

# BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2022- 2023

Somewhat late this year, I have pleasure in setting out some of the achievements and activities of the Parish Council over the past year, covering the period from April 2022 to March 2023.

### Appointments

The following appointments were in place through the 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. Until January 2023.

David Priestley Councillor: Pond Warden. Pest Control. Heritage.

Hilary Whitnell Councillor: KCC Highways. Thatcher and Eleemosyary Charities Representative.

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

Stephen Parfitt Councillor: Parks & Gardens.

### Village Matters

The Parish Council worked closely with other village groups to provide a village celebration for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend. The event took place on Sunday 5th June 2022 from 12:30 until 3:30pm with villagers celebrating by attending a bring-your-own picnic party in the village hall, church and school grounds. A section of Bexon Lane was closed from Rosebery to the junction with The Street to ensure people could move around safely. The picnic was formally started at 1:00pm when everyone stood up to join in as the live band Loose Change played the National Anthem "God Save the Queen". Due to the risk of thunderstorms during the afternoon the picnic took place in a packed village hall. Local singer Kevin Corden provided the entertainment as the serious eating and socialising took place. In addition to the picnic that people brought for

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themselves, further sandwiches, cakes and other refreshments were provided. After the picnic, Loose Change returned to the stage and performed live for the duration of the event. There were a number of activities running throughout the day. These included a vintage and classic car display in the village hall car park showcasing cars owned by local people, face painting, crown making and a treasure hunt around the church grounds with lucky dip gifts. The souvenir gifts were created by local business TrugShop, with many made from reclaimed wood from the old organ at St John the Baptist Church. The entries into a cake competition were on display in the village hall and eaten after being judged by the Rev. Paula Jardine-Rose, Curate of Tunstall and Bredgar Benefice. In Bredgar church there was an art exhibition, judged by parishioner Emily Cooper, which included many entries from pupils of Bredgar School. A local history display and video presentation about the Queen's 1953 coronation celebrations in Bredgar, by the Parish Council and History Society, was shown in the church. The Bredgar Community Choir sang in a very busy church and followed that up with a singing workshop. At 4:00pm there was an official opening of the Jubilee Orchard in Hinkins Croft, Silver Street. The orchard contains 12 different heritage apple trees that were planted earlier in the year and will be kept as a tranquil place in which residents may remember their loved ones in the coming years. Activities were rounded off in the church with Evensong and refreshments, followed by a quarter peal of the bells at 19:32.

During the summer of 2022 more detailed discussions took place with Bredgar Cricket Club about a new cricket club house. Plans for the building were agreed but the need to relocate or replace the children's play equipment caused submission of the plans to be delayed.

Sadly the death of Queen Elizabeth II was announced on 8th September 2022 and the Parish Council organised a Bredgar Book of Condolences in the church for our parishioners. The book was displayed for one month before being sent away to be included with the Lord Lieutenant's pages signed in County Hall. They will be bound and stored in the Kent History and Archive Centre.

Following attendance at the Borough of Swale Proclamation of King Charles III at St Michael's Church, Sittingbourne, the Chair of Bredgar Parish Council returned to bring the Proclamation to the Parish of Bredgar. Church Warden Tim Ford attended and raised the Church flag to full mast for the duration of the reading in the Recreation Ground at 17:30 on Sunday 11th September. A small gathering of parishioners heard the Proclamation which finished when all those attending responded to a call for three cheers for His Majesty The King.

To provide a lasting commemoration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, an Oak Tree was planted in Bush Close and a plaque purchased to be mounted on a stone nearby. The tree was formally recorded as part of The Queen's Green Canopy project.

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For the 2nd year running the Christmas Tree on Gore Pond was kindly donated by Bredgar and Wormshill Light Railway and lit for parishioners to enjoy.

Kent County Council announced an initiative to save money from their transport budget that put the village bus service is at risk of being cancelled permanently. BPC responded to the consultation and encouraged residents to do the same on this matter. Unfortunately all the responses were not sufficient to save the bus service and the very last Bredgar bus left the village on Saturday 11th February 2023 at 17.07.

Early in 2023 the Parish Council began planning for the Coronation Celebrations of King Charles III. It was decided that the celebrations should be forward looking and were centred around the village school led by the Head Teacher Ms Joanna Heath, supported by villagers, Friends of Bredgar School, the church and the Parish Council. The event, called "The Big Bredgar Lunch", took place on Sunday 7th May from 12-4pm in the grounds of the school, church and village hall (just after the Parish Council elections on 4th May).

In addition to this event the Parish Council arranged for a walled garden in Bush Close to be named "The Coronation Garden" to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III. The Parish Council had recently taken over the responsibility for the maintenance of it from Swale Borough Council. The flowerbed was completely cleared and replanted. A plaque was purchased and mounted on the wall of the flowerbed as part of the Big Bredgar Lunch village celebrations.

## **Finance**

In order to maintain our income in line with rising prices the Parish Council levied a 11% increase in the parish precept for the following year. The Council has seen a general increase in the costs charged by suppliers and there was concern that KCC and Swale Borough Council may devolve more services down to parishes in future. Higher than usual 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 objected to amended Highsted Park planning applications, again jointly with Rodmersham, Milstead and Bapchild and separately as BPC. These applications have a significant impact on Bredgar, with 8400 (reduced from 9250) houses south and east of Sittingbourne, and a new junction on the M2 within our parish. SBC decided to stall the Local Plan process due to a lack of clarity on government policy on housing targets.

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We have continued to ask SBC Planning Enforcement for updates on the progress of the clearing of sites in Blind Mary's Lane. SBC have not responded with any enforcement action.

Funding was approved for an updated Conservation Area Report from the SBC Western Area Committee and that work is now underway with completion expected later in the year.

## **Projects / Maintenance**

The cemetery railings repairs project finally completed, with the new sections installed in May in time for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and an additional support strut in installed in September.

Some subsidence of the concrete edge to Gore pond pond was repaired.

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 continued to be a major issue in the parish over the last year. The Parish Council, led on this topic by Councillor Parfitt, continued to be 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 supported by volunteer parishioners.

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

30th June 2023