

Bearsted Parish Council Newsletter

December 2015



A Message from your Parish Councillors

About 7 months ago I received an email asking if I'd like to stand for election to become a councillor in Bearsted Parish Council.

I took a big gulp and said "I'm in!" Fifteen of us were elected following a 3 week whirlwind campaign and thank you for your votes. The campaign gave us a great opportunity to talk to people living in the parish.

Once we'd been elected, the work really began. I'm grateful to the outgoing councillors who had committed a lot of time and energy in the past. This newsletter is one way to continue to communicate with everyone in the parish and to give you a flavour of what we've been spending our time doing over the last six months. We plan to produce the newsletter quarterly, giving regular updates on our activities and plans for the future. Please let us know what you think of it.

Guided by the parish clerk, experienced councillors and some weekend training, we work in a legal framework to follow proper processes and use the precept (council tax money given to the parish) wisely.

We know there's another rich layer of expertise in the parish with skills and ideas on which to draw.

What do you want to change? What do you want to stay the same?

The four committees meet monthly and report their recommendations into the full council for ratification. You can tell us what's important here as the public are very welcome to attend all these meetings. You can also contact us via our website, via Facebook and twitter, write to the clerk or stop us in the street!

We hope you want to be part of shaping Bearsted for the future.

Chair, Fiona Redman



Environment Committee

This Committee manages parish land such as the Green, the allotments and footpaths, organises tree maintenance and planting, organises litter picking throughout the parish, and liaises with the appropriate organisations over roads and parking issues.

Lighting on Church Landway. Due to the repeated vandalism of the low level lights, we plan to replace these with 7 lampposts, giving sufficient lighting while stopping further vandalism. We expect to hear the outcome of the application for planning permission in the next few weeks. If this is granted work will start shortly afterwards. Following reports of anti-social behaviour, we are also looking at installing CCTV in the Church car park.

Traffic Calming. The 20mph speed limit will soon be in force along Roseacre Lane, Tower Lane and Yeoman Lane. Congratulations to the community on their successful campaigning!

Bearsted in Bloom. We plan to build on the success of the 'Best Garden Competition', working with Malcolm Withnall and the community on a 'Bearsted in Bloom' event.

Around the village. The maintenance programme for the Green and the land owned by the parish continues. Work will begin shortly on tree maintenance on the Green, including the pollarding of the bigger willow by the pond. Thank you to our local resident who looks after the pond and does a splendid job at keeping the area clear of rubbish. We are looking into renewing the bins around the Green with new vermin-proof versions.

Many upkeep responsibilities in the local area, such as footpaths, highways and rubbish collections, fall to Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council. We are working hard to liaise with these organisations to ensure the best possible service for our community.

Chairman, Geoff Bennett

Finance and General Policy Committee

This Committee sets and manages the parish budget and deals with all aspects of the day to day administration of the Parish Council.

It's that time of year when we are looking at the budget for 2016, and as usual that brings challenges. As with a household budget we have to think where best to spend the funds we receive. We have to maintain the land that the parish owns - keeping it safe and tidy. Along with the Green, the Elizabeth Harvie Field and the allotments, we own or maintain a number of paths around the village and need to keep those clear, lit and passable. We participate in, or run key events in the parish, such as the Fireworks and Sports and Activity Day. This requires a team of people with associated costs.

The money we receive from Maidstone Borough is based on the number of houses in the parish and it is likely that we will be asking for a small increase for next year. Despite the official inflation figures, the cost of maintaining or improving the services we provide is increasing year on year.

A number of years ago the parish voted to set up a land fund. We have taken the decision to increase the money in the fund so that we are ready when an opportunity of benefit to the community presents itself. We are also putting in place a framework to control how and when the money is spent.

Please rest assured that we are well aware it is your money we are spending and we will always look to spend it wisely, gaining the best possible value for money.

