



## Farnsfield Parish Council Newsletter

April 2023

### Introduction:

From January 2023 we are trialling a new format for the Farnsfield Parish Council publication with a 'Council Matters' section edited by a member of the Council itself and a 'Community Matters' section edited by a volunteer from the community. We are scheduling a minimum of four editions a year with the 'Council Matters' sections focusing on specific areas of interest and the 'Community Matters' section providing a balanced view of community activities across the village. Additional special Council Matters issues may be added to the program where necessary.

Annual Council Communications Plan				
	Jan	April	May	September
<b>Key newsletter focus</b>	Works completed in past 12 months	Progress against key policies	Strategic plan update	Update on Parish council finances
Special issues as required to reflect major council initiatives				

It should be noted that official Council communications are only carried on the [Parish Council Website](#) and the [Parish Council Facebook](#) page.

### Council Matters – Progress against key policies:

Your Council has adopted a number of policies in different topic areas to help guide its decision-making process towards rational outcomes. Some of these policies have been drafted in response to good practice guidelines and employment law whilst others have been created in recognition of the assets we control and services we provide as a Council. All of these policies are designed to minimise the possibility of harmful effects to the parish community and environment. Each policy is agreed by Council decision within a public meeting and has a set review date by which it should be reviewed and reapproved

Subject area	Policy
Facilities and assets	Play and Open Spaces
	Tree Safety
	Environment
Data and records	Records Management and Security
	Personal Data Protection
	Privacy
Communications	Correspondance
	Communication & Social Media
	Vexatious Complaints and Actions
Employment	Health & Safety
	Equality
	Disciplinary
	Grievance
	Sickness Absence
	Dignity at Work

All our policies are made available for resident to view and print if necessary, from the Council website: [Policies and Procedures](#)

Many of these policies impact the life of all village residents in some way or another and the Council would commend users to check the site and browse through those policies that are relevant to



them. As the policies provide a framework for how your Council acts it is important that residents understand these so they are able to make proposals for their amendment should they be thought to be incorrect or carry omissions. The Council welcomes all residents' feedback in this regard as it is through the application of these policies that the Council endeavours to manage the village and its facilities in the way that its residents would wish and support.

### **Facilities and Assets:**

Over the last twelve months we have made significant progress in accordance with our Play and Open Spaces policy with significant improvements in play and open space areas across the village. Improvements have been made across all play areas and the opening of the Hadleigh Park Playground, Acre's Skatepark and small football pitch have added exciting new facilities. We have opened up new shaded areas within a number of copses on Hadleigh Park for users of the playground to sit and take shelter from the sun during the summer months and also added a quiet area for storytelling within the story glade area of the copse opposite the new playground. Newark and District Council continue to maintain our open spaces to a high standard and the perimeter protection bund around Hadleigh Park is maturing and boosting the opportunities for wildlife within the area as the grasses and wildflowers it carries are developing. The main 11 a side football pitch is serving the village well but as it is receiving more use more investment may be needed to maintain its surface through the full season.

Despite the renewal of many of our dog waste bins and the replacement of many with new high-capacity bins dog waste not picked up and left on playing fields and football pitches continues to be a problem. The Council would like to remind all dog owners of their responsibility in this area.

We have completed tree safety inspections in key areas of the village and remedial work to remove diseased and unsafe trees have been carried out across the higher risk areas including the Hadleigh Park copses and the Millennium wood. This is an area where frequent inspection is key and action to improve our resources for this task are being considered.

Our environmental policy has recently been streamlined to provide a clear focus for action based on the DEFRA framework for Councils to act to meet climate change challenges. This provides clear guidance across those areas that the Council has the power and opportunity to act. Whilst we have made many improvements to the village centre which have positive environmental impacts there is scope for us to take a broader view of opportunities for environmental improvements across the village and take appropriate action. An example of this is the localised occurrences of flooding within the village in the last 12 months and the need to maintain drains, dykes, and other elements of the village drainage system. It is hoped that when the new car park at Hadleigh Park is completed this will provide economical off-road electric charging facilities for use by residents and in particular those who do not have the option of off-road parking, to allow them to safely recharge their vehicles.

### **Data and Records:**

Record management continues to be a challenge with large numbers of documents carried over from previous years leading to the requirement to store and index large numbers of paper files. Much of this paper archive has been removed from the Clerk's office into a secure file store with restricted access. The use of Microsoft Office 365 and its associated electronic archiving facilities is helping us to reduce the build-up of paper documentation and make file retrieval easier and more efficient.



Our Personal Data Protection Policy has been effectively applied over the past 12 months and we will continue to monitor for potential breaches and seek to implement necessary improvements to ensure all the personal data we hold is effectively protected.

Our privacy policy which governs the type of information we hold and how it is used has also been effectively applied over the past 12 months and we will continue to track changes in guidance to ensure the policy is kept in accordance with the developing guidelines that regulate personal privacy.

### **Communications:**

As with many governmental and non-governmental organisations effective communications continues to be a challenge as social media channels are exploding and often provide inaccurate and inappropriate messaging which can be damaging to an organisation's legitimate aims, and purpose, and time consuming and difficult to correct. Our correspondence policy stating an acknowledgement will be given to all formal contacts within 5 days and a response will be given in 25 days has been adhered to. This has however placed a strain on our resources over the past 12 months due to some requests being repeatedly made through different channels.

Our Communication and Social Media Policy, which provides guidelines for communication via our website, Facebook and e-mail, provides clear guidance which has largely been adhered to. There has been the need for posts not meeting this policy to be removed from the Council's Facebook feed and the Council would like to remind all users that our Facebook page is not the correct place to raise complaints against the Council or any of its members. A formal complaints channel exists for these types of challenges. To allow the Council to better control communications and minimise the time spent dealing with inappropriate communications we adopted a Vexatious Complaints and Actions Policy. This has not been needed and is there purely as a tool of last resort where our Clerk is spending an inappropriate amount of time and energy on repeated complaints where there is nothing further for her to add to her previous responses.

### **Employment:**

Our Health and Safety continues to be well applied and we have few instances of harm to employees or users of our facilities. Of course, facilities including play equipment and the skatepark do carry some intrinsic risk to users and it is important that anyone using these do so in accordance with their warnings for use and in accordance with their own physical capabilities.

With regards our other employment policies there is little to note over the last 12 months and we continue to operate with a small, happy, and healthy workforce who we are sure all residents will join with us in thanking them for their contribution in making our village a great place to live.