

**Bredgar Parish Council
Minutes of the
Parish Meeting and
AGM
Held at Bredgar Village Hall
On Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm**

Present: Chair Cllr. Brian Clarke;
Vice Chair Cllr. Penny Twaites; Cllr. Mike Day; Cllr. Nigel Osmer;
Cllr. Stephen Parfitt, Cllr. David Priestley and Cllr. Hilary Whitnell.
Clerk: Teresa Hudson

Members of the Public: Five members of the public attended the Parish meeting.

PARISH MEETING

Five members of the public attended the Parish Meeting.

The Chair invited comments from the public.

Question: Has there been any progress in the eviction of the caravan dwellers at Blind Marys Lane?

Answer: During Covid, SBC did not permit any evictions to take place. Since then, several officers have left SBC and even though the PC has chased this issue regularly, nothing has yet been achieved due to lack of resources at SBC.

Question: What is being done about the continuing flooding of Swanton Cottages every time it rains heavily?

Answer: Following the storm in 2018 the PC have worked with KCC to prioritise improvements in several areas in Bredgar which are prone to flooding, including Silver Street and Primrose Lane and are continually concerned with the problem at Swanton Cottages. KCC have made some attempts to solve the issue including clearing/extending the soakaway and installing a larger pipe, but all have failed so far. KCC have indicated that funds are required to solve the issue once and for all by reengineering the road and diverting the water away from the properties. However, due to a budget deficit this has yet to be actioned. Bredgar PC intend to add this issue to their Highways Improvement Plan as a priority issue and ask KCC Cllr. Rich Lehman to assist in pushing forward with it.

Question: A Bush House resident has contacted the Chair with concerns about the dropped edge of road on the corner of Gore Road and Wrens Road. The subsidence has caused a fence to fall and is being replaced at the cost to the owner.

Answer: The Chair has contacted KCC to push for a solution.

Question: A solar panel farm planning application has been received by SBC, what is the PC response?

Answer: The solar panel farm covers a wide area, mostly in Borden but a small area is in Bredgar. The Chair presented some detail to the meeting and councillors will make a formal response prior to the deadline of 6th June 2023.

The members of the public left the meeting at 7.35pm.

Bredgar Parish Council
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PARISH COUNCIL AGM

1. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from KCC Cllr. Richard Lehman and PCSO Katie Jordan.

2. Declaration of Members' Personal and Prejudicial Interest

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.

No declaration of intent was made.

4. Election of Officers

Nominations were put forward by email to the Clerk prior to the meeting for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair. Candidates were elected to the following roles:

Chair: Cllr. Brian Clarke - Proposed by Cllr. David Priestley

Seconded by Cllr. Nigel Osmer

Vice Chair: Cllr. Penny Twaites - Proposed by Cllr. Brian Clarke

Seconded by Cllr. Hilary Whitnell

5. Councillors to complete Register of Interests form and sign Declaration of Office

All councillors signed the Declaration of Office.

The Chair welcomed Cllr. Nigel Osmer to the Parish Council.

6. Elect Councillors to Roles

Cllr. Brian Clarke	Chair, KALC, GDPR, IT, Website
Cllr. Penny Twaites	Vice Chair, Response to Planning
Cllr. Mike Day	KCC Highways, Parks and Gardens, Pest Control
Cllr. Nigel Osmer	KCC Highways
Cllr. Stephen Parfitt	Parks and Gardens
Cllr. David Priestley	Heritage, Pond Warden, Pest Control
Cllr. Hilary Whitnell	Footpaths, Thatcher & Eleemosyary Charities
	Representative, School Liaison
Teresa Hudson	Clerk, Website

7. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th March 2023 were read and approved by the Parish Council. They are now available on the parish website. Proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. P. Twaites.

Matters Arising

The Highsted Park consultant, CERDA, has made a joint submission amendment to SBC at no extra cost to Bredgar PC.

**Bredgar Parish Council
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The planning application for Victor House has been approved, with measures to protect the AONB, etc.

8. PCSO Report

PCSO Katie Jordan was unable to attend the meeting as she was on a training course. However, she reported that there were no crimes of note in Bredgar over the last few months. Katie also informed the PC that Kent Police are remodelling Neighbourhood Policing and will therefore no longer be working in Swale after 7th June. She will be replaced by a Beat Officer who is a PC. Cllr. Parfitt informed the meeting that alloy wheels were stolen from a property in Swanton Street. Councillors repeated that crimes must be reported to the police so that if there is a pattern it may lead to arrests.

9. Ten Minutes Representation by the Public

There were no members of the public present.

