



# Boxley

## PARISH COUNCIL

### **Boxley Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2021 – 2022**

Boxley Parish Council went through many changes in the last twelve months, and it was a rollercoaster year for me as the new Chairman. There are some exceptional highlights. These are the achievements of the staff and councillors who have worked tirelessly and getting Boxley Parish Council back on track after two years of the Covid 19 Pandemic:

- We have recruited three new Councillors who will all bring their experience, attributes, and new ideas. Welcome to Councillors David Hubbard, Kevin Hill, and Alan Asseter.
- I’d like to thank Lynne Clarke for her service as a Councillor especially on Human resource issues and wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement in East Anglia.
- Just before Christmas, the Waldeslade Woodlands was transferred from Kent County Council to us. This is a lovely area of woodland that is a great asset to the local community. I understand it has taken ten years to get this project over the line, but the work carried out by Dani Baylis in dealing with the complex legal issues finally came to fruition. The 38 hectare, Walderslade Woodlands is now a charitable trust and we have set up a Management Committee under the leadership of Robert Burrows to manage the daily activities.
- In the last four months, we have recruited a Parish Caretaker and reorganised the office administration. We have recruited Michael Du-Lieu as Parish Caretaker, Lissi Watt as Assistant Clerk Finance and Jane Denham has been promoted to Assistant Clerk Beechen Hall.
- In the last twelve months, we have supported our residents in opposing the Lidsing Garden Development; traffic concerns at Grove Green and Boxley village; building homes in greenfield areas such as Sandling; and getting planning permission to rebuild the listed stone wall at Boxley Church.
- After two years of the Pandemic when much of the time, Beechen Hall was closed, we are seeing bookings return to normal levels. This is very pleasing and very much down to the hard work of the office staff.
- It was an honour to represent Boxley Parish Council at the Remembrance Day service and attending the installation of Robert Trugwell, the new parish vicar for Pilgrims Way Churches. Meeting the Bishop of Dover who presided over the installation was a great personal experience.
- Without doubt, the highlight of my year was the reopening of the Franklin Drive Play Area which my children and now grandchildren love. The Devon cream tree in memory of the play area saviour, Councillor Wendy Hinder was a lovely afternoon in the Autumn. It was attended by many residents who all enjoyed scones, clotted cream, and Bob Hinder’s homemade raspberry jam. The debate continues whether the jam or cream goes on top of the scone!

As I reiterated at the beginning, it has been a rollercoaster year and there have been several staffing issues that I had to personally deal with. I felt like a full time

HR Manager rather than the Chairman of a Parish Council. These have now all been sorted, and I am very pleased we now have a stable environment to move forward with.

As individuals and as a Council, we have been subject to a very negative comments on social media in relation to our opposition to Lidsing Garden Development. These false accusations have created personal anguish, and nobody should be open to this type of abuse.

I have constantly made the point that Boxley Parish Council is 100% against Lidsing Garden Development and all Councillors made this point collectively and individually during the Maidstone Borough Council consultation. We also attended the Council meetings at Maidstone Town Hall and the Mote Park Leisure Centre.

On a positive note, I am getting used to the processes and procedure of running Parish Council meetings and thank my fellow Councillors for keeping me on the straight and narrow.

We are investing in Beechen Hall with new technology and safety features which will not only be good for the local community but also hopefully attract new business hirers.

I have enjoyed this rollercoaster year as the highs will always outnumber the negative issues.

I will continue to support and serve our residents to the best of my ability and ensure we have another good year but hopefully with less distractions.

Regards

Chris Sheppard  
Chairman Boxley Parish Council

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022