2024 NEWSLETTER



Cllr Helen Weltman - Chair of Kingsmead Parish Council

WELCOME TO OUR 2024 NEWSLETTER!

We have had another busy year looking after Kingsmead. If you would like to find out more about what the Parish Council does for the community, please visit our website at www.kingsmeadpc.org.uk.

Our website contains the agendas and minutes for the meetings of the Full Council and all the committees. Our main meeting is held on the 3rd Monday of each month (excluding August) starting at 7.30pm in Kingsmead school. Please feel free to attend if there is anything you want to discuss with councillors or you just what to see how the council works and what we have to consider through the year.

I want to thank all those who regularly attend our monthly litter picks (last Sunday of each month) and a special thanks to all residents who turned out to help get rid of the roadside weeds. We didn't manage to complete all the areas we set out to do, but hope to organise another event in the new year. While this type of maintenance is not our responsibility and should be undertaken by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC), we were aware of residents concerns about the state of the weeds in lots of places. Similar to many public organisations, CWaC is under a lot of financial pressure and the Parish Council felt it would help to keep Kingsmead looking nicer if we organised the volunteer day. It did not cost us anything to hold the event, as we borrowed equipment from Countrywide, and we believe it made a huge difference. Thanks to everyone for their support.

Crown Hedge

We are (hopefully) in the final stages of negotiating the takeover of the Crown Hedge for us to maintain to its original state. CWaC has agreed in principle to transfer the revenue from the advertising on the roundabout to the PC as a contribution to its ongoing upkeep. We are questioning CWaC about future funding if, for instance, they end the advertising and if they will then continue to transfer an equal sum to the PC. The contract is currently being reviewed by ChALC's (Cheshire Association of Local Councils) legal department to ensure there will be no nasty "gotchas".

Whilst the Parish Council maintains our hedgerows on a yearly basis, it's also important that residents ensure their own hedges are looked after. If your property boundary contains hedges, please make sure they are adequately maintained so that they do not over grow onto pavements and cycle ways. Unmaintained hedgerows not only look untidy, they cause accessibility issues for residents.

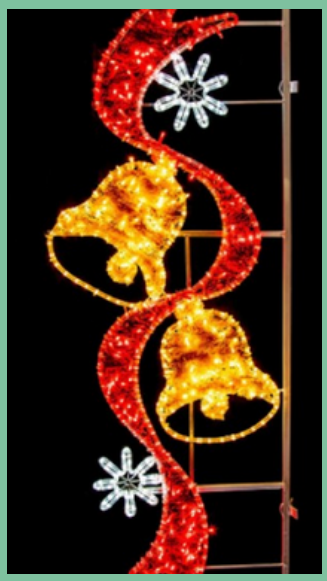


KINGSMEAD PARISH COUNCIL
CONTACT DETAILS
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Christmas in Kingsmead

Christmas soon comes around and like every other year your parish council plans to put on a very festive event for the community to get together and enjoy the start of the Christmas period. We're extremely proud of this event and hope you all continue to support and enjoy it.

Last year was such a huge success that we plan to follow a similar format, although we won't be seeing the inflatable Santa this year on the clock tower. But the tower will be lit with garlands, there will be a new style of motif lights on the Kingfisher roundabout and we will have the large fir tree lit on Kingsmead Square.



The Christmas Lights Switch-on will be a little earlier than in previous years, happening on Friday 29th November. We have the donkeys back again, along with the artisan stalls and the Davenham Scouts who last year brought Christmas trees. We will also be able to enjoy the band from Kingsmead school who never fail to open the evening with a special touch of festive magic. The main event though will be Santa taking time out from his busy schedule to visit us in his Grotto!!

Please see the back page of the newsletter for more information.

"What is a Parish Council?" Thoughts from Jackie Weaver (Chief Officer - Cheshire Association of Local Councils)

Let's start with what it is not … it is not the hybrid PCC (Parochial Church Council)/Parish Council meeting we saw on the Vicar of Dibley and it is rarely the hotbed of personality and vitriol that we saw in 'that' video. But what it is, is the mechanism for local people to take some control of their environment and their services through a democratic process that gives real legitimacy to those speaking and acting on their behalf. I do not dismiss Residents Associations and the like BUT the big difference there is that they are often single issue and have no formal status in law or statute AND they have no accountability to you – they are self-selected not elected.

The kinds of things your council can get involved in (or deliver on your account) are numerous and varied such as the power to plant trees and maintain roadside verges or the power to provide and maintain community buildings. They do not maintain highways (potholes!) or decide planning applications, that is the role of Cheshire West and Chester Council, but they are considerably more accessible. They hold monthly meetings that are open to the public, have an accessible website and often consult on the things that really matter to the community. They are accountable to you through publishing their annual audit and their visibility within the parish.



