

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 31st 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

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

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 \$106 contributions is provided in Appendix 2. Occupation of the first property releases 50% of this money, with the balance due before the 12th 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

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 not 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.

8. Parish Projects

In May the PC purchased 36 mugs to give to parish children to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Handed out on 5th June.

On 29th July the FMCLT completed the purchase of the freehold on the Village Shop and Post Office. Along with a successful round of local fund raising the project secured a Government grant of £206,000.

Plans to improve footpaths arounds the parish have been developed:

- School Footpath – The Snicket. The lower section will be left, the section adjacent to the school will be widened to around 1m and graded with a porous surface.
- N63/6 – The path leading to Home Farm is planned to be widened and re-surfaced.

In June, a dog poo bin was purchased and installed at the entrance to the Gallops on Fontmell Hill. Linked to this, in July the bollard gap at the entrance to Chalk Pit carpark was widened by Gore Farm after pressure from the PC.

In August the PC nominated the Fontmell Friendship Garden for a Volunteer Centre Dorset award as Team/Group of the year. The nomination was successful, and the team led by Sian Highnam received their award in November.

The PC has worked in close collaboration with the Village Hall Committee on various projects being funded by the S106 Contributions from Spring Meadows. These include:

- Destination Play Area
- Kitchen refurbishment
- Hall sound acoustics
- Tennis court extension

These projects and others will be progressed in 2023 when the money from the Spring Meadows financial contribution is received from Dorset Council.



Efforts have been made to improve the mobile network coverage available to Fontmell residents, which is particularly poor in the village centre. EE have been contacted several times, most recently by Anna Markey, but so far have proved obdurate. A resident's survey is being conducted to gauge the level of support for a new 4G mast in the village which would be needed to boost the signal strength.

In November work was commissioned to refurbish the parish notice boards which were in a bad state of repair. Also, the information board at Bedchester is to be relocated to the green outside Holbrook Church St.

Sadly in late August the Fontmell pub closed and in November the Fontmell Freehouse Limited went into liquidation; see Appendix 4. In December/January the PC applied for the pub to be registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). In the event of a sale this would place some restriction on how fast the property/business could be sold. However, the PC's application was rejected by Dorset Council in March. The rationale given is:

“Section 88(2)(b) – Whilst it is clear there is a strong desire amongst the community to retain a pub in the village, very limited information has been provided to indicate there is realistic potential in the next five years of the building re-opening for a non-ancillary use that would further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, whether or not in the same way. For example, whilst it is acknowledged that it appears

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
Budget	4,427.52	95.00	158.00	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 NIC backdated to April 2022	Book Keeper & Audit	Domain name & hosting	Paper, village, Zoom, software, WiFi etc	Inc green waste bin, WM hedge		Inc Clerk CLCA		Inc £891 for planning cons Mill Street	Includes £1,000 for banish - to be reimbursed from Section 106 money - Room hire, Village sign, Noticeboards	Printing & consultant advice	SID from Section 106 monies? Prots £104 Sales kit £125 Brackets £110 all ordered but not paid for yet	£10,768 precept requested in Jan 2022

FONTMELL MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL 2022/23

Budget v Spend 2022-2023 inc-VAT

Appendix 2: Spring Meadows S106 Contributions

Spring Meadows Development		S106 Agreement Contributions		
Contributions	Rate	Dwellings	Total	Purpose
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
Total			£359,628.40	
MH/17Jan22				

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