

In brief

Council unites over BAME issue

A joint statement on tackling discrimination and racism in Uttlesford was due to be discussed at a district council meeting last night (Tue).

After weeks of proposing public statements and a motion in support of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, Uttlesford's Liberal Democrats and Green Party announced agreement on a cross-party statement reached by the leaders of all political groups and the establishment of an independent oversight panel.

The joint statement reads: "We are clear that black lives do matter.

"UDC will continue and redouble its efforts to combat racism, disadvantage and injustice.

"We will, quite simply, do everything within our powers to ensure that the council and district are inclusive and welcoming places for all people to live, work and visit."

Students tackle impact of waste

An Eco Week set by Forest Hall School challenged students to think about the climate, waste management and recycling.

The week devoted to environmental issues saw children set daily tasks such as keeping a pile of every piece of plastic used in their homes over



seven days to raise awareness of their usage. They also recycled materials into art.

Sarah Power, enrichment lead, said: "We hope this week will raise awareness of these issues with our students so that they think about their choices and the effects on the environment."

Water works to close Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill will be closed to traffic for one day, on Sunday August 2, while Affinity Water carries out work.

"The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Affinity Water undertakes new water connection," according to Stansted Parish Council.

A diversion route will be in place via Chapel Hill, Lower Street, High Lane, Cambridge Road and vice versa.

Chef cooks up meat feast after Old Bell's makeover

The Old Bell Steak House and Grill opened its doors to customers last Friday, serving up delicious cuts of meat for hungry guests.

With its refurbished interior and open-plan kitchen, diners were able to choose their steaks and then watch as they were cooked by head chef Andy Chard.

Manager James Scott said that the new layout offered an atmospheric setting for customers, who could enjoy the sights and smells of their meals being prepared.

He said the reopening had been a successful event and prompted a busy weekend for the Pines Hill venue, formerly known as the Old Bell Hotel.

"It was great – everyone loved the food and it was much busier

than I thought it might be," said James.

"There was a nice ambience because you can see the food being cooked, it creates a real experience for diners.

"We specialise in using only fresh meat, all locally sourced, and the chef will cut the joints in front of the customers as they order."

King's Family Butchers in Lower Street is supplying the restaurant with fresh meat while fruit and veg is provided by Mike's of Sawbridgeworth and fresh seafood brought in that day comes from Marrfish at Start Hill.

James said that he hoped customers would continue to support the new venture and that he was looking forward to welcoming more people in through the door.



Head chef Andy Chard cooks up a steak and ribs at The Old Bell Steak House and Grill in Pines Hill, Stansted
Picture: Vikki Linco

Call for urgent action to save Uttlesford's rare river habitats

Hollie Ryder

hollie.ryder@stortfordindie.co.uk

Uttlesford is heading towards a "perfect storm" as decreasing rainfall is met with an increase in water demand – and the district council has been warned urgent action is required to protect rare river habitats before it is too late.

A cross-party motion to safeguard the area's rivers and ensure sustainable water provision was put to members of last night's full council, calling on them to vote for immediate measures to be put in place.

Cllr Richard Pavitt, deputy chair of Uttlesford's Climate Change and Ecology Working Group, who

prepared the motion, said the underground chalk aquifer feeding the district's rivers was being over-exploited to supply housing development in Cambridgeshire and Uttlesford.

"As a consequence, river levels are critically low and this will get worse as climate change reduces rainfall in a region that is already water stressed," he said.

The motion also calls on the Environment Agency to take action to avoid the loss of important river habitats and requires the council to introduce policies to protect the district's rivers and make new homes more water efficient.

"We are the custodians of the River Cam at this end, it is as low as it has ever been," added Cllr Pavitt, who

represents Littlebury, Chesterfords and Wendens Loft. "The average rainfall in this area has hardly changed in 60 years, however, with climate change it is not coming down in even waves.

"We get droughts and then sudden downpours and the water doesn't soak into the ground but just runs off the surface and out to sea. Sudden rainfall is an illusion because all that water is not actually sinking into the chalk aquifer.

"Probably in the last 20-30 years demand has increased and the water table is going down and not getting replenished – we are paying a substantial ecological price in our area."

Rivers in the north of Uttlesford, which rise from the chalk aquifer, are

designated chalk streams, of which there are only 200 in the world, most in the south and east of England. The River Cam has its source four miles south of Saffron Walden in an area of natural springs that is also the origin of the River Chelmer. The River Stort, which has its source at Langley, is also classified a chalk stream.

"Our chalk streams are dying," said Cllr Pavitt. "People tend to accept the low level of our rivers as normal, but it is not. It is a direct consequence of over-abstraction of the aquifer to serve housing development."

He said Uttlesford must act to raise awareness of the threat and demand that those responsible for water supply and environmental protection act now to avoid the loss of important river habitats.

New eco toilet offers welcome relief for allotment users



The new eco-friendly toilet at Stansted's community allotments

Gardeners at Stansted's new community allotments need never get caught short again now that a toilet block has been built on the site.

The unisex eco-loo, which operates as a compostible toilet, has a ramp for disabled access and a multi-purpose community area where people can shelter in bad weather or make a cup of tea. The space might even become a small shop in the future.

Retired assistant parish council clerk Trevor Lloyd, who will remain the council's allotment officer until a replacement can be found, said the £9,000 project had been funded by a National Lottery grant, but stressed that the

facility would remain locked for the time being while the allotment association considered its use during the Covid-19 crisis.

"As well as being a really important facility for the female allotmenters, it will also be welcomed by Human Roots, the community gardening charity who have a wheelchair-accessible allotment plot at Elm's Farm," he said.

"It's all about being inclusive with wheelchair access, and whereas blokes can disappear behind a hedge, it's a bit more difficult for ladies!"

The structure is made out of reclaimed wood. The allotment association will maintain the toilets.