

Uttlesford District Council Meeting

18 December 2025

Responses to Written Questions to Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs

Answers published on 17 December 2025

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

"To ask Cllr Coote what progress has been made on remediation of the problems discovered at Reynolds Ct, the cost to date and the extent to which those costs have been recovered?

When does he think this matter will finally be resolved?"

Response from Councillor Coote:

"As a recap, the original defects identified at Reynolds Court have been successfully addressed. I am pleased to report that this remediation work was completed at no additional cost to the council.

With regards to the claim against Lovell Partnerships Limited it involved two main issues from renovation work done in 2018:

1. Fire Protection Works

- a. **Breach of Contract:** Lovell Partnerships Limited did not meet the contract terms and was careless in designing and installing fire protection measures. Although they eventually fixed the problems, UDC had to pay for a safety watch to protect residents during this time.
- b. **Compensation Claim:** £68,876.64 to cover the cost of the safety watch, which Lovell should have anticipated.

2. Heating in the Flats

- a. **Design and Commissioning Faults:** A report found several problems with the heating and hot water systems in the flats, for which Lovell was also negligent. These issues have since been fixed.
- b. **Compensation Claim:** £16,271.40 for payments made to residents due to these heating issues, following Ombudsman guidelines.

However, claims for hidden defects must be filed within six years of the issue or three years from when UDC became aware of it. UDC learned about the defects on January 21, 2021, and both time limits have now passed.

It should be noted that the work is covered by a Local Authority Building Control (LABC) guarantee, which may allow UDC to seek compensation for the costs incurred.

At present officers are gathering the necessary documents related to the LABC guarantee to explore this option further. I have asked officers to provide further updates at the next meeting.”

2. By Councillor Haynes to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy:

“UDC recently obtained planning permission and Listed Building Consent for ‘energy efficiency and decarbonisation works’ at the London Road offices. Whilst appreciating that these works are to be partly financed by a grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is there a business case for the project available for us to see accompanied by a cash-flow showing expenditure and anticipated cost savings over time?”

Response from Councillor Hargreaves:

“The aim of the proposed works at London Road is not financial savings, but to deliver a significant reduction in carbon emissions generated when heating the building. The detailed case for taking action is in the published Cabinet agenda 16/12/2025:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s41949/London%20Road%20Decarbonisation%20Project%20Report%20to%20Cabinet%2016122025%20FINAL.pdf>

Based on detailed Heat Decarbonisation Plans commissioned for the Council’s key sites, it was identified that switching the heating system at London Road from fossil fuels to low-carbon technology, improving the building fabric and introducing renewable energy generation could cut around 91 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year and 2000 tonnes over the lifetime of the equipment. There is an estimate of £13k a year savings, but this can only be based on current gas and electricity prices. The project will also provide a case study for decarbonisation of a complex historic building in a conservation area.

The business case in the published Cabinet report assesses the carbon, technical and the financial plan, as well as the cost per tonne of CO₂ reduction. Over £600k grant funding has been secured to support the Council in delivering the project.

The scheme aligns with UDC's strategic commitment to climate action. The Uttlesford Climate Change Strategy identifies energy-efficiency and retrofit of existing buildings as a core route to lowering emissions across the district, helping the council meet its net-zero and climate obligations. Every tonne avoided helps limit the warming that drives extreme weather, biodiversity loss, and economic disruption. The Council has a responsibility to act where it has direct control."

3. By Councillor Gregory to Councillor Sutton – Portfolio Holder for Communities:

"Following the September meeting of Scrutiny Committee, what actions has she taken to facilitate a discussion/briefing between all Members wishing to attend and C Insp Richards and ACC Pavelin?"

Response from Councillor Sutton:

"In recent weeks, officers have taken several steps to facilitate an online meeting between Members and the Police, C Insp Richards, and ACC Pavelin, to discuss community safety priorities. The following has been completed:

Initial engagement with the Police: Officers contacted C Insp Richards to confirm availability, agree the purpose of the meeting and which senior officers could attend.

Clarification of Member priorities: Officers are writing to all Members to and relevant Portfolio holders this week to ask them to share the specific concerns they would like to raise, including any crime trends, visibility of policing, partnership working. These priorities will be shared in advance with the police.

Supporting information: Officers will prepare a short briefing note summarising recent community safety data, activities, and any live issues, ahead of the meeting to ensure that all parties are informed.

Logistical arrangements: The Police have proposed that the meeting will be held online via Teams and can be accessed via a Teams App or the web.

Formal invitation: The Police have requested that Members set a date that is convenient to them. As soon as a date is agreed, a formal invitation will be sent to all Members."

4. By Councillor Sell to Councillor Lees, Leader of the Council:

"Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow has recently been rated by National Health Service England 120th out of 134 Trusts. This assesses the performance of trusts. Does the Leader share my concerns and what can this Council do to assist Princess Alexandra?"

