



Foreword

It is now 5 years since the Parish Council came into existence and took over the responsibility of maintaining and improving the public areas within the Parish. We had to quickly prioritise the work as there had been, as we all know, a sad lack of work by the maintenance company, and we decided to work on parks and woodland first.

All the major woodland areas have now been cleared and opened up, and with the increase in light levels, they are a much safer and pleasant place to walk either with family, dog or just exercising. We have tried to increase the chances of native tree species growing by removing other trees that have self seeded, and were in competition for the light. We have also joined with Chester Zoo and the Woodland Trust to plant native trees that are under threat of extinction, and to this end, we have planted Black Poplars around the pond at the top of Moor Park Way and other suitable wet areas.

All the ponds have now been cleaned and cleared of weeds and a maintenance contract is now in place for them to be visited twice a year to have the undergrowth around the edges cut back and controlled. We had a major expense with the pond on Coronet Avenue, as some kind person emptied their fish tank into it! This introduced not just the fish, but also invasive non-native weed species which were rapidly taking over the pond. The cost of having this removed was extremely high because it had to be treated as hazardous waste, and disposed of in a controlled fashion and under licence.

Play areas have been worked on, and where necessary, equipment has been renewed or completely replaced. All play areas are now reviewed by a recognised safety body and their reports are vital to highlight maintenance. If you see anything of concern in play areas please report them to the Parish Clerk so that we can take action quickly. Our submission to the Lottery was successful in 2015, and with the grant, a trim trail was installed in Kensington Park which has proved very popular.

Last December saw the first Christmas fair organised by the Council as well as new decorations on the clock tower and lights on the roundabout. It proved a success and we will be repeating it this year, so please keep **Friday 2nd December 2016** free.

For myself as the current Chair, I would like to thank all those Councillors who have and continue to give of their time freely to help maintain and improve the Parish.

Of all the things we have achieved over the last 5 years my personal highlights have been the battle with United Utilities to recover the hundreds of thousands of pounds they had taken from residents with no justification. To win the battle against them and to get all residents, past and present, refunds, was a matter of pride in both the negotiating team and especially Jo our Parish Clerk, who worked tirelessly getting trade bodies involved and supporting our case. My other highlight is the increase in wildlife throughout the Parish now we have a clear maintenance plan for the public areas. We all know about our various families of foxes who seem to have had a good breeding season if the number of young ones on Monarch Drive is anything to go by. We also have a number of badger families whose location of setts we do not release for obvious reasons. With the clearance of the culvert from Stretton Walk down to the river we are starting to see the return of frogs and more importantly water voles. The icing on the cake has been the appearance this year of orchids, and these will we keep secret and nurture....

And, finally, we are starting a new initiative, the 'Kingsmead Young Citizen Award'. We have taken this decision after being approached for support by Mia Tasker-Hall, a young lady who with Girlguiding, will be heading to Africa in 2017 to do charity work with families and children. She is a tireless charity fundraiser, and runs many a bake sale to support her Girlguiding activities. We decided it would be good to recognise other youngsters who are giving something so positive back to the world. Nominations for 2017 will progress next year.

Cllr Reed, Chairman



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Trees

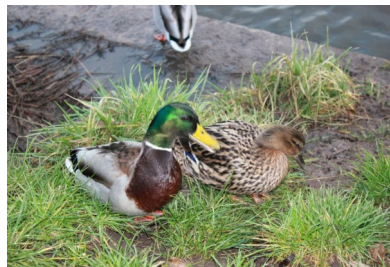
Spring and summer are normally a quiet time as various DEFRA regulations around nesting birds prevent any major work taking place. We had a couple of trees blown over in March but nothing too dramatic has happened over the Spring and Summer.

We do sometimes get requests for trees to be removed or cut down in size because they are reducing light into residents property. It is not the Parish Council's policy to do this unless the tree itself is in a dangerous situation, or is a possible danger to people. As an example, we have removed some very tall Willows from Headworth Close that were making the road very greasy and dangerous as light was unable to dry the road, as it had become covered in moss and lichen. A Silver Birch was removed from Rosset Close as it was in danger of falling onto a resident's garage. We have also been thinning out trees and hedging which have become overgrown with age, and needed some attention to let them grow.

