

Uttlesford District Council
Felsted & Stebbing Ward
District Councillors John Evans and Richard Silcock

District Councillors' Report: May 2026

Please find below our monthly report to the Parish Council, which is written during a period of purdah, as there will be Essex County Council elections on Thursday May 7th.

The most important news to share with you this month is the Intentional Unauthorised Development of a 4 acre field in Main Road, Willows Green.

This has had a devastating impact on the local community and is extremely upsetting, particularly for the residents of Willows Green. Because of the rapidly changing status of this incident, John will be providing the latest information of what actions are being taken by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and what we as a community can do to support UDC in this process, in a detailed report at tonight's (Wednesday 6th May) Parish Council meeting.

Planning

The April Planning Committee meeting was the first opportunity for the committee to review planning applications against the new Uttlesford Local Plan (ULP) adopted on 25th March 2026. At this meeting Core Policy 3 of the ULP, Settlement Hierarchy, was considered when reviewing two applications, in particular, which may be of interest to members of your Planning Committee. Core Policy 3 states "Development outside the existing built areas of these settlements will only be permitted where it is allocated by the Local Plan 2041 or has been allocated within a Made Neighbourhood Development Plan, or future parts of the Local Plan."

An application for 28 new dwellings (UTT/25/2404/FUL) was made in Clavering, which is a larger village and required by the ULP to allocate 117 new dwellings in its emerging Neighbourhood Plan. This application was refused by the committee, as it was judged to be outside the “built areas” of the village. This was in spite of the fact that Clavering has not allocated its quota of new dwellings through a Neighbourhood Plan and Uttlesford at the time could not demonstrate a 5-year housing supply.

Another application, for a single new dwelling behind Rosemary Cottage in Felsted (UTT/26/0385/FUL) was also considered against Core Policy 3.

The new dwelling would be sited in the rear garden of Rosemary Cottage, part of which is inside Village Development Limits (VDL) and part of it is outside the VDL. The committee determined that the site was in a “built area” and therefore was in accordance with Core Policy 3 of the ULP. The application was approved.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The task of integrating the District and County Councils is huge, which is why UDC has set up a Local Government Reorganisation Task and Finish Group to provide oversight of the organisation’s programme and report its findings to the Scrutiny Committee. Richard is a member of the Task and Finish Group and we will provide more detailed information, as it evolves, in future reports. What can be confirmed now, is that our new ward in the West Essex Unitary will see us join with Flitch Green, Little Dunmow and Stebbing and we will have two elected members. Elections for the new Unitary Ward will be in May 2026.

Chaffix

We have not forgotten about the poor state of repair of the road in Chaffix and we continue to chase UDC for a decision on what they intend to do about it and when!

Artificial Intelligence (AI) – Can we be replaced?

Please forgive me, but I have used AI to summarise the two items below, which I think may be a first for the District Councillor Report!

Uttlesford District Council: Roles & Responsibilities under the Renters' Rights Act 2025

BACKGROUND

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025. It is the most significant reform of the private rented sector (PRS) in a generation. Uttlesford District Council (UDC) is the Local Housing Authority responsible for enforcement across the district.

KEY CHANGES FOR TENANTS & LANDLORDS

- Section 21 'no fault' evictions abolished from 1 May 2026
- All tenancies now periodic (rolling monthly); tenants give 2 months' notice to leave
- Rent increases limited to once per year with 2 months' notice
- Rental bidding wars and 'no children / no DSS' policies banned
- Landlords must consider pet requests within 28 days
- PRS Database: all landlords must register (from late 2026)
- Mandatory Landlord Ombudsman for dispute resolution (from ~2028)
- Decent Homes Standard extended to PRS (target 2035)

IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

Dec 2025	UDC investigatory powers active
May 2026	Tenancy reforms & full enforcement begin
Late 2026	PRS Database rollout; UDC enforces registration
~2028	Landlord Ombudsman mandatory
2035	Decent Homes Standard & Awaab's Law for PRS

UDC'S STATUTORY DUTIES

UDC now has a mandatory duty — not merely a power — to enforce landlord legislation across the district. Key responsibilities include:

