

The Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Plan 2010



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Executive Summary

The Parish of Okeford Fitzpaine is an attractive, rural community in North Dorset with a population of 979 people resident in 383 households (in the 2001 Census). Facilities in the Parish include a thriving primary school, a church, a village hall, a recreation ground, a village shop and Post Office, the Royal Oak public house and allotments in Okeford Fitzpaine.

Belchalwell has Saint Aldhelm's church and in Fiddleford the recently closed Fiddleford Inn has now re-opened. There is a range of leisure activity for people of different ages in the Parish: short-mat

bowling, football, First Friday Lunches, a youth club and a garden club. Employment in the Parish is slightly above the average for Dorset and North Dorset, with relatively higher levels of self-employment than elsewhere in Dorset. A number of small businesses are located in the Parish and farming and agriculture also provide employment.



This Parish Plan was produced following an open day, parish survey and two consultation events.

The main findings were that the village should develop as a mixed community with small-scale businesses being encouraged. Road safety and parking were reported as major concerns in an area in which most households have cars and public transport is considered inadequate. Dog fouling is another significant cause for concern. Although there are well used recycling facilities, the survey indicates that recycling collection could be further improved. The shop and Post Office were seen as valuable amenities, as were the village hall and church. People were generally satisfied with the village school and pre-school although there is potential for the school facilities to be used more widely. GP and dental services in Child Okeford and local towns were generally considered to be satisfactory.

Following analysis of the findings and further consultation on them, we recommend that:

- 1. The Parish Council supports small-scale business developments and industrial workshops;*
- 2. The Highway Authority is requested to implement a 20 mph speed limit in the centre of Okeford Fitzpaine;*
- 3. A request is made to the Highway Authority or Sturminster Newton Town Council for more regular use of speed indicator devices on the approaches to the village;*
- 4. Methods to reduce parking problems in the village centre are discussed with the school;*
- 5. A complete footpath from the village centre to the recreation ground is provided;*
- 6. The possibility of using the village hall car park for visitors and walkers is explored;*

- 7.** *NDDC requires adequate parking for residential development, with one parking space provided per bedroom;*
- 8.** *Discussions are held with bus operators and the Local Authorities to provide financial support to improve services to the more popular destinations;*
- 9.** *The Dog Warden Service is contacted to advise on action to deal with dog fouling;*
- 10.** *The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator liaises with the police to discuss the perception of aggravations reported;*
- 11.** *The recycling facility at the recreation ground be retained and residents informed or reminded of the facility;*
- 12.** *NDDC is informed of the survey results, encouraged to improve collection by collecting glass and garden waste from residences and informed of the interest in wheelie bins;*
- 13.** *The Parish Council continues to support the operators of the shop and Post Office, publicises Post Office services widely and vigorously resists any future proposals to close the Post Office;*
- 14.** *Volunteers are sought to explore the demand and options for bringing films, shows, plays and live entertainment to the Parish with relevant organisations such as Artsreach and Moviola;*
- 15.** *The detailed survey responses are fed back to the school and pre-school and the school is asked to consider whether adults might make more use of school facilities, how the school could be more involved in the community and what use might be made of people willing to help the school;*
- 16.** *The provision of more play equipment at Bowey field be explored;*
- 17.** *We explore the possibility of CommUnity.com being distributed every month to each household in the Parish;*
- 18.** *The Parochial Church Councils are informed of the interest in the use of the Church for concerts and other activities; and*
- 19.** *The Parochial Church Councils are informed of the results of the survey to allow the Council to consider changes that may be necessary for their Churches to serve the needs of the community.*

Background

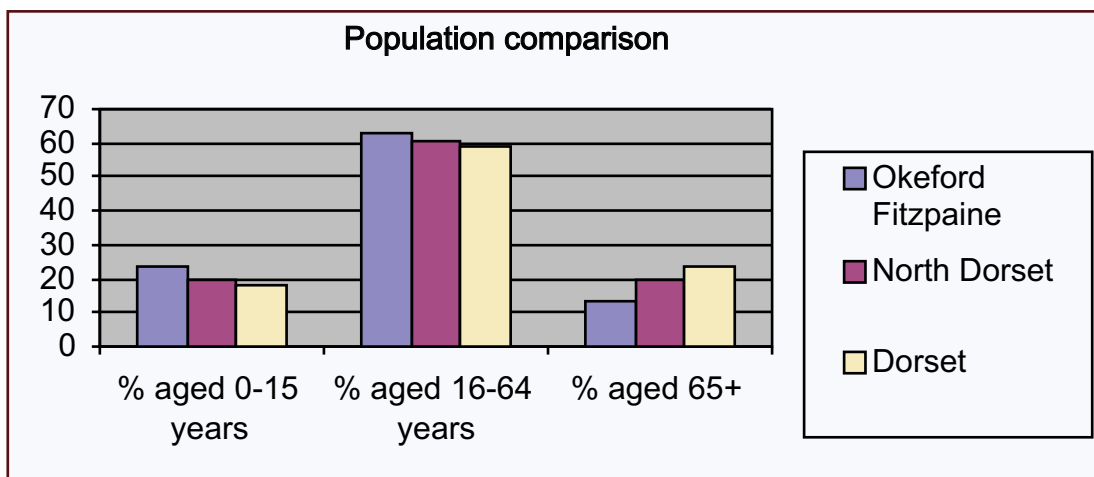
The Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Plan has been prepared with the encouragement of the Government following legislation in 2000. It was funded mainly by a grant from Dorset County Council with the support of North Dorset District Council and other agencies such as Dorset Community Action. The plan records what residents feel about their Parish; what they like about it, what they dislike and what, if anything, should be done to make it a better place to live in the future. An important reason for producing the Parish Plan is that it provides evidence to support applications for resources from organizations such as the County and District Councils. This plan contains only proposals on which residents have expressed their views.

Introduction

Okeford Fitzpaine is one of 74 Parishes in North Dorset District. The Parish consists of the village of Okeford Fitzpaine and the hamlets of Fiddleford and Belchalwell together with some other individual properties.

Population

The 2001 census showed a population of 979 people in the Parish, living in 383 households, of these 192 people were resident in Belchalwell (the population of Fiddleford was unavailable). The profile of the population in the Okeford Fitzpaine Parish from the 2001 census was considerably different from North Dorset and Dorset as a whole. The last census showed a significantly higher proportion of children living in the Parish, being 23.8% against an average in Dorset as a whole of 17.9% and a slightly higher proportion of lone parent households. Also there was a lower percentage of people over 65 years compared to North Dorset and Dorset and at 19% considerably fewer pensioner households compared to 31% (North Dorset) and 33% (Dorset). These figures are set out in the following chart:



The tenure of residents in the Parish also differs from North Dorset and Dorset with a slightly lower percentage of owner-occupiers (70% in Okeford Fitzpaine, compared to 73% in North Dorset and 76% in the county. Nearly a fifth of households (19.4%) live in rented council/housing association properties in the Parish, which is considerably higher than North Dorset (13.8%) and in Dorset (12.1%).