If you have branches or other greenery overgrowing your property you are entitled to cut it back to the boundary line, and you must retain the cuttings in case the owner wants them (it's daft, but that's the law). It is also worth noting that all the hedges do not belong to the Parish Council, if you have a hedge on the boundary of your property you need to check your deeds to see if you are responsible for the maintenance. Some of the complaints we receive concern obstruction to footpaths from hedges that are not the Parish Council's responsibility, so perhaps a polite enquiry to the house concerned may save time in getting them cut.

From October, we will be completing the final part of our stream clearance, which stretches from close to the Kingsmead pedestrian crossing, down Monarch Drive and into the river by the fisherman's car park. This will entail thinning of the undergrowth, as well as the excavation and removal of the silt build up in the stream and pool at the bottom of the footpath. Please let the contractors have space to carry out this work. For a while it will not look good, but at the end of the work we shall have another area for wildlife to thrive in.

Cllr Reed, Chairman



Ponds

When the Parish Council was formed in 2011, the ponds in Kingsmead had not been maintained since the village was originally built. Most of them were badly overgrown, and in some instances, full of invasive weeds and litter and/or dumped rubbish.

Since 2011, the PC has embarked upon a plan of renovation which has transformed the ponds into tidy wildlife amenities for all to enjoy. We took advice from the Freshwater Habitats Trust as to how best conserve the ponds for the enjoyment of all, and to attract local wildlife whilst maintaining a tidy appearance and safety.

Currently, we have a yearly maintenance contract with a local specialist contractor to ensure that the ponds are kept tidy and free of litter and invasive weeds. This involves a general tidy up during the summer months, and a more intensive buffer-strip tidy and tree maintenance in the winter months. As with all things 'wild', we do have to be flexible and modify our plans according to weather and conditions.

Notable projects since 2011

1. All ponds are now sporting the following:

- 'Danger' signs at all ponds for Health and Safety reasons
- Buffer strips around ponds for safety; these provide a natural barrier of plants to prevent anyone accidentally slipping in and promote wildlife by allowing aquatic life to slip in and out of the pond undisturbed

2. A yearly maintenance contract has been set up with Caddis Ltd, a local wetland specialist.

3. The Dukes Way ponds had extensive tree works and removal of overhanging branches in 2012/2013. This work was undertaken in order to open up the pond to more sunlight necessary for aquatic life. We had to temper this requirement with the requests of local residents not to cut down too many trees.



4. Pond-life information boards for Duke's Way and Coronet pond were designed and produced in collaboration with Kingsmead Primary School in 2015.

5. 2014/15 saw a complete overhaul of Coronet pond in to remove 13 years of infestation of invasive non-native plants and reed-mace. This project did cause a lot of disruption and mess at the time, but has proved its worth by allowing the pond to rejuvenate. We will have to spray the invasive weed on a yearly basis and remove a certain portion of reed-mace as well. This pond was noted by Cheshire Wildlife Trust as very diverse in animal and plant species during a pond dip with the primary school. It's worth remembering that a pond with plants in it support a wider diversity of plants and animals than one that contains no reeds or water-lilies.

6. The pond at the top of Moor Park Way was overhauled in 2015 by removing a huge willow tree that had taken up residence and was draining it of life. By removing this tree, the water and wildlife returned. We have planted more black poplar trees nearby to try to soften the aspect of the grass verges. Sadly, we have had a problem with the vandalism of trees and with rubbish dumped in the pond which has polluted the water. We ask any resident seeing any antisocial behaviour or vandalism to call the neighbourhood police on 101 immediately.

7. Our plans for the future are to carry out yearly maintenance on all ponds. We are progressing an overhaul of the sluice pond (where the culvert meets the river) over the winter as it gets terribly silted up.

