

# Fontmell Magna Parish Council

## Annual Report for 2022/23



### 1. Introduction

With the resumption of normal activities after the pandemic, 2022/23 it has been a year of significant progress for the Parish Council led by its new chairman Andrew Davis. This annual report summarises the activities, successes, and disappointments of the Parish Council (PC) over the past year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

### 2. Governance

The PC held six meetings in a year – May, July, September, November, January, March. The minutes of meetings and all significant associated documents are available on the Parish website <http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk>

Andrew Davis took over the role as chair at the AGM in May 2022 and Laura Kurton was elected as Vice-Chair. Andrew replaced Mike Humphreys who completed 3 years in post, indicating he would be standing down fully in May 2023 on completing 8 years as a parish councillor.

For the majority of the year the responsibilities of councillors were:

|    | Area                     | Responsibilities   | Who       |
|----|--------------------------|--|-----------|
| 1. | Planning                 | Planning applications, neighbourhood plan, NP Monitoring Group, planning regulations.  | Mike      |
| 2. | Highways                 | Road maintenance, signage and potholes, traffic management, speed watch, strategic planning, A350CG.   | Andrew    |
| 3. | Environmental Protection | Flood protection, snow clearance, verges, litter and fly tipping, grass cutting, grounds and hedgerow maintenance, dog fouling, applications for tree work and encouraging tree planting, Best Kept Village.                                 | Vacancy   |
| 4. | Community Reach          | Ward Councillor, police, health & medical services (eg. Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, Shaftesbury Hospital), DAPTC, Dorset Unitary Council, Climate & Ecological Support Group, neighbouring parish councils, Compton Abbas airfield. | Hannah    |
| 5. | Parish Communications    | Parish website including posting of The Gossip Tree, email group, social media, village shop liaison, parish notice boards, Annual Parish Report.  | Laura     |
| 6. | Social Infrastructure    | Maintenance of parish council assets, Home Watch, defibrillators, village shop, broadband and mobile coverage, recreation, allotments, Village Hall.   | Christine |
| 7. | Footpaths                | Footpaths, rights of way, signposts.   | Andy      |
| 8. | Governance               | Procedures, standing orders, regulations, new councillor recruitment and induction, councillor training, committees, risk management, contingency planning.  | Andrew    |

All councillors are required to maintain an online Register of Interests. The register is available to public on Dorset Council's website A-Z of Town & Parish Councils.

[https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/parish-and-town-councils/parishatoz/-/ddl\\_display/ddl/424859/274688/maximized](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/parish-and-town-councils/parishatoz/-/ddl_display/ddl/424859/274688/maximized)

Disappointingly, for most of the year the PC has operated with just five councillors, rather than the full complement of 7, meaning more work for extant councillors and some areas of the council's work left in abeyance, namely Environmental Protection and Community Reach (District Liaison). Several appeals were made through the year for new people to come forward to plug these gaps but to no avail. However more recently Hannah Lister has been co-opted to the PC, in March 2023, to lead on Community Reach; we are delighted to have Hannah on board.

The PC has been strongly supported by our Dorset Councillor Jane Somper. Jane has provided frequent updates throughout the year on all the relevant initiatives and campaigns running in Dorset and has attended most parish council meetings. She has vigorously championed the various issues raised by the Parish Council with officers at Dorset Council on highways, road safety, planning and many other matters. We are very grateful for her continuing support.

Sam Smith has continued doing a great job in supporting the PC as Clerk/RFO. Regrettably Sam will be standing down at the end of April after two years in post. Recruitment of a new Clerk/RFO is under way.

In March, in response to the volume of matters arising for the PC, the frequency of parish council meetings was changed to monthly except for August and December.

### 3. Finance

Various events and activities through the year have stretched the financial resources of the PC.

The financial year runs from April 2022-March 2023. The PC started the financial year with a balance of £9,132 and closed the year with a balance of £7,854.

Expenditure during the year totalled £18,570, excluding VAT, which was well above the budget of £10,767, but this included £3,600 for the Middle Mill bench and £3,048 for the SID device which will be recovered from S106 contributions. A summary of spending versus budget for the year is shown in Appendix 1.

