

Fontmell Magna Parish Council

Annual Report for 2020/21

1. Introduction

This annual report summarises the activities of the Parish Council (PC) over the past year ending 31st March 2021. Whilst much of the PC's attention during the year was focussed on housing development and planning applications, the year has been dominated by the impact of and responses to the Coronavirus pandemic.



2. Governance

Parish Council meetings during the year were reduced to four and had to be conducted using the Zoom videoconferencing facility. The AGM and Annual Parish Meeting were delayed until June, and subsequent PC meetings held in September, December and March. The minutes of meetings and all significant associated documents are available on the Parish website

<http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk>.

From March the council had a complement of only 4 councillors with Mike Humphreys as Chair and Jeremy Long as Vice-Chair, with Marianne Wheatley continuing as Clerk/RFO. 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.	Jeremy
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.	Annie/Andy
4.	District Liaison	Police, health & medical services (e.g. Patient Partnership Group, Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, Shaftesbury Hospital), DAPTC, Dorset Unitary Council, neighbouring parish councils, Compton Abbas airfield.	Mike
5.	Parish Communications	Parish website (including posting of The Gossip Tree), email group, social media, village shop liaison, parish notice boards, Annual Parish Report.	Mike/Andy
6.	Social Infrastructure	Maintenance of parish council assets, Home Watch, defibrillators, village shop, broadband and mobile coverage, recreation, allotments, Village Hall.	Annie
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.	Mike

Attempts to recruit more councillors continued throughout the year with little success. However in February 2021 Christine Scott came forward and was co-opted to the Council in March 2021, taking responsibility for Social Infrastructure.

There remain two vacancies which need to be filled by other enthusiastic volunteers coming forward to join our lively, diligent and cohesive Council so that we can be fully responsive to residents' concerns and needs. The Council is aware and concerned that there is an obvious lack of diversity in its groups. It welcomes expressions of interest from people who could bring a wider perspective to its discussions, particularly from young people, women and people with disability and from nationally under-represented ethnic backgrounds.

Fontmell has been strongly supported by Dorset Councillor Jane Somper. She has attended all PC meetings to report on County activities and has been pro-active in pursuing a number of issues raised by councillors and residents. Jane has provided frequent updates throughout the year on the various sources of support to residents during the Covid crisis.

In September 2020 the PC's policies and procedures were reviewed and updated; these are available on the PC website now.

In September Marianne Wheatley formally advised of her intention to stand down as Clerk/RFO and the Council expressed their sincere thanks for her 8 years of service to the Council. Interviews for a replacement Clerk were held in November and Samantha Smith was appointed from 1st February 2021. A handover of responsibilities took place in February 2021.

3. Finance

The financial year runs from April 2020-March 2021. The PC started the financial year with a balance of £7,702 and closed the year with a balance of £7,073.

Expenditure during the year totalled £9,388, excluding VAT, which was very close to the budget of £9,471. There was excess spend on staff costs attributable to the change of Clerk, with two salary payments in February to cover handover and purchasing a laptop for the Clerk's use. The budgeted final payment of £485 for the upgraded website was delayed so will appear in the 2021/22 figures.

Sources of income through the year were:

Parish precept	£9,000
Interest & VAT refund	£209

The principal items of expenditure were:

Clerk's salary	£4,849
Clerk's laptop and software	£423
Insurance	£595
Lurmer Street hedgerow	£795
DAPTC/SLCC subs	£312
Planning Consultant	£434
Grants	£877

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 2021/22 was set at £9,750. Precepts in previous years have been:

2020/21	£9,000
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2019/20	£8,500
2018/19	£7,000
2017/18	£7,000
2016/17	£2,050

The PC will continue to carefully manage expenditure and to maintain a reserve approximately equivalent to one year's precept.

4. Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan

The PC is consulted on all planning applications in the parish and assesses each one for their potential impact on the parish and benefits to the parish community. Since its adoption in November 2018 the Fontmell Magna Neighbourhood Plan has been actively used to assess planning applications as they have come forward to ensure compliance with the FMNP's policies. This work has been undertaken largely by the NP Monitoring Group comprising:

Roy King (Chair)	Robert McCurrach	Dick Stainer	Barry Roberts
John Knight	Mike Humphreys	Michael Hobbs	

Through 2020/21 the PC has considered 28 planning applications, assisted greatly by the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group which has reported on their compliance with NP policies; all the NPMG's reports are published on the PC website. There is also a summary report covering the whole year 2020/21 showing all the planning applications received by the PC and its responses.

http://www.fontmellmagnapc.co.uk/Neighbourhood_Plan_Monitoring_Group_34858.aspx

The PC expresses its sincere thanks to the NPMG for their diligent work in monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan and advising the Parish Council.