Facilities

Several facilities are currently available to people in the Parish. Okeford Fitzpaine village has: a thriving primary school which is associated with the Oak Tree pre-school playgroup located in the school grounds; Saint Andrews Church which, in addition to religious services has an enthusiastic bell ringing group; Ye Olde Bell Stores village shop and Post Office; the Royal Oak public house; allotments; Fippenny Garage vehicle repair and MOT workshop; and a recently improved and extended Village Hall which is used for a variety of functions and leisure activities.



In addition to these facilities, Belchalwell has Saint Aldhelm's Church and in Fiddleford there is the Fiddleford Inn. The Inn recently closed and at the time of writing is thought to have been sold and we hope that this will once again be a facility for people in that part of the Parish. There is also a medieval manor house in Fiddleford which dates from around 1370.



There are facilities in the Parish for tourists including: bed and breakfast accommodation; a caravan and camping site and holiday rental properties.

Activities

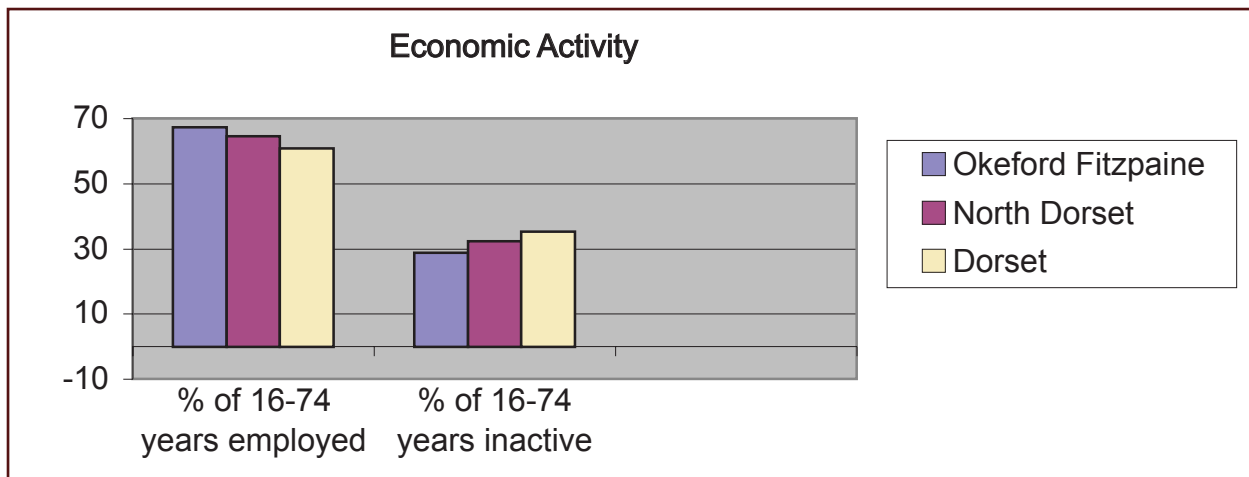
Diverse interests are currently provided for in the Village Hall at the Fippenny Garden Club, Short Mat Bowls Club and in dancing, pilates and keep fit classes, together with occasional quiz nights and concerts. A community lunch has recently been started in the Hall on the first Friday of each month. It is run by members of the church congregation and its popularity has increased with each passing month, recently exceeding sixty people. For young people there is a weekly Youth Club.

Okeford United Football Club, founded in 1900, is based at the recreation ground and is an important part of the community. Two men's teams, eight (boys) youth teams and a veterans men's team, play at the recreation ground on Castle Lane. The Pavilion is used for showering and changing. This licenced premises is also used for socializing after matches. The pavilion is used for other events including monthly meetings of the Parish Council. Plans are in hand to extend the pavilion so that it can cater for larger gatherings.

The Fippenny Fayre is an annual event held in the recreation ground. Skittles teams, darts teams and a quiz team operate from the Royal Oak public house. Use of the recreation ground as a children's play area is gradually being superseded by Bowey Field in Lower Street, which is more central and better served by footpaths. Bowey Field was obtained after the Bowey housing developments were built starting in 1993. It also has junior football pitches and a basketball court.

Employment

Historically Okeford Fitzpaine has been an agricultural Parish, certainly since the Enclosure Acts of the 19th century and this is reflected in the number of private houses which are described as farmhouses. Nowadays people work in a wide variety of occupations in diverse locations. Questionnaires returned in the 2007 survey indicated that over 50% of those working were employed outside the Parish about half of whom travelled more than 10 miles to their workplace. More than 35% of respondents were self employed. The 2001 census showed that 67.2% of the 16 to 74 years old people within the Parish were employed; this is slightly higher than the average for both North Dorset and Dorset. Less than 2% were unemployed and 29% economically inactive, both slightly lower than elsewhere in Dorset.



The Faccenda chicken processing factory in Higher Street, provided employment for many people until it closed in late 2007. Employers in the Parish include: Fiddleford Mushrooms; Fippenny Garage; Goddard Landscapes; ND Young Haulage and Wessex Homes. Farming and agriculture also provide employment in the Parish.

Location

The Parish is located on the southern edge of the Blackmore Vale, Thomas Hardy's 'vale of little dairies', just north of Okeford Hill and Bell Hill which are part of the Wessex Ridgeway. The county town, Dorchester, is about 18 miles south-west and the major conurbation of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch lies on the coast some 25 miles to the south-east. Blandford Forum is about 7 miles to the south-east and Sturminster Newton is 3 miles north. Neither Okeford Fitzpaine nor Belchalwell have major roads running through them. The Parish is principally served by the A357 which connects with the primary route A350 at Durweston Bridge. The A350 runs northward from Poole through Shaftesbury and Warminster before passing west of Chippenham to join the M4 at Junction 17. From Durweston the A357 goes northwest passing through part of Fiddleford and to the south of Sturminster Newton, eventually joining the A303 primary route at Wincanton.

For over 300 years most of the village of Okeford Fitzpaine and surrounding land was owned by the estate of the Pitt Rivers family, members of which still live in Hinton St Mary Manor House about a mile north of Sturminster Newton. In 1966 death duties forced the sale of the majority of the Estate's tied cottages and farm holdings some of which were in the Parish.

The attractiveness of the central part of Okeford Fitzpaine village is reflected in its designation as a conservation area in 1974. This classification has been carried forward into the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan which was adopted in January 2003. The Local Plan also shows the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which occupies a large swathe of land south-west of the A357, penetrating part of the southern section of the Conservation Area. The view from Ye Olde Bell Stores towards the church is of county-wide and even national recognition having been featured in several publications on village and rural life. There is also an historic pound, a lock up and a small museum in Okeford Fitzpaine.

Belchalwell is a hamlet divided into two parts: Lower Belchalwell by the Church and Belchalwell Street immediately below the steep slope of Bell Hill. Fiddleford is approximately two miles north of Okeford Fitzpaine village and is served by the A357. There is a narrow class 3 road which passes in front of the Fiddleford Inn, before going north then west for about half a mile towards the disused Fiddleford Mill. Immediately south of the mill is another ancient building, Fiddleford Manor, which was probably built by William Latimer, Sheriff of Somerset and Dorset, in about 1370. It is now owned by English Heritage and is open to the public.

