

## Progress report

After the August lull I picked up a fair bit of work in the parishes at the start of September, and did my best to make some progress before my trip away for an academic research meeting at Berkeley in California. Unfortunately I then returned from that with covid, so the following week was a write-off too, and then in the middle of October I've been away in Scotland, so mostly I am running to catch up with stuff I missed while away.

## Flags

As a result of a cross-party initiative we succeeded in passing a motion at County Council confirming our commitment to cohesive and collaborative communities, and rejecting the use of our patriotic flags for divisive purposes or as a means of intimidation against vulnerable groups. At the late September full council meeting this motion was passed unanimously. My colleague Serene, Green Party councillor for Mancroft, who was rescued by her father from a warzone as a toddler, made a particularly moving speech. It's worth watching the recording (links and timings are on my facebook page).

Unfortunately the flags that have been hung on highways infrastructure are costly to remove, and doing so would divert council tax revenue that is badly needed to support good communities and people in need. The extra costs of dealing with these highways infringements are likely to divert funds from highways maintenance. The Council is therefore adopting a policy of removing them only when teams are in the area to do other work, unless there is an immediate threat to road safety or to communities and religious groups. Investigative journalists are beginning to uncover some evidence of who is funding the flag projects. I recommend an internet search on the topic "Flag Force UK". It would be nice if that funding could go into delivering a better life for British people, and activities that promote wellbeing and road repairs, rather than funding displays of hatred that make people afraid to talk to neighbours.

## Pylons and panels

The push for hideous and damaging energy projects all over South Norfolk continues. Norwich to Tilbury pylons report that their Development Consent Order (DCO) has now been passed to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. The deadline for registering as an interested party is 27<sup>th</sup> November.

The Tasway Energy Park company have organised four local events later in October and November. I shall attend at least some of these, and also a community event in Fornsett.

## Mayors and unitary councils

In September the County Council narrowly passed the Council administration's proposed business case for having just one large Unitary Council for the whole of Norfolk. Most opposition councillors and some Conservatives voted against, preferring the idea of two or three unitary councils. I was absent on this occasion due to the covid.

In October the County Council voted in favour of the Devolution Deal which is about the funds and powers to be transferred to a metro-mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk. We are expecting the first elections for the Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor (to incorporate the job of police and crime commissioner as well as a range of strategic funds for the area) to take place next May. Some parties have announced their candidates for the mayoral position. County Council elections are also scheduled to happen in May. Rumours are circulating that they might be cancelled again which would be an insult to voters once again.

## Highways and paths

I am following up some issues with the lack of some of the promised traffic sensors on the Shimpling Byway Open to All Traffic. We need accurate information towards eventually aiming to get it closed to motor vehicles.

I am working with the Highways team on interventions to help with traffic management in Carleton Rode and Ashwellthorpe. I've also asked the Highways team to look at the dangerous chasm beside the road where the lorry fell over on Market Lane. No update on that so far.

A disastrous mix up about the resurfacing of the road from Shelfanger to Winfarthing means that the contractors have done top dressing (without any preparatory work), instead of the full resurfacing had been approved. This is worse than useless and very irritating after all the effort put in by the Highways officer to secure the funding for resurfacing. How to put it right? Unclear.

I'm also supporting the campaign to get lifts at Diss station to make crossing the line better for everyone who struggles with the stairs.

## Updates from County Council

### Healthy Ageing

The county council's Public Health department has launched a new campaign to encourage residents aged 50 and over to prioritise their health so that they can live healthier, more connected lives as they age. They've launched a brand-new Healthy Ageing website, called 'It's never too late', [www.norfolk.gov.uk/healthyageing](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/healthyageing) which highlights resources, guidance and opportunities to help residents make positive changes to their health and wellbeing. Norfolk has one of the highest ageing populations in the UK.

Staying active can help keep your mind and body more youthful and healthier than others of the same age in years.

### Norfolk's SEND survey findings

The results of [Norfolk's latest survey of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)](#) are in. They show some progress, but also ongoing challenges.

### Consultation on fire and rescue priorities

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) has [launched a public consultation](#) on their proposed priorities to reduce risk and improve safety in Norfolk.

## National Information

### Consultation on the "Warm Home Discount Scheme"

Do you or someone you know get the "warm home" subsidy that pays part of your energy bill? The government is consulting on whether changes should be made going forward. You can respond [here](#).

### New Commissioner to champion tenant farmers across England

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) have announced their appointment of Alan Laidlaw to a new role of Commissioner for the Tenant Farming Sector. Info [here](#).

### Contact me

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