The PC supported most of the planning applications, raising objections against four:

2/2020/0641	Gupples Farm, Hartgrove
P/HOU/2020/00139	54 West Street
P/VOC/2020/00229	Springhead
P/FUL/2020/00314	Home Mead Cottage, 8 North Street

The approved developments will add 4 dwellings to the parish's housing stock.

The major development on the south side of the village, Land at Home Farm South Street, has still not progressed beyond the planning application stage. A full planning application was submitted in April 2020 to which the Parish Council raised a formal objection on a number of aspects of the scheme including the design and layout of the houses and landscaping; the full objection document is available via the parish website. The developers Pennyfarthing Homes subsequently made adjustments to the scheme to meet the PC's objections; their discussions continue with Dorset Council on several outstanding issues involving ecology and infrastructure contributions. The updated proposed development layout is shown in Appendix 1.

An update of the Neighbourhood Plan has been postponed, pending Government plans to revise the national planning system and also Dorset Council's update to the Local Plan. The Parish Council responded to the Government's consultation on its plans in October 2020 and also to Dorset Council's Local Plan consultation in January 2021.

5. Highways

The Parish Council pursued a range of issues through the year raised by residents affecting highways and roads.

An increasing number of large HGVs are using the A350 route through the village centre. The PC has made several representations to Dorset Highways to find ways of enforcing the voluntary one-way scheme for HGVs of using the A350 when travelling north to Shaftesbury and the C13 when travelling south from Shaftesbury. Motorbikes speeding through the village also raised concerns over noise and safety.



The PC made representations to Dorset Highways over installing speed restrictions along two sections of road: at Bedchester crossroads, and along the B3091 at Lower Hartgrove, but neither fall within the criteria stated in the Dorset Council policy for speed restrictions. A suggestion to install a Variable Speed Indicator device at the village's south entrance on the A350 to slow traffic was assessed but the cost proved prohibitive.

Dorset Highways carried out some remedial work on drainage outside Pipers Mill to alleviate the seasonal flooding by the bridge. The long-term solution of installing larger capacity drains has yet to be scheduled by Highways.



On the east side of the parish, the entrance to the DWT car park at the top of Fontmell Hill is now substantially narrowed by two concrete blocks, installed by the landowner to prevent flytipping. Several residents have reported finding these difficult to negotiate; other motorists are parking on the nearby verges.

Dorset Highways are pursuing a scheme to improve the junction at Gore Clump along the C13, following a fatal accident; a diagram of the proposed scheme is shown in Appendix 2. This work will be carried out in 2021 along with improvements to the C13 at Dinah's Hollow.

The Parish Council was obliged to meet the cost of cutting back a section of long hedge along Lurmer Street which was inhibiting the views of traffic for drivers and pedestrians, as Dorset Highways would not accept responsibility. The vegetation included several dead trees which had to be felled; new saplings were planted as replacements.

Several requests were made to Dorset Highways to re-surface Gupples Lane in Hartgrove but this remains outstanding.

6. Climate & Environment

Dorset Council has declared a Climate & Ecological Emergency. The PC responded to the Council's consultation in November on its Climate & Ecological Emergency strategy and action plan and encouraged residents to respond individually. Parish Councillors have attended the Peoples' Assembly run by the Dorset C&EE support group.

Parish litter picks planned in October and February had to be cancelled due to Covid lockdown restrictions. Through the Gossip Tree, residents were asked to keep the length of road verge adjoining their property free of litter to try to keep parish roads tidy. Posters and the Gossip Tree was also used to request that residents to "cut less, cut later" of their verges through the Spring and Summer to allow wildlife and plants to flourish in this habitat.

The lime tree at Bedchester crossroads was pruned and repair work undertaken to the adjacent verge to stop further erosion. Work was undertaken to clear moss on the pavement in Orchard Close which had become very slippery.

The defibrillator located in the School carpark has been regularly inspected and maintained through the year to ensure it stays in full working order. Thankfully it has not been needed in an emergency.

The parish's footpaths were generally in good order through the year. Dog fouling continued to be a problem along some lanes and footpaths; posters and labels were placed at many locations to remind dog walkers to clean up after their pet. The Middle Mill ponds in Mill Street had become clogged with Starwort over the summer. The ponds were subsequently cleared, partly by Dorset Wildlife Trust but mainly through the voluntary initiative of a resident, Gary Payne – a big thank you to Gary.

A footpath running from West Street to Sutton Waldron had been blocked by new gates erected by the landowner. Dorset Council Rangers were contacted to intervene and re-open this popular route.

7. Parish Projects

The Parish Council's new website came online in December enabling access across multiple devices (laptop, tablet, phones) to bring it into line with the prevailing accessibility regulations. The Clerk and Chair received training on how to maintain the site; the total cost of the upgrade was around £1000.

