

With the Easter break now firmly behind us, it was great to be able to get out and about in North Norfolk to meet with constituents and find out how I can help them with the issues that matter to them most. Last week, my team and I closed our 5000<sup>th</sup> case – a fantastic milestone that reminds us how important it is to be aware of the issues affecting our unique rural communities and to offer them support to make their lives easier.

Below are just some of the issues and campaigns that I am focused on – as always, if there are any pressing issues that you are aware of in your communities, please do get in touch and make me aware of them so that my team and I can offer our support.

### **Benjamin Court**

I have been fighting for the County Council to urgently review the ill-thought-out decision it made almost 2 years ago to close Benjamin Court with no consultation. Residents across North Norfolk need more support when they come out of hospital – the reablement services provided at Benjamin Court improved recovery and quality of life as well as reducing the chances of readmission.

As your County Councillor, I submitted a Councillor Call for Action asking for the decision to be brought to the council's Scrutiny Committee as a matter of urgency. However, over the last 18 months we have been met with delay and diversion. The most recent example of which took place on April 30<sup>th</sup> where the unlawful decision was due to be challenged by the Council's Scrutiny Committee – the topic was bumped from the agenda at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour citing local elections as the reason, despite the County Council deciding to cancel this year's elections.

It is clear that the council know the decision was unlawful and are trying to run down the clock in the hope that I step down from my position, or the council gets abolished before they're held to account. This is why I am committed to staying on as the County Councillor for the Melton Constable Division, to continue to challenge this decision and to hold those responsible to account.

### **Fighting for better rural transport**

There is only one train line here in North Norfolk, but it's an important one. It connects our villages, communities and our towns not just to Norwich, but to the rest of the country. Not every train stops at every rural station – and I have urged Greater Anglia to reconsider their train schedules to include smaller stops where getting people to work, to school and to their appointments on time is crucial.

Support for my petition to improve rural bus services is going strong - I have met with Sanders Coaches to call for a more joined-up bus schedule that will allow people to get where they need to go. While I fight for a better-connected Norfolk, I am also happy to report some good news for our learner drivers who rely on vehicles to get around. The

Secretary of State has promised to prioritise clearing the backlog of driving tests and I'll be making sure that North Norfolk gets its fair share.

### **Supporting our farmers**

British farming is among the best in the world - and Norfolk's is among the best in the country. I have regularly met with farmers to discuss their ongoing challenges – including their concerns about the quality of imported food, the impact of climate change on their farms, the impact of hefty tariffs, bad trade deals and not to mention the devastating family farm tax. That's why I'm fighting their corner, amplifying their voice and backing British farming. I also recently met with young farmers who are concerned about the impact that the family farm tax will have on their futures. I am continuing to push the Government to give our farmers a fair deal before it's too late.

### **Demanding better SEND provision for our children**

Every day, my team and I offer our support to families who are navigating Norfolk's broken SEND system and despite doing everything right, they're finding themselves endlessly butting heads with a broken system that seems to work against them. I have nothing but admiration for them and I am campaigning to build (and fund) a joined-up family-focused SEND system that works with compassion, urgency, and common sense and I will keep fighting for a joined-up system that puts our children first.

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### **Better banking that serves rural communities**

Many residents have written to me about the new banking hub that I secured in Holt which has helped the community to access banking services where they live and work. I'm pleased to say that I have secured a second banking hub, this time in North Walsham, that will go a long way towards replacing services that will be lost when Santander closes their branch there, which is also the only bank left in the town. I will keep campaigning for more banking hubs across North Norfolk so that more people can access the services they need and talk to a representative from their own bank in person when they need to.

### **Easing the healthcare burden with new appointments**

With 21,500 new NHS dentist appointments secured for North Norfolk through my campaign for better dental care – it is clear that the Government is listening to our urgent call for better healthcare provision. I am calling for more services at Cromer Hospital to ensure that those who need urgent and specialist treatment can access first class healthcare without the additional struggle of travelling for hours to get there.

**Finally..**

As always, please get in touch if there is anything that my team and I can support you with, we're always here to help.

Steff Aquarone.