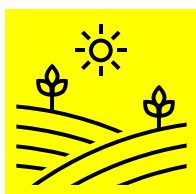


# Farnham with Stratford St Andrew Parish Council

## Chairman's Annual Report

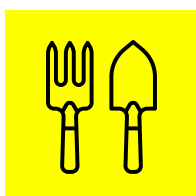
May 2026

*This report covers the period from the end of April 2025 to the end of March 2026.*



Since 2023, the Council has liaised with the Alde and Ore Association to take regular **samples of our local waters** to test the levels of e-coli, nitrates and phosphates and send them for analysis. The Council has agreed to continue to work with the Association and to actively monitor the resulting data to spot signs of fluctuation in water quality, more quickly address issues and ensure prompt awareness of negligent actions. Councillor Richard Ayres leads on this role for the Council.

The Conibeers have again **litter-picked** and disposed responsibly of a significant quantity of rubbish dumped at the roadside. The Parish Council thanks Rosemary and Mark for spending their own time keeping the village tidy for residents and safe for wildlife. Well done! If others wish to organise a litter pick, East Suffolk Council lends out equipment including Hi-Viz vests, litter pickers, bags and bag hoops. [Community litter picks - My East Suffolk](#) And, if East Suffolk Council is notified in advance, it will remove bagged and other waste items collected during the litter pick from agreed collection points. You can also get involved on social media by sharing your own litter pick photos tagging East Suffolk Council and using #litterheroes.



There have been some changes to tenants at the **allotments** – we wish all of them green fingers and bumper crops!

The Council has again appointed East Suffolk Services Ltd (formerly Norse) to cut the **grass verges** within the villages.



During 2025/6, the Parish Council has approved several key **governance** documents, some are subject to annual review, and some are newly adopted (full list below). These documents are essential in ensuring effective governance and accountability. The Parish Council must act within the law and comply with legal obligations specified within various Acts of Parliament.

- Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy
- Asset Register
- Disciplinary Policy
- Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Complaints Policy
- Communications Protocol
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Internal Control Statement
- IT Policy
- Public Rights of Way – Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the public, local authorities and landowners
- Risk assessments
- Safeguarding Policy

We agreed that we would explore the resurrection of a social media presence and, subject to a decision on that, the Communications Protocol will be amended to reflect this aspect.

We also agreed that Cllr Rosemary Conibeer would be the Safeguarding Lead for the Council.



Starting from the 2025/26 financial year, **Assertion 10 GDPR compliance** now forms a formal part of every local Council's AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return). Changes announced in the 2025 Practitioners' Guide from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) included a strengthened focus on demonstrating actual digital and data compliance in practice as part of the Annual Return. The Return is a crucial document in the annual internal audit process. The

Council has been led in discussions on this by the Clerk in November 2025 and March 2026. We are now required to:

- Demonstrate adherence to the mandatory IT and data requirements for smaller authorities and a clear understanding of the legal requirements of GDPR 2016 and its more recent updates, and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Have up-to-date data protection and information compliance policies that reflect the specific ways our Council operates
- Transition to Council-owned (and funded) gov.uk domain names for websites as best practice and to ensure website accessibility and transparency standards are met
- Transition to Council-owned and funded official email systems to secure communications and ceasing the use of personal or generic emails by Councillors (benefits for FOI, GDPR, Subject Access Requests (Data (use and Access) Act 2025, accountability, security, avoiding risks of third-party managed domains etc.)
- Develop an IT policy that covers the use of both Council-owned and personal devices – reflecting key changes and additions impacting digital governance and data integrity requirements.
- Evidence that Council staff and Councillors have received regular, relevant training

The Parish Council has chosen to adopt a paced approach to these requirements. Its website and Clerk use a gov.uk domain name and email system. Councillor Jill Pass is to act as the first Councillor to move to gov.uk email and act as 'pathfinder' to assist others with their transition; we do also have excellent IT support from Community Action Suffolk in this regard. The Parish Council is also aware of the various online training opportunities available via the Suffolk Association of Local Councils. We adopted a Data Protection and Information Management Policy at our meeting in April 2026 as well as an IT Policy earlier in the year.



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 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



The Parish Council met with the County Council's Public **Rights of Way** Officer to discuss Rights of Way which would be affected by the Sizewell C and Scottish Power EA1 and EA2 developments. This primarily related to the temporary closure of footpaths and alternative diversion routes as well as plans for signing and waymarking.

If you spot an overgrown or inaccessible footpath, this can be reported to the County Council direct at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/report-a-public-right-of-way-issue/> - but please do tell us too!



At the time of writing this report, construction of the two villages by-pass is progressing to schedule. There have been and continue to be regular road closures and diversions to facilitate this work, but following robust comments from the Parish Council, we hope that traffic management has improved and there is reduced reliance on unsuitable alternative routes during closures. There was a considerable amount of damage to verges and property experienced and Sizewell C have promised to undertake remedial work. The Parish Council continues to press for this to be done at the earliest opportunity.



The Council is always mindful of spending its **Precept** with care and of the need to ensure value for money is achieved. However, the Council must continue to meet its statutory responsibilities and the costs of doing so have increased considerably.

At its January 2026 meeting and following an earlier review of its draft budget in November 2025, the Council reluctantly but unanimously agreed that it needed to increase its Precept for the 2026/7 financial year due to the impact of inflation and the cost of delivering services having increased significantly in the last few years.

The agreed increase is intended to bring the Council's finances back to a more sustainable level, enabling it to continue operating effectively and maintaining the services, statutory duties and facilities it provides for and on behalf of the villages. Councillors considered this decision carefully and recognised it as a necessary step to secure the Council's long-term financial stability and its continued ability to support the two villages and its community.

What does this mean for residents?

For a typical Band D household (which represents an average property in the area), the increase in the Parish Council element of Council Tax equates, in monetary terms, to approximately £7.26 per month.

This increase applies only to the Parish Council Precept, which is one element of residents' council tax. The overall bill also includes charges set separately by Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council and Suffolk Constabulary.

During 2025/6 the Parish Council did not receive any additional **Community Infrastructure Levy** (CIL) funds. The Council spent a total of £220 on cleaning, removing debris and moss etc on the bus shelters including cleaning and disinfecting the waiting areas, clearing both village signs of dirt and moss, and general maintenance to noticeboards. A total of £1361 is available for 2026/7 (as of 31.3.26).

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In closing this report, I would once again 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. We share a genuine love of our villages, and it continues to be a privilege to be part of this Council. I would also like to thank our outgoing 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 look forward to meeting our new County Councillor shortly.

Councillor Ian Norman

Chairman

May 2026