So how does it work?

Every four years you have the opportunity to elect your councillors – the ultimate test of whether you are happy with their efforts or not! If anyone resigns during that period they will have a casual vacancy (not the J K Rowling kind!) and you will decide if they have a by-election or if they can co-opt (decide for themselves) – again – there is that accountability.

Are these elected councillors special or unique individuals? No – they are ordinary people like you and me who feel passionately about their parish and want to make sure that it gets the best services it can and that your local voice is heard whenever the more strategic decisions are being taken. Could you be a councillor? Why not find out what it involves by talking to one of your councillors or by attending a council meeting? You might be surprised at how much you find out and how much is going on. Not willing or able to commit the time? Why not ask if there is a working group or volunteer opportunity with the council that you might enjoy – its not all hard work, it can be really rewarding and it looks really good on your CV. And just in case you need a further nudge – you do have the authority here – the authority to be part of a great community champion team!

Grey Boxes

You may have noticed a number of grey cabinets that have appeared around the Parish, which are for the provision of Virgin Media internet services. What they didn't realise at the time of installation was that some of the locations used were on Parish Council land and needed our permission. We had initial talks with their representatives and we were in the process of negotiating a Wayleave contract for an annual payment in favour of the Parish Council. They had also agreed to change the colour of the boxes on our land from grey to green to better blend in with the locations. Unfortunately, without any prior discussion with the council, the boxes were moved off our land onto paths which are the responsibility of CWaC. Virgin Media has already received a blanket agreement from CWaC to install the boxes and there is no further action the Parish Council can take. The boxes will also most likely stay grey now as CWaC did not request this change be made.

Litter Picks

We would like to thank everyone who has joined us on our Monthly Litter Picks around Kingsmead. Over the past year we have collected 80 bags of rubbish! This is a great achievement. If you would like to join us, then these events occur on the last Sunday of every month apart from August and December. All equipment is provided – litter pickers, bags and hoops. We gather at the parish notice board on the last Sunday of the month at 10am. Please see details on our website or noticeboard.







New Additions in Kingsmead

Earlier this year we purchased two WW2 figures to stand alongside the Cenotaph as a permanent reminder of the sacrifices made by those who served and continue to serve in the armed forces. The silhouettes were erected to commemorate this year's 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings and will now stay as a permanent tribute. At the same time, we purchased a new flower planter which sits under the sign as you enter Kingsmead from town. The flowers were provided by Countrywide, who will maintain a year-round display and keep the planter topped up with water. We hope you agree it's a nice little touch and sets the scene for how we try to maintain Kingsmead as a great community to be part of and a lovely place to live.

Orchard Project at St. George's Field

The mission of the Orchard Project is to renovate the old farm orchard at the end of St. George's field. The renovation will benefit the local community by providing a community space to enjoy and collectively maintain. It is envisaged that there will be minimal cost as this will be a community project involving residents who are interested and who would like to join in; ultimately we'd like to see a 'Friends of Kingsmead Orchard' group being set up on conjunction with the Parish Council. If you are interested in helping us or would like to join the next event, please contact the clerk.



The following 3-year plan has been proposed:

Year 1 (2024 / Jan 2025)

Debris was cleared from a third of the area by volunteers and a path through the orchard was reinstated on the 1st of August. The removal of self-seeded trees from the area will be carried out in late Autumn 2024 by contractors, along with laying down of bark, which we've kept from the tree clearance, to help maintain the path. The fruit trees will be pruned, under the supervision of an orchard expert, along with volunteers in winter 2024/Jan 2025. On-going maintenance of the path through the area will be carried out as part of the general grounds maintenance contract.



Year 2 (Jan 2025 / Jan 2026)

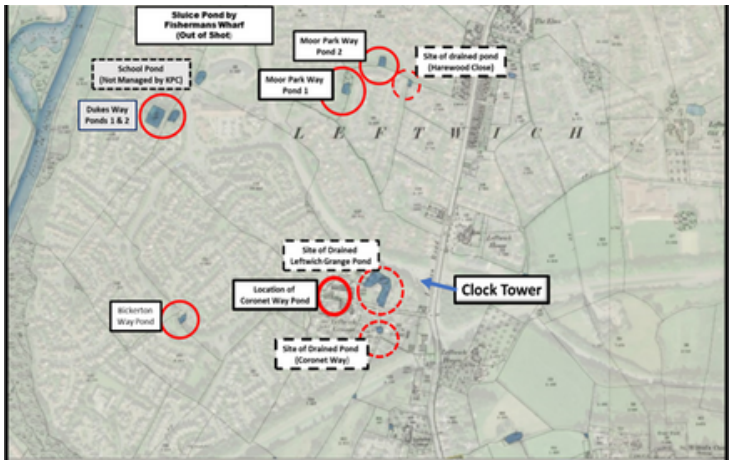
We are hoping to form a voluntary group called Friends of Kingsmead Orchard whose mission will be to help maintain the area for the enjoyment of all. The pruning of fruit trees, under the supervision of an orchard expert, along with volunteers is planned for winter 2025/Jan 2026. There might also be the opportunity for volunteers to attend an orchard management workshop, which is usually run by Cheshire West & Chester Council in the first quarter of each year. On-going maintenance of the path through the area will be carried out as per the general grounds maintenance contract. We're hoping the group will organise an Orchard Day event in the autumn of 2025.

