



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JANUARY 2026

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

STANSTED AIRPORT EXPANSION

As will be recalled, a Planning Application was submitted by Stansted Airport Ltd ("STAL") to UDC requesting permission to create additional access/departure points on the main runway so as to allow aircraft to enter and depart from it quickly. This would result in permitting a greater number of aircraft to use the single runway in the course of a year and thus result in the potential for a greater throughout of passenger numbers. The Application was determined last month by UDC's Planning Committee who granted it while, nonetheless, aircraft movements will continue to be limited to 274,000 pa while the type of new aircraft likely to be introduced will allow an increase in passenger throughput from 43 million terminal passengers to up to 51 million terminal passengers, in a twelve month calendar period.

STAL submitted that expanding to the new passenger limit could support the creation of up to 4,500 new jobs, alongside training and education opportunities delivered through the airport's existing facilities. Planned infrastructure improvements include upgrades to M11 Junction 8 aimed at easing congestion, as well as funding for local bus services, road improvements and measures to tackle illegal fly-parking in surrounding areas.

A key commitment within the approved plans is that 50 per cent of all passenger journeys to and from the airport will be made using public transport, helping to reduce pressure on local roads and support more sustainable travel. The permission remains subject to finalisation of section 106 terms.

Some residents will consider that further expansion runs contrary to policies regarding increases in carbon emissions and we have sympathy for that point of view. However, such matters fall outside the ambit of planning decisions in the aviation sector (as was decided to be the case in the successful appeal by STAL for its last passenger numbers expansion in 2022) and so the Planning Committee were obliged to decide the application on the grounds of making "Best Use" of the existing runway facilities with no regard to be paid to environmental/carbon issues. The Application carried Officers' recommendation for approval by the Committee.

Richard was a Member of the Committee on this occasion and John spoke as Ward Member, not so as to support nor object to the Application but to “make a point” as to the overflying of Conservation Areas and heritage assets (this relates principally to Stebbing High Street and Church End). While this was not a planning consideration, it resulted in the Planning Director of STAL, who spoke before the Committee, acknowledging that they would cooperate with communities in seeking to mitigate such matters.

SUSTAINABLE UTTLESFORD (“SU”)

We have received several enquiries concerning SU since our last Report and it is gratifying that there is enthusiasm for the subject among members of the Community. It is essential for this support not to operate in a silo or be limited to individual Parishes working alone and we look forward to cooperating with our fellow Councillors across the District and other local groups to advance SU’s aims. One of the first things that we can seek to arrange is liaison between the relevant Sub-Committees of Felsted and Stebbing PCs in this area, particularly given the commonality between them through the connectivity provided by Stebbing Brook and its tributaries.

On a wider scale, ECC has just published its Climate Action Report for 2025 which is now live on the ECC website here: [2024 to 2025 Climate Action Report](#).

Interested members of the PC will we think wish to read this and note the achievements in the past year noted for Uttlesford. Further work will continue.

UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN

The proposed technical modifications to the Local Plan are still being considered by the Planning Inspectorate (“PINS”). We included last month a table of these together with the representations made and the responses to them with accompanying comments by the UDC Planning Policy Team and, for ready reference, are repeated here:

https://www.localplanservices.co.uk/files/ugd/017f5b_7607cf60b6e147b1b8fb3d275c276b6f.pdf

We expect PINS to report as to their views on these during the course of January 2026. Subject thereto, matters will proceed to Governance at UDC and of course the views and votes to be cast at Full Council in favour of adoption but we believe that we are on track for adoption by UDC Council in March/April 2026.

We will continue to keep you and residents updated.

FURTHER GOVERNMENT PLANNING CHANGES

We described last month that very significant changes were ahead in the planning system. They further emerged in a welter of draft amendments proposed to the National Planning Policy Framework in the week before Christmas. The proposed revised NPPF may be read via this hyperlink : [here](#)

Let there be no doubt, the proposed amendments to Planning Policy are very significant (some commentators have described the changes afoot as the greatest since the 1947 Planning Legislation which effectively nationalised the right to the development of land).

Your Planning Sub-Committee will no doubt wish to review the changes in detail and perhaps comment on them and the link to the questions consulted upon are [here](#). The Consultation period runs until 10 March 2026.

Meanwhile, suffice to say that the Presumption in favour of Development (the “Tilted Balance”) where there is no up to date local plan nor 5 Year Supply/Delivery is proposed to be varied yet further in favour of development being permitted. The rules as to permissions to be granted in “Grey Belt” are also clarified and development made more possible.

We await publication of the UDC latest Housing Delivery statistics (which are expected to be greater) and will let your Sub-Committee have the latest information when released.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (“LGR”)



We and County Councillor Martin Foley have reported extensively on the subject of LGR in recent months, but you and residents will wish to know that the Government has itself recently launched a consultation upon the competing proposals for reorganisation as they were submitted for Essex.

It has now called for preferences to be expressed by members of the public on the alternative submissions in a consultation which runs from **19 November 2025** to **11 January 2026**. Comments may be made online via this link:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/essex-southend-on-sea-thurrock/>

It remains the strong preference of UDC and the majority of District and City Councils across the County that the “Five Unitary Model” (depicted in the graphic above) be put in place.