Response from Councillor Lees:

"Thank you for the question. Performance indicators are important, but they can sometimes present an oversimplified picture. National experience, including Ofsted's now-abandoned use of single-word judgments, has shown the risks of relying too heavily on headline rankings without appropriate context.

Princess Alexandra Hospital serves a minority of Uttlesford residents for hospital and secondary care. Most residents are served by Addenbrooke's, with others attending Broomfield Hospital and providers beyond. Nevertheless, the Council maintains an ongoing and constructive relationship with Princess Alexandra Hospital through the West Essex Health and Care Partnership, a sub-division of the Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board, which is due to transfer into the new Essex Integrated Care Board from April 2026.

Our Chief Executive is a regular and active attendee at the West Essex Health and Care Partnership and consistently raises detailed issues on behalf of Uttlesford residents. On several occasions, Princess Alexandra Hospital has been extremely helpful. For example, the Trust supported local GPs in pressing Broomfield Hospital to stop rejecting referrals for ophthalmology and maternity services, ensuring that Dunmow area residents could instead be treated at Princess Alexandra.

While Princess Alexandra Hospital, like all hospital providers, faces challenges, the Chief Executive has advised that he has a high level of respect for and confidence in the Trust's leadership. The hospital has long sought to progress a rebuild on a new site, which has been delayed for a variety of reasons. In the meantime, its renewed focus on improving services on the existing site and

expanding delivery in community settings—including the community hospital within Uttlesford—is welcomed and actively supported by the Council. If Councillor Sell has specific areas where he believes a further supportive intervention by the District Council could assist, it would be helpful for those to be set out so they can be considered and actioned. I trust, however, that this response provides reassurance of the Council's long-standing, constructive engagement with Princess Alexandra Hospital."

5. By Councillor Sell to Councillor Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning:

"Data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Building show that the highest housebuilding rate in Essex went to Uttlesford. This relates to the period April 1 2025 to November 9 2025. Does Cllr Evans share my concerns that our infrastructure is failing to keep pace with development and what additional measures can the Council take?"

Response from Councillor Evans:

"Thank you for the question. I fully acknowledge that Uttlesford faces a significant infrastructure deficit, and that this challenge has been compounded, in the absence of an up to date Local Plan, by many years of speculative development, which has made it extremely difficult for the Council and our partners to coordinate and deliver the infrastructure that our growing communities need. However, we are now in a much stronger position to address this. As part of the emerging Local Plan, we have prepared a comprehensive Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out the infrastructure requirements needed to support planned growth across the district. Once the Local Plan is adopted, its infrastructure requirements will have full weight and will help ensure future development is properly aligned with infrastructure provision.

In addition, we are moving forward at pace with the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which we expect to bring into effect next year. CIL will provide an additional funding stream to help reduce the infrastructure deficit over time and support delivery of projects identified in the IDP."

6. By Councillor Moran to Councillor Coote, Portfolio Holder for Housing:

"Could the cabinet member for housing update council as to the current position regarding the progress of plans to build much needed new council homes on the site that the council owns adjacent to All Saints in Ashdon. Have any

approaches been made to other providers of rural social housing to assist UDC with this project?”

Response from Councillor Coote:

“Uttlesford District Council own an area of recreational land adjacent to All Saints Close, Ashdon which the Parish Council have been leasing from UDC for several years.

The Parish Council approached UDC with a view to the area of land being developed for social housing as they deem that it is no longer required to be an area of retained recreational land.

A housing needs survey was undertaken by the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) and there was an identified need for social housing for those with a local connection to Ashdon and neighbouring villages.

English Rural Housing Association were selected as the chosen Registered Provider for progressing a Rural Exception Site (RES) development and they drafted plans for a scheme of 10 new social housing homes with a mix of predominantly rented homes with the remainder being for shared ownership.

UDC are unable to develop Rural Exception Sites as the homes need to be retained in perpetuity and council properties are subject to the Right to Buy.

Access to the council owned land is via a ‘ransom strip’ from All Saints Close and is in the ownership of The Rural Housing Trust. ERHA reached an agreement with The Rural Housing Trust for access to the site from All Saints Close via the ransom strip in return for The Rural Housing Trust taking ownership of one of the proposed shared ownership homes upon the RES.

Essex County Highways were consulted regarding the proposed scheme and advised that as 18 properties are already located at All Saints Close only another 7 properties can be developed as the road has a limit of serving 25 properties.

There is an active group of Ashdon residents lobbying against the potential loss of the recreational land for housing purposes.

Pre-application planning advice was sought

In view of the pre-application advice English Rural HA took the decision not to progress the development as they feel that the loss of a designated green space

is going to be a contentious planning issue and unfortunately, they must be pragmatic with time and resources.

