



## REPORT TO FELIXSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL

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

Annual Town Meeting – 14 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 NHS 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. It was also an honour to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday in Felixstowe, joining the local community in paying tribute to those who served and sacrificed for our freedoms. Marking this occasion alongside veterans, residents and community leaders was a deeply moving experience and a reminder of the strength and history that runs through this town.

It was also a real pleasure to welcome the Mayor of Felixstowe, members of Felixstowe Town Council, and the Bürgermeisterin (Mayor) of Wesel to Parliament. It was great to discuss the importance of community, culture, and continued collaboration between our two towns.

I'm grateful to Felixstowe 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 over 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. SEND provision is one of the most urgent local issues brought to me by families across Suffolk Coastal. Parents shared serious concerns about delays, missed legal deadlines, incomplete plans, and a lack of available specialist places. Urgent action is needed from Suffolk County Council to ensure the system is fair, transparent and properly resourced.



Another part of my work in Parliament this year has been focused on the impact of vaping on young people, especially the increasing availability of so-called "sweets and vapes" products. I know this is something of particular concern in Felixstowe, especially following the opening of one of these vape shops last year and another just in recent weeks. I've shared those concerns directly with Ministers and will keep fighting for policies that protect children and support families. These brightly coloured, high-nicotine vapes, often marketed with packaging that mimics sweets and desserts, and are being deliberately targeted at children. I will continue to campaign for tighter regulations, better enforcement, and clearer public health messaging, to make sure we stop this harmful marketing at its source.

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.

In March, I was pleased to be elected Chair of the Ports All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), a cross-party group focused on supporting and strengthening the UK's port sector. This role allows me to work closely with port operators, business leaders and fellow MPs to champion the economic potential of places like Felixstowe. Whether on issues of road and rail freight connectivity, portside investment or workforce development, I will continue using my voice in Westminster to advocate for the town and the wider industry it anchors.

Parliamentary work has also included efforts on healthcare, transport, farming, and digital infrastructure, all areas that directly affect residents in Felixstowe. I have spoken on the floor of the House about the need for more investment in NHS services and GP practices, 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. Felixstowe: Local Priorities and Engagement

I have had a lot of positive engagement from constituents in Felixstowe 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 the sad state of SEND provision in the area.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being your MP is the chance to meet with the people and organisations that make Felixstowe the thriving community it is. I've spent time with many of the town's most active local charities and voluntary groups, and I've been incredibly moved by their work. Examples of these visits include the Felixstowe Job Club, which offers vital support to people looking for work or a career change; Level Two Youth Project, which gives young people a safe



and structured space to thrive; the BASIC Life Charity, whose food hubs offer dignity and practical help to families under pressure; and the Landguard Trust, whose stewardship of our historic coastline promotes local heritage and supports tourism. These organisations are outstanding examples of Felixstowe's community. There are, of course, many more individuals and groups doing brilliant, community-minded work across the town and I look forward to continuing to meet more of them in the months ahead.

The Port of Felixstowe is not only a cornerstone of our local economy but one of the most critical pieces of national infrastructure in the country. Over the past year, I have made it a central priority to ensure that the port receives the support and attention it deserves. In response to Maersk's decision to reduce some of its operations here, I raised the matter directly in Parliament and met with the Minister for Maritime to press for investment and long-term planning. Our port is vital not just to Felixstowe and Suffolk, but to the whole of the UK economy. Alongside the port, Felixstowe's broader infrastructure needs ongoing attention. One of my ongoing priorities is to improve service provision for hauliers, including facilities for rest and waste disposal. These services are essential not only for supporting the haulage sector but also for reducing the levels of litter and waste that can accumulate around key routes in and out of the town. By ensuring drivers have proper access to amenities, we can help ease pressure on local areas and improve the overall environment around the port.

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. Following repeated closures on the A14 and concerns about congestion on key routes into the town, I wrote to Suffolk County Council urging better coordination and clearer communication around roadworks. I understand just how disruptive poorly planned or overlapping works can be, especially when combined with essential repairs to the Orwell Bridge, so I've made clear that residents deserve timely, accurate information. I have also called on the Council to take sensible decisions, including postponing non-essential works during periods of major disruption, to help keep the town moving.

One of the most promising opportunities ahead lies in digital innovation. At Adastral Park, just a short distance from Felixstowe, 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 Felixstowe 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 Felixstowe 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.

As your MP, I also supported residents affected by poor housing management, including leaseholders dealing with unacceptable service charges and poor customer service. I helped



secure action from FirstPort after serious delays to repairs at a Felixstowe development, including one case where a lift was left broken for 15 months. I have since joined a national group of MPs working to hold managing agents like FirstPort to account, and I will continue to support residents across Felixstowe and beyond who face these ongoing and often frustrating issues.

I have also been supporting former employees of the Orwell Hotel who found themselves owed unpaid wages. Despite being entitled to monies owed, many had to pursue these claims through lengthy and stressful tribunal processes. While I'm pleased that, following my involvement, some former staff have now received what they were owed, I am acutely aware that others are still waiting. I remain committed to continuing to support all affected employees in their efforts to get what they are owed and to make sure their voices are heard.

## 5. Future Priorities

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

This includes continuing to fight for a fairer and more effective SEND system, protecting our young people from inappropriate marketing of vape products, supporting efforts to grow our digital economy, protecting the coastline from flooding and environmental degradation, supporting jobs and growth at the Port of Felixstowe, and pushing for real change in how national infrastructure 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 Felixstowe and Suffolk Coastal in Parliament, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the months ahead.