

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR OF KINGSMEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026. Many of you will have received your council tax bill for 2026/2027. As a parish council we realise that costs are rising for everyone which is why the precept paid directly to Kingsmead PC was kept at a 0% increase compared with last year, with a band D charge being £116.90 pa. It was recently reported in the press that the residents of Kingsmead pay the highest precept in the area, which we understand must be concerning. Before the creation of the parish council, the estate was managed by a management company, who, as I'm sure any long-term residents will remember, did not always deliver a full maintenance service, whilst charging ever-increasing service fees. KPC took over the management of the public areas of land, which include grassed amenity areas, nine play parks, ponds and culverts, hedges and trees and structures such as the clock tower and the cenotaph. In comparison, other parish councils have very few maintenance costs of this type, because they are not responsible for as many facilities. The overall council tax charge is also made up of other elements, such as the money to fund Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Cheshire Police precept and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, all of which have increased their respective charges for 2026-27.



Cllr Helen Weltman



WILDFLOWERS IN KINGSMEAD

Over six years ago Kingsmead parish council planted wildflower strips to enhance biodiversity, reduce maintenance and create attractive natural spaces for residents. When first introduced, these beds thrived, offering colourful displays and valuable habitats for pollinators such as bees and butterflies. However, these plantings have struggled to survive beyond a few years. A key reason for this decline is soil fertility. Wildflowers flourish in low-nutrient soils, but parish grounds are often enriched by years of grass growth and mowing. Over time, vigorous grasses and dominant species outcompete more delicate wildflowers, gradually reducing their presence. Without regular management—such as removing cuttings to lower nutrient levels—the balance quickly shifts away from wildflower diversity. Maintenance practices also play a crucial

role. Wildflower areas require specific care, including annual cutting at the correct time, removal of plant debris, and occasional reseedling. If these tasks are neglected, the meadow can become overrun with coarse vegetation or invasive weeds. Weather conditions, such as drought or heavy rainfall, can further disrupt growth and favour hardier species. With thoughtful planning and consistent management, KPC will try to ensure wildflower projects continue to enrich our parish for many years.

All parish finances are available to view on the KPC website:
www.kingsmeadpc.org.uk
(see "Finance" page)

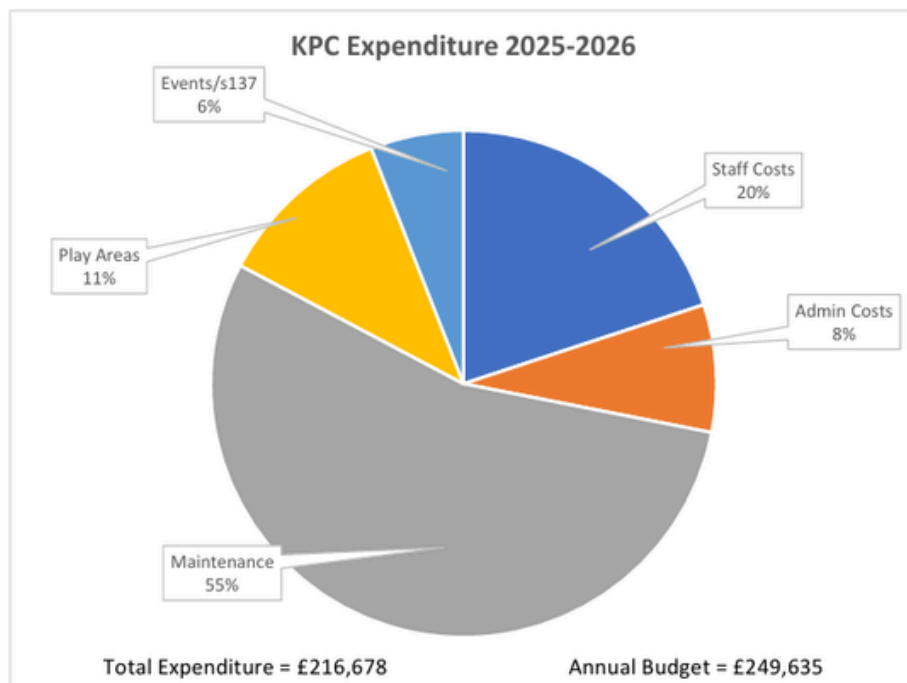
Each month, we publish a list of the payments to be made, along with a YTD view of expenditure against budget. The figure shown here is the total expenditure for last year, i.e. 2025-2026.

At the end of each financial year, we are required to undergo an external audit process and to support this, additional financial information is published.

All finances, including the accounts, can be inspected on request by contacting the clerk at:
clerk@kingsmeadpc.org.uk

Category	Actual YTD Spend	Annual Budget	Expenditure vs Budget by Category	% of Total Spend
Staff Costs	£43,225.00	£45,050.00	95.9%	20%
Admin Costs	£17,627.00	£17,535.00	100.5%	8%
Maintenance	£118,439.00	£152,250.00	77.8%	55%
Play Areas	£24,467.00	£21,800.00	112.2%	11%
Events/s137	£12,920.00	£13,000.00	99.4%	6%

TOTAL	£216,678.00	£249,635.00	86.8%
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WHERE IS YOUR MONEY SPENT?

Last year more than 70% of the council's expenditure (equivalent to nearly £156,000) was to cover maintenance of the amenity areas, play area refurbishments and community events. Both of the maintenance contracts (general grounds maintenance and ponds maintenance) were re-tendered in 2025-2026, with new 3-year contracts being awarded from 1st April 2026. These contracts, that cover routine tasks such as grass cutting every 2-weeks, annual hedge cutting and pond cleaning, etc. are worth a combined total of approx. £100k - a large proportion of the annual expenditure! The contracts were re-won by Countrywide Grounds Maintenance and Caddis, with the tendering process clearly demonstrating that their costs are competitive whilst also delivering good service.

