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Open Public Letter to all Rothersthorpe Residents

REF: Wildflower Strip & Dog Fouling – Banbury Lane / Jct Church Street Rothersthorpe

Dear Residents

It is unfortunate I find myself writing to you all in response to negative village feedback raised at a Parish Council Public Open Session on Monday 10th January 2021.

A village volunteer who has maintained our wildflower strip on the Banbury lane for several years was in receipt of an anonymous handwritten note. It was placed in the wildflower bed on Sunday 9th January in response to a sign that was placed highlighting an increase in dog fouling within the flower strip.

The content of the written note was unacceptable and has been viewed as a personal attack on the volunteer.

In light of this note It is the view of Rothersthorpe Parish Council that an open response to the incident is within the public's best interest and to remind residents of the correct Parish Complaints Process. This letter will advise on:

- Understanding and recognising where Parish services and assets fall short of required standards
- How to formally submit feedback and complaints to the Parish Council
- Understanding what is 'acceptable behaviour' when communicating with resident volunteers and Contracted Village Service Providers working for and on behalf of the Parish Council

For those who are unaware of the wildflower strip, here is the background:

Some years ago, Rothersthorpe Parish Council approached Northants Highways to request permission to adopt the strip of verge that runs between the Allotments on the Banbury Lane to the Junction of Church Street for the purpose of 'Rewilding', a biodiversity initiative to plant wildflowers and create additional wildlife corridors to attract diminishing species and pollinators to the village. This initiative was unanimously agreed and supported by Northants Highways on the proviso that Rothersthorpe Parish Council would be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance going forward. A village volunteer subsequently agreed to tend the strip and has invested their free time into its upkeep asking for very little funding and has donated a lot of flowers personally. I take this opportunity to thank our volunteer for their continued investment to improve the village.

To clarify precedence, ownership of this land sits with Highways, adopted and sponsored by Rothersthorpe Parish Council and maintained by volunteers for the benefit of our village residents.

Rothersthorpe parish Council take any issues regarding health and safety seriously, we will continue to mitigate risk and review our assets to ensure they are fit for purpose.

The actions of placing short bamboo canes to deter repeated occurrences of dog fouling, though 'good intended' in the mind of the volunteer who placed them, are in no way representative of the Parish Council and we have formally asked for their removal with immediate effect.

Our resident volunteers and Contracted Village Service Providers work for and on behalf of the village under the direction of Rothersthorpe Parish Council.

If any resident wishes to make a complaint, raise issues and concerns or wishes to recognise the work they do, this should be directed to the Parish Clerk in the first instance and as soon as practicable. <https://www.rothersthorpeparishcouncil.gov.uk/contact-us.html>

Incidents of confrontation, insults and threatening behaviour whether verbal, written or physical towards our volunteers and contractors is not acceptable, it will not be tolerated and may result in Police action.

Rothersthorpe Parish Council does not condone the handwritten letter and feels this situation could have been dealt with more amicably by reporting it through the correct channels in a timely manner, either reporting via the website or attending a Council Public Open Session in person.

After discussing this point with the Parish Council and the volunteer in question we have recorded our position on the incident and deem the matter closed, however we have a long way to go to address the wider dog fouling issue across Rothersthorpe.

Our volunteers do a fantastic job and shouldn't have to tend to land where dogs continue to foul daily, where owners have not had the respect and common decency of bagging mess and taking it home with them.

The actions of an inconsiderate minority are spoiling things for responsible dog owners and the wider village alike.

We actively encourage residents to report any incidents of dog fouling where the owner has not picked up after their dog. This should be reported on:

<https://forms.southnorthants.gov.uk/xfp/form/207>

We urge all dog owners to be responsible for the actions of their pets, carry an ample supply of bags when out walking and to pick up after their dog, taking any bags away with them.

Under no circumstances should bags be left on the edges of footpaths, fence lines or hedgerows.

Let's all work together to make Rothersthorpe a great place to live, let's have pride in our wonderful little village!

Yours Faithfully.

Frankie Gilkes

Chair of Rothersthorpe Parish Council

For and on behalf of all elected councillors of the Parish of Rothersthorpe