The Stour, Dorset's major river, flows from Stourhead in Wiltshire via Sturminster Newton, Blandford, Wimborne and North Bournemouth to merge with the Hampshire Avon in Christchurch where it enters the sea through Christchurch harbour at Hengistbury Head. The river flows close to Fiddleford, where it used to provide the power for Fiddleford Mill, before passing within 2 miles of Okeford Fitzpaine as it bisects the nearby villages of Child Okeford and Shillingstone. A trailway, opened in 2008, runs approximately five miles from Sturminster Newton to Gaines Cross via the recently renovated Shillingstone station. It passes close to Fiddleford, following the disused Somerset and Dorset railway line, providing a scenic route for walkers and cyclists.

The Process

From the start of the process of developing this plan, local people have been encouraged to make their opinions known on any issues which are important to them. Views were obtained in a variety of ways including a public meeting, an open day and a survey.

Following several discussions on producing a Parish Plan the process was started at the Parish Council meeting of 7th February 2006 when it was agreed to hold a public meeting on 15th February to consider the production of the plan. Following that meeting the Parish Council resolved on 7th March 2006 to proceed with the production of a new plan to replace the Parish Appraisal, a document published in October 1985.

A Steering Committee was appointed to co-ordinate the process of preparing the plan. Regulations required that the Parish Council should have a maximum of 2 members on the committee. An advertisement in the 'Fippenny News', Parish magazine, produced no volunteers and it wasn't until a letter and questionnaire seeking expressions of interest had been distributed to all households, in June 2006 that 4 residents volunteered to join the Steering Committee. They were joined by 2 Parish councillors.

This acting Steering Group became operative in early October 2006 and the first action was an unsuccessful attempt to try and recruit new members from Belchalwell and Fiddleford. The next step was to complete a Parish Plan Budget application form for submission to the Dorset Strategic Partnership. This process was facilitated by Simon Thompson of Dorset Community Action and the grant application was made on 30th October 2006. Notification that the application had been successful was received in late November 2006 indicating that £2756.00 would be made available for the production of the plan. This enabled work to go ahead.

Open day

It was decided that the best way to bring the plan to the attention of residents was to organize an open day after the Christmas Holidays were over and children were back at school. In January 2007 a flyer was sent to households in the Parish inviting residents to the open day, on Saturday 3rd February, in the village hall at which the process of producing the plan and its purpose was explained. To provide more interest several Parish organizations were invited to provide stalls with information on their activities. Principal amongst these were the school and playgroup who were joined by representatives of the short-mat bowls club, gardening club, football club, youth club and the Three Okefords Preservation Society. Also in attendance were the community police van, officers of North Dorset District Council and Dorset Community Action.

The 134 people who attended the open day were asked to record the issues which were important to them so that the information gathered from this exercise could form the basis for the design of a questionnaire to be circulated to all households in the Parish. The principal issues of concern were, in order of percentage of times mentioned (to nearest whole number):-

23%	complete the village hall extension
21%	excessive vehicle speeds
16%	dogs fouling footways
12%	retain the village Post Office
9%	problems caused by parking outside the village school
8%	people dropping litter
8%	inadequate recycling facilities
7%	inadequate recreation facilities for the under fives
7%	footpath needed to the recreation ground
5%	more low cost housing required
4%	smells from the chicken houses and factory
4%	graffiti
4%	reduce numbers of heavy goods vehicles in village

The open day also produced 2 more volunteers for the Steering Committee.

Survey

Representatives from Okeford Fitzpaine Primary School, the playgroup and the church contributed to the design of the questionnaire. About 350 questionnaires were distributed during September 2007 and recipients were asked to return them to the village school, The Fiddleford Inn, The Royal Oak or Ye Olde Bell Stores by the end of October. There was a good response with 142 households (40.6%) returning questionnaires which represented the views of 342 people of all ages.

Responses to the questionnaire were collated and prepared for analysis so that the primary concerns of residents could be identified and courses of action decided upon.

Consultations

Two further consultation exercises were carried out in 2009 to determine whether the perceptions of issues had changed since the original survey in 2007 and to include the views of people who had moved into the parish more recently. On Sunday 21st June a presentation was mounted at the annual Fippenny Fayre which was held at the recreation ground, Castle Lane, Okeford Fitzpaine. The display was visited by 80 people many of whom provided written comments. The exhibition was also displayed at Okeford Fitzpaine Primary School Summer Fair on Saturday 4th July when it was visited by 37 people. Many of those attending were children, some of whom gave written comments on the issues and recommendations. At both of these consultation events copies of the first Draft Plan were available for examination.

Summary of findings

This section provides a summary of the main findings from the survey open day and two subsequent consultations. It includes individuals' comments in italics.

- **The future**

People wanted to see the Parish stay much as it is.

"It is a beautiful part of England let us try and protect and keep it that way."

"It's a pleasure to live in such a nice quiet and peaceful village."

Development should be as a mixed community with small-scale businesses and industrial workshops encouraged on the Faccenda site, to provide a self-sustaining, viable community.

"We would like to see the village kept as a working community, not become a dormitory village."

There were conflicting views on further residential development, with more people against than in favour.

"Okeford Fitzpaine has already a disproportionate amount of new housing (mainly social) so shouldn't require additional building on green field sites within the Parish."

- **Road Safety**

Many people wished to see traffic speeds reduced and the most popular means for improving road safety were reducing the speed limit in the centre of Okeford Fitzpaine to 20 miles per hour, introducing electronic speed indicators and enforcing parking restrictions in the centre of the village.

There is strong support for a complete footpath from the village centre to the recreation ground.

“The level of traffic through the village and the speed of vehicles are the MOST CRITICAL issues for all of us.” “There is no impediment to speeding traffic and there needs to be.”

- **Transport**

Most Parishioners travel by private motor vehicles with an average of almost 2 vehicles per household, and very few households (4%) without cars. One in ten cars was parked on-street. Parking near the village school, especially when dropping off and collecting children, was identified as a particular problem. Parking for visitors is also needed. Two thirds of people considered public transport to be inadequate.

- **Aggravations**

Dog fouling caused by far the greatest concern in the Parish, with vandalism and theft also mentioned.

“Dog fouling is a major problem around the village.” “Dog fouling should be more firmly clamped down on.”

- **Recycling/refuse collection**

The recycling facilities at the recreation ground are well used and should be retained and recycling would be improved by the collection of glass and green waste.

- **Shopping and Post Office facilities**

The village shop and Post Office were shown to be important local amenities, with three quarters of the survey respondents using the shop and half using the Post Office more than 5 times each month.

“We find the village shop and Post Office facility excellent and friendly.” “Should our village shop and Post Office come under threat we should mount a major campaign to save it.”

Blandford was, unsurprisingly, the main shopping centre beyond the Parish used by people.

