

# Welcome to your Spring 2019 newsletter

## Chairman's Foreword

You will soon receive next years Council Tax request which will include an increase in the Parish Council precept.

This has been necessary for several reasons including new responsibilities for the maintenance and possible replacement of the wooden footbridges and the footpaths around the monument, clock tower, and Coronet pond. The monument footpath has been completed FY18/19, the clock tower paths will be replaced FY19/20 and Coronet pond FY20/21. We have also been informed by our auditors that we need to build a reserve fund of at least 25% of the annual precept income. We have decided to build this reserve over a 3 year period to reduce the impact on households. On a very positive note, our 2 main contractors have agreed to extend their contract period for an extra year at no additional cost. This means that the cost of maintaining grounds, ponds and trees has remained constant for 4 years.

The unplanned expense of repairing damage to Council property and the legal cost of trying to recover costs from perpetrators unfortunately continues. Cheshire Police and the Crown Prosecution Service have now agreed that any future incidents will be prosecuted. In 2018 we have planted, using donations from the Woodland Trust, 200 new tree saplings and hedging plants. Please call 101 to report vandalism within the Parish.

I would like to welcome the new residents of Hilltop Grange to Kingsmead Parish. There are 113 households within this development who join our community.

We will also soon be saying goodbye to our Parish Clerk, Jo O'Donoghue, who has accepted a new role with Frodsham Town Council. Thank you Jo from myself, all councillors and the community for your work over the last 8 years. We wish you the best of luck in your new position.

Finally, I would personally like to thank volunteers Steve and Cath who always give their time to join litter pick sessions and planting activity. Also thanks to the SpeedWatch Group who, in conjunction with the Police, are bringing speeding motorists on Monarch Drive to book. Thank you for your community spirit and commitment. *Chris Reed, Chairman*

## Our History

For residents who are relatively new to Kingsmead, this is an overview of the history of the Parish Council, which was formed in 2011.

When Kingsmead was first built, the communal land, including parks, ponds, grassed areas, fences, trees etc, were all managed by a private management company, which collected a fee each month from every property. This went towards the maintenance of those areas.

However, the management company often failed to collect all of the fees, which left a shortfall in the monies, and gradually led to a lack of maintenance, with the village beginning to look run-down.

As well as the maintenance fee, residents also paid a precept to either Davenham Parish Council or Northwich Town Council. However, neither Council could spend their contributions on Kingsmead due to the private management arrangements. The resident's association asked the then Vale Royal Borough Council if they could form a new Parish, while at the same time asking the developers to gift the land and a sum of money to the new Parish Council and therefore abolish the running of the estate by a private management company.

Since 2011, your Parish Council has been responsible for maintaining this area and 100% of your precept contribution is invested in the Parish.



# Kingsmead Garden Competition

We are blessed to live in Kingsmead, with its riverside walks, ponds and large landscaped areas and this is reflected in the pride many of you take in your gardens. This year we are aiming to hold another Garden Competition.... there will be several categories, including a new one for best garden with children's play area so, whether it has the manicured look of a mini Versailles, typical cottage garden or wildlife haven, we would love you to take part.

Entry details will be posted shortly in the Parish Council bulletin board and on the resident's Facebook page. Congratulations Peter Prost for being our overall winner in 2018.



## Trees, Ponds and other wild creatures...

Please check out our Wildlife policy on our website for more details.

### Trees

We have a duty of care to ensure that all the trees on Parish land are kept in an acceptable condition and do not put persons and property at unreasonable risk. Inspection of trees is carried out by a qualified tree specialist (major tree work below). Only dead, dying, diseased or dangerous trees are removed or made safe, whichever is deemed necessary. Removed trees (dangerous or diseased) are replaced if required by native species sourced by specialist contractors. Tree pruning is only undertaken where there is sound justification for the work. We do not fell or prune trees to alleviate problems caused by natural (leaves) and/or seasonal phenomena (wind) or for reasons of light.



### Ponds and the culvert

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 Parish Council has embarked upon a plan of renovation which has transformed the ponds into tidy wildlife amenities for all to enjoy. The Parish Council has taken 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 health and safety.