10. Authorisation of Accounts

PAYMENTS

01/03/23	Bredgar F/Shop	PO Rent	150.00
01/03/23	EDF	Pond Electricity	62.00
09/03/23	T. Hudson	Postage/Ink	145.63
22/03/23	SBC	Grounds Maintenance	3162.56
31/03/23	EDF	Pond Electricity	287.32
01/04/23	Bredgar F/Shop	PO Rent	150.00
01/04/23	EDF	Pond Electricity	62.00
05/04/23	TP Jones LLP Accountant		85.92
05/04/23	Waste Manage	Hippo Megabag	189.98
18/04/23	BHIB	Insurance	659.54
18/04/23	KALC	Subscriptions	329.10
18/04/23	Waste Manage	Hippo Megabag	235.98
18/04/23	Bredgar Tearoom	Hospitality	24.55
18/04/23	The Sign Maker	Coronation Plaque	298.85

RECEIPTS

04/04/23	Dignity Funerals	Burial of M. Spratt	1982.00
18/04/23	Doves Funerals	Burial of Z. Munro	1982.00
26/04/23	SBC	Precept	5935.00

The clerk confirmed that the PC is in year two of a three-year contract for the insurance.

The clerk informed councillors that the payment to the accountant, TP Jones LLP, was for the clerk's Honorarium.

The clerk stated that the 'unclaimed VAT' will be claimed but that it takes a while for HMRC to respond to claims.

Bredgar Parish Council
Minutes of the
Parish Meeting and
AGM
Held at Bredgar Village Hall
On Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm

The accounts were proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke and seconded by Cllr. D. Priestley. All councillors agreed.

11. Finance Policy Review and Approval

The Council considered and approved the Finance Policy for the year ending 31st March 2023. It was amended to show that the external auditor is now Mazars. Proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. P. Twaites. All councillors agreed.

12. Statement of Internal Control (SIC)

The Council considered and approved the SIC for the year ending 31st March 2023. The Chair and Clerk signed the Statement on behalf of the Council. Proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. S. Parfitt. All councillors agreed.

13. Annual Governance Statement

The Council considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023. The Chair and Clerk signed and dated the Statement on behalf of the Council and confirmed the Transparency Code requirements have been kept up to date and posted to the Council's website. Proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. D. Priestley. All councillors agreed.

14. Accounting Statements

The Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements and supporting documents as provided by the Responsible Financial Officer who had, prior to the meeting, signed and dated section 2 of the AGAR for 2022-2023. The Chair signed and dated the Accounting Statements on behalf of the Council. Proposed by Cllr. B. Clarke seconded by Cllr. H. Whitnell. All councillors agreed.

15. Exemption Certificate

The Council considered itself 'exempt' from the Limited Assurance Review. The Chair and RFO signed and dated the Certificate of Exemption on behalf of the Council. The clerk will submit the Certificate of Exemption to the external auditor, Mazars., by email.

16. Exercise of Public Rights

The Council noted the period for the Exercise of Public Rights from Monday 12th June to Friday 21st July 2023.

17. Planning Matters

Borden Solar Panel Farm

Councillors felt that there is a need to look to future generations and use land appropriately but that certain amendments could be made to the proposals if they went ahead, such as utilising the land underneath the panels for grazing or including more environmental protections. Councillors agreed to take a look at local solar panel farms to get a better idea of the plan. Following the comments from councillors and the parishioners at the Parish Meeting, the PC resolved to submit observations to Cllr. P. Twaites who will form a response. This will be circulated to councillors for approval prior to submission to SBC before the deadline of 6th June.

Bredgar Parish Council
Minutes of the
Parish Meeting and
AGM
Held at Bredgar Village Hall
On Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm

18. The King's Coronation Celebrations

The King's Coronation celebrations were a big success. The weather was very kind and a great many people turned out to enjoy the stalls, games and displays.

The PC would like to express their gratitude to Headteacher, Miss Heath and her team as well as FOBS and all the parishioners who helped make it a success. Bredgar School was pleased with the link to the village and hopefully many more events can be enjoyed together.

The Queen's Jubilee Plaque

The plaque has been purchased. Chair, Cllr. Clarke, proposed to use one of the large stones excavated from the pond to mount the plaque on; all councillors agreed.

19. Village Matters

Conservation Review Report

Councillors, along with SBC Cllr. Monique Bonney and Conservation Officer/contractor for SBC conducted a walk around Bredgar to start preparing an update of our Conservation Area documentation. They concluded that it was unlikely that the area could be extended but that the existing area could be retained. Hamlets are important and should be protected. They followed it by refreshments in Bredgar Tearoom. It is likely to be approximately 6 months to a year before any results are signed off.

The Bredgar Book has been loaned to the contractor writing the update.

