



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2025

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council – a bumper edition!

We look forward to attending at the first PC Meeting after the Summer Break – since we last met, our work has continued with a number of UDC meetings and business and other residents' matters attended to, as we describe further below.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION ("LGR")

We commence our Report with the subject of LGR since this month will provide a critical time window for advancement of LGR plans within Essex. As will be recalled, this will be the first reorganisation of Local Government for 50 years in terms of its effect upon many "Shire" County and District Councils and Essex in particular. As we have mentioned previously, LGR was not a manifesto commitment on the part of the present Government at the time of the 2024 General Election. Notwithstanding, it is part of its "change" agenda and has been driven forward at pace by MHCLG and the responsible Minister of State, Jim McMahon, an elected MP for Oldham, who with a metropolitan background is vehemently in favour of its perceived benefits.

So, we think it is appropriate to remind readers of what lies ahead. In addition to the reorganisation of District Councils which are required to combine into larger unitary bodies which will then assume responsibility for the current responsibilities of Essex County Council as to Education, Adult and Children Social Care and non-strategic transport matters, the County Council will be disbanded and new powers established in favour of a Mayoral Authority. That authority will have very substantial powers as to strategic matters such as major infrastructure in way of transport and importantly, policies towards the establishment of large new community developments. That would be a matter of potential medium term interest to our residents if (say) the concept of a large Garden Community were ever to be considered in the vicinity of the section of the A120 passing through our Parishes, since it would be a matter falling within the purview of the Mayor, rather than of the new unitaries.

Thus, four inaugural mayoral elections will take place not only in Essex but also, in Hampshire & the Solent, Norfolk & Suffolk, and Sussex & Brighton, and all will be held in May 2026. As to the creation of the new Unitary Authorities in place of the District Councils, this will take place in two stages in the sense that elections to the new Unitaries are expected to take place in May 2027 with them "going live" in April 2028. There will be an overlap of 12 months prior to that date since Uttlesford DC (and the other District

Councils) will not be formally disbanded until April 2029. This type of transitional arrangement has been the norm where reorganization has occurred voluntarily in recent years in other local authority areas across the country.

We have previously advised that UDC prefers the creation of five replacement unitary authorities across the County, while Essex County Council itself (supported by three District Councils presently) advocate the creation of as few as three unitaries. Thurrock and Rochford Councils however each and separately advocate the creation of four unitaries. Business Cases are being finalised by the various Councils supporting their preferred options for presentation to Government by 26 September 2025.

The principal difference, for the purposes of Uttlesford residents, between the preference of Essex County Council and its supporters and that of Uttlesford DC is the scale and “layout” of the councils with which it would join. ECC’s proposal would involve joinder of Uttlesford with all three of its neighbours to the East, which would have the effect of creation of a unitary of some 600,000 residents. That is considered by Uttlesford and the 7 other (or 8/9 – depending on the view ultimately taken by Braintree DC and Harlow) councils with which it has been cooperating as being far too large. The Councils who currently have expressed a strong preference for the five unitary model include:

Southend City, Chelmsford City, Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Colchester, Maldon and Uttlesford

Epping Forest DC is following the “party line” represented by the leadership of ECC ie supportive of the three model, while Braintree DC and Harlow BC have yet to confirm their final decisions.

The five unitary model, if finally decided upon by MHCLG, would look like this:



If this comes to pass (ie if it is ultimately approved by MHCLG), the new unitary of which we in Uttlesford would be part would have the following characteristics/features:

Population 2023 (2040):	325,609 (340,230)
Working Age:	61.5%; Young People 19.8%; Older People 18.7%
Dwelling Growth (2023 - 2040):	46,580
Number of Councillors:	83 (current 141)
Number of Parish Councils (current):	77 (Uttlesford 53; Harlow 0; Epping 24)

There remain major issues to be overcome in the context of LGR not the least being the huge (as much as possibly £ 1 bn gross) debt incurred by Thurrock Council and about which much has been written in the Press – the question arises as to who will take that debt obligation over or will it be written off by Government as part of the price to be paid for demanding LGR be put into effect? That still remains to be seen.

