

**Bredgar Parish Council**  
**Minutes of the meeting**  
**Held by Zoom**  
**On Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Chair Cllr. Brian Clarke;  
Joint Vice Chair Cllr. Penny Twaites; Joint Vice Chair Cllr. Jane Ingram;  
Cllr. Mike Day; Cllr. Beverley McCourt; Cllr. Stephen Parfitt and  
Cllr. David Priestley.

**Clerk:** Teresa Hudson

**In Attendance:** SBC Cllr. Andrew Bowles and SBC Cllr. Monique Bonney

**Members of the Public:** Charlotte Whitney-Brown, Conservative County candidate.

**1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**2. Declaration of Members' Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

There were no interests to declare.

**3. Declaration of any intention to record or film the PC meeting by any member of the Council or member of the public**

There were no intentions to record or film the meeting by anyone present.

**4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the previous PC meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were read and formally approved by the Parish Council. They are now available on the Parish website. Proposed by Cllr. J. Ingram, seconded by Cllr. D. Priestley.

The Minutes will be signed by the Chair.

**Matters Arising**

Cllr. Priestley submitted the hedgerow survey to Swale BC. No response has been received to date.

The Safeguarding Policy has been approved by councillors and published on the Parish website.

**5. PCSO Report**

PCSO Lewis Rigden has moved on and our area has a returning PCSO: Lorraine Holmes.

Prior to his departure, Lewis reported to the PC by email a report as follows:

- Gift voucher fraud
- Anti-social behaviour – electric scooters ridden on public roads and footpaths (not Bredgar)
- Milk carrier and milk theft from doorstep
- Dog snatches
- Burnt out car removed from Blind Marys Lane
- Vandalised post box in Primrose Lane

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Cllr. Parfitt reported that a follow up enquiry to find out when the post box would be replaced as promised by Royal Mail initially, was disappointing. It appears it may not be replaced. Cllr. Parfitt is to investigate further and lobby Royal Mail to replace it.

**6. Ten Minutes Representation by the Public**

Nothing to report.

**7. Authorisation of Accounts**

**Payments**

16/11/20	Zoom	Registration 1 month	14.39
23/11/20	Oakwood Landscaping	Cemetery tree work	2350.00
01/12/20	Bredgar Farmshop	PO Rent	150.00
01/12/20	Bartholomew	Christmas tree	50.00
03/12/20	Ask A Gardener	Village Maintenance	140.00
07/12/20	T. Hudson	Honorarium	375.00
15/12/20	Cllr. D. Priestley	Pond work	25.00
21/12/20	KCC	Village landscaping	169.96
21/12/20	SSE	Pond electricity	41.54
01/01/21	Bredgar Farmshop	PO Rent	150.00
06/01/21	Ask A Gardener	Village maintenance	140.00
20/01/21	Cllr. B. Clarke	Christmas Gifts	32.00
01/02/21	Bredgar Farmshop	PO Rent	150.00

**Receipts**

13/10/20	KCC	Grass Cutting	179.54
24/10/20	Bredgar Cricket Club	Rec Grd Rent	50.00
21/01/21	Bredgar Cricket Club	Grass Cutting	708.24
28/01/21	PCC	Grass Cutting	321.58

**Councillors are grateful to Peter Bartholomew for supplying the Christmas tree at a heavily discounted price.**

**Councillors also thanked Dick Clack for assistance in erecting the tree.**

The accounts were unanimously approved. Proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. J. Ingram.

**8. Financial Matters**

**Precept confirmation**

The Chair confirmed that the Bredgar part of the council tax remains at £10273.00, with no increase for 2021/22. This equates to £35.73 for a Band D property, an increase of 0.08%. The minor increase is explained by the difference in the number of households receiving a grant. The PC recognised that some parishioners have experienced financial difficulties over the last year.

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**Financial Review**

The financial review was circulated by email prior to the meeting.

Councillors noted that the cemetery railings are unlikely to be supplied before June due to illness of the supplier. Therefore the funds will be carried over to the next financial year.

The accounts were unanimously approved.

**9. Reports from Councillors**

**Cllr. Penny Twaites**

Cllr. Twaites contacted SBC Planning for an update on clearing the site at One Acre, Blind Marys Lane, as the site remains an eyesore. Swale resources are stretched but it is hoped the clearance takes place soon. Councillors expressed concern about the lack of progress and asked Cllr Twaites to inform SBC Planning. Cllr. Bonney will also follow up the issue.

Cllr. Bonney also stated that if more rubbish is burnt on the site, that it is reported to SBC.

Bredgar School has been open for pupils of key workers and vulnerable children throughout the lockdown. All pupils will return to school from 8<sup>th</sup> March. There is to be a Governor meeting next week.

**Cllr. David Priestley**

On 12<sup>th</sup> February villagers were distressed to learn a dog had drowned in Bredgar pond after falling through the ice. Firefighters attended but were unable to save the dog. A risk assessment is to be carried out on the pond but it is accepted that this was an unfortunate accident. Councillors agreed that Cllrs. Priestley and McCourt along with Paul Charman would carry out a risk analysis.