- **Recreation and Leisure**

Okeford Fitzpaine village hall was the facility most widely used for a range of activities. A considerable variety of popular leisure and recreational activities were enjoyed in the Parish although people also expressed an interest in having films, shows, and plays or live entertainment. More play equipment at Bowey field for younger children was requested.

- **Education**

Good use was made of the school and pre-school in Okeford Fitzpaine, indicating general satisfaction although responses indicated that there could be scope to increase the use of school facilities and to increase the engagement of the school in the community. Volunteers said they were willing to help out in the school, join the Governors or the PFA should the need arise.

- **Health**

Most people used the Child Okeford surgery and there is a prescription collection service operating through the village shop. Others used Sturminster or Blandford surgeries. While four out of five people were satisfied with GP services, only two thirds were satisfied with dental treatment. At the time of the survey, dissatisfaction was due to lack of NHS dentistry, although this is now less of a problem with the introduction of an NHS dental surgery in Sturminster Newton.

- **Communication**

The Fippenny News and Blackmore Vale magazine are the most powerful means of written communication in the Parish, although word of mouth, the Parish notice board and posters all play an important role in promoting effective communication.

- **The church**

Was also seen as important - as a tourist attraction, a community focal point and for significant events such as births, marriages and deaths. A change to the style or length of services might encourage people to go to Church more often.

Detailed findings, issues and recommendations

This section provides detailed findings drawn mainly from the survey and including evidence from the open day and consultations. It reports the issues causing concern, areas for improvement and then makes recommendations to address them.

- **The future**

The survey indicated that residents would like the Parish to develop as a working community (119) or mixed community (103), although 88 people thought the Parish should stay as it is, maintaining its character and mix of population and businesses.

A strong preference was expressed for encouraging the development of small businesses, which was rated most highly in the 'strongly in favour' and 'in favour' categories. There was also support for small-scale industrial workshops. There were mixed views on more residential housing with the majority expressing views that it should not be encouraged (101), 57 stating definitely not, contrasted with 71 in favour, 29 strongly so. Almost twice as many people said 'definitely not' compared to those 'strongly in favour.'

Development in the Parish

	Strongly in favour	In favour	No opinion	Reservations	Definitely not
Small businesses	85	87	25	8	8
Small-scale industrial workshops	51	79	20	24	27
More residential housing	29	42	43	44	57

The preferred use of the Faccenda Factory site in Higher Street was for small businesses (104) and industrial use (77). If the site was not developed for industrial usage, responses were split as to whether another employment site in the village should be found, with 155 in favour, 109 against and 31 suggesting the Faccenda site in Shillingstone Lane. In the survey, 39 people indicated they wanted to see the factory site used for allotments. However, in 2009 a site for allotments was established in Back Lane and at the time of writing, 17 allotments are in use by 25 allotment holders.

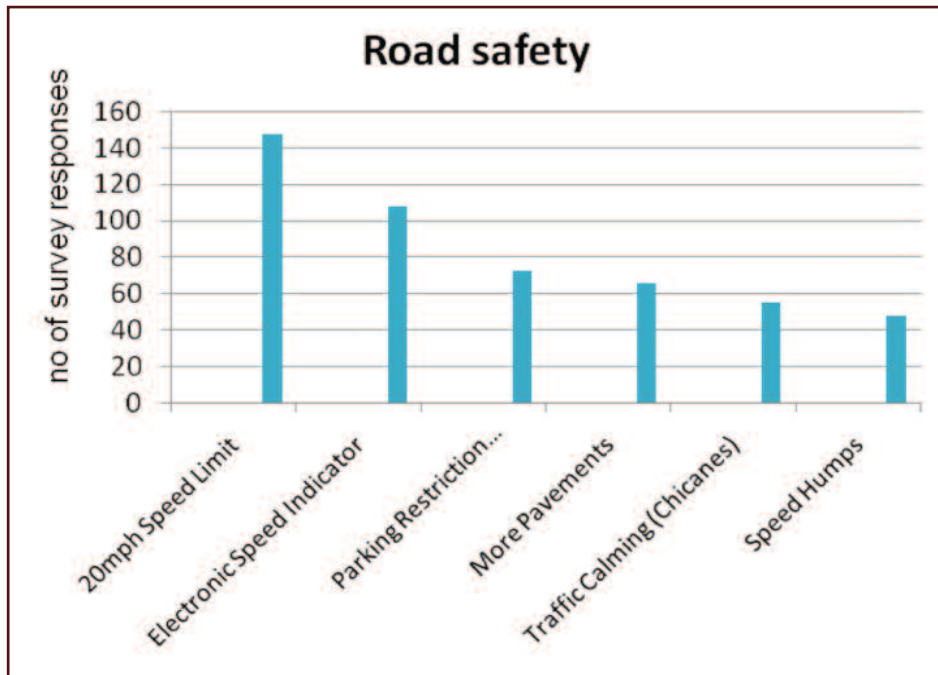
In conclusion, people wanted to see the Parish develop as a mixed community with small-scale businesses and industrial workshops being encouraged. On balance the survey indicated that more people were against further residential development than in favour.

We recommend that:

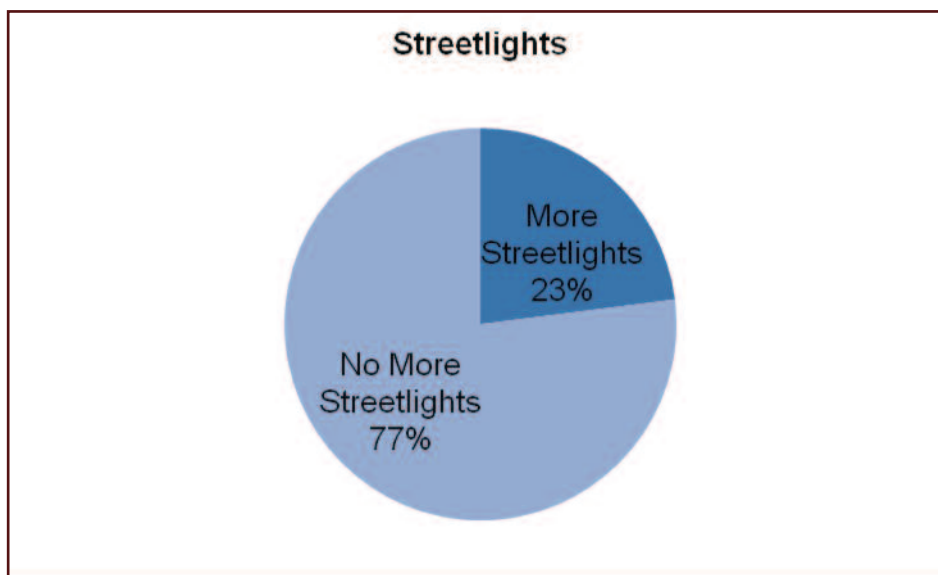
The Parish Council supports small-scale business developments and industrial workshops.