Sources of income through the year were:

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| Parish precept | £10,769 |
| Other income   | £6,523  |

The principal items of expenditure were:

|                              |        |              |
|------------------------------|--------|--------------|
| Clerk's salary               | £4,965 |              |
| Insurance                    | £746   |              |
| DAPTC subs                   | £267   |              |
| Grants                       | £1,010 | (see note 1) |
| Speed Indicator Device (SID) | £3,048 | (see note 2) |
| Middle Mill bench            | £3,600 | (see note 2) |
| PC Notice Boards             | £558   |              |
| Fontmell Magna Village Sign  | £197   |              |
| Dorset Planning Consultant   | £891   | (see note 3) |

1. Grants were made to the Church (£400) for grounds maintenance, to the Village Hall (£550) for insurance and maintenance of the playground, and to Gossip Tree sponsorship (£60).
2. These costs will be covered by S106 financial contributions.
3. Dorset Planning Consultant (Jo Witherden) was commissioned to write a formal objection document for the planning application to build 25 homes on fields along Mill Street.

Full details of income and expenditure through the year can be found on the Parish website.  
[http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk/Finance\\_29458.aspx](http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk/Finance_29458.aspx)

The Parish precept for 2023/24 is set at £11,848. Precepts in previous years have been:

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 2022/23 | £10,769 |
| 2021/22 | £9,750  |
| 2020/21 | £9,000  |
| 2019/20 | £8,500  |
| 2018/19 | £7,000  |

#### 4. Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan

##### 4a. Spring Meadows Development



Construction work got underway promptly at the end of February 2022 and is expected to be completed in the Summer 2023 with final landscaping work completing in November 2023. The first houses were occupied by residents in December.

A condition of the planning permission requires the landowner to make significant financial contributions to the village community. A contribution of £197,317 is expected towards capital improvements and maintenance costs for parish facilities and amenities including the Village Hall, indoor and outdoor sports areas, and the childrens' playground in West Street. A full list of S106 contributions is provided in Appendix 2. Occupation of the first property releases 50% of this money, with the balance due before the 12<sup>th</sup> house is occupied.

The site developer Pennyfarthing Homes has continued to co-operate fully with the PC and residents, responding promptly to any concerns raised. Two major issues have arisen in relation to the development – adoption of the School Drop-Off Area and road connection to Site 22.

The School Drop-Off Area is expected to be ready to handover in June 2023. Salisbury Diocese has confirmed agreement in principle to adopt the area, subject to legal contracts; negotiations are under way.

In the concept and outline design of the Spring Meadows development it had been intended that the road would connect through Blandfords Farm Barn site to the north, when this site came forward for development. However, it's been revealed that the landowner Vernon Christopher has retained ownership of a 1m wide strip of land along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site, which has cast doubt on the viability of this road connection; see below on Blandfords Farm Barn.

##### 4b. Blandfords Farm Barn

Several meetings have been held through the year with the prospective developer of Site 22 in the Neighbourhood Plan known as Blandfords Farm Barn. The Neighbourhood Plan policy (FM20) envisages up to 10 self or custom build homes, with the barn converted for some form of employment use.

Intelligent Land (IL) have proposed a development of 9 self-build or custom-build homes, but their scheme does not contain an employment facility to replace the barn. IL has been reluctant to make contact with the Vernon Christopher about connecting the access road to Spring Meadows, because

of the so-called “ransom strip” surrounding the development. IL prefer instead to provide road access to the site from West Street, west of the surgery. The PC passed a resolution in March that it would strongly object to this method of road access. Discussions with Intelligent Land will continue and a consultation event with residents is planned.

#### 4c. Planning Applications

A recent analysis has shown that 45 new homes have been built or in construction in Fontmell Magna parish since April 2017, the start date of the Neighbourhood Plan. This volume of new homes, including 12 affordable homes, more than fulfils the current expectation of Dorset Council for new housing development in the parish for the period 2017-31.

The main contributor to this volume is of course Spring Meadows with 30 homes, with the balance coming principally from redundant agricultural barns being converted into houses.

