

Farnham with Stratford St Andrew Parish Council

Annual Report

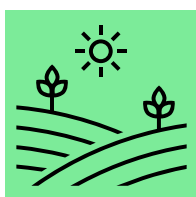
May 2024

This report covers the period from the end of April 2023 to the end of March 2024.



There were some **changes to your Council** during this period of this report. Two applications were received for a casual vacancy in Farnham and, following a vote at the Annual Meeting in May 2023, Jeremy Williams was co-opted to the position. The Council was saddened to hear of the death of Ian Tayler, a former Councillor, following long illness; a minute's silence was observed by the Council prior to its meeting as a mark of genuine respect to Ian and his past service to the community.

The long-serving Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer, Debbi Tayler, resigned in May 2023 and left the Council in August. Her hard work and support to the Council and the residents of the two villages was formally praised by the Council and formally acknowledged in the minutes. The Council provisionally appointed Katherine Abbott to the dual role in September 2023 and, having successfully completed her probation period, Katherine was permanently appointed in December 2023.



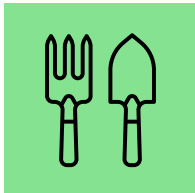
The Council appointed a new Tree Warden in June 2023, Graham Evans, following the resignation from the role of Tim Cocker. Mr Evans stood down from the role in November 2023 and the Clerk has been actively seeking a replacement, but for the wider role of **Ecology Volunteer**, since then. This role, and that of the Water Monitoring Warden, see below, sit within the Council's duty, under the Environment Act, to "conserve and enhance" the natural world (or at least our bit of it!).

The Council also appointed a **Water Monitoring Warden** in the period of this report. Teresa Perrin liaises with the Alde and Ore Association to take regular samples of our local waters and send them for analysis. The Council is liaising with the

Environment Agency to better understand the data resulting from the analysis, the status and health of the villages' waterways, and any actions that may be necessary.

The Council obtained around 500 free daffodil bulbs in the Autumn as part of the **East Suffolk Blooms** scheme. These were planted by volunteers and, as I write, are starting to appear and are a cheery sight after the winter months.

Volunteers, notably The Conibeers who organised it, have **litter-picked** and disposed of a significant quantity of empty lager cans, empty bottles of cider and whiskey, and take away wrappers. Some of the items were piled at the side of a lane so it is thought this was a clearing out of a vehicle, but it may be that items were thrown from a window. What a contrast – one person who disposes of their rubbish in the most anti-social and damaging way possible, and other people who love their village and spend their own time keeping it tidy and safe for wildlife. Well done and thank you.



The Council has appointed East Suffolk Services Ltd (formerly Norse) to cut the **grass verges** within the villages. In the past, this contract also included the cleaning of the two **bus shelters** but East Suffolk Services Ltd have advised that they no longer have the resources to clean the shelters. The Council has therefore employed a small local business to clean the shelters in the Spring and the Autumn.



We have continued to respond, as a statutory consultee in the planning process, to numerous **planning applications** and other planning matters during the year. The role of the Parish Council in this regard is to represent local views and should provide local knowledge, raise areas of concern, inform, debate, and add value to the process. Parish Councils must be informed of all planning applications, and any amendments to those applications, within the parish. The Council comment on these planning applications in the same way as any other member of the public, however, any comments by the Parish Council must be agreed by a majority of the Councillors. Members of the public attending a meeting can also comment, speak in support of, or object to any application during the 'Open' segment of the meeting and at the Chairman's discretion. Equally, residents can contact the Clerk, outside of a

meeting, to express their views on an application. They may not participate in the Councillors' deliberation of an application at a meeting.



There was a consultation on the proposed Diversion of Farnham **Public Footpath** No 11(part) and Farnham Public Footpath No 12 – Highways Act 1980 Section 119 in the interests of the occupiers of the land crossed by the footpaths at Walk Farm Barns and The Bungalow. The diversion was approved.



The year has seen extraordinary weather, particularly rainfall, which has created significant standing water and so flooding. Storm Babet was particularly savage. Whilst both our villages lie within areas which are, thankfully, at low risk of flooding such as our neighbours experienced and endured, we have a **community emergency plan** in place, and this has recently been reviewed by the Council to ensure we are as prepared as possible.

On the subject of flooding and its impact on the rural roads in the vicinity, the Council has written to several local landowners seeking their investigation of how best to minimise water flowing from fields to become standing water on roads at times of heavy rainfall. We are hopeful of their positive participation.



The December 2023 meeting of the Parish Council included a presentation by representatives of **EDF Energy** and was attended by around 30 residents. The Council and residents were informed the Site's overview included two kilometres of new highway; two new roundabouts on the A12; two twin culverts; one bridge over the River Alde; one footbridge; one main compound on the A12 (west) and one satellite compound at Friday Street.

The meeting was shown the proposed design of the bridge over the River Alde. This would include ground improvement work and underground engineering to provide

stable foundations. The work at Friday Street would commence with archaeological conservation works as a key early part of the project. The meeting was advised that most of the structure would be built off-site to minimise periods of traffic management. The main construction works were scheduled for quarter one of 2025 and the opening of the by-pass was scheduled for quarter one/two of 2027. The Council, on behalf of its residents, expressed disappointment at the late scheduling of the by-pass construction and opening.



During the financial year 2023/24, the Council's income and expenditure was, as expected, impacted upon by the cost-of-living crisis. Early in 2024, the County Council has declared its financial challenges will result in it:

- Reducing demand for more expensive social care options through technology and other means resulting in a cost-saving of £30.6million.
- Centralising its archive facilities.
- Using £15.9million from its reserves to balance the budget.

The Parish Council unanimously agreed to increase its precept from £4500 to £5000 and to closely monitor its financial situation in the coming year whilst exploring alternative grant funds, if required.

The total income received in the 2023/24 financial year was £5147.50. There was a carry forward of £5852.47 from the previous financial year. The total expenditure in the same financial period was £7728.18. The balance as at 31 March 2024 was £3031.60.

During 2023/24 the Parish Council received Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds of £2082.06. A total of £508.71 was spent on church gates for the church. This, when added to the funds carried over from previous years, equals £2598.84 funding available. We are also immensely grateful to County Councillor Andrew Reid for giving us £1628.45 from his Locality Budget to pay for the Farnham footpath adjacent to the A12 to be skirted so making it safe for pedestrians to use.

In closing this report, I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their hard work and commitment to our role and responsibilities and to their proactive responses to our residents' needs. I believe we pull together with good humour and a genuine love of our villages, and it is a privilege to be part of this group of people. I would also like to thank our Water Monitoring Warden, Teresa Perrin, for her voluntary work to help monitor and maintain our waterways, our County Councillor,

Andrew Reid, and our District Councillor, Sally Noble, for their regular attendance and participation in our meetings, and their help and support when requested.

We live in a special place – long may it continue to be so.

Councillor Ian Norman

Chairman

April 2024