Publicity was given to the government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme, designed to enable residents to acquire fibre connection to their homes with very high-speed internet connection at a subsidised cost. There was limited interest from residents.

The PC attempted to purchase the BT telephone box outside the Village Shop, but the landowner decided to buy it. Its future use is not clear.

In a desire to make the PC's activities and its councillors more visible, a new blog was launched called Councillor's Chronicles. It is published monthly on the website and in the Gossip Tree. The aim is to talk about some of the activities of councillors in a light-hearted style, which may encourage new people to come forward to join the council.

8. Plans for 2021/22

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

- Promoting environmental "green" policies that help to provide and maintain habitat and food sources for local wildlife.
- Supporting Dorset County initiatives in tackling the Climate Change emergency.
- Arranging community litter picks.
- Promoting the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the village.
- Re-establishing physical Parish Council meetings.
- Commenting on Dorset Council's draft Local Plan 2021-37 expected in the summer or autumn.
- Updating the Neighbourhood Plan, to reflect the changes in Dorset's Local Plan that affect Fontmell Magna and ensure the Plan and its policies continue to carry weight in decisions on future planning applications.
- Continuing to ensure planning applications are in line with FMNP policies.
- Liaising with Pennyfarthing Homes regarding the proposed development in South Street (see Appendix 1).
- Maintaining the War Memorial and other village facilities owned by the PC.

It would be enormously helpful if some new people came forward to fill the remaining 2 councillor vacancies. **A parish with the importance, history and amenities of Fontmell Magna should have a fully constituted parish council**, to shape, protect and preserve the village and its surroundings which we all value and enjoy. Serving on the Parish Council is an enjoyable and rewarding way of contributing to our community.

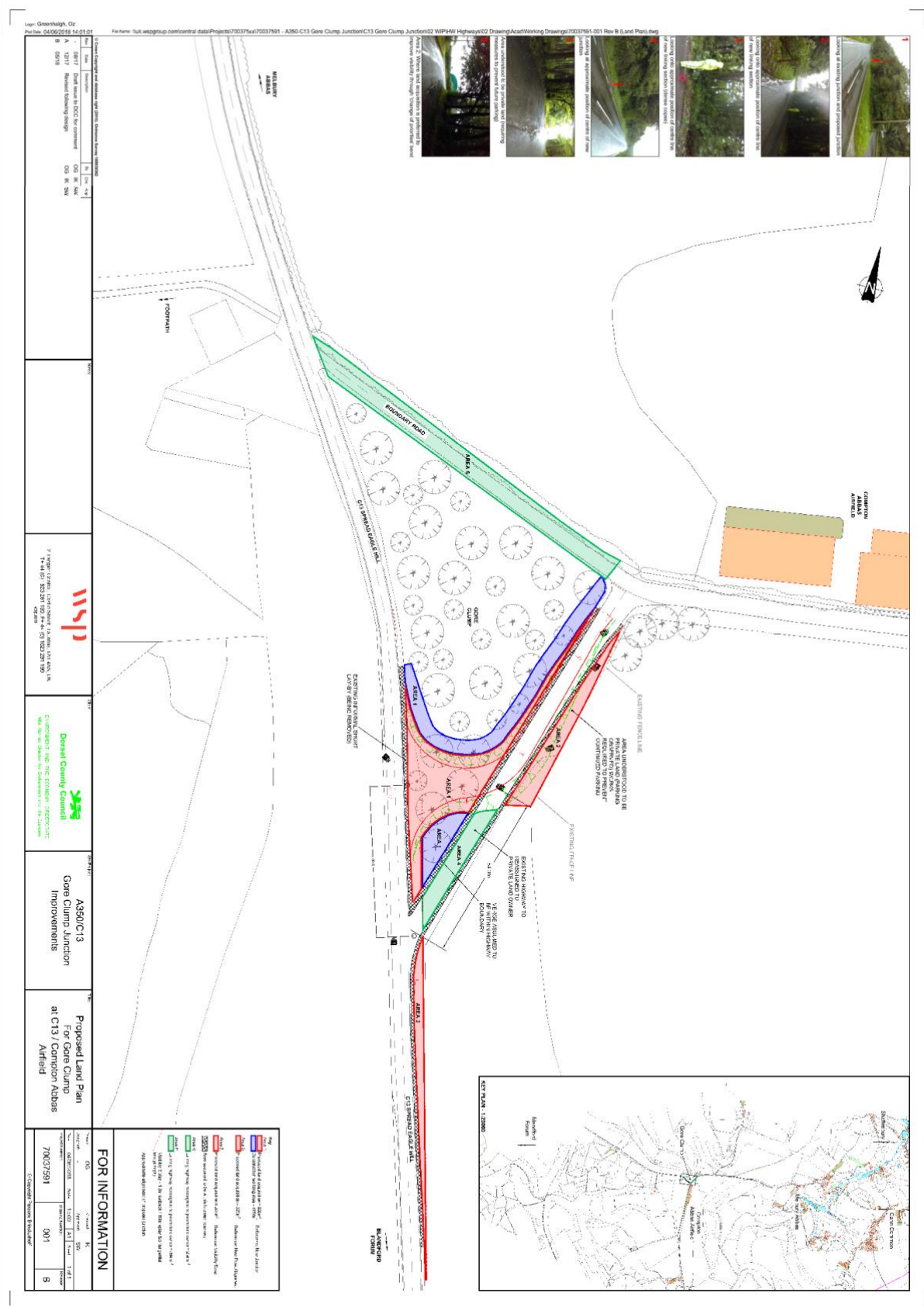
And finally – the PC wishes to thank The Gossip Tree editor and committee for their support, and Cllr. Somper for her support and regular updates. Also, thanks go to the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group who continue to provide advice on new planning applications. And special thanks to all who have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