However, one view was expressed at your last PC that it was more appropriate for Uttlesford to “join up” with Braintree, Colchester and Tendring ie meaning that the three Unitary Model be put in place rather than the five Unitary council model. With due respect to that view, John disagrees, while Richard abstained at Council in September in the debate.

If the three Unitary model came about, John considers that the residents of Uttlesford would likely end up “swamped” in a very large Unitary created and having some 620,000 residents. The joinder of Uttlesford residents in a Unitary together with residents in Epping and Harlow while at first blush not appearing to some observers (including Richard) to be as attractive as coming together with the other three North Essex districts, it would not in John’s opinion be as conducive to elected member accountability and representation as would be the case when provided by a model with a population mix of some 325,000 residents. Significantly fewer elected councillors would result under the three unitary rather than the five model – residents would be more distant from their elected representatives in consequence.

Taking in Harlow into a unitary model might be thought disadvantageous to Uttlesford residents (and of course those of Epping whose Council Tax burden is in any event much greater than that of Uttlesford) in way of the resulting cost of adult and youth social care to be absorbed. That is true but equally, and indeed of a greater order of magnitude, would be the cost of adult social care associated with being within the same unitary authority as Tendring DC, having regard to the cost incurred by its very large proportion of elderly and socially deprived residents).

Moreover, in terms of bed fellows, it will not be forgotten that Braintree District has historically been seen by some to be “predatory” in its willingness to seek to allocate development across our boundary in Uttlesford (at Andrewsfield) and also has procured economic development entirely within its own area (through funding secured via the South of England Local Economic Partnership) at *Horizon 120*. It might be thought that such Braintree-centric approaches would continue and be amplified if our area were to end up formally joined up with it as well as its larger neighbour still of Colchester.

UDC’s Chief Executive wrote on 29 December 2025 to all Parish Councils providing a copy of UDC’s response to the Government’s questions in this area and he wrote:

“Should any of you wish to respond individually or formally as Parish Councils, details of how to do so either online or in writing are on the Government’s website [here](#). Details of the four competing models are available [here](#).”

However, the decision will be one for Government alone to make and it is expected that we shall hear from them in March 2026 with their decision.

We encourage all readers interested in this (once in 50 years perhaps?) important topic to review the competing Councils’ submissions and respond to the Government’s consultation. Responses are required to be submitted by 11 January 2026.

ESSEX MAYORAL ELECTIONS

We reported last month, in the context of Devolution and Local Government Reorganization that Mayoral Elections were due to take place in 2026 for the election of a Greater Essex Mayor. On 4 December, the Government however, announced that this date was postponed to **May 2028** so our Report of last month requires to be amended and read accordingly.

UTTLESFORD HELP HUB

We received a helpful presentation immediately prior to Council in December from two (very approachable) UDC Officers who were asked to establish a *Help Hub*. The extent to which there is deprivation in the District is not universally the same but even in what might be seen to be our prosperous Ward, there is indeed difficulty experienced by some residents for which help might be of use and value.

So the Officers will be making themselves available to assist members of the Community, every second Wednesday, in Dunmow Library between 1000 and 1400 commencing on 14 January. This is how the Team describe their potential assistance:

“We work with local organisations to offer practical support, advice, and guidance to help you get back on track. Everyone needs a little extra support sometimes. The Help Hub is here to make sure you get help quickly - before small problems become big ones. We can help with:

- Benefits and housing
- Rent and council tax
- Managing payments and arrears
- Wellbeing and mental health
- Employment advice”

We invite all Members of the PC to be aware of this initiative and bring it to the attention of any Residents who might benefit or be interested. We shall provide further details to the editor of Felsted Focus also.

OUR WARD ACTIVITY

As to other matters, we continue to press UDC for ongoing maintenance and repair of the road surface at Chaffix; the pot holes are large and the current icy conditions are of concern and will perhaps have caused further deterioration in the road surface.

We have assisted residents at Clifford Smith's Drive in regard to the level of grounds/maintenance charges sought to be imposed by their Management Company and have brought them up to date as to participation in a consultation currently underway by MHCLG as regards what is in the press often dubbed "fleecehold charges".

Problems as to drainage in Felsted arise from time to time but the most egregious is flooding at The Bridge over the Flitch Way on Stebbing Road, where the two roadside deep drainage sumps and culvert beneath the road surface have once again become blocked by volumes of soil and stone carried in water run off from the adjacent field lying to the south east.

This is unacceptable and we are in dialogue with ECC (as both the Highway Authority and Lead Flood Authority) to determine what might be done to prevent this from occurring in future. We are meanwhile seeking the clearance once more of the sumps and culvert (which John secured in 2022) but the cause of the problem needs to be identified and prevented which seems to us to require input and positive action from the adjacent land owner.

UDC were pleased to hold the Chairman's Annual Carol Service at Holy Cross Parish Church, Felsted on 10 December. The Carver Barracks Military Wives graciously provided choral support and representatives of local Cadet Forces (being the Chairman's chosen Charity) were in attendance as well as the High Sheriff of Essex and two Deputy Lieutenants. We were pleased that Cllr Richard Freeman and family members were also able to attend. John was invited to read the traditional Lesson taken from the Gospel of St Matthew relating the visit of the *Wise Men*.

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 not be holding our usual monthly surgery in the URC Hall this month in view of the PC not meeting in person but remotely.

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 !

Finally, we would like to wish Members of the Parish Council and all readers a very Happy 2026 and of course a Healthy one.

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