As might be anticipated, no other existing District Council wishes the residents in its successor Unitary authority to be landed with any part of such debt obligations.

A web site [A stronger Greater Essex | Essex Local Government Reorganisation Hub](#) has been launched to which members and residents might like to subscribe so as to be kept updated as to news and review the detailed business cases to be advanced. That for the five unitary model has just (1 September) been uploaded to it and a summary is here [Five unitary council proposal - Exec Summary.pdf](#).

An extraordinary meeting of UDC members will be held on 23 September to enable members to express their opinions concerning the proposals and the future. There is, we are pleased to report, currently unanimity of opinion on the preference for the five unitary model on the part of both the R4U Administration and the Lib Dem members while the Conservative members' views remain currently unknown.

The belief of Central Government is that LGR will “save money” and be more efficient than the model presently in place. That proposition is by no means certain and recent press reports suggest that no costing of the savings was actually undertaken by it, instead relying on savings calculations which had been estimated by the County Councils Network.

THE LOCAL PLAN 2021 - 2041

We are glad to report that the Planning Inspectors having closed the hearings of the Examination in Public, as reported to you in July, have been very prompt in providing their interim comments to UDC, which is a very good sign that the Plan is “on the right track” in terms of it being likely to be found “sound, subject to modifications”. The Inspectors published a *Post Hearing Note* dated 31 July 2025, which was published on 8th August. A copy may be found in the following link, but while the Inspectors made some suggested proposed modifications for Uttlesford to consider, no fundamental road blocks or objections have come from them to its broad structure and policy framework.

[017f5b_bf62550d1d54440d95d5f919f3641fef.pdf](#)

These proposed modifications will be accepted in due course and indeed the Local Plan Panel of Members will be meeting shortly to be updated concerning them. Thereafter, they will be the subject of public consultation before being referred back to the Inspectors to await their final Report.

Meanwhile, the principal matter of concern to the Inspectors however is as to whether or not Uttlesford will have a five year housing supply upon adoption of the Plan, that being a requirement of the NPPF. The Inspectors will likely recommend that an early review of the Local Plan be undertaken if at adoption, this level of supply cannot be demonstrated. UDC Planning Policy Officers are confident however that, given current and expected delivery of housing, this level of supply will in fact be demonstrated and there would not be a need for an early review, other than in ordinary course. Officers are additionally confident that no additional housing allocations will be required to be included (recent local suggestions to the contrary thus being erroneous).

All updates to the Local Plan continue to be maintained and updated on the Planning Inspectorate portal/webpage:

[Uttlesford Local Plan Examination](#)

We are aware that members of both your Planning Committee and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group helpfully keep themselves up dated as to matters published there.

REFUSE & RECYCLING MATTERS

This topic brings us back down to earth from the rather existential topics of the new Local Plan and LGR, so we turn to the way that our refuse service is utilised by our residents in their weekly refuse recycling habits and practices!

In July, together with our other Uttlesford District Councillor colleagues, we were given a thorough presentation by members of the UDC and Essex County Council environmental services teams responsible for implementing refuse and recycling policies and related services across the District and County. This was in anticipation of new rules and standards being implemented in 2026.

The current challenge for the management and recycling of refuse in Essex is substantial, since some 660,000 tonnes pa of material is generated which costs about £ 130 m pa to collect, process and recycle. This is equivalent to about 440 kg weight and £ 84 cost per person. For Uttlesford alone, about 35,000 tonnes pa of refuse is generated, which costs about £ 3.2 m pa to manage and recycle, equivalent to **£ 77 pa** per household. This cost is of course recovered and included in council tax. We do however, recycle about 15,500 tonnes pa, made up of some 9,100 tonnes of dry material (including paper, glass and steel) and 6,400 tonnes of “green” material (including food and compostables) thus achieving an overall recycling rate of some **49%** currently.