MH/FMPC/May 2021

Appendix 1: Proposed development on Land South of Home Farm, South Street



Appendix 2: Junction Improvement at Gore Clump



Annual Report to Parishes...May 2021

Beacon Ward - Cllr Jane Somper

CllrJane.Somper@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Who would have imagined a year ago that we will have experienced so much change and disruption to our own daily lives along with everyone across the world, no exceptions, no one untouched by the devastation of a global Pandemic, not even here in quiet rural North Dorset where we experience a different pace to towns and cities, where we know our neighbours, where time can sometimes seem to move slower than in built up areas, where we are governed by seasonal changes of the land, through the work of our cherished farmers, ploughing, planting and sowing, where the sight, sound and for me the smells of agricultural vehicles and hay bales signify a move from summer to autumn.

Looking out at our beautiful countryside it has often felt that we are isolated from the ills of the world, but we know that we have not been. We have sadly lost people in our villages though this Pandemic and it's important to remember them and their families.

There have been positives and I am happy to acknowledge those with enthusiasm. Just look at how our communities all pulled together to help one another, to reach out to our neighbour, to enquire as to our health, whether we needed assistance with food shopping, with prescription collections, and above all we began to ask each other 'how are you feeling'. With mental health becoming far more acceptable to discuss and to talk about and I am delighted that so many people have felt they can talk about their feelings because talking is key to getting help if needed or sometimes just making us feel better, knowing we are not alone, that there are people who care and who are willing to listen. So I hope we continue to learn, to change and embrace new ways of working and living and do not revert back to type, except for those things we love to do.

While we have all been busy in our villages with many more people putting their hands up to volunteer, Dorset Council has not been standing still in the most challenging of times for an organisation of its size to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the 376,480 people who live in approx. 178,000 dwellings.

North Dorset alone is home to approx. 88,530 people with 36,362 households. 5,705 businesses, with Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing being the largest business category (17.62%). 88.1% are micro-business, employing 0-9 people. That's a great deal of people, businesses and homes all affected by what has occurred in the last year.

I think it is easy to dismiss Dorset Council and be critical and of course it gets things wrong, but it also gets much right dealing with an enormous range of issues for its 376,480 residents and 5,705 businesses. I have put in to context the enormity of what DC had to do in a very short space of time, showing it can be agile as it responded swiftly with its partners to the very clear seriousness and the well of anxiety and panic

by creating a programme of seven workstreams. And all this with 2,500 members of staff all working remotely from home overnight.

- Contact Centre across multiple organisations
 - Delivery network
 - Food and Medicine Supply
 - Community Support
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing
 - Digital
 - Data
-

MARCH 2020

The Council knew there were 10,000 people in the community (which rose to a high of 18,000 in the Dorset area at one point) who had been told they should shield as they were considered to be clinically vulnerable. The enormous amount of work by Adults and Children's teams along with colleagues in the NHS, local partners charities and direct from residents and Councillors cannot be underestimated. Everyone who needed assistance received it through an incredibly complex delivery system and using all the resources available to the Council. Staff from across the Council services were all part of delivering the essential items that our vulnerable residents needed.

The Council faced potential communication and awareness barriers. These were quickly and expertly addressed by the Communications Teams working together across all the partners to co-ordinate delivery on social media, traditional channels and bespoke communications for residents with specific needs.

APRIL 2020

During April resident needs changed from enquiries about food and general advice to concerns about medicine supply and request for help with chores (ie. dog walking). 375 highways vehicles were re-deployed, 250 people from DC, Dorset Public Health, Dorset CCG and five local volunteer organisations joined forces with a total pool of more than 1,000 volunteers across the Dorset Council area, all aiding where needed.

DC Highways crews took the surprise decision to deliver Easter eggs in all the food boxes leading up to Easter, I know how much this was appreciated.