Each new planning application that arrives is assessed by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to gauge its compliance with NP policies. Also, the Clerk writes to the applicant with an offer to meet the PC to discuss their application if this would be helpful. The NPMG publishes a assessment report with a recommendation for the PC to support or object to the application.

The Parish Council is very grateful to the NPMG members for their assistance in assessing the planning applications; these are:

|                  |                  |               |               |
|------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Roy King (Chair) | Robert McCurrach | Dick Stainer  | Barry Roberts |
| John Knight      | Mike Humphreys   | Michael Hobbs | John Gilbert  |
| Ian Warr         | Aidy Lister      |               |               |

In December Robert McCurrach stepped down as Secretary of the Group and Roy King stepped down as Chairman; the PC is very grateful for their work in this area. Mike Humphreys is acting Chair and Secretary until new members are appointed.

In 2022/23, the Parish Council received 30 new planning applications. Details of all the applications and the NPMG reports can be on the PC Website at:

[http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk/Neighbourhood\\_Plan\\_Monitoring\\_Group\\_34858.aspx](http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk/Neighbourhood_Plan_Monitoring_Group_34858.aspx)

The PC was able to support the majority of these, but with objections raised against 9 where the applications are not compliant with Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Of particular note is the proposed development P/OUT/2023/00667 Land at Mill Street, for 25 dwellings on two fields north of Mill Street. The PC



objected strongly to this application as it conflicted with 10 NP policies and potentially conflicts with 4 more. The parish does not need this volume of additional housing, the location is wholly inappropriate being outside the Settlement Boundary, and there would be harm to the setting of the AONB. The PC’s formal objection statement was submitted to Dorset Council alongside numerous objections from residents, the Cranborne AONB, CPRE, Historic England and Dorset Council’s Conservation Officer.

#### 4d. Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is an important document, its policies forming the basis for assessing planning applications. The NP covers the period 2017-31 and was “made” in November 2018 to become part of Dorset Council’s Local Plan. The NP affords some protection against unwanted or inappropriate development in the village or wider parish.

Through various Dorset Council briefings in 2022, it became apparent that the NP needs to be updated. Dorset Council has failed to pass the Government’s Housing Delivery Test in means the NP is only granted a tenure of 2 years. If the NP is updated is then acquires a further two years of tenure.

A new team has been formed to undertake the review and update of the Neighbourhood Plan. The NP Review Group is separate from the Parish Council, chaired by Rosie-Anne Yates with Andrew providing the PC link and Dick Stainer is a member to provide continuity with the original NP team. Jo Witherden has been retained as a planning consultant to guide the project team through the process. It is hoped to send out a revised plan for consultation in June 2023.



#### 5. Highways & Road Safety

A great deal of efforts has been put into improving the safety of roads in the village, for pedestrians and road users.

Last April/May a community survey was conducted which showed strong support for reduced speed limits. The survey results based on replies from households, ie. one vote per household only were:

- 95.2 % of the 63 household responses support a 20 mph limit through the village.
- 82.5 % support a 20 mph limit on the A350 through the village.
- Over a third ( 34.5%) use a car in the village to make a short trip to village hall or shop because they feel the A350 is too dangerous to walk on without a pavement.

Andrew, supported by Peter Mole and Jane Somper, have been campaigning vigorously throughout the year for a 20mph speed limit to be applied to the A350, from the bends as Parsonage Street to the junction with Church Lane but Dorset Highways show no sign of agreeing. An advisory “20mphMax” sign has been installed on the A350 before the southern bends at Parsonage Street.

In November a revised speed limit policy was adopted by Dorset Council which enables parishes to apply for a 20mph speed limit. The PC has made a formal application for a 20mph limit on the A350, West Street and Mill Street.

The PC has invested £4,100 in a Speed Indicator Sign (SID), which is proven to reduce average speeds. The SID will be operated at three points in rotation – South Street entrance to the village, North Street opposite St Andrews View entrance and West Street by the surgery. The SID became operational at the end of March.

Dorset Highways have made a further commitment to resurface Gupples Lane, delayed from 2020.



