

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2015 TO 2016

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

Appointments

At the AGM in May, the following appointments were made:

Penny Twaites	Chair; representative to the Governing Body of Bredgar C of E School; drafting responses to parish Planning Applications; drafting responses to matters such as the Swale Local Plan.
Brian Clarke	IT; broadband; Swale West Forum; drafting responses to matters such as the Swale Local Plan; Rural Forum.
Dick Clack	KALC; pest control; Swale West Forum; footpaths; Post Office support.
Susie Hickman	Thatcher and Eleemosyary Charities representative; Parks & Gardens.
Graham Kite	KCC Highways; Rural Forum.
David Priestley	Pond warden; pest control; heritage.
Mark Pullen	KALC; Parks & Gardens; Village Hall representative; Cemetery.

Teresa Hudson continues as highly valued Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer, as well as being our website co-ordinator.

Precept

The Parish Council has maintained the precept for the financial year 2016 to 2017 at £9,500. This equates to a band D rate of £33.08 compared to £33.31 in 2015 to 2016. Running costs in relation to the village are carefully monitored by the Responsible Financial Officer and Cllrs and reserves remain in place to assist with unexpected eventualities and improvements requiring capital expenditure.

Recreation Ground

The purchase of the freehold of Bredgar Recreation Ground, by the Parish Council, was duly completed on 15th January 2016. This was funded by a combination of Parish Council reserves, grants from Swale and KCC Councillors, village groups, and many donations from individual parishioners. The Parish Council extends its thanks to all who supported the acquisition, and in particular to all parishioners who gave so generously and to former Chair of the Parish Council, Beverley Willis, who worked tirelessly in making the arrangements, and securing donations and grants.

The Parish Council is planning an event to be held in early summer, on the Recreation Ground, to mark the achievement.

Superfast Broadband

Superfast broadband is now available for many residents in Bredgar. A new cabinet has been installed in the village opposite the church and fibre has been run from Sittingbourne, providing upgrade capability for properties connected to the existing BT cabinet nearby. This enables broadband upgrades to be purchased for approximately 54% of the lines in the parish. The Parish Council is now researching solutions for the remaining connections, although it seems that Phase 2 of the KCC programme will not assist with this.

Maintenance of the Village

The public spaces in the village are maintained to a satisfactory level, including cutting of grassed areas, tidying and planting of borders and re-stocking of planters and keeping the Cemetery and other open spaces in order. The pond is in good condition and the Parish Council has organised a few working party sessions over the year, for tidying and clearing around its edges – the ducks are thriving.

A successful ‘Clean for the Queen’ event was organised early in March, by the Parish Council in collaboration with the School. Thanks to all who have helped in caring for our village environment.

Pond Decking

The fabric of the pond decking is old. It has, unfortunately, largely rotted away, and needs replacing. Councillors are currently engaged in weighing up options for suitable materials, and to raising funds from Swale and KCC Councillors, to supplement Parish funding. It is hoped that work on the re-building of the platform will begin very shortly.

General Matters

The Parish Council has responded to the usual flow of planning applications for Bredgar, as submitted to the Mid Kent Planning Authority. After problems last year with the implementation of a new computer system, the process is working more smoothly now.

The School continues to strive for high and achieve high academic standards, and the Council is represented on its Governing Body. New cloakroom facilities have been constructed successfully during the year.

The Post Office, following its re-opening in the summer, continues to provide an important service to the village, under the supervision of Teresa Hudson, and with the support of the Parish Council.

I conclude by thanking everyone who has played a part in assisting the work of the Parish Council over the year. Parishioners are fortunate to live in a village where so many people care for their environment, and are prepared to actively support its well being.

Penny Twaites

22nd March 2016

