

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021- 2022

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: Liaison with 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
McCourt Councillor: KCC Highways. Thatcher and Eleemosyary Charities Representative.

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

Stephen Parfitt Councillor: Parks & Gardens.

COVID 19

The COVID 19 pandemic has continued to impact the Parish Council this year, but the vaccine rollout and gradual relaxation of restrictions have allowed the resumption of meetings in the village hall. Thankfully, we were able to resume our usual Parish Council Remembrance Service at the war memorial, with a wreath on behalf of all parishioners, in remembrance of those who have sacrificed themselves in the cause of freedom. Although the Church were unable to hold their usual service in Bredgar due to lack of resources.

Finance

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



In order to maintain our income in line with rising prices the Parish Council levied a 4% increase in the parish precept this year. The Council has seen a general increase in the costs charged by our suppliers, but income from the cemetery has ensured that our finances remain sound.

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 put considerable resources into responding to a major planning application and a further Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan. Due to the importance and potential impact on the parish of both these cases, consultants were engaged to prepare and submit our responses.

We objected to the Highsted Park planning applications jointly with Rodmersham, Milstead and Bapchild and separately as BPC. These applications have a significant impact on Bredgar, with 9250 houses south and east of Sittingbourne, and a new junction on the M2 within our parish. The applications have subsequently been put on hold by SBC, pending required responses from the applicant.

SBC decided that a second Regulation 18 public consultation was required to complete a sound Local Plan. Due to the high government housing targets for Swale, delivering this Local Plan for the years up to 2038 is very challenging. There were at least ten potential sites for new housing put forward for consideration within our Parish. We submitted a parish response jointly with Rodmersham and Milstead Parish Councils and separately as BPC in November 2021. All responses are now being considered and we await the resulting revised Draft Local Plan.

We have continued to ask SBC Planning Enforcement for updates on the progress of the clearing of sites in Blind Mary's Lane. Unfortunately the impact of COVID and a lack of enforcement resources has resulted in little progress

The council remains a member of the 5 Parishes Group but there have been no meetings this year. The new SBC Western Area Committee Meetings now provide an alternative forum for joint parish discussions. We have successfully lobbied for a review of the Bredgar Conservation Area in that meeting and expect it to be started in the coming year.

Unfortunately due to illness the Landscape Assessment Report, mentioned in my last annual report, has not yet been completed. If it does get completed it will be used as guidance and evidence, along with the updated Conservation Area Report, when the Parish Council considers future planning application impacting the Parish.

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



Projects

There have not been any significant planned projects taken forward over the past year. However, heavy rain last June following a long dry spell caused many fish to die in the pond. This was an extremely distressing event, with significant numbers of fish dying including large carp. Fish could be seen gasping for air at the surface of the pond. Our Pond Warden led our response to this event. Mid Kent Fisheries were quickly engaged to provide emergency aeration of the pond to limit further deaths. Then once the initial problem was overcome the Parish Council approved the purchase and installation of a new air pump as a permanent solution. This has been operating well and pumps air out through two diffusers located in bottom and middle of the pond. A parishioner assisted with the project by installing a secure cabinet to house the pump. The system should deliver less murky water and healthy fish.

We have looked into providing mains water supply in the cemetery following complaints from visitors. Unfortunately the costs were extremely high and therefore it was decided we should keep the existing rainwater system.

Completion of the cemetery railings repairs has been delayed due to the availability of the blacksmith. We hope, finally to install four replacement sections by the end of May before the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend.

Since late last year the Parish Council have been working closely with other village groups to ensure that there is a village celebration for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend. This is now secured with planning at an advance stage for a 'Bring your own Picnic' street party around the Church, School and Village Hall area of Bexon Lane, with live music, classic car display, and other attractions. The Parish Council will be marshalling parking for the event in the Recreation Ground and with the History Society displaying memories of the Queen's Coronation in Bredgar.

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 continued to be a major issue in the parish over the last year. The Parish Council, led on this topic by Councillor Parfitt, has been very active with the support of many residents in reporting and having the fly tipping removed. In September we held another village litter pick that was again well supported by parishioners.

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



Due to a Kent County Council initiative to save money from the transport budget the village bus service is at risk of being cancelled permanently. BPC have responded to the consultation and encouraged residents to do the same on this matter. The consultation closed in April and the resulting decision is expected later this year (August).

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. I'd like to thank all of our Councillors for their commitment and time given to the Parish Council.

Brian Clarke
Chair
Bredgar Parish Council

4th May 2022