

Matters arising in East Downham ward

I asked Borough Council Planning Enforcement for a timescale for the opening of the blocked footpath from Bexwell Road to the Civray development. They advised that NCC have a 1 to 2 month delay. I'll continue to chase this as it's important to have this route to Downham Academy opened before winter weather arrives.

With assistance from some residents of Orchard Close, I've been researching planning permission that was granted in 2017 for a house to be built in the back garden of a house on Bexwell Road. This requires vehicle access for construction, and for the new occupant, along Orchard Close. Residents of Orchard Close raised objections at the time - which were included in the report to the Borough planning committee - that the plot in question didn't have vehicle access; also that construction traffic would damage this private unmade road which the existing residents jointly have to maintain. However permission was granted regardless, and construction started recently. This issue will have to be resolved before the development is sold as separate dwelling.

Borough Council matters

As previously reported, I asked for information on availability for Downham Market of High Street funding which had been promoted by Cllr Middleton (Business Development Portfolio Holder) but he failed to respond. Eventually I heard from an officer that the Borough council is liaising with Elaine Oliver on funding projects in Downham Market.

Following a request by a resident, I've asked the Borough council to consider marking Baby Loss Awareness Week. This takes place 9-15 October every year and aims to raise awareness about pregnancy and baby loss in the UK, and is led by Sands (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society).

I attended an online training session offered by Scope to Borough Councillors on the topic of Disability Awareness and barriers to accessing services. We learned about Sunflower Lanyards (which our branch of Morrisons has recently received a supply of, for customers to borrow when shopping). The lanyard is voluntary for people with hidden disabilities and acts as a discreet sign for staff that additional consideration or help may be required. A card can be attached with further information, such as having a condition that prevents wearing a face mask.

Other items of interest

I'm pleased to confirm that, despite attempts by a known non-resident to generate complaints, I didn't receive a single item of communication from any town residents regarding Town Councillors. Nor did any of a small group of vocal commentators contact me directly, even after posturing to each other on Facebook posts that I shared in support of the town market. Fortunately, most town residents are unaware of the recent unpleasant activity stirred up around the topic of the market.

I hope my report is of interest and I look forward to joining the meeting tomorrow.

Best regards,

Josie Ratcliffe

Liberal Democrat Councillor for East Downham ward