

What is the purpose of a Parish Council?

As we look towards a new year which I suspect will see SCC and ESC working to change the way Suffolk is governed, I thought it would be useful to reflect on the purpose of a Parish Council.

- A Parish Council is an elected body of people who are responsible for local community matters rather than national or county-wide services.
- They are the lowest (or first) tier of government and have a small budget and no enforcement powers. That does not mean we are toothless as we can influence decisions at ESC and SCC.
- Our main responsibilities are to:
 - Represent the views and interests of local residents
 - Improve local amenities and facilities
 - Influence larger councils on planning and local services

To that end, the fact that SCC and ESC will be dissolved in 2028 and replaced by a new East Suffolk Council will have little impact on us as a PC.

We will need to engage with new councillors and – potentially – a new approach to how County and District councils will be run but, fundamentally, our role should remain the same.

What have we done?

- So, if that is the purpose of a PC, the natural follow-up question is – what have we done as Bromeswell's PC.
- I may be slightly biased but I think we've done rather well and I am extremely grateful to the whole PC for their part.
- Taking those three points in order, since May last year:

To 'Represent the views and interests of local residents'

We implemented our latest Parish Plan 2026-30. That plan highlights road safety and the protection of Bromeswell's rural character as the main priorities as raised by the village.

On the road safety side, we have:

- Pressed concerns about pedestrians crossing A1152 with Suffolk Highways and our MP, Jenny Riddell-Carpenter
- Looked at ways to reverse the encroachment of hedges and verges over lanes
- Liaised with SCC Highways to remove adverts on Wilford roundabout and Eyke Rd junction.
- Supported James and Andrew with their concerns about the railway crossing closure
- Logged problems with signs, flooding and potholes on SCC reporting tool and chased when required
- Drains cleared and VH soakaway cleared to avoid flooding

To help protect the rural character of the village, we have:

- Responded to 12 planning applications, submitting our support and, where necessary, concerns if the plans did not meet the requirements of building in the countryside.
- Chased up old and new enforcement requests where we felt planning regulations were not being followed correctly.

Financial responsibility

I would add to this that, as a PC, we take the need for financial responsibility very seriously.

We have a healthy bank balance for a small parish but we don't take that for granted

- Every year we budget our precept based on what we intend to do the next year and stick to that budget.
- We also explore new cost-effective solutions like switching insurance providers to reduce the premium.
- Accounts approved at audit

The second responsibility of a PC was to **'Improve local amenities and facilities'**

On that count, we have:

- Repaired the bus shelter roof (thanks to Allen Turner)
- Supported the PCC Fabric Fund to protect St Edmund's Church
- Set aside funds to support the Village Hall's plans to modernise
- Ensured grit bins were accessible (from brambles) and filled before winter
- Planting of daffodil bulbs (thanks to ESC for the donation)
- Organised a Spring litter pick
- Supported SWT with installing bat recorders on Bromeswell Green

The third responsibility was to **'Influence larger councils on planning and local services'**

Obviously, we are limited in what we can achieve here but we do make sure our voice is heard by:

- Engaging with various consultations and surveys on policing, council policies, transport, planning and many more.
- Being an active voice in the Joint Parish Transport Initiative: a group designed to bring local PCs together with representatives from ESC and Suffolk Highways.

That was a snap-shot of the work that has gone on. There is more but I don't want to talk forever.

I do want to end with some heartfelt thanks:

- To my fellow Parish Councillors who all volunteer their time and energy to make our PC a success.
- Jenny - our superb Clerk – who
 - Keeps on top of a mountain of communications,
 - Ensures we stick to the rules of parish government, and
 - Keeps us informed about what's going on in PCs outside Bromeswell.
- James Malinder and Andrew Reid for all their support – both financial and through championing our ambitions.

It's no exaggeration to say we couldn't do half of what we do without your support.

I know Andrew announced he was stepping down from his role before the recent election but I am delighted that James will continue as our District Councillor.
- The editors of the Bromeswell Warbler for helping us to publicise what we do.
- Last but no means least to the residents of Bromeswell who attend our meetings, send messages of support and contribute their time and energy to the benefit of the village.