## 6. Climate & Environment

There has been very limited activity in this area as there has been no councillor in place to pursue matters as they arise.

A potential resident approached the PC to request a new bus stop is provided for residents of Spring Meadows. Unfortunately, the bus operator could not agree to this, on grounds of cost and impact on timetables.

In September, using S106 money, the PC purchased a picnic table and bench for Middle Mill, in memory of Gary Payne. This is donated to the community by the Fontmell Magna Public Amenity Site Trust.

During the cold weather in January a grit bin was requested for The Knapp. The PC decided to postpone a decision as funds were no available.

In August Barbara Robbins of Chapel Street came forward to cut the grass outside Holbrook Cottage. The PC has reimbursed Barbara for the cost of a green bin to dispose of the cuttings.

Residents were invited to join a Spring Litter Pick around the lanes but disappointingly only a few residents came forward.

## 7. Communications

During the past year the PC has made a major effort to improve its profile and the communications provided to residents on its activities, under the leadership of Laura Kurton. New communications channels were utilised including Facebook, NextDoor and email subscription. As far as possible the content published was co-ordinated with The Gossip Tree.

A new Parish logo was launched in November. The design aims to encompass two objectives. First is the historic link to the mills in Fontmell Magna; mills have been recorded in Fontmell Magna for at



**Fontmell Magna Parish Council**

least 1000 years. They were water mills powered by the Fontmell Brook, a tributary of the River Stour. The Domesday Survey (1086) recorded three mills in the manor and these are almost certainly the Higher, Middle and Lower mills. The other three mills in the Parish, Pipers Mill, Hurdles Mill (unfortunately no longer with us) and Woodbridge Mill are only dating back to the mid to late 1700's. It just reflects how the whole parish played such a vital role in the economy of the village via its water

mills. The second aims to visually show how the Parish Council promotes transparency of local issues and engagement with parish residents. The interlocking mill wheels is the visual representation of this goal, namely, the Parish Council engaging with residents.

In December the Village Hall and Parish Council combined to provide some support to the community over the Christmas period when ambulance crews and paramedics went on strike. Emergency cover was provided by councillors for ambulance strikes in February and March, aimed at providing first aid and transport to hospital if needed. .

In January the PC launched an Emergency Response Plan, developed with help from Eil Wilson, and distributed to every parish resident.

Laura is working on a revamp of the PC website. The central idea is to create a Community Website with links to satellite sites such as Parish Council, Village Hall, Shop, Pub, Church, etc.



that the pub is not currently being marketed, there is currently no evidence of any parties, community based or otherwise, who would potentially be interested in buying the pub and/or who could successfully run it as a pub or use it in another way that would further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community. Consequently, Dorset Council considers that the requirements of section 88(2)(b) have not been met.”

The pub is now up for sale and the PC will continue to monitor developments, to ensure as far as possible it will continue as a pub. Any attempt by new owners to apply for change of use will be vigorously opposed.

## 9. Plans for 2023/24

The PC will seek to achieve a range of improvements and targets in the coming year, including:

- Campaigning to improve road safety, including securing a 20 mph speed limit along the A350 and rural lanes in the main village.
- Supporting the King’s coronation street party in May.
- Working with the Village Hall Committee to secure improvements to amenities and facilities at the Village Hall.
- Updating the Parish website.
- Reviewing and updating the Neighbourhood Plan, to bring its policies up to date and secure two years more tenure.
- Continuing to assess planning applications are in line with FMNP policies.
- Liaising with Pennyfarthing Homes regarding the Spring Meadows development to resolve any issues arising.
- Further discussions with Intelligent Land on the development of Blandfords Farm Barn and opposing any road access from West Street.
- Opposing any new planning applications for large scale development (>3 dwellings) around the village not included in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Installing a second defibrillator for the village, in the telephone box at the village shop.
- Securing a new parish councillor to lead on environmental protection, to promote environmental “green” policies that support local wildlife.
- Securing a new parish councillor to lead on planning matters.
- Promoting the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the village.
- Arranging community litter picks.
- Supporting Dorset County initiatives in tackling the Climate Change emergency.



