

‘Open Day’ at Kingsmead Primary School, 13th June 2015

The Parish Council sponsored a climbing wall for the primary school fair this year, in return for resident feedback. The event, which is open to all residents, attracted a large crowd this year, and we were pleased to share our recent projects and also the finances of the Parish Council with those attending. It was also great to see the children (and the occasional adult), enjoying the wall!

Many thanks to the 55 residents who completed the survey. Residents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 – 5, the following items in order of importance: Neighbourhood watch; community speedwatch; more dog poo bins; support for local groups to help maintain parks; increased tree planting; best kept garden competition; expanded activities for Christmas tree switch on. The top 3 places, in terms of priority, went toexpanded activities at Xmas, dog poo bins and the community speedwatch initiative. You will therefore hopefully be pleased to read about our new Xmas plans. Whilst we do think we have plenty of dog poo bins, we appreciate that the dog poo itself causes an issue (see our newsletter article). As for community speedwatch, this is interesting. When we recently asked for volunteers to help set up and participate in this initiative, we were severely lacking in support....come forward if you are out there!



Diary

- **3rd Monday every month — Parish Council Meeting, 7.30pm, Kingsmead Primary School. If you have a pressing issue, or would like to know more about Parish Council business, please come along.**

We will have a new website shortly containing all our information and more ways to contact us. Keep an eye out...

Parish Council vs. County Council



We are often asked about our responsibilities as a Parish Council and where the County Council (CWAC) comes into play. In brief, we are responsible for the upkeep of the communal areas and facilities in Kingsmead village, with the exception of the shops, school, roads, pavements, streetlights and grass areas along the spine road.

We appointed Lawtons to manage our annual landscaping contract, but have a range of other suppliers who you will also see working in the village—Caddis, Jim’s Mowing, Pentagon Sports and so on. There are good reasons why certain work is suspended at different times of the year; our pond and tree updates explain, but they are not a reflection on the quality of the landscaping i.e. we don’t cut hedges whilst birds are nesting in them! If you have any landscaping feedback, please contact the Parish Clerk.

Contact Us

Clerk: Jo O’Donoghue

Email: clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk

Telephone: 01606 41862

Pond Life

Ponds support an extraordinary two thirds of all freshwater species including the Common frog, Common toad, Teal, Common Great Diving Beetle, Pond Olive mayfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Broad-leaved pondweed, Great Crested Newt, Pillwort, and Medicinal leech to name just a few. Maintaining existing and creating new ponds is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect freshwater wildlife.

Ponds can make a large impact on the big environmental issues that affect us all: climate change, flooding and pollution. All this, as well as being fantastic for wildlife.

There are 7 ponds in Kingsmead; all are different and all are really important, as well as providing us with a green and pleasant backdrop to our lives. We have created a management plan for the ponds in Kingsmead with a view to preserving them for all to enjoy.

After cleaning out **Coronet pond**, the pond is filling naturally and will recover nicely over the summer; it is already looking much better. The works were completed in winter to ensure most pond life had flown/moved away, had died or would be in hibernation at the bottom. After cleaning out, the banks have been put back as before and sown with appropriate wild flower seed. A buffer wildlife strip of 1.5m will be left unmown (as previously) around the unpaved edge for plants and insect life. The crazy paving has been tidied up and weeded.

Our policy to leave buffer strips around the ponds is for the following reasons.

1. They provide a natural and effective barrier to prevent small children (and adults) from falling in since the edges are clearly defined by dense undergrowth. In the past, when we have cut this away, we have been asked to fence in the ponds.
2. As advised by The Freshwater Habitats Trust, this buffer strip forms a simple but effective way to provide a safe haven for fresh water wildlife.

We endeavour to keep the buffer zones contained to a 1.5 metre strip around the pond and not expanding over the grassed areas. Please note that this pond contains the non-native invasive weeds called Crassula and Parrots Feather from New Zealand; most likely introduced by a well-meaning resident releasing fish into the pond. The disposal of weeds are strictly regulated by DEFRA to prevent their spread, and the cost of cleaning out the pond was high due to strict rules regulating waste disposal. We will never be able to get rid of these species from the pond and will have to clean it regularly; every three years or so. For more information see the following link.

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/checkcleandry/documents/species-guide.pdf>

We hope you like the information boards by **Dukes Way** and **Coronet** ponds designed by the children of Year 6 at Kingsmead Primary school. We think the children have done a wonderful job for us.

This year we intend to tidy up a few of the other ponds, but no major de-silting work is planned until 2016. Ponds due for a tidy-up by Jim's Mowing are **Dukes Way** and **Moor Park Way** (completed July). **Bickerton pond** is being rejuvenated by local wetland specialist company Caddis Ltd with a few selected trees planted in the surrounding area in the Autumn. For more information on ponds see website <http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/habitats/pond/>

Contact Cllr Hoey if you require more information on management of Kingsmead ponds.