- **Road Safety**

Arising from concerns expressed about road safety in the survey, many people in the Parish wished to see traffic speeds reduced both on the approaches to Okeford Fitzpaine and on the roads within the settlements. The consultations in 2009 confirmed that this remains a significant cause for concern. The most popular measures for slowing vehicles are reducing the speed limit in the centre of Okeford Fitzpaine to 20 miles per hour (22% of responses to question 4.1) and the introduction of electronic speed indicators (16%). The perceived need to enforce parking restrictions in the centre of the village (11%) is the result of traffic problems which occur, particularly when parents are dropping off or picking up children at each end of the school day. This puts small children in danger when they have to walk between parked vehicles. The need for a public car park for walkers or visitors to the church and village was also indicated at the consultations. If the village hall car park is to be used for this purpose, the existing sign would need to be removed or amended to indicate that parking is permitted.



The introduction of speed humps (sleeping policemen) was requested in 7% of the responses to the survey, but these can only legally be installed in areas with street lights. However, when asked about street lights many more people answering the question (77%) said they did not want any more lights compared to only 23% asking for more.



The introduction of speed humps and increased street lighting could, therefore, be seen to be against the wishes of the majority. Traffic calming by means of chicanes was not popular, achieving only 8% of total responses.

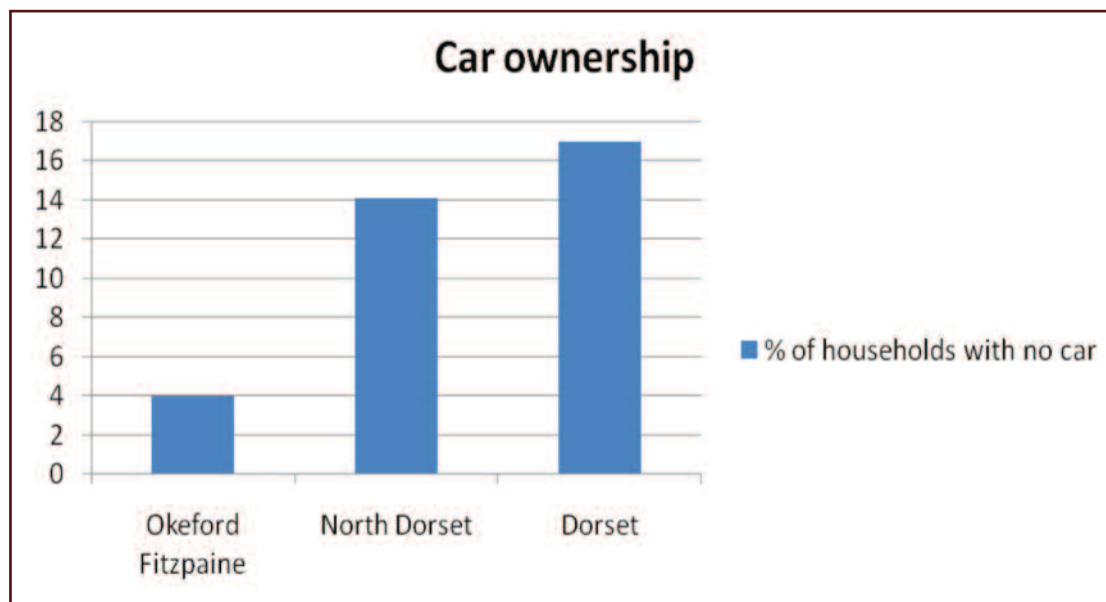
About 10% of people answering question 4.1 (66 responses) would like more pavements to be provided. Since the survey was carried out a new footpath has been provided by the Parish Council northwards from Ridouts to Castle Cottage in Castle Lane. There was strong support at the consultation events in 2009 for a complete footpath from the village centre to the recreation ground.

We recommend that

- 1. The Highway Authority is requested to implement a 20 mph speed limit in the centre of Okeford Fitzpaine;*
- 2. A request is made to the Highway Authority or Sturminster Newton Town Council for more regular use of speed indicator devices on the approaches to the village; methods to reduce parking problems in the village centre are discussed with the school;*
- 3. a complete footpath from the village centre to the recreation ground is provided; and the possibility of using the village hall car park for visitors and walkers is explored.*

Transport

The survey demonstrated the heavy reliance in the Parish on private motor vehicles as a means of transport. Of the 241 responses to the question “Which of the following is your major means of transport?” 212 people indicated that they travelled in their own car or with other drivers. This helped to confirm the answers to the question on car ownership and use which indicated that the 142 households responding had 252 vehicles available to them of which nearly 10% had to be parked on-street. Car ownership, therefore, is about 1.8 vehicles per household. The 2001 census shows that only 4% of households in Okeford Fitzpaine have no car, this compares with 14.1% for North Dorset and 16.96% for Dorset as a whole.



One of the reasons contributing to the very considerable dependency on cars may be that public transport is seen by many people to be a poor alternative mode of travel. Nearly 60% of respondents found public transport inadequate for their needs while about 40% considered it to be acceptable. If public transport services could be improved the most popular destinations, perhaps unsurprisingly, were Blandford, Poole/Bournemouth, Sturminster Newton, Dorchester and Gillingham.

These survey results give apparently contradictory conclusions. Although there seems to be a need for more parking spaces, this could encourage more private vehicle ownership and militate against increased use of buses, even if public transport were to be improved. Reducing street parking could have the benefit of making roads safer for pedestrians. Increasing the coverage of bus services would improve accessibility to essential facilities for people without cars and also allow car owners the choice of an alternative mode of travel. The possibility of introducing a car sharing scheme was explored at the consultations in 2009 and was overwhelmingly considered to be impractical.

Obtaining better levels of off-street parking would require North Dorset District Council to agree to ensure that developers provide higher levels of car parking for new housing in rural areas. Improvement of bus coverage could be more difficult to achieve since services would probably need to be subsidised, at least in the early stages and money would have to be acquired from Dorset County Council.

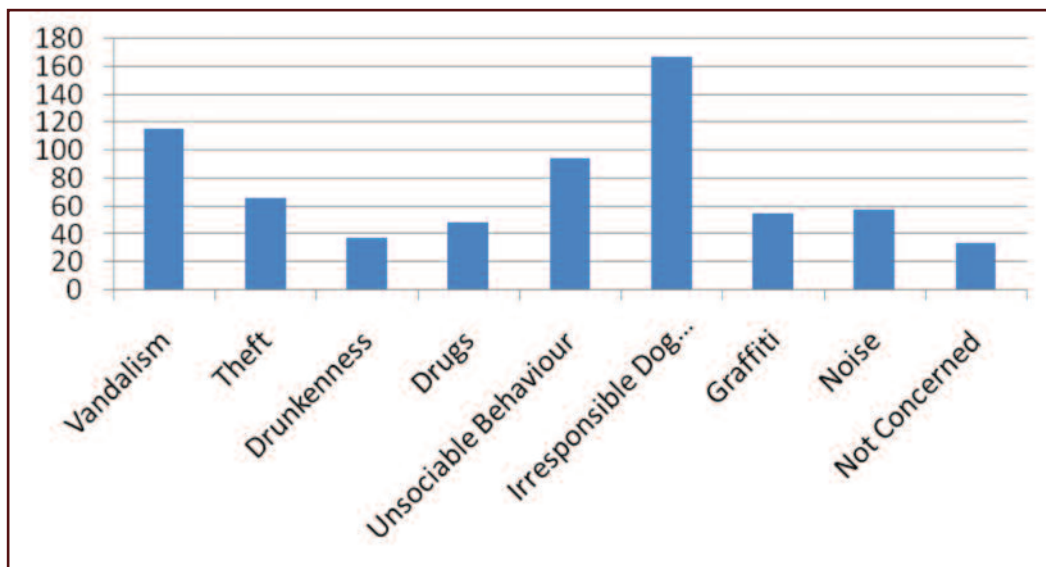
To improve road safety, we recommend that