Repairs to the duck house will take place in the autumn.

**Cllr. Jane Ingram**

The village hall remains closed due to the lockdown.

The Post Office continues to thrive. During the Christmas period controlling queues was challenging as it was so busy, but Farmshop staff assisted in managing the customer queue.

The Farmshop has undergone a refit with more stock available and is an asset to the village.

**Cllr. Beverley McCourt**

Donations and gifts due to be distributed at Christmas from The Thatcher Trust will be given in April instead due to Covid restrictions.

The Thatcher Trust also donated funds to Bredgar School to purchase laptops to loan to pupils while working from home during the pandemic lockdown.

The Kent Highways Vision Zero consultation ends in March.

**Cllr. Mike Day**

There appear to have been fewer incidences of fly tipping around the village lanes. Farmers have helped by reducing possible sites and creating ditches along lanes.

**Cllr. Stephen Parfitt**

Some footpath signs are becoming dilapidated. The Bexon Lane sign has been reported as missing following the demolition of the Church wall by a lorry.

The trees along the edge of the recreation ground, which were felled as they were rotten, have been replaced by the landowner. Douglas fir, Scots pine, Silver birch and

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European larch have been planted and although they are not the type preferred by councillors, they are fast growing.

A tree overhanging the recreation ground has been cut back by the landowner.

The PC would like to thank Julie Harris for the colourful display of flowers in the Memorial planters.

A horse was seen on the recreation ground, this is not to be encouraged.

The Farmshop driveway has been smoothed after the snow left large potholes.

Potholes have been filled in Primrose Lane and Wrens Road. Parishioners are encouraged to report any potholes they notice on the Kent website.

Bredgar phone box, outside the Church, continues to serve the village. Cllr. Parfitt stated that it must be used to keep it for the village. It cannot take credit cards but can access 0800 numbers which are free whereas they are not free from a mobile, so an ideal opportunity presents itself for residents to save money if they wish to call these numbers. It is less likely to be withdrawn if it is used. It can also be used for reporting crime on 101.

A report of rubbish accumulated in a garden in Primrose Lane has been dealt with; the rubbish has been burnt.

#### **Cllr. Brian Clarke**

Cllr. Clarke has attended five meetings recently on behalf of the PC including; KALC AGM where he voted in support of the motion for printing car registrations and date on fast food packaging; SBC Western Area Committee Meetings where he supported funding for conservation village area reviews (Bredgar is shortlisted for a future review) and for work to be done to improve footpaths in the western area and to identify good circular routes; KCC Vision Zero Event where he spoke in support of 20mph limits if done whilst respecting environmental issues (such as dark skies). Reports were emailed to councillors prior to the meeting.

A replacement road sign for Bexon Lane has been requested from SBC and is expected to be installed soon.

The white paint on the pond decking edge has deteriorated and is to be repainted.

The stile in Bexon Lane is not compliant with KCC policy and the Public Rights of Way team are addressing the issue.

The brown bin for use in the recreation ground has been delivered. It is to be marked as property of the PC. Councillors approved the purchase of a sticker and padlock.

## **10. Planning Matters**

### **Swale Covid update**

The Chair informed the meeting that 534820 Swale residents have received the Covid vaccine so far.

Councillors thanked Friends of Bredgar Church (FOBC) for their continued support during the pandemic for the more vulnerable members of the village by helping with shopping, deliveries, visits and friendship calls. Councillors felt that everyone stepped up to help and pulled together to look after each other. They also felt it was important to consider retaining the list of vulnerable residents for future use.

Cllr. Bonney informed the meeting that SBC business grants are available up until the end of March and encouraged eligible candidates to speak to Swale online for business advice.

Cllr. Bonney also encouraged Covid testing even if no symptoms are present. Detling showground are now offering testing and is easy to get to.

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SBC is assisting with the Food Bank and residents are urged to seek help before they get in a desperate situation. Facebook is being used as a means of communication during these difficult times so residents are encouraged to check if they need help.

#### **Draft Local Plan (LP)**

Cllr. Twaites proposed forming a sub committee to look at the Local Plan and submit a response by the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> April.

Cllr. Bonney stated that every household in Swale is to receive a letter from Cllr. Mike Baldock concerning the Local Plan. It informs residents of the numbers of houses proposed as well as climate emergency details, special design and affordable housing proposals across the borough. There appears to be no large housing allocation around Bredgar, but concerns were raised that no mention is made in the report of protection of the countryside gap between Bredgar and Tunstall. The Highsted development is not in the Local Plan but an application could be submitted in the future.

A review of the conservation areas in Rodmersham and Milstead has been produced, with an update for Tunstall also completed.

#### **5 Parishes Group Update**

Cllr. Clarke and Cllr. Twaites attended the 5Parishes Group meeting last week where each parish was represented.

##### **Local Plan**

There was a general consensus that although the Local Plan was not ideal it was not a bad LP and was something they could support in general terms. It had good environmental points but a large amount of unallocated housing, which could end up in villages. There is always a concern that planned infrastructure doesn't materialize, once developments have commenced. Each Parish will put together a response and circulate to the group before the group makes a decision as to how to respond.