Cllr Hoey, Vice Chairwoman

Hedge Lines

We all value living in an area quite heavily populated with trees, bushes and open spaces, but this does not come without its issues. A lot of time, effort and money is consumed trying to manage them to keep the area neat and tidy. Unfortunately however, this same principle does not always apply to the trees, bushes and hedges managed by some residents, as they overspill onto footpaths, cycle ways and damage the tarmac surface underneath. There are areas where people have to step onto the roads to get past these obstructions, or cycle on non-designated areas both of which are potential accidents waiting to happen. This is made even more hazardous when pushing prams, walking small children and/or dogs.

This is a kindly reminder for you to review your boundaries, and if any of the above conditions are evident then please make every effort to cut back obstructing plants, and make walking around these areas easier and more pleasurable than at present.

Cllr Done



Welcome to...

Cllr Andy Logan
Cllr Jim Miller
Cllr Neil Martin

Monuments and Structures

My particular interest has been to ensure that the elements of infrastructure on the estate were returned to operation and maintained going forward. As an example, I had for nearly three years been trying to get the incumbent estate management company to repair the lighting around the clock tower. Despite several commitments, the issues were never resolved.

Since taking on the responsibility for these fixtures, the Council have been able to understand the issues and put remedial plans in place. The clock tower was not under any maintenance plan, the lighting of the clock faces and the 'Kingsmead' sign had failed, the clock mechanism was not understood and the dark areas under the tower were attracting anti-social behaviour.

So, what have we done to address these issues.

Firstly, we contracted an electrician to look at the power issues. Remedial works were performed, and lighting was restored to the clock faces and the 'Kingsmead' sign. We then addressed the anti-social behaviour by installing security lights under the arches of the clock tower which increased the level of light across the pavement. These lights are sensor-controlled, so they light as daylight fades. Similarly, we've recently revisited the lighting to the clock faces. This is also now sensor-controlled and alleviates the need to reset the lighting timer twice a year. We've also installed additional power circuits so we can accommodate festive lighting on the run-up to Christmas.

The war memorial on the spine road also came under similarly scrutiny. During the Parish Council's tenure the obelisk has been cleaned and repointed. The chain link fence that surrounds it has been replaced. We also introduced flower beds either side of the obelisk to soften the installation and bring some memorial colour. The brick-built structures around the estate, such as the lych-gate on Regency Way and the gazebo by the pond on Coronet Drive, are also reviewed by the Parish Council to ensure that they remain in a sound and safe condition.

Cllr Boylan



Parks

During the initial **2011-12 period**, we carried out park maintenance, which was much needed in some cases. We also implemented a regime of regular independent safety checks. Our first park project was the overhaul of **Kingslawn Close** park a.k.a the 'pirate park', which was broken, vandalised and not attracting safe play. In **2013**, we removed components of the park, and replaced them with new climbing equipment and a trim trail. We also tidied up the bark surfaces, improved the gates and put signage in place. As the park had been a previous hangout for teens, we placed a new set of benches outside the park to discourage park misuse.

By **2014**, we were looking at **Dukes Way** park (1) and the large **Kensington Way** park. **Dukes Way** park needed a facelift, new railings and signage. Kensington Way park was unpleasant - vandalised, enclosed and prone to anti-social behaviour. We recognised there was no point improving the park with the landscape as was. We therefore started a process of removing concealing shrubbery to open the area up. There was concern from nearby residents, but as the area regenerated, no one can deny that it's much improved. In **2015**, we achieved grant funding from Big Lotteries alongside Parish Council funding, and refitted the park, much to the delight of local children.

In **2016-2017**, we have several parks to look at. We are refitting the toddler park on **Campbell Close** which had become extremely run down. New equipment panelling, swing seats, railings and bark will improve this park in the next 10 weeks. We also have a challenge at the **Dukes Way toddler park**. The main piece of equipment needs replacing, but with what? Similar units cost £10K, is this what's needed? We are still deciding, so please feel free to contact us if you have ideas. In the last few weeks, it has also been decided that **Capesthorpe Park** needs attention. It is probably the oldest park in the village, and unlike other parks has timber equipment which does last well, just not over 20 years! We are currently assessing our finances to work out a plan for this park, ideally in this year's budget.

Cllrs Bannister and Broome



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