There are seven ponds in Kingsmead; with a wide range of biodiversity and all are important habitats for wildlife as well as providing residents of the Parish with a green and pleasant back-drop to their lives. The Council has established, in association with local wetland specialists, an annual maintenance programme for each pond. This involves a general tidy-up during the summer months and a more intensive buffer-strip tidy and tree maintenance in the winter months. 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.

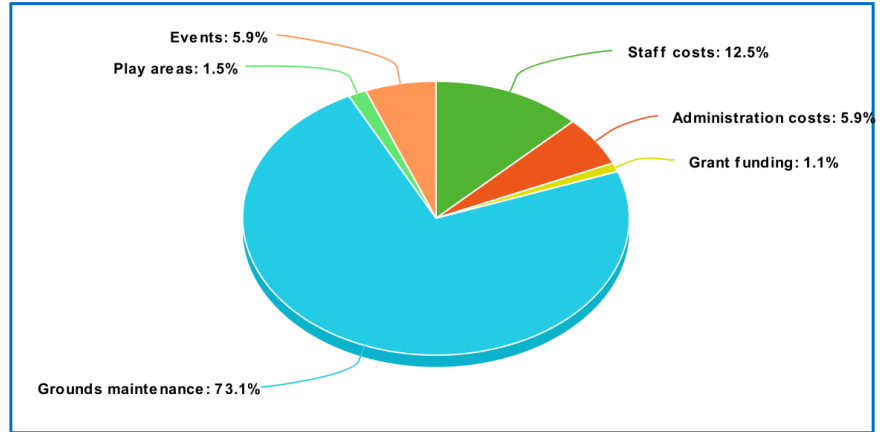
We are delighted to say that we frequently see foxes, herons, squirrels, kingfishers, bats and hear owls in Kingsmead. If you see any exciting wildlife, please let us know.

## Financial Report

The Parish Council raised a precept of £136,634 for the 2018-2019 financial year (1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) and received a grant of £936 from Cheshire West and Chester Council under the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Whilst we are not yet at the end of the financial year here is a graph showing a breakdown of where the money you have paid in Parish Council Tax has been spent over the past 10 months.

Expenditure to 31st January 2019

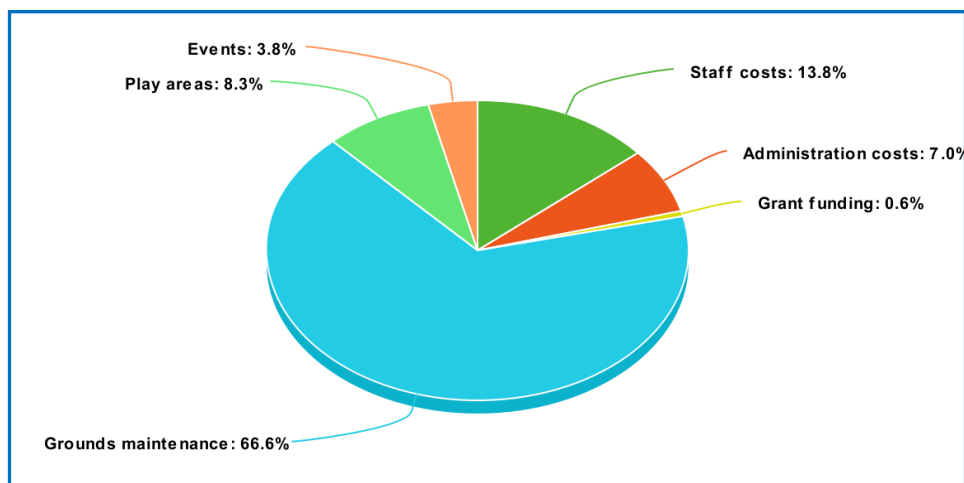


During the past 10 months the Council has: continued to maintain grounds to include open park land and areas of woodland; maintained the 7 ponds and drainage ditch; carried out regular inspections and maintenance works in the 9 play areas; replaced the path around the monument; supplied dog and litter bins and arranged waste collection for the 33 bins (weekly); organised a Best Kept Garden Competition and supported 3 young citizens in their charitable endeavours with grant provision; attended the Kingsmead Primary School Fair and staged an excellent Christmas lighting ceremony.

