

Councillor Joshua Osborne: Report for Downham Old Town

13 January 2026

Apologies for the Town Council meeting. I am attending the Borough Council Regeneration and Development Panel tonight.

Ryston End SEND School Proposed

Norfolk County Council has received investment from the Government for SEND funding, which it does have the option to pursue through the long spoken about SEND school at Ryston End where the old Sixth Form used to be. Given the site has been empty for close to four years I think this makes a lot of sense, and I hope Norfolk County Council will decide in February (where there is a deadline for Government funding) to utilise this site and provide much needed SEND places in Downham Market. This will also benefit many families in our surrounding area as well as in the town itself.

Local Government Reorganisation

A full Government consultation has been carried out and closed on 11th January in Norfolk and Suffolk, asking residents what they thought of the proposed one, two, or three unitary councils for each county. I and most district councillors have been strongly in support of the three unitary option since the debate began as I do think this will be best for having West Norfolk's voice still clearly heard within Norfolk.

In the next few months the Government will make its decision and then we will all work to make that option happens whatever they do pick. I believe the Borough Council has played a positive role in the discussions overall and it will be good to have some certainty early this year on what is happening for organisations like Downham Town Council.

Council Work

Our Budget will be decided next month so we will have several briefing and debates before this point in January and February. Government investment in housing has been very substantial which is beneficial, but there are areas where the finances are looking tighter due to increasing cost pressures.

Christmas Market

Thank you very much to everyone who helped out for the Christmas Market on 14th December, especially Mabels Bakery for their work in organising it. I helped during some of the day and it was a very successful event bringing lots of people into the town centre for various fine wares on the stalls. A brilliant end to the year and I look forward to more events such as this.