

## Report from your County Councillor, Cllr Steffan Aquarone



Please accept my very best wishes for what I hope will be a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2023. Full Council and its various committees are due to meet in the coming weeks and I will report back in due course.

### **Making it through the winter**

We need little reminding that we're in the middle of a difficult winter, and I wanted to take this opportunity to remind all parishes and constituents that my colleagues and I will do whatever we can to help people access support services - in particular in these most challenging times.

Some of the cases we've come across in the past few weeks have been heartbreaking: we've helped get loft insulation put for a social housing tenant who previously had no insulation whatsoever after they ran into energy bill difficulties; we've advocated on behalf of a chronic pain sufferer to get a proper in-person medical assessment that has narrowly avoided them suffering renal failure; and managed to cut through the insufferably slow processes to ensure a vulnerable elderly couple were able to obtain a Blue Badge.

Whilst I always feel privileged when my office or my actions can bring about changes, it simply shouldn't be like this - everyone should be able to count on receiving the services they're entitled to, with urgency and dignity, without having to get a politician to write a letter. I fear this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Nevertheless large organisations seem to be making it harder for people to get in touch with them - not least a recent example of a large housing association insisting that as a local representative, I received written consent from any tenant wishing me to raise things on their behalf.

### **Devolution**

You may have noticed that there has been further turmoil over the political future of Norfolk, with the latest chancellor having announced a devolution deal for Norfolk in his Autumn Statement, only to be contradicted by several local leaders within his own party.

Eventually we learned that a 'deal' has been done to have an elected mayor for Norfolk. There has been no further information regarding whether this would lead to further devolution powers or unitary authorities, but Norfolk County Council is convening for an additional meeting this month to debate the proposals. I welcome your views.