Year 3 (Jan 2026 / Jan 2027)

The pruning of fruit trees, under the supervision of an orchard expert, along with volunteers will be carried out again in winter 2025/Jan 2026. The path will continue to be maintained as per the general maintenance contract and we're hoping to have another Orchard Day event in the autumn of 2026.

Kingsmead's Ponds – History and Management

Ponds have been a feature of the land on which Kingsmead now stands for at least 150 years. The image shows an Ordnance Survey map of 1895 overlayed on a current satellite image of the Leftwich and Davenham area. The map highlights the locations of existing and drained ponds on the old Leftwich Grange Farm estate, now Kingsmead.



(acknowledgements to the National Library of Scotland for the use of this image)

Kingsmead Parish Council manages seven of the remaining ponds on the estate.

Dukes Way Ponds

There are 2 ponds by Dukes Way.

Pond 1 (sometimes referred to as 'the Duck Pond') is a large, permanent pond that provides habitat and with its jetty, floating duck house and proximity to the school and local shops is a popular amenity.

Pond 2 is smaller and seasonal, only flooding after long periods of wet weather.

Moor Park Way Pond 1

This pond is permanently flooded to varying degrees. It provides reasonable habitat and also has a floating duck house. Frogs are known to spawn there in the spring months when the water level is high

Moor Park Way Pond 2 (adj. to Harewood Close)

This is a small seasonal pond only filling after long periods of wet weather.

Sluice Pond

The sluice pond is situated on the river bank at Fisherman's Wharf. This is a United Utilities infrastructure asset that captures silt and debris from groundwater before it flows into the River Weaver through the pipes under the wharf. However, Kingsmead Parish Council's contractors keep the surrounds tidy.

Bickerton Way

A small, seasonal pond with some wildlife habitat.

Coronet Avenue Pond

The pond by Coronet Avenue was created in 1996 when Kingsmead was being built. Its main purpose is to stem the flow of ground water that previously flowed down the hill and into a large pond and wet land close to where Tatton Close and the clock tower now stand. Of all our ponds, Coronet pond is currently the most vibrant and is now home to many fish, frogs and insects. Due to longevity and water purity none of the other ponds host any life beyond ducks, insects and daphnia and so Coronet is unique amongst them. With its covered seating area, it is a popular and valued amenity. However, the pond suffers from infestations of invasive plants and it has taken some effort to bring it to the good standard it now enjoys.



KPC employ a specialist contractor (Caddis Ltd) who manage the ponds and their surrounds. The maintenance strategy has involved maintaining a 'buffer strip' of approximately 1m of vegetation around the ponds to create a natural safety barrier to deter people from approaching too closely, to protect and strengthen the pond banks and to provide cover and protection for wildlife along the edges. Twice a year Caddis carry out a programme of flailing, pruning and removing overgrowths of weeds, bramble and other vegetation. Overhanging trees are pruned to improve light levels and silt, weeds and debris are cleared from the water. The PC has also organised litter clearing and tidy-ups.

The ponds are also regularly tested for water quality. During this summer, Coronet pond was regularly shown to have the best quality with minimal ammonia, nitrate and nitrite levels and a neutral pH score. This creates a good environment for the fish living there despite the fluctuating water levels that occur.

Coronet Pond – Managing the Water Level



A concern often raised about Coronet pond is its fluctuating water level, which is often less than ideal during prolonged dry spells. Whilst the wildlife that use the pond have never been under threat, the parish council has nevertheless been working to address the problem.

Several years ago, work was undertaken to add a course of bricks to the existing overflow so that the water level would have to rise before any water was removed from the pond. Unfortunately, this didn't work as a leak in the masonry caused pond water to leak into the overflow and drain from the pond whilst the water level was much lower. During this summer, additional work has been performed to the inside of the overflow to ensure that water cannot escape into the drain until the water level reaches the level of the newly installed drain hopper (see photo). The expected result is that the pond level needs to be at least four inches (10 cm) higher before any water enters the drain. Subsequent checks have shown that the pond's level has recovered from its summer low and is now higher than previously recorded.