The aim is to recycle more through greater awareness and by more efficient means, particularly in the area of food/scraps recycling; currently, a great volume of waste/out of date food is simply thrown away by residents into their black bins while still enclosed in their wrappers and which cannot be recycled easily/economically. This is a “real waste” since surplus food materials when not enclosed in wrappers is very effectively recycled into gas for energy production and fertiliser/compost.

This source www.loveessex.org contains information prepared by the Essex councils and which describes the different processes involved in waste management and recycling which many readers will find informative, as well as containing a link to the full County wide *Waste Strategy* which outlines the recycling changes ahead. Further information and publicity will be provided in coming months to residents and the community concerning means whereby recycling rates can be easily improved with a view to avoiding the current necessity for land fill.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (“CIL”)

This is a long overdue process, neglected unfortunately by previous UDC Administrations. Studies have been commissioned and evidence assembled to justify the introduction of CIL in the District and detailed viability calculations have been undertaken to pave the way for the imposition of CIL upon all new developments. This will operate in addition to the section 106 community benefits imposed currently by way of site specific mitigation and which of course are available only for major (excess of 10 dwellings).

So, it will mean that smaller developments (of which we have seen so many in the Parish in recent years) will in future contribute to community wide benefits and which are not solely attributable to mitigation on that specific site. Large sites will contribute to CIL of course too.

John will be bringing the matter to Cabinet for final discussion on 4 September and the papers are here: <https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s40397/20250718%20draft%20CCS%20for%20Cabinet.pdf>

The CIL scheme, if approved by Cabinet, will be consulted upon this Autumn (at the same time as the Local Plan Major Modifications) and propose the imposition of a non negotiable tariff levy of (among other charges) **£ 200 per m2** on all residential development on greenfield land, **£ 100 per m2** on all residential development on previously developed land and on large retail stores/related warehousing. This is equivalent to about 3-5% of GDV and has been tested as viable and will not be expected to inhibit development. Any likely Mayoral CIL charge which might be imposed following on from LGR can also be accommodated on viability grounds.

As will be expected, such CIL charges are area related and will survive changes introduced by LGR.

A draft SPD has been prepared (included in the last link as Appendix 3) and gives examples of the application of the 12 Policies contained in the Local Plan which can variously benefit from CIL, including not only roads, transport facilities, flood defences, education facilities, medical facilities but also:

- Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- Management of Public Open Space
- Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Biodiversity and Nature Recovery
- The Historic Environment
- Public Art

This topic will become of relevance to Parish Councils, once adopted, since 15% of CIL applicable to a development located within that parish, or 25% thereof where there is an adopted Neighbourhood Plan in place, will be passed by UDC (and successor body) to it for scheme permitted application/use. Full

briefings on this subject and its implications will be provided by UDC officers to Parish Councils in the coming months.

HEDGEHOG SOLAR DEVELOPMENT

Your Chairman will no doubt wish to report further concerning this matter. So, we limit ourselves to confirming that, while TOTAL have withdrawn their application which, of necessity, was originally submitted to PINS for approval, being of a National Infrastructure size due to its scale (namely 98 MW ie well in excess of the local level for the grant of planning permission which is currently set at 50 MW but expected to be increased shortly to 100 MW), the scheme will continue to be advanced locally and will be submitted to both UDC and Braintree DC for development approval when the new threshold rules are introduced either later this year or early next year. The Community Liaison Group upon which we serve will be expected to continue to monitor and advise.

HATFIELD FOREST – Strategic Access Measures (“SAMM”)

Very many residents of our Parish are either members of the National Trust or are users of Hatfield Forest, or indeed both!