1. *NDDC requires adequate parking for residential development, with one parking space provided per bedroom; and*
2. *discussions are held with bus operators and the Local Authorities to provide financial support to improve services to the more popular destinations.*

Aggravations

When asked what anti-social behaviour caused most concern in the Parish, the major issue was irresponsible dog owners and dog fouling (167 responses). This was also a significant issue raised at the open day. Other concerns were vandalism (116) and unsociable behaviour (95). Less frequently mentioned were theft (66), noise (58), graffiti (49), drugs (49) and drunkenness (38). Although 34 respondents said they were not concerned at all suggesting that most of the problems are of a relatively low order.

Aggravations



More than half of survey respondents considered dog fouling to be a major concern. It is not just a nuisance, but is also an offence that could lead to a fine. The availability of more visible bins for dog mess was suggested at the Fippenny Fayre consultation. Advice will be sought from the Dog Warden Service to explore what action might be taken to improve the situation.

With regard to vandalism and other anti-social behaviour, it would be important to know both the real incidence and sources of any problems so they can be dealt with, rather than the reported perception. The open day elicited some comments about the need for more police patrols or presence in the Parish. A Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator was appointed in 2009 and he will provide a point of contact with the police.

We recommend that

- 1. The Dog Warden Service is contacted to advise on action to deal with dog fouling; and*
- 2. The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator liaises with the police to discuss the perception of aggravations reported.*

Refuse/Recycling

Responses to the survey question on this topic indicate that most people were aware of the recycling facility at the Recreation Ground. It was used by 178 people out of a total of 266 respondents (67%). This indicates that the recycling facility is well used and should be retained. However, 38 people (14%) were unaware of its existence and this suggests that it would be useful to inform or remind residents of the facility.

There was a number of suggestions for the improvement of the refuse collection/recycling systems. The most frequently mentioned was glass collection (166), followed by the collection of green/garden waste (146). The use of wheelie bins was mentioned in 92 responses. The collection of cardboard attracted 21 mentions. The survey indicated that correct separation of items (108) would be an improvement. In retrospect, the correct separation of items was perhaps mistakenly included as an option since recycled articles are, apparently, separated mechanically elsewhere.

We recommend that

- 1. The recycling facility at the recreation ground be retained and residents informed or reminded of the facility; and*
- 2. NDDC is informed of the survey results, encouraged to improve recycling by collecting glass and garden waste from residences and informed of the interest in wheelie bins.*

Shopping and Local Economy

Ye Olde Bell Stores and Post Office

Survey responses to questions on the village shop and Post Office demonstrate the importance of these 2 amenities to the local community. When asked how many times they used the village shop 196 people out of a total of 274 (72%) indicated that they used it more than 5 times each month. People were generally pleased with the range of services provided in the shop with only very small numbers requesting any other specific services. Although fewer people use the Post Office it is nevertheless vital for local people. Out of 265 people responding to the question on Post Office usage 139 (52%) said they visited it more than 5 times per month. The significance of the Post Office to the Parish is reinforced by the fact that it is used not only for general postal services but also for collecting pensions and other allowances, for personal banking, giro bank services and for purchasing saving certificates.

We recommend that

- 1. The Parish Council continues to support the operators of the shop and Post Office, publicises Post Office services widely and vigorously resists any future proposals to close the Post Office.*

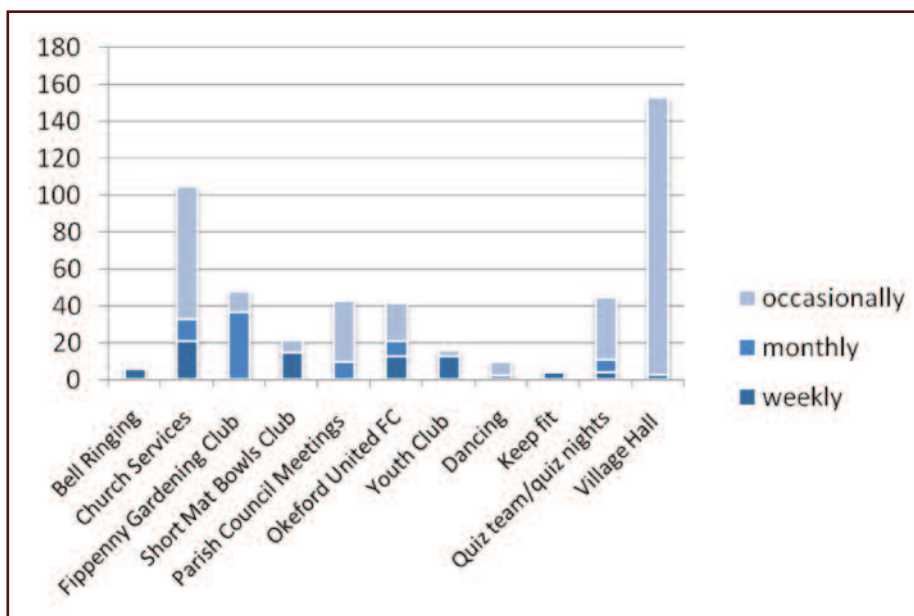
Main Shopping Destinations

Blandford Forum is clearly the main shopping centre for most people in the Parish since it featured in twice as many responses as 11 other destinations added together. A small number of people shop on the internet. It is perhaps not surprising that Blandford is the first choice of the majority given that it is the nearest town with a choice of supermarkets and a range of independent outlets. At the time of the survey the choice of supermarket was between Somerfield and Tesco. Since then Morrisons have opened a branch in Blandford in the disused Safeway premises and a new Co-op has opened on the site of the bus garage. Independent retailers in Blandford include butchers, greengrocers, clothes shops, opticians and many other services.

Recreation and Leisure

In the Parish the most frequently mentioned facility used was the village hall followed by the church. 150 people/respondents said they occasionally used the village hall and 72 used the church. Other events mentioned were: the monthly Fippenny Garden Club meetings (37 mentions); the quiz team/quiz nights (34); Parish Council meetings (33) and Okeford United Football Club (21).