Bredgar Book update

The proposed reprint of the Bredgar Book, with additions, is progressing and is on course for a possible print run in the autumn. It is hoped to include articles on the last Bredgar bus, the ABC Church window and some other topics being contributed by parishioners. The deadline for contributions is August.

Proposed War Graves Sign

An email has been received from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to enquire whether Bredgar Parish would be interested in having a sign at the cemetery entrance to let the public know there is a WW2 grave situated there. The signs project commenced as part of the centenary of the First World War and the Commission is hoping to erect signs at as many churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds as possible that contain war graves. The aim of the initiative is to increase awareness of war graves in the UK and to remind the public that they need not travel abroad to find Commonwealth commemorations.

Councillors agreed to obtain an application form to have a sign at Bredgar Cemetery.

War Memorial Cleaning

The War Memorial lettering was last renewed and cleaned in 2014. Councillors would like to carry out another clean and are investigating costs.

Trees/Saplings at Boundary of Recreation Ground

The Chair has discussed the issue of the trees at the boundary of the recreation ground with the landowner of the adjacent field. The landowner is happy for the PC to tidy up and replant saplings. The landowner will continue to maintain his side of the boundary.

Bus Service – Future Plan

Cllr. S. Parfitt has doggedly tried to get an alternative bus service since losing the funding from KCC for the buses which Bredgar parishioners have enjoyed for many years. However, after

Bredgar Parish Council
Minutes of the
Parish Meeting and
AGM
Held at Bredgar Village Hall
On Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm

exploring several avenues he has been unable to gain funding for any transport. Kent Karrier continues to be the only option for non-drivers to travel outside the village.

20. Highway Improvement Plan

The PC submitted the Highways Improvement Plan and a copy is available for Hollingbourne PC, but it is to be reformatted to a new template. The re-engineering of Swanton Street to eliminate the risk of flooding at Swanton Cottages will be added as a priority. All councillors agreed.

21. Cemetery

Cemetery Fees Review

The clerk circulated a copy of the revised cemetery fees to correspond with Swale Borough Council fee increase. Councillors unanimously agreed to raise the fees in line with SBC. Proposed by Cllr. P. Twaites, seconded by Cllr. H. Whitnell. The new fees will be updated on the Parish website.

Cemetery Spoil Removal Update

The new system of spoil removal following a burial is working well. The clerk supplies a Hippo Megabag for the gravedigger to fill and it is then removed by HippoWaste. This prevents the build up of excess soil around the boundary of the cemetery.

22. Project List

The Chair circulated the Project List. Councillors discussed which items were priority for funding:

- The conifers in the cemetery are overgrown and will be removed.
- The clerk and Cllr. Whitnell are to inspect the graves for maintenance issues
- The War Memorial cleaning costs will be investigated
- The broken ridge tile on the cemetery store will be replaced.
- The replacement of the children's play equipment will be looked at when the new cricket pavilion is built, although some repairs will be carried out prior to the annual inspection.

23. Reports from Councillors

Cllr. Hilary Whitnell

Cllr. Whitnell attended the charities meeting where it was announced that 17 pupils are transferring to secondary school this year and each will receive a Bible and £50 towards their new uniform.

Cllr. Whitnell left the meeting at 9.45pm.

Cllr. Stephen Parfitt

The dog bin in the recreation ground is to be replaced at a cost of around £170. Another dog bin will also be purchased and will be situated next to the litter bin at Primrose Grove.

In the recreation ground the swing seats have been cleaned. The spikes on top of the swing frame are bent and will be repaired.

The safety paintwork on the edge of the decking will be renewed.

Bredgar Parish Council
Minutes of the
Parish Meeting and
AGM
Held at Bredgar Village Hall
On Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm

A number of road/work signs have been collected by KCC.

Cllr. Parfitt spent some time in SBC learning about the work done to tackle fly tipping and attended six sites to clear up rubbish that had been dumped. It is vital that fly tipping evidence is not moved otherwise a prosecution cannot go ahead.

Cllr. Penny Twaites

Nothing to report

Cllr. Twaites left the meeting at 9.50pm.

Cllr. Mike Day

Nothing to report.

Cllr. David Priestley

Some clearance work has been carried out on the pond. The two planters around the pond require plants.

Cllr. Nigel Osmer

Cllr. Osmer asked if the PC should consider adding to the Heritage List following an invitation by email from SBC. The nomination period extends until 26th June. Councillors agreed to review the current list with a view to resubmitting it to SBC, and to display it on the website.

Cllr. Brian Clarke

A damaged post outside the cemetery needs will be replaced.

24. 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.

25. Any other Business

Land backing onto some properties in Silver Street has been sold to three local residents and fenced. All footpaths have been retained with three new stiles installed.

26. Date of the next meeting

The next PC meeting will be held on 23rd August 2023 in Bredgar village hall.