

COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT – HOLKHAM - 8 NOVEMBER 2016

Dear Keith

I hope to be with you this evening and in case I delay sending you a report here is one! I will update on the roundabout and devolution tonight.

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News from County Councillor Dr Marie Strong
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Parking on Pavements:

Parking on pavements and obstructing pedestrians particularly those with physical problems has been cause for strong debate over many months. Whilst our small parishes have few pavements (!) I know that can be more annoying than where there is more choice to walk. Members of the public who attended a recent meeting received reassurance from Inspector Chris Stevens that action can and will be taken by Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers. I followed this up with another meeting with the Inspector and am now able to offer you the following details.

Wells Division is covered by the police stations at Holt, Fakenham and Wells. Police Inspector Chris Stevens is in charge of these stations and has given me his assurance that all Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers from these stations are aware of the Constabulary's position on obstruction of the highway (see below) and will take appropriate action.

I now know there are two categories of obstruction. The offence of wilful obstruction, usually seen when a vehicle totally blocks the pavement, and unnecessary obstruction, that is half on half off the pavement. Both can be dealt with by means of a Traffic Offence Report known as a TOR.

Whilst half on, half off a pavement is normally unnecessary obstruction it would move into wilful obstruction if a wheel chair/motor scooter could not pass. The expectation for an offence of wilful obstruction would be the removal of the offending vehicle if the officer considered such action necessary.

Both Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers can issue a TOR - which is a report to central ticketing where the decision makers in that department decide whether the matter can be dealt with by means of a fine or by attendance at an educational driving course.

Parking across a driveway, where a vehicle is unable to access or leave a property, would fall into the category of unnecessary obstruction – providing the parking obstructs to an extent where a vehicle is unable to pass, not simply making it difficult to pass.

Officers seeing any obstruction offence will issue a TOR or if considered necessary arrange for the removal of the offending vehicle. Members of the public should report offences by telephoning 101 and can ask for feedback from

their call. Whilst I am assured that a case of a real emergency caused say by blocking an ambulance would be seen as urgent everyone will understand that serious crimes will take precedence over parking offences.

I would add that following previous debates as to what constitutes unnecessary obstruction I was given the code of practice regarding 'Safety at Street Works and Road Works' laid down by the Secretary of State for Transport which reads: Safe routes for pedestrians should always provide a minimum unobstructed width of 1 metre, increased wherever possible to 1.5 metres or more. Personally I like the idea of specific measurements, however, whilst there is not a similar code for the police I trust the clear statement that half on, half off a pavement would be an unnecessary obstruction and would move into wilful if a wheel chair/motor scooter could not pass will prove adequate information to motorists.

Devolution: The Devolution saga has moved along in what has become its own inimitable style. The latest news may come as a surprise to you. In brief Sculthorpe residents, because they live in Broadland, will be able to vote for a mayor – not so we who live in North Norfolk. This is because some Norfolk district and borough councils voted to proceed with a consultation on devolution, others not. I have written a letter which asks our MPs to ensure this democratic deficit is removed. If not the mayor, who will have extraordinary powers, must surely come from Suffolk. Norfolk County Council is supposed to have a final vote as to accepting devolution or not on Monday 21 November. However once I have sent this piece off to the Chronicle I must prepare my notes and questions for an additional meeting which will take place on Monday 7 November – with the intention the EDP informs me for councillors to vote on whether or not to give the council leader power to continue with the prospect of devolution. Additionally Minister of State for Local Government Sajid Javid has visited Norfolk and Suffolk, meeting the leaders of the two counties separately. Is Suffolk to be offered a separate deal is another question to be asked.