

Uttlesford District Council Meeting

14 October 2025

Written Questions to Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs

Responses published on 13 October 2025

1. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“Parkside in Saffron Walden and Alexia House in Dunmow are former sheltered accommodation units, which have now been vacant for over five years.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm when these properties were declared empty, what the monthly costs of these properties have been since empty in respect of the following:-

- a. Heating and Light
- b. Rates or Council Tax
- c. Security
- d. Maintenance
- e. any other costs;

and whether these costs fall to the HRA or the General Fund?”

Response from Councillor Coote:

“Thank you for the question.

Declaration of Vacancies: Both Parkside and Alexia House were fully vacated by the end of 2021. The decision to vacate these properties was made in light of changing needs within our housing strategy and the evolving requirements of our community, and the buildings required major updates.

I assure you that we are actively exploring options for the future of both Parkside and Alexia House, with a focus on addressing the housing needs of our residents and minimising unnecessary expenditure.

To address the ongoing costs and make better use of these properties, we are conducting a review and feasibility study for both Parkside and Alexia House. This study would focus on:

- **Community Engagement:** Gathering input from local residents and stakeholders to understand their needs and preferences through surveys and public meetings.
- **Market Analysis:** Assessing the housing market to identify potential uses for the properties, such as affordable housing or community facilities.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Exploring collaborations with local housing associations and developers to enhance resources and expertise for any redevelopment.
- **Financial Assessment:** Evaluating the costs and potential funding sources for redevelopment to ensure long-term viability.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensuring that any plans meet local planning regulations and housing standards.

By conducting this review, we can make informed decisions about the future of Parkside and Alexia House. I welcome your thoughts on this proposal and look forward to working together to find the best path forward.

Costs: -since vacant.

- a. **Heating and Light:**
 - i. Electricity: £7,542
 - ii. Gas: £54,757
 - iii. Water: £1,729
- b. **Rates or Council Tax:**
 - i. Alexia House: £289,196
 - ii. Parkside: £239,279
- c. **Security:**
 - i. An additional £12,000 has been spent on enhancing security measures at Alexia House due to incidents of break-ins and anti-social behaviour. No additional security costs have been incurred at Parkside.
- d. **Maintenance:**
 - i. There have been no recorded maintenance costs since the properties became vacant
- e. **Other Costs:**
 - i. None

The Housing Board will receive a full report at the next meeting. These costs are paid by the HRA not the tax payer.”

2. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether these are the only vacant former Sheltered Units / Older persons accommodation empty in the District?”

Response from Councillor Coote:

“Alexia and Parkside are the only former sheltered blocks that are empty.”

3. By Councillor Gooding to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“Can the Cabinet member please confirm the timetable to either bring the properties back into use, remodel the properties for alternative uses, or, demolish and replace with other social accommodation?”

Response from Councillor Coote:

“Thank you for your inquiry regarding the future of Alexia House and Parkside. I can confirm that the recent asset appraisal results indicate that both properties are unviable for development into sheltered social housing. As a result, we are currently conducting a further options appraisal to explore alternative uses for these sites.

The options appraisal will cover several key areas, including:

1. **Feasibility Analysis:** Assessing the potential for different types of development
2. **Cost-Benefit Evaluation:** Evaluating the financial implications of each option, including development costs, potential revenue, and long-term sustainability.
3. **Market Demand Assessment:** Analysing local housing needs and market conditions to determine the most suitable use for the properties.
4. **Regulatory Considerations:** Reviewing planning permissions and compliance with local and national housing policies.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Consulting with relevant stakeholders, including community members and potential developers, to gather input and gauge interest in proposed options.

To facilitate this process, the Property Services team is actively meeting with a developer to discuss potential options for the site. We aim to produce a final report outlining our findings and recommendations by January 2026.”

4. By Councillor Luck to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning:

“Can the Cabinet member for Planning confirm what action the council is taking in response to complaints from residents regarding the smell at the sewage facility at Debden Drive and that mitigation measures are not signed off until there is no detectable odour from the facility on a day-to-day basis?”

Response from Councillor Evans:

“This relates to details related to a recent approval for a sewage packing station at Debden Drive adjacent to the barracks. There is an outstanding Discharge of Condition (DOC) related to odour management issue. This DOC has been long outstanding whilst the planning team awaits formal input from experts.

The team, via its EHO colleagues, have funded and sought external expert advice. The advice has been received which covers matters around complaint management, management of the site and mitigation measures. This has been shared with the operator’s agent, and the Council is confident the submitted management plan will be suitably amended and agreed quickly. The DOC can then be discharged. This will not guarantee that there will be no odour but puts in the appropriate management measures, to address any issues of odour that may periodically occur. The measures in place are intended to prevent odourous events and to address and rectify problems when they occur, therefore protecting residential amenity. It would be unrealistic to expect a sewage treatment plant to prevent any odour 100% of the time. There may be times when certain conditions are met that could cause some noticeable odour to be detected. However, we anticipate these incidents to be rare.

Officers from the Environmental Health service have investigated complaints from one resident who lives approximately 17m from the boundary of the works. Whilst there were some teething issues at installation, these were remedied. I am aware that Environmental Health has carried out monitoring visits to the site since installation and no significant odour has been observed. Whatever odours that are being observed are intermittent, and not prolonged.”