

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020- 2021

I have pleasure in setting out some of the achievements and activities of the Parish Council over the past year.

Appointments

The following appointments have been in place through this year:

Brian Clarke Chair: KALC, GDPR & IT.

Penny Twaites Co-Vice Chair: Representative to the Governing Body/Local Monitoring Committee of Bredgar School.
Responses to Residential and Local Planning.

Jane Ingram Co-Vice Chair: Post Office Support. Village Hall Representative.

David Priestley Councillor: Pond Warden. Pest Control. Heritage.

Beverley Councillor: KCC Highways. Thatcher and Eleemosyary Charities Representative.
McCourt

Michael Day Councillor: Footpaths. Parks & Gardens. Pest Control.

Stephen Parfitt Councillor: Parks & Gardens.

Coronavirus

The COVID19 pandemic has impacted the whole community including the Parish Council throughout the year. Operation of the Council's normal processes and meetings have needed to change to comply with government regulations. Parish Councillors have been unable to meet physically and therefore all meetings in the year have been held online using video conferencing software. This has not been ideal but has enabled our operations to continue as usual.

The Parish Council has kept in close contact with the Friends of Bredgar Church (FOBC) who stepped up again for the second wave of COVID19 and through the national shutdown, continuing

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to provide support for vulnerable residents in the village. The Parish Council, on behalf of all parishioners, would like to thank and commend FOBC for their actions. They have been an important support at a most difficult time, for our most vulnerable residents.

Regretfully, due to the COVID19 lock-down we were unable to perform our annual Service of Remembrance at the war memorial. The Parish Council worked closely with The Benefice of Tunstall and Bredgar to remember Bredgar's fallen in the Church services, and the Chair of the Parish Council laid a wreath on the war memorial on behalf of all parishioners in remembrance of those who have sacrificed themselves in the cause of freedom. The laying of the wreath was photographed and reported as a News item on the Parish Council website.

Finance

In recognition of the difficulties that some parishioners may have experienced this year, due to the difficult economic situation caused by the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, the Parish Council did not increase the precept for the financial year 2021/22.

Due to our ownership and management of the cemetery the Parish Council were eligible to claim for a government business grant of £10,000. This grant is being used to fund project work within the village and wherever possible to engage local businesses.

Planning

Councillors have reviewed planning applications and submitted comments diligently during the year, working hard to give balanced and relevant views. In addition to responding to standard planning applications, we have submitted a response supporting the Regulation 19 consultation for the Draft Local Plan, responded to the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report for the Highested Park proposal, performed a hedgerows survey, in response to an SBC request, and responded to a Kent Science Park application for a new manufacturing development that expands outside the existing boundary.

SBC Planning Enforcement have been regularly asked for updates on the progress of the clearing of sites in Blind Mary's Lane and it appears that progress will be made shortly.

The council remains a member of the 5 Parishes Group, which meets several times a year to discuss issues that are common between the Parishes of Bredgar, Rodmersham Green, Tunstall, Milstead and Bapchild.

We have engaged a Landscape Consultant to produce a Landscape Assessment Report. Once completed it will be used as guidance and evidence when the Parish Council considers future planning application impacting the Parish.

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Projects

The main project work for the Parish Council over the last year has been to improve the cemetery. A number of self sown trees, that were causing damage to the fencing or dying back have been removed. The undergrowth around the north and west boundaries has been cut back and several tonnes of unwanted grave spoil removed. The project continues with replacement fencing being manufactured for some sections along the boundary with Wrens Road. This is expected to be installed in the summer.

Play equipment in the recreation ground was repainted and some safety repairs completed.

Our long running lobbying for further improvements to broadband in the village was rewarded this year. In January 2021 the Swanton Street fibre broadband upgrade became available for use by most properties there. Bredgar now has FTTP (Fibre to the Premise) in Swanton Street, the top end of Silver Street, Deans Hill Road and Primrose Lane north of the M2. The main village has FTTC (Fibre to the Cabinet) as installed previously. FTTP provides 300 mbps or greater and most properties on FTTC achieve around 30mbps, a great improvement over the speeds previously attained. Most properties in the parish now have Superfast and some have Ultrafast broadband.

Maintenance of the Village

Grass cutting (soft landscaping) and maintenance of border areas continue to be one of our main costs and core services. A gardener provides regular weeding and maintenance in border areas and Jubilee Garden. The war memorial flower tubs have been looking splendid and well maintained for us voluntarily by one of our parishioners.

Fly tipping has significantly increased in the parish over the last year. The Parish Council has been very active with the support of many residents in reporting and having the fly tipping removed. The response time for clean up is often longer than preferable as it is dependent on the material dumped or who is the responsible party. Unfortunately this appears to be a problem that shows no sign of reducing and that repeats regularly in a number of locations across the parish. KCC and Kent Police have been taking the matter much more seriously and have had some success in identifying fly tippers leading to charges and vehicle confiscations. Parishioners can assist by observing any suspicious activities and reporting information through the Neighbourhood Watch scheme or our PCSO.

After having to delay the event in April due to COVID19 we successfully held our Bredgar September Clean - Litter Pick. Over 25 people volunteered their time and worked extremely hard to

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clean up our lanes. The event was supported by many Bredgar parishioners, Bredgar Cricket club and two Tunstall residents. The volunteers collected 60+ sacks of litter and some other slightly bulkier rubbish from the verges and within the village. The following lanes were all cleared - all roads within the village 30MPH limit, Swanton Street (from the village to the top of Hollingbourne Hill), Bashford Barn Road, Bexon Lane, Ruins Barn Road to the M2, Wrens Road, Tunstall Road, Deans Hill Road, Vigo Lane, Stiff Street, Hawks Hill Lane, Blind Mary's Lane and the Recreation Ground. The result was a noticeable improvement to our environment.

General Matters

During the winter a dog fell through the ice on the pond and drowned. This sad event has led to the Parish Council performing a risk assessment and we are now considering if any further safety measures are required around the pond.

A few weeks ago a visitor to the village lost control of their car and knocked down a section of brick wall in Jubilee Garden. The driver left without leaving a name or contact details. The wall is the responsibility of the Parish Council and repair is being arranged. If any parishioner can help us contact the driver it would be appreciated.

I would like to close this report by thanking everyone who has helped the Parish Council look after our village over the last year. I'd like to thank all of our Councillors for their commitment and time given to the Parish Council. Looking forward, I hope that everyone keeps well during the months ahead of us, the successful vaccination programme gives us hope that the next year will be nearer to our past normal.

Brian Clarke
Chair
Bredgar Parish Council

5th May 2021