The Parish Council will continue to actively manage the ponds within the estate to preserve and improve their appearance and cleanliness. To help us maintain the ponds we ask that you do not feed bread to the ducks. This can be harmful to both the wildlife and the water quality of the ponds.

Play Area Update

The parish council manages all nine of the play areas in Kingsmead, which it regularly reviews to ensure they are fit for purpose. The field area at Kensington Way has been overlooked over recent years though because of its poor drainage; many residents will know that in the winter months this field becomes so muddy that it's almost unusable.

It has been a council objective for several years to change this. We investigated the drainage issue over an extended period of time with several professional bodies and we eventually came up with a solution to improve the state of the field. We next engaged in a consultation with approximately 120 households that are in close proximity to Kensington Way park, marked up the field to show the proposed layout and held a consultation meeting with residents.



Northern Lights over the new play area

Finally, we felt that we were ready to make a decision! After much consideration, the council agreed its project and we have just completed the installation of a multi-sport play surface at the field, which will provide a higher quality play area for those that use the park. The basketball hoop remains in place and the play surface has been marked up with white lines to create a small pitch. With a large 250m2 soak away under the play area, it is designed to maintain a cleaner, drier play environment for many years to come.

All are welcome to use the field; there are no restrictions and Kensington Way can be enjoyed by residents, children, dog walkers and others as it was previously.

Introducing the Clerk

Kingsmead Parish Council is a team of ten councillors and the clerk whose job is to work together to represent the interests of the community.

The clerk is a professional officer employed by the council to manage its activities; providing administrative assistance and sound advice on which decisions can be made. In the case of Kingsmead Parish Council, the clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

The combined role of clerk and RFO is a very varied job. I advise the council on legal matters, manage and administer the council's finances, organise the council's procedures, gather information for meetings where decisions are agreed, guide the council in its actions, negotiate with other organisations, implement the council's decisions and manage its projects. I also manage the contractors who work for the council e.g. doing the grounds maintenance, looking after the ponds and culverts, managing the many areas of trees and woodlands and maintaining the play areas.

The clerk also acts as the "face" of the council, being the first point of contact for residents and organisations. Unfortunately, the council doesn't have any offices, but I can be contacted by email: **clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk or tel. 01606 533858 / 07737 334504.**

Any issues, suggestions or concerns raised by residents are presented by the clerk to the council, or relevant committee, for discussion at the next available meeting. The clerk does not make decisions independently but acts on the instructions of the council.

Wildflowers in Kingsmead

Since the second world war, we have lost 97% of our wildflower meadows in the UK. Over 200,000 miles of hedgerows have been destroyed and half of our ancient woodland and heathland has disappeared. The resulting effect on wildlife has been catastrophic, with 41% of all species seeing a decline since 1970 and a complete loss of 150 species in the last one hundred years. When wildflower meadows vanish so do pollinators, as well as other insects and animals such as hedgehogs, birds and bats. The more diversity we have in our natural habitats, then the more bees, birds, animals and other insects there will be. Due to intensive farming methods, patches of wildflowers in towns and villages are crucial in providing habitats for insects and birds and small invertebrates. Well-managed sites with areas of long grass and wildflowers can look beautiful and provide a link to nature, and every small patch of wildflowers benefits us all.



We have had varied success in our project to introduce wildflower strips into Kingsmead. These are notoriously difficult to establish and maintain and sadly ours have been somewhat overrun with ox-eye daisies. This year we are hoping to establish a more colourful and varied mix of flowers to brighten our summer days and provide an environment for insects and birds. To do this, the ground has been re-worked and new seeds were sown in the autumn. We hope you will bear with us and appreciate the natural beauty of the wildflowers alongside the more manicured and traditional flowers beds of Kingsmead.

Tree Planting

As most people will be aware we have had to remove a large number of ash trees which were infected with ash dieback. Most of those removed were next to or beside footpaths and roads where it was considered a risk to the general public. The woodland survey which was carried out found around 300 ash trees either with or in the early stages of the disease and this will be dealt with over time. To replace them we received a number of native tree saplings from the Woodland Trust and these have been planted around the Parish. Unfortunately the two flowering cherries which were planted to give shade to the bench in St. George's field were stolen.

KINGSMEAD
PARISH COUNCIL



KINGSMEAD CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON

FRIDAY 29th November 5-8PM

- Santa's Grotto (£2)
- Tombola (£1)
- Donkey Rides (£2)
- Artisan Stalls, Choir, Live Music
- Northwich Ukulele Club



BBQ, FOOD & DRINKS @ THE KINGFISHER

Event Organiser: Kingsmead Parish Council
Location: The Kingfisher, Kingsmead Square