MAY 2020

Loneliness and mental health became a focus from the contacts received into DC along with the continued contact for food, medicine, chores and general advice. The project team expanded to 2,500 volunteers including colleagues from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services and DC Housing Services in order to meet safeguarding plans to support residents who members of the team had an awareness of but whom DC had not received contact from or managed to contact themselves, ie. people that there were concerns about.

JUNE 2020

The work of DC settled down a little as the Lockdown eased but some areas had to deal with issues relating to the large numbers of visitors. During this time the systems were consolidated, and time was given to prepare for any anticipated future restrictions.

A Local Outbreak Management Plan was developed to enable delivery in the future. Staff from Revenues and Benefits service were also added to the team in order to all work together providing financial support to residents.

Not only did this project create in three weeks a collaborative and partnership-led customer-focussed, service-delivery system to a scale that would have usually taken more than a year to negotiate, design and develop, DC sustained this service for four and a half months and these services were reinstated twice subsequently. In so doing, they have demonstrated to the people of Dorset how much their council cares for them, and to all employees of Dorset Council what can be achieved when boundaries are removed and we blend technology with people to solve extreme and urgent problems.

COMMUNICATIONS DURING PANDEMIC

21,000 outgoing calls were made and 13,900 incoming contacts were received across email, telephone and online, approximately 1 contact made every 2 operational minutes.

30,000 emails sent to extremely clinically vulnerable residents during 2020/21

DORSET COUNCIL

DC has provided over £259 million of Covid Government grants and support to local business since April 2020

DC has exceeded its target of providing affordable new-build homes

Due to DC's speed of response to call for grants from Government the Council secured £19m to help deliver the climate and ecological emergency strategy

Dorset Children's Services have developed ambitious plans to create a new school for SEND children and young people for approx. 280 pupils and a leading national Centre of Excellence at St Mary's School. DC also announced an investment of £37.5m over the next 5 years, providing the best possible education for all Dorset SEND children and young people, St Mary's is just one part of this.

BEACON WARD WORK – Your Councillor

During the last year my own workload increased significantly with enquiries from residents and Parish Councils coming in high numbers daily. Things did become quieter once the initial worries and concerns were dealt with. I want to be honest and tell you that at times I found it very challenging, and felt as isolated as everyone else as I, along with other councillors tried to make sense of what was happening and what help was available and how to access assistance for our residents. I had direct contact with members of the Cabinet who were dealing directly with decisions in order to gather information to disseminate to the Parishes. I felt I needed to get out and help where I could, volunteering to collect prescriptions through a brilliantly run system up in Shaftesbury and doing food shopping and other chores for residents.

99% of the correspondence and calls I received were all polite and simply seeking guidance, however it is a shame that some people felt that being confrontational and aggressive was acceptable, I'm afraid it isn't and I told them so but at the same time I was aware that this is how some people found the world easier to cope with and calm was restored.

I was delighted to be asked to take on a new role as Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding. The Children's Directorate is ambitious and forward thinking and I have been impressed by all the staff I have met and spoken to in recent months. I was able to have one real-life visit to the CHAD (Children's Advice and Duty Service). A fascinating day observing meetings and listening to calls as the team of Social Workers did their work, it was sobering listening to some of the issues. The service functions 24 hours a day 7 days a week and is where anyone who is concerned about a child or young person can put through a call or email the service who will follow this up and investigate.

I do not know how many virtual meetings I have attended but it must run well into hundreds and with a lot of screen time and much has been achieved. Holding meetings with Highways and Dorset Council Rangers Teams for the ward along with individual Parish issue meetings.

There have been huge numbers of planning applications coming in (double the amount normally received by the Planning Department) and I've spoken with planning officers on a range of topics, requesting site visits, expressing concerns over decisions, discussing delicate conservation and listed buildings applications.

There have been many positive moments and possibly the highlight was a recent problem involving nesting swans. No day is ever the same, I never know what is going to come up, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Community Fund

Bids are being invited for the £3m Community Renewal Fund, from a £220m Government Fund. DC are seeking applications for the fund specifically for projects that focus on supporting people and communities most in need across the UK through the following priorities:

Investment in skills. Investment for local business. Investment in communities and place. Supporting people in to employment.

Applicants must be able to deliver and complete the project up to 31 March 2022. Bids need to be submitted to DC by 21st May for appraisal. DC will prioritise a shortlist of projects to submit to Government who will assess all bids submitted by lead authorities against set criteria and the successful projects will be announced by the Government from late July 2021.

More information here: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/business-consumers-licences/economic-development/submit-a-bid-for-the-community-renewal-fund.aspx>

Gigabit Broadband

60 community buildings across rural North Dorset from Blandford to Sherborne; including schools, community centres, a health centre, council depots, farms and adult social care residential homes are to be connected to next generation, gigabit-capable broadband due to a fund allocation from the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership by March 2022

This follows a competitive tender process that I am delighted that Beacon Ward based, Wessex Internet has been awarded the contract to deliver full-fibre to these community buildings.