##### **Highsted Valley**

The 'Quinn' development is not supported by the LP at present. SBC is currently at the 'scoping' stage of the LP; planning applications need to be submitted by September 2022 so SBC may expect something by then, or a lot sooner.

Councillors agreed to put forward a response to include the impact on Bredgar. Proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. Ingram.

##### **Landscape Assessment**

Councillors recommend a landscape survey be put in place as a useful tool for future planning matters. This would analyse the characteristics of the landscape. The cost for the assessment for all 5 parishes together would be £3950, with each PC contributing £800. Councillors felt this was acceptable particularly as Bredgar PC has not previously donated any funds to the 5Parishes Group. Cllr. Clarke felt it was a good thing to do, as it could be used as evidence to influence all future planning applications in and around the parish. The assessor would spend time in each village and produce an assessment of the landscape; history; what has degraded over time and how to improve aspects in order to bring it back to its former glory.

Cllr. Twaites proposed that Bredgar PC contribute £800 to the 5Parishes Group to be part of the landscape survey with the other 4 parishes. All councillors agreed to the proposal, seconded by Cllr. Priestley.

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**SBC Cllr. Bowles left the meeting at 8.45pm. Cllr. Clarke thanked Cllr. Bowles on behalf of the parish for the various projects he has helped with over the years and wished him well in his retirement.**

**11. Policy Review**

**Cemetery Policy**

The proposal by Cllr. Clarke to update regulation 2.4 reads:

*Surplus soil remaining after the refilling of a grave shall be removed entirely from the cemetery at the sole cost of the person arranging for the interment.*

This amendment was unanimously agreed by councillors.

This will give a clear unambiguous instruction to undertakers and grave diggers that surplus soil is not permitted to be left in the cemetery and there will be no requirement for us to provide a storage area or to arrange future soil removal.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Ingram.

**12. Village Matters**

**Cemetery Maintenance Update**

The groundwork in the cemetery has been completed. Grass seed is to be applied in the spring. The new railings have been slightly delayed due to illness and are expected by June.

**Drainage**

Kent Highways have drilled a deeper borehole at the corner of Blind Mary's Lane and Swanton Street to improve drainage but it has not solved the underlying problem. A levels survey is to be carried out next and then engineering solutions will be identified based on the results. Any works to correct the water flows will entail closing the road for approximately two to three weeks to carry out the work and require KCC funding to be approved.

The groundwork carried out previously at the bottom of Silver Street around Bush House appears to have been a success. However, rainwater running off the fields at the top of Silver Street creates a blockage in the drain. It was cleared in November but heavy rain caused it to be blocked again. It should be cleared again in April but a more permanent solution is required.

**Fly Tipping**

Cllr. Parfitt reported that Clearwaste cleared six sites in Bredgar over the previous eighteen months. There appears to be a lull at present, possibly due to measures taken to reduce opportunity. The Police Rural Report states some offenders have been caught.

Littercam has been rolled out in Maidstone where offenders are filmed when throwing litter out of cars. Number plates are recognised and perpetrators fined. Volunteer litter pickers also operate locally. It is hoped another Bredgar litter pick will take place in the near future.

Cllr. Bonney informed the meeting that using the Fix My Street app doesn't always work, as the link to Swale BC is faulty. It is preferable to report incidents directly to the Swale online portal.

**Condition of Blind Marys Lane surface**

Cllr. Day is to report the condition of the road at Blind Marys.

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#### **KALC/SAC replacement 'gates' in Bredgar**

The Kent Highways Improvement Plan is a useful process to achieve results and councillors agreed to utilise it to get certain work carried out. The gates around Bredgar are looking worn and could be replaced with plastic versions. Also possible additions to the plan include a sign for Bexon Lane stating it is unsuitable for heavy vehicles. Cllr. Clarke proposed collating items mentioned in the Minutes, including the surface of Blind Marys Lane, and submitting to KH. Cllr. McCourt agreed to coordinate and follow it up.

#### **Broadband Update**

Bredgar made the BBC news with reports of poor broadband service here being 'saved' by a new satellite service under test.

In fact, Bredgar has been quite successful in getting KCC funding allocated for fibre broadband. In January this year 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). FTTP provides 300 mbps or greater and most properties on FTTC achieve around 30mbps, a great improvement over the speeds previously attained.

### **13. Community Assets**

Designating a local amenity as a Community Asset safeguards the first option to purchase should an owner decide to sell.

Councillors agreed to revisit Community Assets on a three monthly basis.

### **14. Any Other Business**

There was no other business to report.

### **15. Dates of Future Meetings**

<b>10<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b>	<b>Parish meeting</b>
<b>12<sup>th</sup> May 2021</b>	<b>AGM</b>
<b>18<sup>th</sup> August 2021</b>	<b>PC meeting</b>
<b>24<sup>th</sup> November 2021</b>	<b>PC meeting</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022</b>	<b>PC meeting</b>