Chairman, Richard Camp

Communications and Community Committee

The Communications and Community Committee organises parish events such as the Sports and Activity Day and Fireworks Display, provides information through the newsletter, website, Facebook and Twitter.

The first six months have been a big learning curve for many of us but we have made some real progress. So far we have:

- redesigned and updated the website - now much easier to read and navigate www.bearstedparishcouncil.gov.uk
- organised the Sports and Activity Day on the Green
- entertained more than 2,000 people at the fantastic Fireworks Display
- relaunched the Parish Council newsletter
- reactivated the Facebook and twitter accounts, increased followers by more than 300% and posted information daily. You can find and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BearstedParishCouncil and on twitter [@bearstedpc](https://twitter.com/bearstedpc)
- set a date for Music on the Green 2016 – to be run by the local community through the not for profit 'Bearsted Events' Community Interest Company on Sunday 28 August

Next year is looking just as busy. We plan to:

- provide further enhancements to the website
- strengthen the newsletter with more useful news and content
- publicise the 2016 calendar of parish events
- integrate social media with the website
- investigate making our meetings available via audio or video through the website

Chairman, Dan Conner

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee views all local planning applications submitted to Maidstone Borough Council and makes recommendations as to whether they should be approved. It also makes recommendations on local and national planning issues and proposed new developments.

Since May of this year the Planning Committee has dealt with 72 applications. Most of these were considered straightforward and of benefit to developer and community alike. Where necessary the committee has also met developers to discuss the plans brought before them.

Unfortunately there has been a constant threat of inappropriate development within Bearsted and its surrounding areas. The Planning Committee has strongly objected to these developments, which include the Waterside Park development at Junction 8, the new application at Woodcut Farm, the building of 100 dwellings at Barty Farm and the relocation of the listed wall at Barty Farm to allow access to the proposed development site. The development at Lilk Meadow had been approved by Maidstone Borough Council before our election, however we believe it to be an inappropriate site for any development and will continue to monitor adherence to the conditions imposed by MBC.

The new Planning Committee continues to encourage the public to attend monthly meetings to voice their concerns and is committed to continue to keep the community informed about proposed developments.

Chairman, Graham Farrow

Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Development Plans were introduced as part of the 2012 Localism Act and offer parishes and community groups the opportunity to control and shape future planning policy at a more local level. A number of communities and parishes in Maidstone are already preparing plans, now Bearsted Parish Council is embarking on the same process, and residents are invited to join the council to help produce the plan. We want our neighbourhood plan to focus on all aspects of life in Bearsted, including managing development, green spaces, sports and leisure facilities and employment and business opportunities in the parish. The council estimates the process will take up to one year to complete, after which the completed plan is put to a community referendum, and if agreed, legally comes into force. There are financial benefits for adopting a neighbourhood plan, as areas with adopted plans are directly entitled to 25% of any funds contributed by development in the area via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). For more details of what a neighbourhood development plan is and what it could mean for Bearsted, go to www.planningportal.gov.uk/inyourarea/neighbourhood. However, time is short, as the council wants to hold a meeting in January 2016 to kick off the process. To get involved, please see the Parish Council's website, contact Cllr Paul Young or email bpcneighbourhoodplan@gmail.com

Cllr Paul Young

Dates for the Diary

Date	Event	Location	Time
December 2015			
Wednesday 16th	Carols on the Green	Bearsted Green	7.30 pm
Sunday 20th	Christmas Farmers' Market	Bearsted Green	9am—1pm

Your Councillors

Parish Councillors:

Chair:

Fiona Redman

Vice Chair:

Richard Camp

Deputy Chair:

Dan Conner

Richard Ash

Geoff Bennett

Suzanne Camp

Kenny Cox

Graham Farrow

Helen Farrow

Helena Goodwin

Fabienne Hughes

Jonathan Hughes

Pat Marshall

Tony Ryan

Paul Young

Maidstone Borough

Councillors:

Richard Ash

Mike Cuming

Val Springett

Kent County Councillor:

Paul Carter

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