

Uttlesford District Council

20 July 2021

Written Questions to Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs

Answers to be published on 19 July 2021

1. By Councillor Pavitt to the Leader of the Council

'A year ago council unanimously passed the Water & Rivers, which included the following imperatives:

To call on those responsible for water supply and environmental protection to adopt immediate measures to avoid the loss of important river habitats.

To call on the Environment Agency to immediately submit a plan for restoring a proper and consistent flow to the rivers of Uttlesford (together with other measures).

Could the Leader please provide members with a report on progress towards these aims.'

2. By Councillor Khan of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Housing and Health

'As we emerge from the pandemic, three issues that will impact on the Uttlesford public are debt, employment, and housing.

The 1963 Local Authorities Land Act gave councils the power to develop land; the 2000 Local Government Act gave councils the power to do anything that promotes the "wellbeing" of their communities; and the 2011 Localism Act, which bestowed the "general power of competence. One of the ways to put these powers into action is for Uttlesford to build council homes that offer secure tenancies thus helping develop better well-being for individuals and families.

Can the Cabinet member for Housing and Health inform the Council of the R4U pledge to build 163 new council homes:

- How many have been built since May 2019.
- How many are 1,2, 3 or 4 bedrooms.
- Are these homes built in a sustainable way and what reduction in carbon emissions has been achieved?'

3. By Councillor Khan of the Leader of the Council

'The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts Local Government Governance and Accountability report in May 2019 stated the following:
"Local politicians and council employees operate within a governance framework of checks and balances to ensure that decision-making is lawful, informed by objective advice, transparent and consultative. Key elements of the local framework include officers with statutory powers and responsibilities; internal checks and balances such as audit committees and internal audit; and external checks and balances such as external audit."

At Uttlesford District Council, there is an ongoing police investigation into one or more R4U Councillors which has resulted in the External Auditor being unable to sign the Annual Governance Statement and therefore approve the full accounts.

Can the Leader of the Council provide an explanation as to why the individual/s concerned have not been asked to step aside whilst the police investigation continues and does he believe that the reputation of the Council has been tarnished by this episode? If not, why not.'

4. By Councillor Sell of the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Local Plan

'What provision is being made in UDC car parks for the provision of electric vehicle charging points?'

5. By Councillor Sell of the Cabinet Member for Council and Public Services

'What is the rationale for establishing a hub at the Walpole Meadows commercial building in Stansted? How many UDC staff will be based there and from when?'

6. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Budget

'The Parish Councils in my ward are keen to submit proposals to the Local Highways Panel for several highways issues in their area. I am however concerned at the perceived lack of commitment from this administration, following its failure to offer its share of the LHP's funding, up front and without caveat, as has always been made in previous years.

Firstly, this gives rise to the risk that the council will decide what it funds, potentially using a subjective criteria that risks politicising the LHP. Secondly, the LHP clearly cannot include this offer in its budget, given the uncertainty that the funds will be forthcoming. Could the Portfolio holder explain why the Council's approach to funding the LHP has changed? Can the Council not spare the £200,000 that it would normally contribute to the panel?'

7. By Councillor Dean of the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Green Issues; Equalities

'Council passed motions on climate change/climate emergency on 30 July and 16 December 2019. It also passed a motion supporting the reduction of single-use plastic on 8th December 2020. The Council's current climate strategy includes a commitment to reducing single-use plastics and to increasing rural and urban tree planting. Has the Council's recently appointed climate staff adopted the two priorities within the work plan as current priorities? When will an action plan with timed outcomes be published and when will substantial actual delivery take place?'

8. By Councillor Dean of the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Green Issues; Equalities

'A listening event took place 9th March 2021 to hear from district residents and others about this topic. I wrote immediately after the event that it had been impressive. Since that date, I have seen neither a written account of the event, nor am I aware of any follow-up activity. Could Members please be advised of steps taken since March 9th and what actions will follow during the rest of 2021?'

9. By Councillor Caton of the Leader of the Council

'Can the Leader please inform the Council:

- (a) Of the total costs that the council itself has incurred on the determination and defending the appeal of the Stansted Airport (STAL) application to expand to 43 million passengers per annum?
- (b) The estimates of the costs of taking High Court action against the Planning Inspectorate at (1) the preliminary stage and (b) if the case is allowed to proceed to a full hearing?
- (c) Whether STAL has provided an estimate of costs they are claiming from the council? If so, are they in the hundreds of thousands or in the millions?'