The Parish Council is funded from a precept that is collected on our behalf by CWaC as part of your overall Council Tax. It is calculated based on our budget for the financial year and the taxbase within the parish, i.e. how many council tax charges are being collected. For the 2026/27 financial year, the council was able to balance its budget whilst also maintaining a 0% increase in charges - see below. In fact since 2022/23, our Band D council tax charge has only increased in actual terms by £8.87 pa.

[illegible]

PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY

KPC will shortly be advertising for new vacancies on the council. If you are interested in joining us, please look for further details on our noticeboard or on the KPC website at www.kingsmeadpc.org.uk

MAINTAINING THE PARKS AND PLAY AREAS

As part of the Parish Council's custodianship of the parks and play areas, we need to make regular checks of the play equipment, safety surfaces, tidiness and general maintenance of these areas. Some of these checks can be done by simple visual inspection, and are usually done by a parish councillor, however, some checks need to be carried out by professional bodies. Whenever issues are identified, work will be carried out to maintain safe operational use.

Wooden Play Equipment - On the recommendation of our Play Inspector, inspections were undertaken in October 2025 by Apex Arb Consultancy, checking wooden play equipment in the play areas at Capesthorne Close, Kensington Way, Duke's Way 2, Kingslawn Close, Pulford Close and Monarch Drive. These inspections included Drilling Resistance Tests, which test the condition and strength of the timbers. The results of these tests show that some timbers will need to be replaced during this year, but no emergency work was required. Work has already commenced and will continue throughout 2026.



Bridge & Jetty Inspections - The three wooden footbridges (Bickley Close, Monarch Drive and Headworth Close) and the jetty on Duke's Way Pond have all undergone a 'Principle Inspection' (as per CS450 guidelines) carried out by Up and Under Limited, based in Crewe. All structures are safe and sound with some minor recommendations. The Parks and Environment committee will meet to discuss

the findings of the reports; delivering precautionary and recommended works during 2026 and beyond. As part of this, several members of KPC will be carrying out some decorative and restoration work on the jetty, including painting the metal railings and refreshing the wooden rails.

Park and Play Area Inspections – Members of KPC regularly inspect all the parks and play areas. However, we have now tightened this up for 2026 onwards, with parks being assigned to specific members of KPC to carry out these inspections several times per month. Reports with photos and any recommendations will be passed electronically to the KPC clerk to review. These inspections will check to see if the park is in a safe and tidy condition. The monthly litter picks are another opportunity to check the parks are tidy and for litter to be removed. Recently one of the parks had its bin stuffed full of household waste (including empty Amazon packages) stopping normal litter being disposed of – this was removed by a councillor.

Parks Improvements – as part of the ongoing maintenance of the parks, KPC has replaced play area surfaces at Campbell Close and Monarch Drive, as they were not fit for purpose and now have safer materials fitted. As you can imagine, these improvements do not come cheap if they are to comply with safety standards and guidelines. New eco-friendly benches have also been installed in Dukes Way One.



MANAGING THE COSTS OF THE PLAY AREAS

All inspections and/or works that are required are fully reviewed before any money is spent. We take advice from regulatory bodies and professionals to get the best information and guidance, and the council, along with the Clerk, work tirelessly to get multiple costings for any work that needs to be done. We strive to get the best value for money for all expenditure, and in most cases, we will have several companies quoting. We are careful to be always getting true value for money, which does not always mean using the cheapest contractor, but those providing the correct level of work and quality.

We have many more pieces of maintenance and work underway with the ponds, parks and play surfaces to name a few. Additionally, we must also deal with any acts of vandalism and the costs these create – bins set on fire; salt bins replaced and cleared up after contents tipped out; bins thrown into the pond several times and requiring full clear up on multiple occasions...the list goes on.

The KPC is a voluntary group and we do this work because we care about our community. Thanks to everyone who supports us and our collective work and we are always happy for more people to come and help in keeping our community looking at its best.



We Need You!!!

Kingsmead Community Litter Pick

The Parish Council runs regular litter picks on the last Sunday of every month (although NOT in August and December).

Why not come along and help make your community a nicer place to live?

All are welcome, but children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Litter picking equipment (gloves, bin bags, litter pickers and hi-vis vests) will be available to collect at the Parish Council noticeboard on Kingsmead Square from 10am -12pm

We look forward to seeing you!

VILLAGE GAMES

A joint venture between the parish councils of Moulton, Davenham & Bostock, and Kingsmead, to compete in a series of events across the summer. We are looking for competitors for running, darts, pool, pub quiz and more. Further details will be posted on Facebook as they become available.

MEET OUR NEWEST COUNCILLOR

My name is Ashfak Syed - known locally as Ash - and I have lived in Kingsmead since August 2024, with my wife and two children, having previously resided here from Oct-2020 to Sept-2021. I work as an Agile Project Manager specialising in mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineering consulting projects, infrastructure systems, and building services. I am an Indian national, Commonwealth citizen, and UK permanent resident. Since returning to Kingsmead, I have come to appreciate even more the unique character of our estate - the well-maintained areas, and the strong sense of community. Having lived in both Kingsmead and nearby Winnington, I have a good understanding of the local area. I am aware of the Parish Council's important role in maintaining these assets and addressing residents' concerns. I want to contribute to preserving and enhancing Kingsmead for all residents. Having observed the Council's work and the challenges of maintaining a large residential estate, I believe my professional expertise and commitment to the community can support the Council's objectives. I am looking forward to working with fellow councillors to meet the estate's needs and residents' expectations.

