

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016 TO 2017

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

Appointments

The beginning of the Council year, saw two long term Councillors, Mark Pullen and Graham Kite, stepping aside from the Council. The remaining Council Members express their gratitude to these two, and in particular for the ongoing support which both have offered in different forms. We welcomed new Councillors Jane Collins, and Andy Dwyer

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	Vice Chair, IT; broadband; Highways; KALC, Swale West Forum; drafting responses to matters such as the Swale Local Plan;.
Dick Clack	KALC; pest control; footpaths; parks and gardens.
Susie Hickman	Thatcher and Eleemosyary Charities representative; Parks & Gardens.
David Priestley	Pond warden; pest control; heritage.
Jane Collins	Post Office support and representative to the Village Hall

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 increased the precept for the financial year 2017 to 2018 by £115, to £9,615, approximately in line with inflation. This equates to a band D rate of £33.59, compared to £33.08 in 2016 to 2017. 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. Grants are also sought to assist with projects requiring capital.

Pond Decking

A project was launched to replace the rotten pond decking, and work was completed, to a high standard, in June. Funding was largely covered by grants obtained from Swale and KCC Councillors and those Councillors attended a brief 'opening' ceremony on 25th June.

Recreation Ground

Following the purchase of the freehold of Bredgar Recreation Ground, by the Parish Council, in January 2016, the change of ownership was formally recognised at the opening of the School Fete, held on the Ground, on 21st May, in speeches by former Parish Council Chairman, Beverly Willis, and the current Chair. The Parish Council is now in discussion with Bredgar Cricket Club, in relation to their ongoing use of the Ground, and their plan to build a new pavilion, which we welcome.

Traffic in the Village

Parishioners have responded brilliantly to the call for volunteers to train for the Speedwatch initiative. We now have several teams of three, who are able to set up roadside observation positions, to record and formally report speeding in the village, through this Police scheme. Some hairy speeds have been reported and letters sent to those offending.

In the autumn, villagers signed a petition calling for the KCC Cabinet Member for the Environment and Highways to visit the village and take measures to curb the ability of traffic to race through Bredgar as high speed. A group of Councillors presented this to Cllr Matthew Balfour in December, at County Hall, in Maidstone and he has agreed to visit the village to see the issue at first hand, on 22 February.

The Post Office

After a worrying period, the future of the premises for the Post Office has been secured, with a change of ownership of the Farm Shop business. The team who have taken over, are showing great support for the Post Office, and have made it possible to remain open during the transitional period, as well as in the long term. We are all looking forward to completion of the current works and the grand opening of the Shop in early March.

The Cemetery

Tree work will be undertaken in the cemetery very shortly, as certain trees have become too large and potentially dangerous. The water supply to the cemetery has been renewed, with the refurbishment of the water butt system, generously undertaken by a neighbouring parishioner. This should ensure that the reported shortages over the summer of 2016, will not be repeated this year.

Maintenance of the Village

The public spaces in the village are maintained to a good level, including cutting of grassed areas, tidying and planting of borders and re-stocking of planters and keeping the 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. Tidying work was also undertaken in the Jubilee Garden, which benefitted from the planting of a ‘dwarf’ oak tree, and generously donated new roses.

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 early last year with the implementation of a new computer system and some staffing difficulties, 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.

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

15th February 2017