To date the Council has kept the increase in Parish Council Precept year on year to a minimum, balancing budget against precept. The Council has been advised, following internal and external audit, that reserves need to be established to cover unexpected eventualities and these reserves should be in the region of 3-6 months budget. The Council currently has no reserves. The Council currently has no reserves and has used the £100K gifted by the developers to offset the precept since 2011.

It was agreed at the Parish Council Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to set the precept for 2019-2020 at £185,000. This represents a cost of **£97.47 for a Band D property and an increase of £1.93 per month—still less than maintenance and precept fees before 2011**. This will enable the Council to build up reserves over a 3-year period and continue providing an excellent service.

Budget 2019-2020



A Parish Council election will be held on 2nd May 2019 if the current 10 councillor seats are contested. Under these circumstances, the Council will be recharged election fees, which increase administration costs in this financial year. If an election is required, all details will be posted on the Parish Council website and noticeboard.

# Kingsmead Parish Youth Council

WOW! We are really excited to offer a unique opportunity to the young people of Kingsmead.

**2019 will see the first ever YOUTH COUNCIL set up for the Parish.**

We believe the young people are the future of our communities and we feel it is important that we as Parish and town councils invest in them. Kingsmead Parish Council will support the Youth council in achieving these objectives:

- To develop a culture of participation in the democratic process and to develop an awareness of citizenship
- Be empowered to take decisions and action to improve the community they live in
- Form partnerships with local and national organisations
- Promote respect for each other and the community
- Encourage all young people to have a voice and that their opinions are valued



Kingsmead Parish Council believe the Youth council will enable us to truly represent the whole of the community.

We would love to have a group of 10-12 young people aged 11-18 who want to participate. If you would like to express an interest in the first instance, contact us at [clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk) for an application form. All applications should be submitted by 11th March 2019 for an initial meeting on 18th March 2019. Information will also be available via our website and the Parish noticeboard.

## Park Development

During our 2018/19 financial year, we decided to reduce park spending to a minimum to offset the park overspend in 2017/18 and to protect limited funds. For the coming financial year, we do have a restricted budget, but will look for grant funding to help us update the small park off Burwardsley Close. This park has one piece of very decrepit equipment, which may now be ~20 years old. All parks will continue to be inspected regularly.

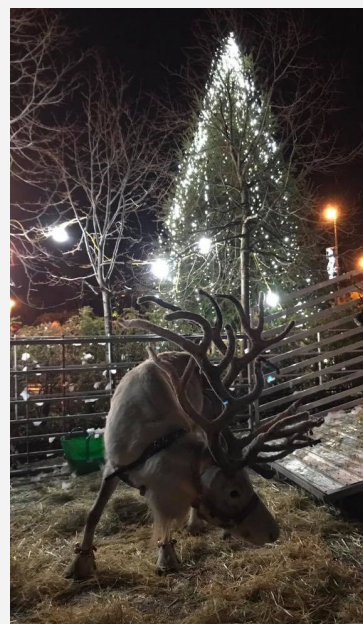
We performed a survey of residents local to the park in early 2018 to assess the Burwardsley Close park use and residents were all keen to see a new installation in place. Whilst this work is likely to happen later in the financial year, we remain very committed to providing safe and exciting play environments in the village, and places where all carers can bring their children to socialise and have a great time.

## Christmas in Kingsmead 2018

In the run up to Christmas, Kingsmead Square was once again filled with families who'd gathered to see the giant tree lit up with thousands of tiny lights. The children were thrilled by the appearance of Father Christmas and young and old alike were mesmerised by, possibly the highlight of the evening, three magnificent live reindeer... quite a magical sight.

It was a cold night but that didn't seem to bother anyone as they listened to the young children from Kingsmead Primary School band playing Christmas carols beautifully. Mince pies and hot mulled wine, provided by the Kingfisher, were offered to people as they mingled and chatted with friends. There was also a photo booth on hand to record the evening with souvenir photographs.

This annual event is always popular with residents as it signals the start of the holiday season and brings the community together and we very much look forward to you joining us again to make this year even more special. *Beautiful photo thanks to Debbie French, Visual Storyteller, Kingsmead resident*



Please get in touch using our email address, [clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk). The full contact details of our new clerk will be posted to the website and our village noticeboard in due course.