Hatfield Forest is owned (since 1924) by the National Trust and is both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a National Nature Reserve. It represents the only large public open space located within Uttlesford and consequently is heavily used by walkers and riders. Because of the housing development which has occurred in recent years and the greatly increased footfall in the Forest resulting, which has increased from 200,000 pa in 2015 to 500,000 pa today, its walks and natural infrastructure have come and will continue to be severely prejudiced by visitor use.

Consequently, Natural England and the National Trust have together developed a Mitigation Strategy outlining a package of on-site SAMM to protect and restore the condition of Hatfield Forest. The Mitigation Strategy sets out a range of costed measures which relate to access management and infrastructure as well as ride and path mitigation, currently identified as about **£ 7.4m**, over a current projected life of 80 years.

Accordingly, the UDC cabinet has decided that a set of measures is to be funded by future development occurring within a Zone of Influence of 11.1 km (which extends into East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest Council areas too) that captures the origins of the majority of visitors to the Forest. All development within the Zol where there is a net increase in homes will be required to make a contribution to the Hatfield Forest SAMM to mitigate the recreational impact. The other Councils mentioned will also be joining in a Partnership with UDC to achieve this common purpose.

The current tariff within the Zol located within Uttlesford is set at £1,333.60 per new dwelling. Applications where the Hatfield Forest SAMMS applies will be refused if a mitigation payment has not been secured via a planning obligation. In addition, for development within the Zol, developers are required to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (“SANG”) to criteria set out by Natural England. This SANG, is in addition to open space requirements as part of the development and is designed to provide an alternative source of outdoor space to Hatfield Forest and is therefore part of the remediation measures.

OUR GENERAL ATTENDANCES

As mentioned at the outset of our Report, we have remained busy throughout August on Council business and other resident matters.

We have asked for two Planning Applications in the Ward to be “called in” to UDC Planning Committee for its decision in the event that the Planning Officer dealing were to recommend the application for approval. Call in requests are not routine and making such a request is justified only if there are sufficient planning policy considerations to do so. Incidentally, as we have reported recently, under the Government’s possible reforms to the Planning Committee system and as to which technical consultation was undertaken earlier in the Summer, the scope for consideration of Officers’ delegated decision making powers by Member Committee is likely to be much reduced in the future.

Richard sits as a substitute member of the UDC Planning Committee and sits when the nominated colleague is not available. He attended the August UDC Planning Committee accordingly. In order to be permitted to sit as a substitute member, constitutionally, mandatory training was first required to be undertaken by him as well as other substitute members.

Apart from his regular Cabinet Commitments in August (including two Informal Cabinet Briefings lasting a morning and held every second Monday), John deputised on two occasions for the Leader of UDC, Cllr Petrina Lees, at meetings of the Chief Executives and Leaders of the District Councils which were convened to discuss LGR and potential submissions to MHCLG.

Additionally, an extraordinary Council meeting was held to discuss and approve a further investment to be made in Chesterford Research Park (where it will be recalled, UDC are 50/50 partners with Aviva) for the purposes of the refurbishment cost of a large building after its vacation by a long term tenant and further required site developments/improvements.

We also attended an All Member Briefing on LGR given by UDC’s Chief Executive, preparatory to the further work described earlier above.

WARD MEMBER’S INITIATIVE

We are very happy to consider requests for financial support, utilising our Members’ Initiative Grant as appropriate and which can be made available to community groups for suitable purposes. We draw to your attention however, as previously reported by us to you, that this will be the last year (2025/2026) that the grant will be available.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS’ AND CONSTITUENTS’ SURGERY

We will be holding our usual monthly surgery in the URC Hall at 1730 immediately prior to your PC 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 indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports.

If any resident would like to receive a personal copy of our Monthly Reports, we shall be pleased to send one directly to them by e mail but do remind all concerned that they are published and included by way

of a link in each Month's Parish Council Minutes. Back Editions commencing as far ago as June 2019 are available additionally on request !

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