- Enforcing new tenancy rules, anti-discrimination provisions and rent regulations
- Investigating complaints from tenants about landlord breaches
- Entering properties and business premises (with/without warrants) to gather evidence
- Requiring documents from landlords, letting agents, banks and third parties
- Issuing civil penalties and pursuing criminal prosecution where warranted
- Enforcing PRS Database registration and Ombudsman membership when live
- Reporting enforcement activity to the Secretary of State
- Retaining civil penalty income to fund further enforcement

CIVIL PENALTY POWERS

Breach Type	Max Penalty
Initial / less serious breach	£7,000
Repeated / continued breach	£40,000
Most serious offences	£40,000 + prosecution

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PARISH

- Tenants with complaints should contact UDC's Private Sector Housing team: uttlesford.gov.uk/article/5311/Private-Sector-Housing
- Parish Council has no direct enforcement role but can signpost residents
- Landlords in the parish must comply with new rules from 1 May 2026 and prepare to register on the PRS Database later this year
- Abolition of Section 21 may reduce homelessness presentations to UDC from the parish

Simpler Recycling Regulations 2026: Implementation and Impact on the Parish

BACKGROUND

The Simpler Recycling Regulations — made under the Environment Act 2021 and introduced by DEFRA — came into force for households and local authorities on 31 March 2026. They are designed to end the 'postcode lottery' of bin collections across England, creating a single consistent standard for what is collected and how.

Uttlesford District Council (UDC), as the Waste Collection Authority for the district, is legally required to comply. The regulations affect households, flats, businesses, schools and other non-domestic premises across the parish.

WHAT THE REGULATIONS REQUIRE

From 31 March 2026, all local authorities must collect at least four separate waste streams from every household:

- Food waste — weekly collection (in a kitchen caddy / external food bin)
- Dry mixed recyclables — paper, card, plastic, glass, metal (fortnightly)
- Residual (general) waste — non-recyclable waste
- Garden waste — collected separately (UDC operates this as a chargeable subscription service)

From 31 March 2027, collections of plastic film (carrier bags, flexible packaging) will also become mandatory.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

Mar 2025	Businesses (10+ employees) must separate all recyclables and food waste
1 Apr 2026	All households: standardised 4-stream collections; weekly food waste mandatory
Mar 2027	Plastic film / carrier bag kerbside collections added; micro-businesses (under 10 employees) must comply

POSITION IN UTTLESFORD

UDC already provides food waste (kitchen caddy), dry recycling, and general waste collections for most houses in the district. Its own Cabinet report confirms:

- Most Uttlesford households already receive the core recycling service required by the regulations and will see little change to existing collections
- The main new obligation is extending all recycling streams — including food waste — to flats and communal properties, which was not universally in place before April 2026
- UDC is also required to extend compliant collections to businesses operating in the district — this is a significant gap as UDC's commercial waste service currently does not offer recycling following the closure of its Mechanical Biological Treatment Plant
- Soft plastic (film) collections are not yet in place and must be introduced by March 2027
- UDC is undertaking a wider waste services review, including member engagement workshops, to plan longer-term service redesign

IMPACT ON THE PARISH

- Households in the parish with their own bins are unlikely to see significant changes — existing collections of food waste, recycling and general waste already largely comply
- Any flats or communal housing in the parish should now receive food waste collections if they did not previously — residents in such properties should contact UDC if collections have not started
- Businesses in the parish with 10 or more employees were required to separate recyclables and food waste from March 2025 and must arrange this independently through a licensed waste carrier
- Small businesses and sole traders (fewer than 10 employees) must comply by March 2027
- Schools, GP surgeries, care homes and other non-domestic premises in the parish are also covered and should already be compliant (from March 2025)
- From 2027, all households must also have plastic film collection — residents currently disposing of carrier bags and flexible packaging in general waste should be prepared for this change

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

- Communicate to parishioners living in flats that they are entitled to food waste collections — and to contact UDC if not receiving them
- Further information: uttlesford.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste

Our Reports

Normal service should resume next month and John will produce one of his excellent Monthly Reports, but as you will appreciate, as Portfolio Holder for Planning at UDC, John has been wholly focussed on dealing with the Intentional Unauthorised Development at Willows Green that occurred over the Bank Holiday Weekend.

Disrtict Councillors' and Constituents Surgery

We will be holding our usual monthly residents' surgery in the URC Hall at 5-30 pm prior to the Parish Council Meeting.

We are always, of course, pleased to meet up by appointment, as required, with any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or interest.

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