This is a challenging list and needs volunteers to contribute their time, both existing councillors and new people as councillors or partners.

And finally – the PC wishes to thank The Gossip Tree editor and committee for their support, and Cllr. Somper for her support and regular updates. Also, thanks go to the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group who continue to provide advice on new planning applications. And special thanks to all who have given their time voluntarily to serve as parish councillors during the year, and also to the Clerk, for her work in supporting the parish.

AD/LK/MH/ - April 2023

## Appendix 1: Income & Expenditure for the year April 2022-March 2023

| Period          | Staff wages                                    | Bookkeeper          | Website & IT          | Travel Expenses /Stationary              | Maintenance & grass cutting   | Insurance | Training       | DAPTC/SLCC | Planning                               | Miscellaneous   | Neighbour-hood Plan          | Grants  | TOTAL      |
|-----------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------|--|---|------------------------------|---|------------|
| <b>Budget</b>   | 4,427.52                                       | 95.00               | 156.00                | 400.00                                   | 453.00                        | 720.00    | 250.00         | 267.43     | 500.00                                 | 500.00  | 500.00                       | 2,500.00  | 10,768.95  |
| Apr             | 437.60   |                     |                       |  | 113.48                        |           | 45.00          |            |  |   |                              |   |            |
| May             | 369.60   | 50.00               |                       | 62.36                                    | 50.00                         | 746.76    |                | 267.43     | 45.00                                  | 634.42  |                              | 400.00  |            |
| Jun             | 395.96   |                     |                       |  |                               |           |                |            |  |   |                              |   |            |
| 1st Qtr         | 1,203.16                                       | 50.00               | 0.00                  | 62.36                                    | 163.48                        | 746.76    | 45.00          | 267.43     | 45.00                                  | 634.42  | 0.00                         | 400.00  | 3,617.61   |
| Jul             | 374.16   |                     |                       | 35.30                                    | 159.84                        |           | 25.00          |            |  |   |                              |   |            |
| Aug             | 373.96   |                     |                       | 19.99                                    | 50.00                         |           |                |            |  | 36.00   |                              |   |            |
| Sep             | 374.16   |                     | 150.60                | 25.30                                    | 50.00                         |           |                |            |  | 3,600.00  |                              | 550.00  |            |
| 2nd Qtr         | 1,122.28                                       | 0.00                | 150.60                | 80.59                                    | 259.84                        | 0.00      | 25.00          | 0.00       | 0.00                                   | 3,636.00  | 0.00                         | 550.00  | 5,824.31   |
| Half Year Total | 2,325.44                                       | 50.00               | 150.60                | 142.95                                   | 423.32                        | 746.76    | 70.00          | 267.43     | 45.00                                  | 4,270.42  | 0.00                         | 950.00  | 9,441.92   |
| Oct             | 374.16   |                     |                       | 19.99                                    | 89.50                         |           |                |            |  | 18.00   | 165.00                       | 60.00   |            |
| Nov             | 5.80   | 95.00               |                       |  | 190.00                        |           |                |            |  | 144.00  | 108.00                       |   |            |
| Dec             | 1,037.52                                       |                     |                       | 35.30                                    | 265.00                        |           | 58.75          |            |  |   |                              |   |            |
| 3rd Qtr         | 1,417.48                                       | 95.00               | 0.00                  | 55.29                                    | 544.50                        | 0.00      | 58.75          | 0.00       | 0.00                                   | 162.00  | 273.00                       | 60.00   | 2,666.02   |
| Jan             | 407.36   |                     |                       | 141.45                                   |                               |           |                |            |  |   |                              |   |            |
| Feb             | 407.36   |                     |                       | 33.50                                    |                               |           | 173.75         |            |  | 625.50  |                              | 3,048.00  |            |
| Mar             | 407.36   |                     |                       | 85.29                                    |                               |           |                |            | 936.00                                 | 196.84  |                              |   |            |
| 4th Qtr         | 1,222.08                                       | 0.00                | 0.00                  | 260.24                                   | 0.00                          | 0.00      | 173.75         | 0.00       | 936.00                                 | 822.34  | 0.00                         | 3,048.00  | 6,462.41   |
| Spend Total     | 4,965.00                                       | 145.00              | 150.60                | 458.48                                   | 967.82                        | 746.76    | 302.50         | 267.43     | 981.00                                 | 5,254.76  | 273.00                       | 4,058.00  | 18,570.35  |
| Balance         | (537.48)                                       | (50.00)             | 5.40                  | (58.48)                                  | (514.82)                      | (26.76)   | (52.50)        | 0.00       | (481.00)                               | (4,754.76)  | 227.00                       | (1,558.00)  | (7,801.40) |
|                 | Payroll awarded by N/C backdated to April 2022 | Book Keeper & Audit | Domain name & hosting | Paper, mileage, Zoom, software, WiFi etc | Inc green waste bin, WM hedge |           | Inc Clerk CLCA |            | Inc £891 for planning cons Mill Street | Includes £1,000 for bins - 10 bin reimbursed from Section 106 money - Room hire, Village sign, Noticeboards | Printing & consultant advice | SD from Section 106 monies? Posts £804 Solar £150/98 precept requested in Jan 2022 but not paid for yet |            |

