



SOUTH MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL

**ANNUAL
REVIEW
2023**

The Chair's Review

Yet another busy year when we have been tackling more and more local services that Swindon Borough Council can no longer afford to provide.

At the same time, we seem to spend an increasing amount of time on trying to influence the numerous and often very large developments for housing and warehousing in our parish.



Inside this report, I cover some of the main activities during the last year along with a summary of how our income was spent. My thanks go to my fellow Councillors and staff, and particularly to all our volunteers without whom we would simply not achieve what we do. Thank you for reading this!

Colin McEwen

We aim to ensure that South Marston is:

Green and Rural - by maintaining and enhancing our green places and negotiating new rural open space with public access

Clean - by providing and emptying dog bins, giving litter picking volunteers support and equipment, as well as hedge-cutting and annual leaf clearance

Vibrant - with financial support to SMRA to provide the Village Hall and a well-maintained Rec and giving support to local events, projects and initiatives

Well informed - by providing information events, website and Facebook pages, and the free village magazine 'Community News' with household delivery

Influential - by negotiating with developers and the Borough Council on the future of the parish

Parish Council year 2022-23

In March this year we held a drop-in event for residents at the Village Hall. Its purpose was to display significant projects and current issues that we had been working on and consult on how best to take them forward. For a small community, our volunteers enable us to achieve a lot.

Improving our Facilities

Chris Brooks and Barry Thunder lead the volunteers of our Open Spaces Working Group (OSWG) in maintaining our green spaces. In addition to renewal work already undertaken and sponsored by Steris, significant works in Oxleaze Wood have been agreed with the Borough to be funded by the S.106 Bellway contributions.

The Honda Heritage Memorial Garden was completed and opened, together with upgraded amenity areas and new plots on the Allotments. Vacant plots are being quickly occupied. However, Thames Water's efforts to locate their own mains water pipe in the road have been challenging and connection to a water supply is still awaited.



We continue to support South Marston Recreation Association (SMRA), the charity whose aims are to improve sporting and recreation facilities for South Marston residents. Its Trustees are local residents who volunteer to manage the Village Hall and support local activities. SMRA is contracted by us to maintain the Recreation Ground and its facilities.



On the Rec., new play equipment has been installed and a surfaced path to the toddlers' area was laid over ground that has been levelled. I thank the members of the committee for the time and efforts they have made and the F and E Harris Memorial Trust for their generous grant towards the work.

Phase 2 of the improvements should now be in progress, drawing on the consultation with villagers of all ages. This will be funded by S.106 money and a further grant from the F and E Harris Memorial Trust.

We are again indebted to Lionel Cave-Ayland for his work as volunteer Footpath Monitor and, indeed, for his enthusiastic and practical efforts in other areas such as the events for the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the King's Coronation May celebrations, to which we gave financial support.

Influencing Development

We were pleased that Panattoni, the developers of the Honda site, worked with us and took residents' concerns into account in their final plans. These should see a significant reduction in the flood risk for the village and good pedestrian/cycle access through the site.

The major development proposal of the HHT consortium to expand the village by building 500 houses as well as a much larger new village at Rowborough is still very much stop/start. Major concerns for us are the sequence of delivery, restricting construction traffic on village roads and the delivery of appropriate infrastructure as each parcel of houses is developed.

Plans for the redevelopment of the old hotel next to St Margaret Retail Park site as a DIY and garden store, together with a drive-thru coffee shop, are proceeding despite our reservations about traffic circulation and litter. The Keypoint Energy Centre has been abandoned in favour of warehousing, which will be much preferred by many residents.

Finances

The Borough's services continue to be impacted by financial constraints. We received £47,000 of your Council Tax money in 2022-23 which funds the full range of our work, including the essential administration involved in being a public body. With just 2 part-time admin staff, this puts a big load on the volunteers (both councillors and residents) that contribute their time and physical activity to meet our aims.

Last year we deliberately ran a significant deficit budget. This year we increased our precept by an average of just over a pound a month per household.

We don't have the capacity to provide the full range of services that bigger councils can provide (volunteers to run Youth Club would be very much welcomed!). We hope that our combination of voluntary action and contractors provides a practical and cost-effective solution to tackling those that we can manage to do.

We were saddened by the recent death of Pam Adams, one of our Borough Councillors. Pam was getting to grips with the needs of the village and we looked forward to working with her. We now have two new Borough Councillors in place and hope to establish a strong relationship with them.

Your Parish Councillors:

Colin McEwen (Chair), Sylvia Brown (Vice Chair),
Barry Thunder, Andy Carter, Tony Leathart, Nigel Hole,
Mike Povey, Rachel Messenger (from May 2023).

Clerk: Kevin Morgan, **Comms Officer:** Sharon Robinson,

Book-keeper: Mandy Larcombe

Footpath Monitor: Lionel Cave-Ayland



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SOUTH MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL

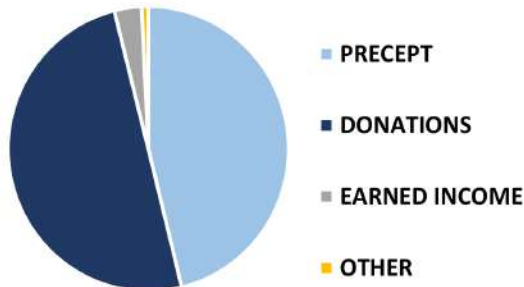
ACCOUNTS 2022/23

Prepared by Sylvia Brown, Chair of the Finance Working Group

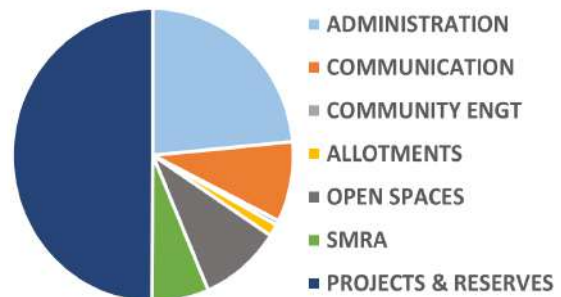
The Parish Council finances undergo both internal and external audit processes. The formal 'Annual Return' has been posted on the South Marston website.

Below is a summary showing how we obtained our income and how it was spent.

Sources of Income Total: £102,396



Expenditure Total: £113,183



The precept - a small proportion of residents' Council Tax - is the main source of income that funds our normal activities, but this year, the recent refurbishment of the Play Area is reflected in the size of 'Donations' received and spending on 'Projects'.

The Clerk's salary, book-keeping and regulatory costs such as insurance and audit form the largest part of 'Administration' costs, but enable us to function as a Parish Council. 'Communication' include the Communications Officer's salary and the cost of printing Community News which has increased significantly this year. Normal 'Allotments' expenditure is covered by rents. The cost of maintaining our 'Open Spaces' continues to benefit from significant volunteer labour, but we are raising our contingencies as major tree surgery and landscape maintenance is increasingly expensive. The coming year will see the receipt of S.106 'planning gain' money from the Magdalene Close development, allowing us to invest in further improvements to village facilities.

FUNDS WE HELD AT 31.3.2023:

£96,702

General Reserves cope with year-on-year variations in ongoing costs. 'Projects and contingencies' are mainly for active village improvement projects or to cover risks to property. The 'Phasing Fund' is to manage transition ahead of the village tripling in size. For instance, this might be professional or legal fees or allowing us to invest in projects which will later be re-imbursed by developer planning obligations.