Recreation and Leisure



When asked what new clubs or activities people would attend if provided, there was considerable interest in two: films and shows (156 mentions) and plays/live entertainment (136). The next most popular activities, although with significantly fewer mentions, were: book club (41); self defence/martial arts (30); lunch club (27) and choir (22). 29 people in the Parish said they would be willing to run sessions of interest to them.

Village facilities appeared to be well used, in particular the village hall and church. There is sufficient evidence to warrant exploring the options for bringing films, shows, plays and live entertainment to the Parish.

We recommend that:

1. volunteers are sought to explore the demand and options for bringing films, shows, plays and live entertainment to the Parish with relevant organisations such as Artsreach and Moviola.

Education

A large majority of survey respondents (190 to 45) were in favour of using the school premises, particularly the newly extended ICT suite, for adult education. 111 people indicated that they were prepared to help the school in some way, with 27 prepared to become a school Governor or to join the Parents and Friends Association. The same number of people also suggested that the school should be more involved in the community.

Other survey responses also showed that:

1. The majority of people were satisfied with the recreation facilities for toddlers (106) although 28 were not;
2. All 7 respondents to the question, indicated that their children would attend Okeford Fitzpaine Primary School;
3. The children of 9 people attended Oak Tree Pre-school; and
4. when asked if care were to be offered from 8am to 6pm, 7 people would be interested full-time and 5 term time only.

The people in the Parish said they would send their children to the school and pre-school in Okeford Fitzpaine, indicating general satisfaction with these facilities. There was scope to increase the use of school facilities and the engagement of the school in the community and volunteers were willing to help out in the school, join the Governors or the PFA should the need arise.

The consultation in 2009 identified the need for more play equipment, particularly for younger children, although some people suggested that more equipment was also required for older children. The most popular venue for the equipment to be sited was Bowey field.

We recommend that:

1. *The detailed survey responses are fed back to the school and pre-school and the school is asked to consider whether adults might make more use of school facilities, how the school could be more involved in the community and what use might be made of people willing to help the school; and*
2. *The provision of more play equipment at Bowey field be explored.*

Health

Most people needing to see a doctor use the surgery in Child Okeford but a significant proportion visit a general practitioner (GP) in Sturminster Newton and others go to Blandford. No other places featured in more than 2 responses. 80% of respondents are satisfied with the provision of GP services and the main reason for dissatisfaction is because there is no GP presence in Okeford Fitzpaine. This may be because a doctor from Child Okeford used to operate a surgery in Okeford Fitzpaine on one day each week, but no longer does. The long-time connection with Child Okeford medical centre is reflected in the provision of a prescription collection service for elderly or disabled people without transport from that surgery by proprietors of the village shop.

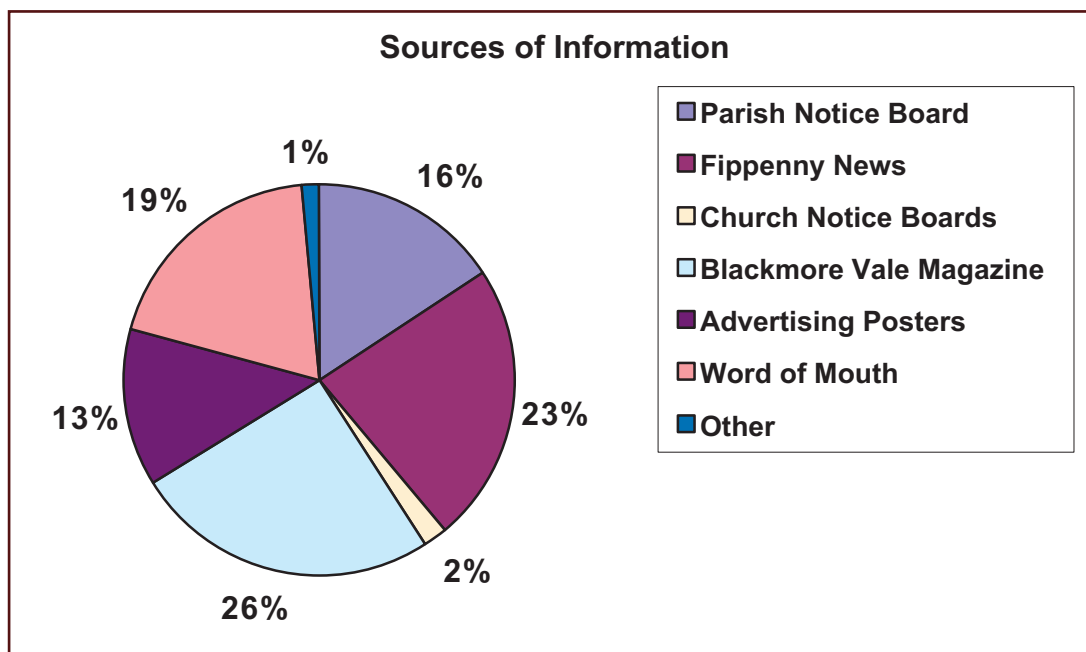
People in the Parish were less satisfied with the provision of dental services with just 67% finding them acceptable. The lack of National Health Service (NHS) dental treatment was the principal cause of dissatisfaction. This problem has recently been ameliorated to some extent by the establishment of an NHS dentist in Sturminster Newton.

Communication

The main way of communicating with the people within the Parish appeared to be through the medium of the written word. The Blackmore Vale Magazine is a free paper widely available and distributed to each house in the village, but not to the hamlets. It is published weekly and covers the towns and villages within the Blackmore Vale. It is a source of both local news and events, and job, house and classified advertisements. The Fippenny News is the local Parish magazine, produced within Okeford Fitzpaine; it is an interesting mix of information about village events, recipes, games for the children and jokes. It is delivered to all the houses in the Parish that subscribe, including the hamlets.

The Okeford Fitzpaine Parish website www.okeford-fitzpaine.org contains information about the villages and the wider Dorset area. It includes information about the Parish Council, local clubs and organisations and a 'notice board' that lists forthcoming events. There are links to other sites including the Belchalwell website which contains detailed historical information www.belchalwell.org.uk and the Okeford Fitzpaine Primary School site www.okeford.dorset.sch.uk.

The other means of communication are posters and notices appearing on the Parish notice board, the Church notice board and advertising posters in the village shop windows. These posters mainly inform of village and local events. As can be seen from the following chart word of mouth is also a powerful form of dissemination of information within the village.



The CommUnity.com magazine is published by the Stur 2000 group and provides news, what is going on and community contact details for Sturminster Newton and District. This magazine is available from the village shop but is not now widely distributed around the Parish.

When asked if they would like to receive information by email 52% of people said no. 19% of the people would like to receive information by email, and 29% did not respond.

