

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2024

Since winning the Blakenham Ward for the Liberal Democrats in May 2023 I have been on a steep learning curve. All new recruits are required to attend a great deal of training from MSDC, which was very time-consuming. However, the bulk of the training is now finished with the exception of updates with regard to Planning.

I am on the Council's Audit and Standards Committee and a sub-committee related to Councillor conduct; a Clinical Governance Review Working Group (looking at boundary issues) and a Biodiversity Working Group. I took the Overview and Scrutiny training and the Planning Committee training and have on occasion, stood in for my fellow Lib Dem councillors who are on those committees.

I have enjoyed being a member of the Biodiversity Working Group. We have been looking at endangered animals, birds and insects as well as their habitats, discussing ways of preserving them and their habitats. I was interested to learn that the Blakenham/Somersham area has quite a strip of calcareous grassland which could host many scarce wild flowers. The group discussed adopting "mascot" species and we are focussing on hedgehogs, toads, swifts and bumblebees.

I have also enjoyed attending Parish Council meetings and Parish Meetings and hearing about their plans and their obligations and issues. I feel more connected to the parishes through them.

Unfortunately not every issue brought to me by parishioners is instantly solvable. I was pleased early in the year to be able to help a resident of a flat in Great Blakenham. She was disabled and found it difficult to access the bins on the ground floor but when she did so, she found them overflowing and crawling with maggots. I emailed the head of Public Realm and the bins were emptied the next day.

Last summer I went on a ward walk around Blueleighs (mobile home) Park with Sarah-Jane Hatt, community funding officer, Mark Emms, Operations Manager, Kelly Taylor, Food and Safety Technical Officer and two local residents of Blueleighs. The Council had previously been in touch with Wyldcrest homes, owners of the park, regarding breaches of the Caravan sites and control of

development act 1960. After the visit a letter detailing the residents' issues was sent to Wyldcrest Homes.. Soon after a site map appeared on the notice board and bags of rubbish and rubble had disappeared from the entrance. Kelly noted that this was "a marathon and not a sprint" and I am reminded that I should chase up current progress.

Another longstanding issue is that of enforcement at "The Pit" in Flowton. The enforcement order dates from 2012. The owner of the clay pit is continually burning unpleasant substances and dumping rubbish onto his and his neighbour's land. He and his sons have threatened villagers and, on one occasion, dropped tacks across the road. It is only noted that the enforcement officer has made one visit; however, he now tells me that he is working with the county council and the environment agency towards issuing an injunction.

I have had a couple of "neighbour issues" to deal with. One resident of Somersham at Cherrytree Cottages felt very intimidated by her opposite neighbour who shone a CCTV camera right into her bedroom. He was also quite threatening if she or her son tried to park in the layby outside his house. The man's partner was actually the council tenant and the complainant told me that he was known locally as a fraudster.

The complainant had installed a CCTV camera herself as she was worried about the actions of her neighbour. However, this was turned against her when I raised the case with a local policewoman recommended to me by Cllr James Caston. Apparently the neighbour said that he was intimidated by **her** camera.

Another "neighbour" problem relates to owners and tenants of Park Cottages, Somersham. These were originally all council houses but some residents have bought their house. There is a shortage of parking and two residents (one owner, one tenant) were driving along a track designated a "path" to access their homes. However, another owner objected to them driving across a very small corner of her land. I have been working to get the Council to fulfil a covenant created in 1946 allowing them to surface this track. However, the tenancy services manager says that the Asset Management Team whom he reports to, are unwilling to spend money on this. I have copied all correspondence to the Leader of the Council, Andrew Mellen as the objecting owner had contacted him and in the hope that he might raise this issue with his fellow Green councillors.

A third “neighbour” issue related to a resident of Little Blakenham whose garden backed onto a footpath and another garden across the footpath. The owner of the garden had dumped an enormous pile of manure right by the fence, providing an ideal environment for flies and wasps as well as an unpleasant smell. I have emailed two environmental protection officers about this but have received no reply. Now that (hopefully) the weather is changing for the better, I will raise the topic again.

To turn to more pleasant topics I have given out all of my Locality Grant money for 2024:

Outdoor play equipment for Somersham Youth Club – Sarah Freeman – replacing existing, damaged equipment and replacing with new. Over thirty children attend the club.

New L.E.D. lights for Somersham & District Community Shop – Jennie Hutchinson. Groundwork East had carried out an energy review and recommended that the shop lighting should be upgraded from filament light bulbs and fluorescent tubes to reduce energy consumption.

New external signage for Somersham & District Community Shop -Jennie Hutchinson. Current signs were either broken or their lettering had faded. New signs are:

- 2 x free-standing metal signs at either end of the village
- Board to be displayed on the roadside adjacent to the shop
- 1 new sign outside the shop showing shop opening hours.

Gipping Valley Bowls Club, Great Blakenham – Michael Roberts
Ditch rubbers around the bowling green to catch wayward bowls.

*Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
1st May 2024*