



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: MARCH 2026

Please find below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

UDC BUDGET 2025/2027

As might be imagined this is a subject warranting a complete Report in itself but in reality, justice to the topic cannot not be properly given in a Report of this type/nature. Reference needs to be made to the voluminous papers put before Council at its last meeting on 24 February which was convened for the purpose of Budget approval. There is a full page with links dedicated to the subject here: [Budget 2026/27 - Uttlesford District Council](#) to which we refer interested readers in the detail.

The high level summary included there states:

“Despite facing a challenging financial environment, we have put forward a balanced budget for the year ahead with no planned cuts to frontline services. As part of the budget we have approved a below-inflation Council Tax increase of 2.99% for a Band D property to £ 187.46. This modest increase represents an additional £5.44 per year in this Band bracket. The increase set across the board will help maintain our essential services such as waste and recycling collections, community safety, planning, housing support and environmental protection.

The budget also includes an increase in rents by 4.8% for our 2,800 housing tenants, helping to ensure that housing services remain sustainable. This means an average weekly rent increase of £6.22, bringing the average rent to £135.83. This remains significantly below the cost of equivalent private rented homes.”

The principal challenge encountered in setting the balanced budget was the reduction in support provided by Central Government towards local authorities in rural areas such as Uttlesford. This is regrettable but is a matter of political choice/imperatives.

As a matter of interest to readers, the Band D Council Tax charged by our neighbours at Braintree District Council is **£ 206** per dwelling compared with **£ 187** charged by UDC. It will also be recalled that BDC does

not have any social housing stock at all, unlike UDC whose stock encompasses 2,800 dwellings across the District, an ownership policy which we are pleased to say is supported by the current political parties.

UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN and CIL

A meeting will be held at Full Council on 25 March to consider adoption of the Local Plan as examined, together with the Planning Inspectorate's Major Modifications. We hope that it will be approved by Members. We are of course both supportive of it, while recognising that it will bring considerable development and inevitable change to several areas within the District.

We are pleased to report that finally, the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy scheme is now under consultation, whose particulars will be found here: [Developer Contributions SPD consultation - Uttlesford District Council](#). Once adopted, this 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 – a good reason to have a NP!

FURTHER GOVERNMENT PLANNING CHANGES

We have reported previously on the impending very significant changes ahead in the planning system. The draft amendments proposed to the National Planning Policy Framework published in the week before Christmas are being consulted upon until 10 March. The proposed revised NPPF may be read via this hyperlink [here](#)

UDC has responded to the consultation as in this link [Decision details on public web site](#) and which may be of interest to your Planning Sub-Committee.

We await publication of the UDC latest Housing Delivery statistics, whose publication is being held up by MHCLG, and will let you have the latest information when released. Suffice it to say, we expect there to be in excess of 5 years' Housing Land Supply.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION ("LGR")

We await news from Central Government, which is expected this month, as to the composition of the new Unitary Councils which we have described in several of our recent Reports. We have nothing further to add presently.

OUR WARD ACTIVITY

We continue to press UDC for ongoing maintenance and repair of the road surface at both Chaffix in Felsted and Bran End Fields in Stebbing. The pot holes at the former are large and the road surface and footways are deteriorated. UDC, while owning the road at Chaffix, will be looking to charge those who

own their properties for their fair share of the costs of repair, in accordance with the terms and conditions whereby their properties were purchased under the Governments' Right to Buy schemes.

At Bran End Fields, the surface is flooded because of a blocked drain and there has been a question as to whether or not this is the responsibility of UDC to clear it or that of Anglian Water, into whose drainage system the surface is designed to drain. We believe that this is now in the course of resolution after many weeks.

Problems as to drainage in Felsted arise from time to time, including at Causeway End (prevaling we regret to say for in excess of six years) and discussions are taking place with ECC and they with the owners of the adjacent field into whose drainage system the roadside ditches are designed to drain. We shall be meeting with Cllr Freeman and the immediate residents to see what further we might be able to do to assist.

We have participated in the recent Regulation 14 Consultation for the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan and also that for the proposed designation by UDC of Stebbing Green as a Conservation Area, and related events were attended by John.

Richard (through Sustainable Uttlesford connections) arranged introductions to both Felsted and Stebbing Primary Schools to representatives of Community Energy, a non profit organisation whose motivation is to encourage public buildings to go towards self sufficiency in their energy needs through the installation of their own solar panels and heat pumps. This would be financed by innovative means. Meetings were attended at the schools which we attended accordingly and we hope that positive developments for the benefits for the schools will emerge.

We both continue to attend the Community Liaison Group established by Total Energies in respect of the proposed Hedgehog Solar Farm, the next meeting for which is to be held next week. The relevant planning applications to UDC and BDC have yet to be submitted.

Naturally, we remain supportive of County Councillor Foley in his active interventions concerning road maintenance and indeed flood matters, all being within the scope of the County's statutory and discretionary functions, rather than of UDC. This includes work undertaken at the long standing defects at Molehill Green and its localised drainage and residents' foul systems.

As may be imagined, we receive in our "post bag" a wide variety of enquiries from residents as to matters which concern them individually but are of general interest (sometimes arising out of these Monthly Reports to you, which of course we very much welcome).

We consider that the level of detail as to "What is Going On" at Council level is generally missing from local press/newspaper reporting in recent years and that included on social media is not by its nature always comprehensive or worse still, limited or even partisan!

Our Reports are therefore intended to provide a little bit of depth to enable both you and residents at large to enquire further about issues and topics not merely of specific concern or objection to them individually but of general interest and application at large.

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.

Indeed, we propose to be allocating our allowance prior to the municipal year end and have some potential beneficiaries in mind.

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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