Affordable Housing

DC has exceeded its target for providing new-build affordable housing in the county over the last 12 months despite the very challenging conditions. With building sites restricted and materials in short supply, joint efforts have proven successful. The outstanding work by Housing Association partners pulling out the stops has meant that safe and affordable housing has been made available for the residents of Dorset.

Throughout the pandemic the council team has done excellent work to prevent homelessness and supporting people who are homeless into settled and more permanent housing. While there is still a lot of work to do, the current pipeline of development is delivering well with excellent work from Housing Associations such as Magna, Sovereign and Aster. The council is currently working up a new Housing Strategy which will identify where there are gaps or mismatches in the type of housing, or housing related services, available across the Dorset Council area.

Virtual Council Meetings – High Court Ruling

Due to the High Court decision last week, Town, Parish, District, Unitary and Borough Councillors will need to return to physical meetings rather than carry on with virtual meetings after May 7th.

I am very happy to be able to go back to face-to-face meetings again it is important. However, due to current covid-19 regulations and safety rules it is not possible to hold meetings involving all Dorset Councillors in any of the buildings they own and therefore these meetings cannot be held until June 21st, assuming regulations change when indoor meetings involving larger numbers are hopefully allowed again. Town and Parish Councils face the same issue.

Like many of the Parish Council Meetings, Dorset Council has moved its annual meeting forward to avoid the May 7th deadline (that is why I cannot be with you this evening as I have important meetings already scheduled and many of the PC meetings are now clashing).

I am disappointed and frustrated to not be able to attend any of the Annual PC meetings in my ward that have been brought forward as this is a vital part of my Ward role, where I provide information to PC's and residents who attend and where they are able to ask me questions about Council business or matters of concern their village.

The Leader of DC, Cllr Flower states "Being able to hold Council Meetings virtually has been widely welcomed and a great success for Local Government during the pandemic. I am incredibly disappointed regarding the High Court ruling announced on Wednesday. Speaking to fellow Council Leaders across the country, we all agree that the Government should allow some flexibility in whether meetings are held in person, when social distancing rules allow, or remotely as has been the case for the past year. I am hoping that the Government will listen to the views of local government leaders and bring forward legislation as soon as possible so that virtual meetings can be part of the arrangements going forward. I understand that Parish and Town Councils are also being urged to respond to the legal ruling"

THE FONTMELL FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

The Fontmell Friendship Garden was an idea which materialised last November when talking to the social prescribing lead at the Blackmore Vale Practice. The village hall trustees had already actively made links with the surgery and were establishing many village initiatives as Covid arrived. The monthly community lunches had been very positively received and there was a will to continue to develop more projects involving members of the community.

Since the initial approval was gained from the Blackmore Vale Practice last December, the project has grown and in just five months we have a cut flower garden planted behind the surgery, built, nurtured and supported by volunteers within our community.

Local businesses have been generous in their support, enabling all the infrastructure to be in place and villagers have grown, propagated, bought and donated plants to fill the beds and the tubs which surround the village hall.

There have been garden preparation mornings, where the work has been really well supported by positive villagers, fuelled by the extraordinary cake makers of Fontmell Magna.

All the village stakeholders have a part in the project-

Springhead Trust have made three raised beds and planted two calm beds and offered practical support.

The Village shop have been selling plants and will continue to sell plants and flowers to sustain the project.

The pub have generously donated three beds and in return we have planted tubs around the pub with our plants.

The School have been growing and planting sunflowers and have also received plants we have grown for their own garden in school. They have really enjoyed the project and will be visiting my own garden in July and have been helping me maintain the village garden this afternoon – when ten children raced off the playground on spotting me - all keen to help.

The Under Fives have planted seed bombs for bee friendly flowers

Clayesmore school are providing hedgehog houses, two photographers for the open day, musical entertainment for the open day and art work to decorate the hall for open day

Bryanston have made a road side sign to sign post the garden and are providing musical entertainment on the open afternoon.

Within the village, many members of the garden club have grown seeds, assisted by villagers, friends and members of other villages. The craft club have sewn unique bunting to decorate the garden. The art club have painted the individual plant signs for the beds. The archive society are lending me all their equipment for a time line display on opening day and all the keep fit instructors who use the village hall have provided a raffle prize. Garden books have been donated and Barbara Humphreys has organised these into an excellent library for use once the garden is open.

It has truly been an extraordinary effort, spanning the generations and highlighting so many different skills.

The next stage is to become a place to benefit the patients of the Blackmore Vale Practice in addition to ourselves- and links are being established with other local social prescribing gardens and organisations to ensure we can work together for the benefit and enjoyment of others.

