DISTRICT COUNCILLOR LIZ VICKERS: FAKENHAM LANCASTER SOUTH WARD (please feel free to contact me on 07537 917699 or liz.vickers@north-norfolk.gov.uk)

REPORT JULY 2026

Film News

We are lucky to have a historic town centre that would lend itself to period dramas but equally to contemporary scenarios. The feature-length drama *Onwards and Sideways* was shot extensively in Fakenham, Norfolk. It's available on BBC iplayer. We need to make the most of Fakenham's potential. I will be working with NNDC's Comms team to encourage more filming opportunities and highlight our beautiful town.

Clean up in Church Lanes and Constitution Hill

I have asked SERCO to tidy up, sweep these areas and remove weeds. They should be included on SERCO's regular cleaning rota. NNDC officers are monitoring this and so am I.

Racing Cars and Motorbikes in Valley Way

Residents report cars and motorbikes are using Valley Way and Norwich Rd as a racing circuit. PC Elliot has agreed to provide a police presence in the area. Racers should realise that if they are caught, they will be contacted by the police, with the ultimate sanction of their vehicle being confiscated and crushed.

Fakenham First Focus

The closure of First Focus is a huge loss to Fakenham, particularly to the most vulnerable members of our community. The charity provided counselling, help with IT and form filling, a community fridge and, most importantly, a day centre where people could meet and share a meal. For 24 years, First Focus picked up a lot of the work that would otherwise go to adult social services, and its absence leaves a big gap in provision. By the time I was asked for help, it was rather late in the day. I managed to get sponsorship from a local business association and identified future funding opportunities, but the need for funds was pressing and immediate.

I asked the Lib Dem administration at North Norfolk District Council to give First Focus a small grant from the savings they made from closing council services at the Fakenham Connect building. It was closed without notice and First Focus had to pick up some of the slack. I got a flat-out no from the Lib Dems. Not a great result for a Lib Dem led Council that is supposed to be tackling loneliness and isolation.

I hope there is potential to restart First Focus. I would like to get together with the trustees and local business to see if we can get a business plan, a future funding strategy and recruit volunteer fundraisers. I am grateful to Cllr Jamieson for helping me to identify County Council funding sources and to Fakenham Town Council for its funding contribution.

9 Norwich Street

I have been lobbying for a resolution to the eyesore at 9 Norwich Street from my very first Council meeting. I want a solution that ideally does not raise costs for Fakenham taxpayers but places responsibility squarely on the building's owner. I instigated a community petition which Shop Fakenham took forward and arranged for members of the community to address Full Council and meet the Leader privately. I am grateful to Cllr Jamieson for sharing his account of a recent meeting with NNDC Chief Executive, Steve Blatch. Whilst Mr Blatch's report that legal

solutions take time is correct, this in no excuse. Legal proceedings could have been started years ago and by now we might have had a solution. In my view, the Lib Dem administration has been dragging its feet with no political will to assist Fakenham in this matter. However reluctant they may be, I will continue to put pressure on them to resolve this issue.

PLANNING NEWS

Plannng application for an ATM machine outside Nationwide

As the ward councillor, I spoke strongly in support of this application at planning committee on 16 July. It was very close and only lost on the Chairman's casting vote. I understand that Nationwide intend to appeal this decision. The ideal solution would be to get a banking hub, which is what we are fighting for.

Labour Government's Law Hands Planning Decisions to Bureaucrats

The Labour government's new mandatory planning reforms take powers away from elected local councillors and hand many decisions to unelected planning officers. The reforms are mandatory, which means we have to implement them. We have no choice. As a member of the Council's Constitution Working Party, I made it clear that I was very unhappy about this. Along with fellow District Councillor, Tom FitzPatrick, we proposed an amendment to protest against the government's planning reforms and took it to Full Council. It was passed unanimously with cross party support. However, the long-standing right of local ward councillors to "call in" applications for public debate at a planning committee will face strict new limitations under Labour.

Sites wanted for development

North Norfolk District Council is reopening its Call for Sites and is inviting landowners, developers, agents, businesses, organisations and members of the public to suggest land that may be suitable for future development in North Norfolk.

The second Call for Sites period will run from Monday 20 July to Monday 31 August 2026. This follows an **initial Call for Sites** which took place between 1 June and 13 July 2026.

The Call for Sites forms part of the Council's early work to prepare a new Local Plan for North Norfolk under the Government's reformed plan-making system. It provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to suggest land that could be considered for a range of uses, including housing, employment, infrastructure, open space, community facilities and other uses.

Health Matters

I visited Sheringham to find out more about what they have been doing over the past five years to join up their health and community services. With thanks to Cllr Liz Withington for sharing this information with me.