Hastoe Housing are the other specialist rural housing provider but before approaching them to gauge their interest in progressing a RES at All Saints Close it would be useful for Ashdon Parish Council to provide written confirmation that they still deem the area to be surplus to requirement as a recreational area, providing their rationale for reaching this conclusion and provide details of alternative nearby recreational areas available to local residents.”

7. By Councillor Regan to Councillor Coote, Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“The safety, security and wellbeing of the tenants of UDC owned properties is of paramount importance and in this regard, I have been approached by several of my residents who are complaining both about the slow progress and poor quality of works scheduled for completion to their UDC properties. Will the Cabinet Member, Cllr Coote, please give details of what is being done to expedite timely completion of all works and to ensure that such work is of an acceptable quality?”

Response from Councillor Coote:

“I share your concerns and appreciate the feedback from your residents regarding the slow progress and quality of works being carried out.

We recognise that the timely completion of maintenance and improvement works is crucial for the comfort and safety of our tenants. In response to the issues raised, we have implemented several measures aimed at expediting the completion of works and ensuring that they meet the highest quality standards.

Firstly, we have established a dedicated client team that monitors the progress of ongoing works. This team is responsible for addressing any delays promptly and ensuring that contractors adhere to the agreed timelines and quality benchmarks.

Additionally, we are holding weekly meetings with Axis to review performance and discuss any challenges they may be facing. We have developed an improvement plan that outlines specific actions to enhance the quality of service provided by our contractors. While we are seeing some progress in implementing these actions, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done to achieve the level of service our tenants expect and deserve. We have escalated this at an executive level within Axis and are in the process of developing a new granular

improvement plan along with a proactive quality inspection regime being implemented.

We are committed to maintaining open lines of communication with residents and will continue to seek their feedback as we work to improve the situation.”

8. By Councillor Gooding to Councillor Coote, Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“Officers of this Council recently visited Stansted Parish Council for a meeting with some of the residents of the Flats at Manor Road, Stansted. I attended that meeting and noted that a number of promises were made regarding the ongoing refurbishment of the buildings together with waterproofing of the structure to reduce the instance of Mold within the residential parts of the properties.

As the Cabinet Member is aware, the ongoing condition of these flats has been the matter of much concern, and it is of relevance that Awaab’s Law is now on the statute and social landlords will be held responsible for ensuring safe living environments for their tenants.

Can the Cabinet Member Confirm that this work will now be completed in a timely manner?”

Response from Councillor Coote:

“Thank you for your inquiry regarding the ongoing refurbishment of the flats at Manor Road, Stansted, and the commitments made during the recent meeting with residents. I appreciate your engagement in this matter and your concern for the living conditions of our tenants.

I can confirm that the works to complete Phase 2 of the refurbishment at Manor Road are scheduled to commence as part of our capital programme for the financial year 2026/27. We anticipate that these works will begin in the first quarter of the year, aligning with more favourable weather conditions that are conducive to construction activities.

In response to the feedback received during the meeting with residents, we are committed to enhancing our communication and consultation processes. We recognise the importance of keeping residents informed and involved throughout the refurbishment process. Lessons learned from Phase 1 will guide our approach to ensure that residents are updated regularly and that their concerns are addressed promptly.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasise our commitment to ensuring safe and healthy living environments for all our tenants, particularly considering Awaab's Law, which underscores the responsibilities of social landlords in maintaining properties. We take this responsibility seriously and are dedicated to addressing issues such as mould and structural integrity to provide a safe and comfortable home for our residents."

9. By Councillor Moran to Councillor Coote, Portfolio Holder for Housing:

"Can the cabinet member for housing please give us an update on the HRA maintenance contract performance figures for the last quarter?"

Response from Councillor Coote:

"I must express our disappointment with the performance reported for this period. A further update on performance is included in an upcoming agenda item.

The figures indicate a persistent and systematic failure to meet the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set forth in the contract. The KPI figures for September to November 2025 are:

The average completion rates for emergency repairs have fallen significantly below the contractual target of 95%, with an average performance of only 87.01%. (YTD 77.01%)

Urgent repairs have been even more concerning, with completion rates averaging just 63.64%, failing to meet the target in every month of the reporting period. (YTD 64.55%)

With routine repairs averaging 86.26% (YTD 84.33%)

Despite our ongoing efforts to manage the situation, including the implementation of a comprehensive improvement plan, the results have not reflected the necessary wholesale improvements in performance. We have established a robust framework for oversight, which includes weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings to closely monitor the contractor's performance and address any issues as they arise.

While we are seeing some actions from the improvement plan being achieved, these have not yet translated into the significant enhancements we expect in the KPIs. We remain committed to ensuring that the quality of service delivered to

our residents meets the standards they deserve, and we will continue to work diligently to address these performance issues."