



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JUNE 2026

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

THE PARISH COUNCIL – THE RETIRING CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY

We would very much like to associate ourselves with the words of appreciation given by your newly elected Chairman, Cllr Roy Ramm, at the outset of the last Parish Meeting regarding former Cllrs Graham Harvey and Frances Marshall upon their retirement from service upon the Parish Council as Chairman and Deputy Chair respectively. Their very long service to the Parish Council and community at large was exemplary in every respect and their wise and effective contributions to the work of the Council will be sorely missed.

We look forward to enjoying the most cordial of relations with their successors and can assure them and the Council that we shall continue to provide our support to them also in every way available.

WILLOWS GREEN – UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT

All residents living in the Willows Green/Milch Hill areas will have been aware of the unauthorised development which took place in the field facing Main Road and Mole Hill Green Road throughout the May Day Bank Holiday weekend, commencing after close of business at UDC offices on the Friday evening. It was designed in our view, to make the investigation and any potential enforcement action by UDC officers more difficult and time consuming than otherwise it would have been.

The development involved (among other activities) substantial ground works, drainage, sewerage, removal of hedging, installation of fencing, the deposit and levelling of large volumes of hard core. Heavy excavation and earth moving equipment was brought to site on HGV low loaders and used by individuals who appeared to be skilled operatives assisted by squads of labourers delivered by mini bus, working as directed by foremen, enabling them to work long hours under cover of darkness by use of generators and emergency lighting.

Thereafter, mobile homes and touring caravans were deposited on the site which appears to be owned by or on behalf of the individuals concerned in the undertaking of the unauthorised development activity.

As you know, John attended the location over that weekend, saw the activity and met a number of residents as well as Sir James Cleverly MP to discuss the incursion so as to be able to brief UDC's officers on the reopening of offices after the Bank Holiday as to what had transpired/been observed. Some 150 reports were also submitted by interested residents to UDC Enforcement Team as to the shocking and unprecedented (so far as our Ward is concerned) events.

Planning Permission had not been applied for let alone granted in relation to the said activity/works. For that reason, we describe it as "unauthorised" and indeed in breach of planning control. We were in attendance at your last Parish Council meeting of course, held on the eve of the ECC Election, and John explained that we were constrained from providing information to questions raised by the public as to the events in question due to the restraints imposed by Pre-Election Purdah.

In consequence of the unauthorised development, UDC issued a Stop Notice in respect of it and thereafter by reference also to the failure to comply with the Stop Notice, UDC obtained an Injunction from the High Court of Justice in London to restrain the current and further development activity. The Order obtained contained a Penal Notice warning of the serious Penalty consequences for breach. That Order was granted (as is always the case for applications made in the absence of the other party) for a temporary short period and was extended after a Court Hearing held on 13 May until 18 June to allow the Defendant to file its evidence. John was in attendance at the Court Hearing, to hear the argument and provided you with a summary of proceedings. He intends to attend again on 18 June.

It will, we are sure, be understood that it is not possible for us to provide a running commentary of "what is happening or the approach that UDC might take" to the very many residents who have been in contact with us. The channel of advice and updates, fully supported by us, will be from UDC to Felsted PC and for that information to be posted on its web page/social network. We might add that the initiative taken by the PC to ask residents to restrain themselves in making repeated enquiries of UDC was most welcome. Officers need to have the space and time to get on with the job of investigating, instructing and liaising with external advisers as required.

In this connection, UDC's in house legal team has substantial experience of these issues while employed at another Local Authority which has had and continues to investigate and required to deal with very similar matters and circumstances. Moreover, the Counsel instructed by UDC to settle the Court papers and argue matters before the Court is fully immersed in the topic and has a number of current identical matters which have arisen elsewhere, including those which occurred over the Easter weekend, where she is also instructed by the relevant Local Planning Authority.

A further but separate Injunction was applied for and obtained by UDC on Saturday 16 May in relation to the risk of unauthorised development on a field off Milch Hill and there is a Court hearing again in the High Court on 2 June where UDC will seek its renewal. Again, John will attend to hear the argument.

These issues will remain challenging and of great concern for quite some time. Members of the public are rightly concerned to see that public policy is observed ie that the planning system is complied with and if

development by a land owner or promoter (whoever they may be) is sought, then it should be undertaken in accordance with the prevailing rules, being compliant with planning policy and if it is not, then appropriate enforcement measures should follow. We are of course entirely supportive of the community in their strong expression of these concerns.