In the meantime, we hope to welcome you to the opening of the garden on June 26th between 1-4 pm, when Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Mr Angus Campbell will formally open the garden.

I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to everyone who is supporting this project.

Sian Highnam 26.5.21

St Andrew's Church Report for 2020

The biggest factor affecting the church during 2020 (and continuing into 2021) was the Coronavirus outbreak, which resulted in the church being closed for over one third of the year. This impacted not only on the life of the church, but also on mental health, weddings, funerals, the community and of course, the finances of the church.

During this time, prayer for the nation, our village and families continued in our homes and support groups were formed for essential supplies of groceries and medication. Those known to be a little isolated and without regular outside contact were kept in touch by telephone and while this was not formally structured the church community has held together. Foodbank donations were received via the shop.

When we came out of the first lockdown, services took place under the social distancing measures with face-coverings, sanitising, no singing or fellowship activities. So much taken away from the act of worship that attendance reduced. However, services continued as far as practicable, with the Harvest service taking a slightly different form, having a retiring collection in aid of families in Yemen instead of the usual offering of foodstuffs.

The Remembrance service in November was not possible in the church due to the space being inadequate for the sort of numbers expected while complying with social distancing requirements, so the names were read at the War Memorial only, (which still attracted over 50 bystanders).

Health protection measures to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus meant no coffee mornings or Sunday breakfast. Many joined in with Zoom for Homegroups and live Services as well as pre-recorded services on the website. One regular event which did go ahead was the Ride and Stride for Dorset Historic Churches Trust with one person doing a half-marathon.

It was a new challenge to make the church safe for services by reducing the number of seats that could be occupied, providing hand-sanitiser, masks and gloves and making sure we complied with the ever-changing rules and regulations set out by the government, including contact-tracing.

We thank all who have helped during a difficult year and it is reassuring that, together with the other important community facilities in Fontmell, the church is open and ready to serve our community. We look forward to seeing everyone again.



Fontmell Magna Community Land Trust Ltd

(a Community Benefit Society - FCA Reg. No:81113)

email: fontmell.clt@gmail.com

www.fmclt.org

REPORT TO FONTMELL MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

27th May 2021

Over the last 12 months we have had a very low profile, but we have not been idle.

We have done a lot of work to establish whether the CLT can purchase the freehold of the village shop. We believe this can be done, and we expect shortly to be issuing a prospectus for the issue of further shares in FMCLT, to get together the substantial amount of money for the purchase. The total sum required is likely to be over £400,000. We estimate that the project could support a mortgage of up to £150,000, so the amount we shall be looking to raise from residents, and from grants or donations, is around £250,000. The better the response from residents, the better the chance of getting grant support.

We have seen the success of comparable efforts in neighbouring villages, so we have grounds to be confident. If you are interested in becoming involved, please get in touch.

FMCLT members will be receiving a notice in the coming days, with more details.

Annual Parish Meeting 2021 Speedwatch Update

I have recently taken over as Speedwatch Co-ordinator from Robert McCurach. So first of all I would like to thank Robert for his superb work in establishing a group of volunteers who participate in Fontmell, for carrying out all the administration and ensuring that as the speedwatch operations have evolved we are up to date and actively taking part in trying to improve safety on our roads.

There has been a long period when it has not been permitted to carry out speedwatch checks because of the pandemic. This is particularly pertinent as there is not a safe site on the A350 in the village for the Dorset Police Speed Check van to safely operate.

A session to resume activities was arranged for Saturday 8 May but unfortunately this had to be cancelled because of rain. A new date is awaited.

Dorset Police are strongly committed to the Speedwatch process and are concerned to ensure that post lockdown resumption of traffic keeps to safe practice. Additional information is being collected regarding motorcycles which is a topic known to concern residents in Fontmell.

If anyone wishes to join the volunteers please get in touch with me on 811669 or at peter.mole@btopenworld.com

Peter Mole

The Gossip Tree May 2019 - May 2021

Since we last reported, there have been some changes to the team responsible for the Gossip Tree and we thank Chris Bellers and Ann and Mike Ashford for their significant efforts in editing the newsletter at different times within the last two years.

In October 2020, after a period of dual editorship with Ann and Mike, Graham Eames became solely responsible for each issue and he took on the role from the perspective of someone who had moved relatively recently into Fontmell Magna Parish.

His aim was to maintain a channel for information from clubs and organisations but also offer a forum for other material which it was hoped would be of broad appeal to readers, including reflecting the great scope of parish interests, initiatives and activities, and news from the wider community especially neighbouring villages.

The Gossip Tree has been available on the Parish Council website for quite some time but now reaches further parts of North Dorset through the neighbourhood app NextDoor. We estimate the current readership to be around 300 in addition to those who read it on NextDoor.