Exploring ponds

50% of the UK's ponds were lost in the 20th century

80% of those that remain are in a poor state

2/3 of all freshwater species are supported by ponds

Because they're small it's easy to keep them clean and pristine for the long term



Oh Poo

On the whole, and in comparison to other local areas, we are pleased to say that Kingsmead doesn't suffer from a major dog fouling issue. The vast majority of our canine owning residents appear to be extremely responsible and pick up any waste after their dog, leaving our communal areas clean and tidy. As a Parish Council this is an absolute blessing as we are able to redirect the public money we manage into more beneficial areas such as the parks, ponds, trees and events in and around Kingsmead.



Of course, dog fouling does still occur and we are keen to tackle the problem. To that end we are always on the look out for new schemes to highlight the issue and the latest one on our agenda takes that literally - 'Pink Poo'! The idea behind the scheme is to, over a short period of time, spray any unclaimed doggy deposits with environmentally friendly pink paint to draw attention to the issue. We are currently observing other local areas where this scheme is in action to judge the results and will report back in due course.

As a final friendly note, we do tend to notice an increase in the amount of dog fouling as we approach the summer holidays when other family members may start to take over dog walking duties. This of course could be coincidence, so we would just like to remind all of those who are responsible for a dog to be extra vigilant over the coming months and help to keep Kingsmead dog poo free! (Think about the river paths too—don't leave poo behind.....)

Vandalism

Unfortunately, Parish Council work seems to be regularly affected by vandalism. Within a week of the new park equipment at Kensington Way, a colourful array of bad language was added to the climber, alongside regular cans of lager and pizza boxes. Thank you to the residents who took it upon themselves to clean/sand the damage off. The log edging is regularly pulled out and thrown in the corner of the park, and glass bottles are smashed by the entrance.

We have had snapped trees, trashed fences and the iron gate on the Spine Road has had its self-closing spring kicked off recently. Extremely annoying (and costly) when this is a safety precaution to stop children running into the road.

So what do we do? Well, we would like to appeal to all parents and young people to respect the village. Make sure you know where young people are, and importantly, what they are doing—especially this Summer holiday. Get them to understand that vandalism will be reported and taken very seriously. It is the village who pay for repairs, and that is money which comes from **every** resident. Children's parks are for play; benches are for hanging out, and we have provided lots of both.

We will continue to improve the village if the facilities are not abused.

If you see vandals damaging property, please call the Police on 101. Report any repairs to the Parish Clerk.



Contact Us

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Trees & Landscape

Spring and summer are normally quiet times as various DEFRA regulations around nesting birds etc prevent any major work taking place. A couple of trees blown over in March were removed, but nothing too dramatic happened over the winter.

We do sometimes get requests for trees to be removed or cut down in size because they are reducing light into resident's properties. It is not the Council's policy to do this, unless the tree itself is dangerous. As an example, we have 3 trees at the top of Waystead Close that the developers planted into an artificial bank, and which are now in a position of becoming unstable. These will be dealt with in the Autumn period when we are allowed to cut them. If you have branches or other greenery overgrowing your property, you are entitled to cut it back to the boundary line (but no further), and you must retain the cuttings in case the owner wants them (we know it's daft, but that's the law).

We have lost some trees either through vandalism or natural wastage, and these will be replaced as part of our normal maintenance in the Autumn when they stand a better chance of settling in.

Some residents will have noticed that we have started to address overgrown areas where weeds and nettles have taken hold. On Stretton Walk, between Moor Park Way and Waystead Close, we have cut back to the ditch and removed the cut vegetation. We will also be clearing the grids of silt to improve the water flow. The intention was to work our way up Stretton Close up to the Fire Station, but on inspection we discovered this area is alive with frogs, toads and a real find, water voles. We have therefore postponed the piece of work until later in the year when the wildlife will be dormant or gone.

As an indication of how much wildlife we have in Kingsmead, apart from the well known foxes, we have at least 4 badger sets, Black Redstart birds (with fewer than 100 breeding pairs in the UK, the black redstart is on the amber list of Birds of Conservation Concern) and Brimstone butterflies. So, if you see an area in the Parish that looks a little untidy there is probably a good reason. For example, hedge cutting starts again in August, after the bird nesting season.



Christmas—In July!?

We know the only Turkey on your mind is your holiday destination, but unfortunately our Christmas working party is looking a little bit further forward. To this end we would like to try and give the Christmas celebrations a bit of a perk up this year. One of the ideas in the pipeline is to have a small Christmas market around the open area adjacent to the pub. What we would like to do, is encourage our Kingsmead Parish local businesses to have a stall and air their festive wares.

Therefore we request you make a provisional reservation with Jo, our clerk, before the 4th September before we try to attract other interested parties. The festivities are planned for the 4th December so get planning. Happy holidays!



New Councillors in place!

The Parish Council election came and went in April with barely a murmur. The election was uncontested as less than the allotted 10 Councillors applied to stand for a further term. However, in addition we have some new Councillors in Gareth Broome and Mike Channon—welcome to the Committee!

Cllr Laura Hoey was voted to continue as our Chairwoman. Cllr David Boylan continues as our Vice Chairman. Cllrs Emma Bannister, Helen Weltman, Brian Done, Paul Salmon, and Chris Reed remain in place, with a single vacancy to fill.

Being a Parish Councillor is a volunteer role. We have one paid member of staff; our Clerk Jo. We are here to respond to the needs of the Parish, so please keep in touch with us because we want to hear from you.

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