We recommended that:

- 1. We explore the possibility of CommUnity.com being distributed every month to each household.*

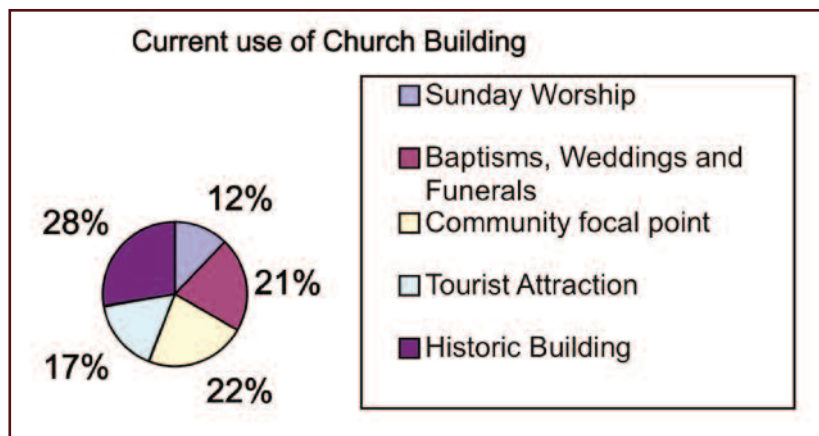
Church

St Andrews Church is situated in the centre of Okeford Fitzpaine. It was almost entirely rebuilt in 1866 using much of the material from the earlier Church dating from the 14th century. It remains in full use. The tower is of unusual design, with the recessed window and internal supporting pillars. The Church is the subject of many visitor photographs.

The Church of St. Aldhelm, within the benefice of Hazelbury Bryan and the Hillside Parishes, overlooks Lower Belchalwell from a low hill to the north west of the village. The Church has some of the oldest building structure still standing in the area, and portions around the Main doorway and south west facing side are believed to date from circa 1190. Significant rebuilding and modifications have been carried out at several times, notably in the 15th and late 19th centuries. In 1932 the Lord of the Manor (Captain G. Pitt-Rivers) gave a quarter of an acre on the south side of the Church to enlarge the burial ground. The Church holds services approximately one Sunday each month in rotation with Ibberton, Hazelbury Bryan and Woolland Churches.

When asked what the Church building is important for, 66.6% of respondents felt it was a community focal point, tourist attraction and historic building. This compares with 72% of the general population in England who feel that Churches are historic tourist attractions with a community focus.

Just 33% of respondents felt the Church was important for Sunday worship, baptisms, weddings and funerals. The breakdown is as follows:



When asked if the Church should be used for other functions, 31% of the respondents said the Church should not be used for other things or they had no opinion. 27% of the respondents felt that it should be used for concerts. Other suggestions ranged from confirmation classes (13%), discussion groups (12%) to healing services and multi faith meetings, both with 8%.

We recommend that:

- 1. The Parochial Church Councils are informed of the interest in the use of the Church for concerts and other activities.*

The survey also asked what would encourage people to go to Church more often; only 35.7% of the respondents answered this question. The vast majority of the people who responded (42.4%) felt the style/length of Service needed changing, 21% would like an evening Service and others required various changes such as midweek services and the provision of crèche and toilet facilities.

We recommend that:

- 1. The Parochial Church Councils are informed of the results of the survey to allow the Council to consider changes that may be necessary for their Churches to serve the needs of the community.*

Summary of recommendations

We recommend that:

- 1.** *The Parish Council supports small-scale business developments and industrial workshops;*
- 2.** *The Highway Authority is requested to implement a 20mph speed limit in the centre of Okeford Fitzpaine;*
- 3.** *A request is made to the Highway Authority or Sturminster Newton Town Council for more regular use of speed indicator devices on the approaches to the village;*
- 4.** *Methods to reduce parking problems in the village centre are discussed with the school;*
- 5.** *A complete footpath from the village centre to the recreation ground is provided;*
- 6.** *The possibility of using the village hall car park for visitors and walkers is explored;*
- 7.** *NDDC requires adequate parking for residential development, with one parking space provided per bedroom;*
- 8.** *Discussions are held with bus operators and the Local Authorities to provide financial support to improve services to the more popular destinations;*
- 9.** *The Dog Warden Service is contacted to advise on action to deal with dog fouling;*
- 10.** *The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator liaises with the police to discuss the perception of aggravations reported;*
- 11.** *The recycling facility at the recreation ground be retained and residents informed or reminded of the facility*
- 12.** *NDDC is informed of the survey results, encouraged to improve collection by collecting glass and garden waste from residences and informed of the interest in wheelie bins;*
- 13.** *The Parish Council continues to support the operators of the shop and Post Office, publicises Post Office services widely and vigorously resists any future proposals to close the Post Office;*
- 14.** *Volunteers are sought to explore the demand and options for bringing films, shows, plays and live entertainment to the Parish with relevant organisations such as Artsreach and Moviola;*
- 15.** *The detailed survey responses are fed back to the school and pre-school and the school is asked to consider whether adults might make more use of school facilities, how the school could be more involved in the community and what use might be made of people willing to help the school;*
- 16.** *The provision of more play equipment at Bowey field be explored;*
- 17.** *We explore the possibility of CommUnity.com being distributed every month to each household;*
- 18.** *The Parochial Church Councils are informed of the interest in the use of the Church for concerts and other activities; and*
- 19.** *The Parochial Church Councils are informed of the results of the survey to allow the Council to consider changes that may be necessary for their Churches to serve the needs of the community.*

Next steps

The Parish Plan has been presented to the Parish Council and it has been adopted. The Plan is with the Parish Council for implementation.

Contacts

Parish Council Chair	01258 860415	Mike Burt
Parish Council Clerk	01258 453738	Sandra Deary
Village Hall Bookings	01258 860415	Diane Burt
Fippenny News Editor	01258 860095	Jane Tapping
The Priest-in-charge	01258 860261	Rev Shirley Smith
Pre-School	01258 861517	Niki Carey
Okeford Fitzpaine School	01258 860530	Mark Acreman
Short Mat Bowling Club	01258 860582	Colin & Barbara MacLeod
First Friday Lunches	01258 861553 01258 860571	Jacqui Dakin Beryl Shaw
Footpaths	01258 861719	Mark Paine
Tree officer	01258 863480	Dennis Eadsforth
Youth Club	01258 472368	Mike Bennett
Okeford Utd Football Club Chair	01258 861327	Stephen Corben
Fippenny Garden Club Chair	01258 860565	Jean Durrant
Allotment Group	01258 860966	Robert Loving
Sturquest Community Partnership	01258 471456	
Dorset County Council	01305 221000	www.dorsetforyou.com
North Dorset District Council	01258 454111	www.north-dorset.gov.uk
Homewatch	01258 860146	Mike Wood
Police	01258 452101	Dave Mullins PC2186
Fire	01258 472609	

Acknowledgements

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Dorset Community Action:

Simon Thompson, Community Field Worker

Hugh de longh, former Community Development Worker North Dorset

Other Parish Plans:

Francis Shaxson, Lower Winterbourne

John Wootton, Child Okeford and Hanford

North Dorset District Council:

Wilbert Smith

Kevin Morris

Mark Brownbridge

Steering Committee Members (who have contributed significant time and effort)

Warren (Bud) Abbott

Sue Abbott

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(Steering Committee Chairman)