Other changes in the last eighteen months include larger font size, increase in the number of pages and more space between articles and listings. This has in part been made possible by the use of electronic distribution. With 120 paper copies printed each month rather than 290 as previously, we have been able to keep the cost of printing down despite needing more space and a modest increase in the price charged by the printers who are the very helpful Iwerne Valley Benefice Church Office.

Electronic versions allow for more flexibility and a slightly longer lead time to printing. Obviously, this arrangement does not suit everyone living in Fontmell Magna Parish, so we are extremely grateful to Jan and Rick Attfield for letting us leave 100 paper copies in their shop and post office for people to pick up in person, and also and especially to Sue Mercer who collects these paper versions from Iwerne Courtney and delivers them to both the shop and an extra 15 to more vulnerable households in all parts of the parish.

We thanked the delivery team last summer for their hard work over many years in taking the Gossip Tree round to each door in the parish, but which effort was no longer possible when the first Covid -19 restrictions came into force and then became unnecessary when we started delivering electronically. The Gossip Tree has been a team effort over 327 issues. Well done and thank you to everyone involved. This includes the regular contributors Judy Westgate and Alison Main, the Parish Council, and the combined efforts of the Village Hall Committee notably, Sian Highnam and Lisa Le Druillenec. There are also many people who keep us informed of events in the parish for whose contributions we are also grateful. Sponsors have played a large part in allowing us to continue to provide paper copies

and we very much appreciate their support. Sponsorship remains at £30 per edition and we are looking now for help with printing the late summer issues. Please contact fmgossiptree@gmail.com for details.

The Chimes was published as usual in 2019 and 2020 though the Directory became a victim of Covid in 2020. We have recently asked for contributions to a 2021 edition, but response has been extremely slow, and it is hard to justify the effort of producing it when there seems to be so little interest. Therefore, there will not be a directory this year unless the situation changes.

One other thing to say is that the Gossip Tree is for the whole community. We really welcome all appropriate contributions and will try to use whatever people send us: story/poem in 100 words, announcements (because we won't necessarily get to know about everything that should be mentioned), information about plans and events, local business initiatives that are relevant to the parish, photographs, young people's achievements or creative work, artwork, recipes, observations of the natural world – there are many ways that people living in Fontmell Magna Parish can contribute so please use the newsletter to share your interests and knowledge.

From the Gossip Tree Committee, Graham Eames, Amelia Berriman and Barbara Humphreys

Village Hall Annual Update June 2021

Just as lockdown eased last year, the weather turned to an English summer.

The Trustees, especially Lisa Le Druillenec and Dick Stainer had to spend so much time understanding all the advice from insurers, local and national government in order to stay one step ahead, keep what facilities we could open and operate in a COVID compliant building. It was a massive undertaking, enabled some user groups to run exercise classes, the playground and tennis court to stay open.

We had planned a Christmas Fayre in December but we quickly decided in September with 6 weeks' notice change this to an Early Christmas Market in October. As many of you will remember we were blessed with lovely, bright autumn weather, 22 stall holders, delicious food and fabulous music. We were delighted to raise a further £1700 towards the Playground Appeal which now stands at around £8,000 includes a large donation of £2,500 for a specific piece of play equipment for the under-fives.

Sadly not long after we have had to embrace further lockdowns but it gave us a chance to plan and carry out the maintenance of the playground, replace the old tennis net, repainting of the village hall internally and externally and upgrading the lighting to LED. More maintenance is due to start shortly following a very thorough Fire Risk Inspection this week.

Above all, Sian Higham's idea for the Village Hall Charity to create a cut flower garden on the land behind the Surgery began to take place, giving us all hope and something to look forward to in the future. The birth of The Fontmell Friendship Garden had started in earnest. Sian's drive and determination opened doors, raised money and had the first beds on the ground by the end of January. All of us are truly grateful for the time and work this has taken.

Due the great support we have seen from the wider community, the Village Hall Trustees are delighted to announce that we have created a Sub-Committee of 4 new volunteers who will assist Sian, Lisa and myself with running events and fundraising.

We will be running a Pop Up Café on a Wednesday afternoon from 2.00pm-4.00pm from Wednesday 30 June to welcome everyone for teas, cake, ice lollies etc (with all ingredients purchased from the village shop) so time can be spent admiring the garden. Hand tied posies will also be available. As the days draw in and subject to COVID being held at bay, we intend to re-ignite the Community Lunches in the Autumn.

Upcoming Events:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Saturday 26 June | Grand opening of The Fontmell Friendship Garden |
| Wednesday 28 July | Village Hall AGM followed by a talk from Laura Scott-Walby "Behind the Bouquets – a Kenyan Flower Journey" |
| Wednesday 4 August | National Play Day – Picnic in the Park (A national event celebrating children's play, free entry, multiply activities, tea and cakes) |