### FONTMELL MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL 2022/23

#### Budget v Spend 2022-2023 inc-VAT

## Appendix 2: Spring Meadows S106 Contributions

| Spring Meadows Development Contributions     | S106 Agreement Contributions |           |                    | Purpose  |
|--|------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|--|
|  | Rate                         | Dwellings | Total              |  |
| Community Leisure & Indoor Sports Facilities | £2,006.97                    | 30        | £60,209.10         | Enhancement or replacement of the existing Village Hall  |
| Destination Play Area                        | £967.52                      | 30        | £29,025.60         | Provision of and/or improvements to the Destination Play Area  |
| Destination Play Area Maintenance            | £359.36                      | 30        | £10,780.80         | Maintenance of the Destination Play Area   |
| Footpath Maintenance                         | £76.62                       | 30        | £2,298.60          | Shared footpath and cycle path to the village hall from Gundels  |
| Informal Outdoor Space                       | £4,000.00                    |           | £4,000.00          | New viewing platform and picnic table at Middle Mill. Picnic bench and display board at Brookland Wood.                      |
| Open Space Maintenance                       | £1,278.80                    | 30        | £38,364.00         | Open spaces within the development   |
| Outdoor Sports Area                          | £1,318.80                    | 30        | £39,564.00         | Provision and/or improvements to the playground and all-weather football pitch   |
| Outdoor Sports Area Maintenance              | £128.73                      | 30        | £3,861.90          | Maintenance of the playground and all-weather football pitch   |
| Pre-School Education                         | £190.50                      | 30        | £5,715.00          | Meeting the additional pre-school educational demand   |
| Right of Way Maintenance Works               | £76.62                       | 30        | £2,298.60          | Resurfacing works to the Right of Way situated at the north of the development and joins on to the south side of West Street |
| Right of Way Upgrading Works                 | £1,200.00                    |           | £1,200.00          | Upgrading four stiles on the perimeter of the development  |
| Secondary Education                          | £4,077.03                    | 30        | £122,310.90        | Additional secondary and post 16 educational demand  |
| School Drop Off Area Maintenance             | £1,333.33                    | 30        | £39,999.90         | Maintenance of the School Drop Off Area  |
| <b>Total</b>                                 |                              |           | <b>£359,628.40</b> |  |

MH/17Jan22

# Appendix 3: Proposed Mill Street Development



## Appendix 4: Fontmell Pub Closure



The Fontmell

30 August 2022 · 🌐



It is with a heavy heart and great regret to say that The Fontmell will close with immediate effect other than to honour the bed and breakfast bookings that we already have.

This is not a decision that has been made lightly and we would like to thank all our guests for their support and help over the last 6 and a half years.

Supplier prices have increased to such a point that we are no longer able to pass that cost onto our guests.

Our utilities alone have increased by an extra £58,000 per year.

Until further notice and subject to the above proviso as regards current bookings, the building will remain closed.

John and team



👍👎👏 364

134 comments 93 shares