

# BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



## CHAIR'S REPORT 2025-2026

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

### Appointments

The following appointments were in place through the year:

Brian Clarke

Chair:  
KALC, GDPR & IT.

Nigel Osmer

Vice Chair:  
Post Office Liaison, KCC Highways.

Penny Twaites

Councillor:  
Responses to Residential and Local Planning.

David Priestley

Councillor: Pond Warden. Pest Control. Heritage.

Hilary Whitnell

Councillor:  
Footpaths. Thatcher and Eleemosyary Charities Representative.  
Liaison with Bredgar School.

Stephen Parfitt

Councillor:  
Parks & Gardens.

Malcolm Vessey  
(co-opted in place of  
Michael Day)

Councillor:  
KCC Highways. Parks & Gardens. Pest Control.

Teresa Hudson

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: Website

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## Planning

Highsted Park planning applications remained a major focus for the Council this year. We worked closely with neighbouring Parish Councils (Rodmersham, Milstead, and Bapchild) as part of the Five Parishes Group and as a Rule 6 participant in the Planning Inquiry.

The Inquiry, led by the Planning Inspectorate, began on 11th March 2025. Although originally expected to conclude in June, it was extended, with final closing submissions completed on 31st October 2025. The process was thorough, involving the Applicant, Swale Borough Council, National Highways, Kent County Council, The Duchy of Cornwall, The Action Group, and the Five Parishes Group.

Proofs of Evidence and Rebuttals were presented covering landscape, built heritage, ancient woodland, ecology, archaeology, public rights of way, air quality, highways, socio-economic factors, viability, housing, S106 conditions, and community issues. Thirty-one third parties spoke over two days in mid-May; I, along with two other parishioners, utilized this opportunity to raise specific concerns for Bredgar. The Five Parishes Group submitted evidence on most topics, successfully holding the Applicant to account. Regular site visits ensured the Planning Inspector became intimately familiar with the area. Shortly after the Inquiry concluded the Bexon Conservation Area was approved by Swale Borough Council and added to the evidence base.

The Inspector is currently writing her report, which is expected to be submitted to the Secretary of State for a decision later this year. If approved, the development would involve constructing 8,400 houses (reduced from an initial 9,250) to the south and east of Sittingbourne, a large-scale commercial expansion towards the M2 for the Kent Science Park, and a new M2 junction within our parish. Regardless of the outcome, the Five Parishes Group's participation has already improved the proposals.

More generally, councillors have reviewed planning applications and submitted comments diligently during the year, working hard to give balanced and relevant views.

The Parish Council discussed and submitted responses to a number of consultations through the year. Including; supporting the Local Government Reorganisation option for four unitaries 4B (Swale, Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe); supporting the creation of a Sittingbourne Town Council in the Swale Community Governance Review; and supporting the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 with many improvement suggestions.

## Finance

An analysis of expenditure against the precept demonstrated that the Parish Council is dependent on savings and uncertain income from the cemetery to balance the budget. Consequently, a 7.5% increase in the parish precept was approved for the 2026/27 financial year to start to address this situation. This is a topic that will likely be revisited again this year to ensure the precept is funded sufficiently to deliver core services, particularly as the expected Local Government Re-organisation

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in Kent to Unitary Councils is likely to increase pressures to raise council taxes and devolve services.

Only £400 of the £4000 contingency reserved for representation against Highsted Park was required in this financial year due to the tremendous fund raising of Five Parishes Group and support from local residents. Bredgar residents contributed significantly to those efforts through a raffle in the Post Office, a sponsored walk and quiz night.

## Projects

During the year the council delivered some discretionary projects as part of our ongoing efforts to maintain the village. These included replacement of the ageing bench in Jubilee Garden and repairs to the eroding edge of the pond along The Street side.

## Village Matters

Grass cutting (soft landscaping) and maintenance of border areas continue to be one of our main costs and core services. A gardener provides regulars weeding and maintenance in border areas and Jubilee Garden. With another engaged to maintain the pond several times over the year.

Maintenance works were completed on the recreation ground play equipment last summer following an annual safety report by ROSPA. The swing seats were replaced, the goal straightened and some play surface edges trip hazards addressed.

In October, the Parish Council organised another village litter pick which was well supported by our regular participants. Fly tipping continued to be a problem in the parish over the last year. Councillor Parfitt remains active in leading our community response to the problem along with the support of many residents, in reporting and having fly tipping removed.

In our annual Highways Improvement Plan meeting with KCC Highways the Parish Council our request for an extension of the 30mph speed limit on Bexon Lane was refused, however speed surveys for assessing the viability of a future 20mph scheme through Bredgar were agreed. These surveys will be taking place in Swanton Street and Primrose Lane in the next few weeks.

Once again the Christmas Tree on Gore Pond was kindly provided by Bredgar and Wormshill Light Railway and lit for parishioners to enjoy.

A large tree in the cemetery border hedge unexpectedly toppled on 7th March this year. Luckily nobody was in the cemetery at the time and no graves or headstones were damaged. A tree surgeon was engaged to clear it and fell an adjacent trunk following a safety inspection. In recent years the Parish Council has completed a number of maintenance projects in the cemetery but more will be needed in future to avoid another similar event.

The Farmshop and Post Office site has been sold to a new owner during this year. Both operate under leases expiring in April 2027. The Parish Council is trying to secure the continued operation

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of these important and valued community services in the village. We conducted a survey of our Sub Post Office users in the last quarter of 2025. The responses confirmed that the Bredgar Sub Post Office is a critical community asset; almost every respondent uses it for mail and banking, most visit weekly, and a solid majority indicated they support—at least conditionally—the Parish Council rental lease subsidising its continuation. Only one respondent did not use Bredgar Sub Post Office and although they live within Bredgar their post code indicates they had easier access into Sittingbourne. Strengthening its ancillary services (shop, parcels) and presenting a clear, ring-fenced lease extension proposal would likely secure broad community backing and could ensure the Sub Post Office remains open for years to come.

Finally, I would like to close this report by thanking everyone who has helped the Parish Council look after our village over the last year and all of our Councillors for their commitment and time given to the Parish Council.

Brian Clarke  
Chair  
Bredgar Parish Council  
6th May 2025