

# Uttlesford District Council Meeting

## 11 October 2022

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

#### Written responses to be published on 10 October 2022

**1. By Councillor Khan to Councillor Lees - the Leader of the Council:**

“The public have a right to expect councillors to be accountable. This is enshrined within the Nolan Principles that set the framework for our own Code of Conduct.

Given the announced further delay to the Local Plan and the £(multi-million) costs awarded to Stansted Airport because of the failed planning appeal, can the Leader of the Council explain if and why she has confidence in Cllr John Evans as the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Stansted Airport, Infrastructure Strategy and the Local Plan.

If the Leader does have confidence in Cllr Evans, would she please explain to the residents of Uttlesford what her key reasons are for Cllr Evans remaining in post and continuing to draw the special responsibility allowance for his role, given the failure to deliver a Local Plan and the mismanagement of the Stansted Airport appeal defence, both of which areas are within Cllr Evans’ portfolio and cabinet responsibility.”

**2. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Coote - Cabinet Member for Housing:**

“As private landlords are likely to be required to have an EPC of "C" or better when letting property from 2025, I am sure you would agree that we would want the same or better for our social tenants.

Can I therefore ask what proportion of our UDC housing is band C or better and what are we doing to improve this; and what proportion of Housing Association Housing is Band C or better and how are we working with those social landlords to reach band C sooner rather than the back stop date of 2035?”

**3. By Councillor Sell to Councillor Lees - the Leader of the Council**

“Next year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first elections to Uttlesford District Council. What plans does the Administration have to mark this occasion.”

**4. By Councillor Caton to Councillors Hargreaves and Reeve – Cabinet Members for Finance and the Budget & the Economy, Investment and Corporate Strategy:**

“Has the Council taken action to reduce the impact of interest rate increases on the income generated by the council’s £300m Investment portfolio?”

Secondly, what has been done to mitigate any reduction in income from further interest rate increases on the council’s budget for 2023/24 and subsequent financial years?”

**5. By Councillor Smith to Councillor Hargreaves - Cabinet Member for Finance and the Budget:**

“Can I have a breakdown of all costs on both the previous and new Local Plan since 2019 when this administration took control of the council. Including but not limited to details of internal staff costs, external costs (consultants, advisors, etc.), management overheads, and the costs for any competitions or awards that UDC has entered into that were related to the Local Plan?”

**6. By Councillor Smith to Councillor Evans - Cabinet Member for Planning, Stansted Airport, Infrastructure Strategy and the Local Plan:**

“Since the Call for Sites for the new Local Plan closed in the spring of 2021, how many meetings have taken place on behalf of UDC with landowners or their agents relating to sites that were not originally submitted? Who was present in those meetings and how many of these meetings were recorded through minutes?”

**7. By Councillor Light to Councillor Freeman – Cabinet Member for Council and Public Services:**

“Over the years, you have demonstrated your concerns for residents, especially for the more vulnerable ones, and have stated that the Garden Room community centre in Saffron Walden would be maintained. The requirement before winter for a warm and welcoming centre which will cater for a multiplicity of needs is indisputable, and as ward councillor, residents regularly ask me when the centre will reopen. As you are aware, Saffron Walden Town Council has submitted a proposal to run the community centre and with its excellent record of managing venues will ensure the centre will be successful in meeting residents’ needs.

Can you confirm that the Garden Room will reopen as a community centre for local residents as it has been in the past?”

**8. By Councillor Light to Councillor Sutton - Cabinet Member for Communities, Health, Youth, Public Safety, Emergency Planning and liaison with the Police and Fire & Rescue Service:**

“When we founded the Youth Council, it consisted of 22 members, held regular meetings, and this Council has a seat reserved for a Youth Councillor at each Full Council meeting.

Could you please give Council a comprehensive progress report towards reestablishing the Youth Council since our last request in April, 2022 when there were only two Youth Councillors due to Covid?”

**9. By Councillor Fairhurst to Councillor Lees - the Leader of the Council:**

“Could you please inform us who is responsible and accountable for the lack of oversight and the reputational and financial harm in the following areas of concern and what actions they will be taking in mitigation?”

- the disastrous change of the defence strategy relating to the Stansted Airport application which resulted in the granting of planning permission and at least £1.5 million in financial penalty awarded against this Council where even the external adviser pointed to a lack of oversight; yet nobody is responsible
- the imprudent interpretation of CIPFA guidelines for the Council’s commercial investments which has led to a reduction in yield of at least £1 million a year, ignoring the risk of interest rates rise in borrowing from private lenders and now being forced to retreat to public lending which will cost a substantial sum every year; yet nobody is responsible
- the poor management of the Local Plan resulting in more than 3.5 years of significant additional costs and resources, exposure to mass building by developers and a return to May 2019 in terms of development of the Plan; yet nobody is responsible
- the lack of action and acknowledgement that the police investigation which has overshadowed this Council since March 2020 was a serious matter despite calls for action; yet nobody is responsible.”