



## REPORT TO WOODBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

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Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP, Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal

Annual Town Meeting – 8 May 2025

### **1. Introduction**

It continues to be an immense privilege to serve as the Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal. Over the past ten months, I've had the opportunity to meet hundreds of constituents across Suffolk Coastal at surgeries, coffee mornings and on the doorstep. These conversations have helped guide my work both locally and in Westminster, and I am grateful to every individual and organisation who has taken the time to share their views and concerns.

As part of my ongoing work, I have made it a priority to be as visible and accessible as possible across our large and diverse constituency. From hosting workshops, community coffee mornings, regular surgeries and more, I am committed to staying rooted in the day-to-day lives of our towns and villages.

I'm grateful to Woodbridge Town Council for the opportunity to provide this written update ahead of the Annual Town Meeting, and to outline the work I've been doing on behalf of the town and the wider constituency

### **2. Parliamentary Work and National Issues**

In Westminster, much of my attention over recent months has been directed toward those policy areas where national decisions have a clear and immediate impact on our local communities.

I led a Westminster Hall debate on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in February. The debate followed a detailed survey I launched across the constituency, gathering evidence from nearly 100 families. The findings were stark: more than half of respondents said their children had missed out on school because their needs could not be met, and 13% had been out of education for over a year. I have challenged the Department for Education to respond urgently, and the relevant Minister for SEND will be visiting Suffolk Coastal shortly to meet affected families and professionals on the ground.

Energy infrastructure has also been a major area of focus. I have spoken out in Parliament and submitted formal responses to consultations on Sea Link, LionLink, and Nautilus. These projects, taken together, represent a significant transformation in our region but their planning has been fragmented. I have called for a coordinated offshore grid approach and urged developers to work with rather than around local communities. I have made clear that respect for our landscape, and for the people who live here, must be at the heart of any national infrastructure rollout.



Through my role on the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, I have scrutinised the performance of water companies, challenged poor standards, and supported reforms to improve accountability. I've pressed Anglian Water on their role in protecting rivers like the Deben, and highlighted the vital work done by local citizen science groups who regularly test and monitor water quality.

I've spent a lot of time listening to farmers across Suffolk Coastal, hearing directly about the challenges they're facing. One of the key concerns raised with me is the imbalance in the supply chain, with farmers too often being squeezed by large retailers. In Parliament, I was part of a group of MPs who wrote to the UK's major supermarkets to demand fairer treatment for farmers and an end to misleading "farmwashing" practices. While these retailers reported billions in profits last year, many of our local farms are struggling to remain viable. I've been clear that supermarkets must play their part in building a fairer, more sustainable food system, and I'll continue to use my voice in Westminster to stand up for those who put food on our tables.

Parliamentary work has also included efforts on healthcare, rural transport, farming, and digital infrastructure, all areas that directly affect residents in Woodbridge. I have spoken on the floor of the House about the need for more investment in rural NHS services and community GPs, about fairer treatment for farmers in the supply chain, and about supporting BT's work at Adastral Park to develop new digital opportunities, especially for young people in Suffolk.

### **3. Woodbridge: Local Priorities and Engagement**

I have had a lot of positive engagement from constituents in Woodbridge since being elected as MP, and this is really important in ensuring that I work on issues that are priorities to local people. Throughout the year, I have heard directly from residents on a range of local issues, including traffic congestion, crime and antisocial behaviour, access to healthcare, and environmental protections.

Earlier this year, I met with the River Deben Association to discuss the ongoing need to protect and enhance the water quality of one of Suffolk's most iconic natural features. The River Deben is not only a vital environmental asset, it supports local wildlife, tourism, and recreation, and forms a central part of the town's identity. My work on water regulation in Parliament has been informed by local concerns here, and I will continue to push for transparency, investment, and stronger enforcement powers to hold these companies to account.

Concerns about road safety and traffic congestion remain a regular feature of



correspondence and casework. I have raised these issues directly with Suffolk County Council and in Parliament, an example being safety and traffic on the A12 and the broader need for better roadworks coordination. In Woodbridge, I know from correspondence with constituents that areas such as Melton Hill and key school routes require attention, and I will continue to press for meaningful improvements.

Crime and antisocial behaviour, while low by national standards, have become a growing source of anxiety for some residents. I remain in close contact with Suffolk Police and have urged greater visibility of neighbourhood teams. I've also been clear that Woodbridge, as a busy town centre, must not be overlooked when it comes to community safety planning.

One of the most promising opportunities ahead lies in digital innovation. At Adastral Park, just a short distance from Woodbridge, BT is developing an innovation hub focused on AI, cybersecurity, and next-generation connectivity. During a recent visit from the Housing and Local Government Minister, I made the case for further investment in skills, training and infrastructure to support these industries, ensuring that towns like Woodbridge can access the benefits.

#### **4. Local Casework and Support**

Over the past year, my team and I have handled a wide range of casework on behalf of Woodbridge residents. These have included SEND support for children, challenges in accessing NHS and dental care, housing allocation issues, and a wide range of localised issues. My role as MP includes ensuring that people can navigate public services and get the help they need.

In December, I partnered with the Woodbridge Salvation Army and the Citizens Advice Bureau to host a pension credit awareness event. These kinds of local initiatives are essential in helping people access the support they are entitled to, and I was pleased to see the positive response from residents. I have also visited local food banks, schools, and voluntary organisations to listen, learn, and amplify their voices in Parliament.

#### **5. Future Priorities**

Looking ahead, my focus will remain on the core issues that matter most to Woodbridge and similar towns across Suffolk Coastal.

This includes continuing to fight for a fairer and more effective SEND system, protecting and enhancing the River Deben and our wider natural environment, supporting efforts to grow our digital economy, and pushing for real change in how national infrastructure



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projects are coordinated and delivered. I will also maintain pressure on Suffolk County Council and government departments to invest in road safety, improve public transport, and protect access to essential services like libraries, GP surgeries and schools.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide this report. I am proud to represent Woodbridge and Suffolk Coastal in Parliament, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the months ahead.