FURTHER GOVERNMENT PLANNING CHANGES – MOST IMPORTANT

MHCLG has, on 1 June, published draft Regulations which will lead, when introduced (presently intended to be with effect from **31 October 2026**), to amount to the most **radical** change since the Planning Legislation was first introduced in 1947 to the way that Planning Committees of Local Planning Authorities operate. Their powers are being deliberately curtailed under a National Scheme of Delegation (“NSoD”). All LPAs will thus be operating under the same arrangements.

This will necessitate amendments to the UDC Constitution to reflect the impending changes and will mean that more planning decisions will be taken by Planning Officers than might ever have been imagined in the past. Thus, members of the Planning Committee will not be called upon to determine applications to the same extent as they are now.

The proposed NSoD introduces a two-tier approach:

- Schedule 1 applications that must be delegated to officers;
- Schedule 2 applications that may still be determined by planning committee only where specified criteria are met;
- Under Schedule 1, a range of applications would become mandatory officer decisions, including:
 - householder applications,
 - minor commercial schemes,
 - minor residential developments (under 10 dwellings),
 - non-material amendments; and
 - most reserved matters applications.
- There would (in practice) be no call-ins.

As this proposed Regulation has only just been published (although it was consulted upon in the early part of the Year and to which UDC responded in objection), it is too early to provide a complete digest as to its likely impact in Uttlesford. A presentation concerning it will however be made to the UDC Planning Committee and to the Parish Councils in the forthcoming Parish Forum.

We will report further as we learn more but presently, are of the view that the future role of Parish Councils in the scrutiny of applications will become all the more significant since the more thorough their review the better as this will result in the fullest representations becoming available for consideration of Officers. This need will perhaps be highlighted further when planning decisions will be in the hands of Unitaries which will be made up of many fewer Councillors than now and where Officers may possibly be less familiar with their “home turf” than at present.

UTTLESFORD BIG GREEN FESTIVAL

On a happier note, UDC is celebrating between 5 and 14 June five years of its investment in nature recovery and low carbon projects in local communities. One such is in our Ward, namely the creation of a woodland walk, a nature area on Mill Lane Playing Field, Stebbing (acquired by the Parish Council with the aid of a PWLB Mortgage). Here is an image of one of the work parties who contributed their labour! It was named after the late Mr Michael Kingdom, a former Stebbing PC Chairman, who had been instrumental in drawing up the early plans and concepts for it.

There is a wide variety of celebratory events and John and Richard will attend several and we encourage as many members of the community as might be interested to view the programme and join in, details being found here:

[The Uttlesford Big Green Festival - Uttlesford District Council](#)



UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN and CIL

The proposed CIL charging scheme was conducted on behalf of PINS at the end of May by an independent Examiner. Few issues arose and a Report/Decision is expected prior to the Summer Holiday season. UDC hope to introduce the CIL Scheme thereafter during the Autumn.

As you know, once adopted, the CIL scheme will mean that all developments, and not merely those in excess of 10 dwellings as at present, will be required to contribute a fixed sum towards local infrastructure needs. Parishes which have an up to date Neighbourhood Plan will themselves be in a position to claim up to 25% of those CIL sums to disburse on their infrastructure needs.

A Protocol is being prepared by UDC as to how the scheme will impact and be intended to operate at Parish level and a suitable briefing will be provided in good time before implementation (although funds will only of course come through as developments progress and payment trigger points are reached).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (“LGR”)

As previously reported, Government are still expecting Essex LGR to mean the creation of 5 Unitary Councils, whereby so far as we are concerned, Uttlesford, Epping Forest and Harlow Councils will “merge”. However, since the May Elections, the new Administration at ECC and Harlow Council have each announced their intention to challenge the LGR process. We shall wait and see whether this will prove to be effective.

OUR WARD ACTIVITY

We continue to support householders and UDC in respect of the required maintenance and repair of the road surface at Chaffix where arrangements are being finalised among UDC (in respect of their own liability for the contribution attributable to Social Housing) and the owners of the remaining housing as to the proportions of repair costs to be borne by each of them respectively.

We are monitoring the problems as to drainage at Causeway End and are supportive of the initiative of the householders in seeking to secure the intervention of ECC as the LFFA regarding deficiencies in the maintenance of the adjacent field drainage system (still prevailing we regret to say for in excess of six years). Positive discussions are now taking place between ECC and the owners of the adjacent field.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS’ AND CONSTITUENTS’ SURGERY

We will be holding our usual monthly residents’ surgery in the URC Hall at 1730 prior to your 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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