

Davenham Parish Council: Chairman's Report: June-July 2006

Kingsmead Maintenance

There has been some correspondence from a Kingsmead resident reacting to the statement made at the last meeting regarding the fact that responsibilities for Kingsmead maintenance have been clarified. This resident was very critical particularly of Kingsmead Landscape Management Company. Ltd. who subcontract CPM to carry out the work which is then further subcontracted. The main areas of complaint seem to be the abundance of litter and the fact that no-one seems to be picking it up and the standard of workmanship relating to the frequency and quality of grass cutting and the fact that the grass clippings are not removed but left in situ.

It has been pointed out to residents of Kingsmead that the maintenance contract is an *individual* agreement between themselves and KLMC and as such outside the jurisdiction of either the Parish or Borough Councils. Formation of a Kingsmead Residents Association has been suggested and although this might have some effect, KLMC Ltd may not feel any obligation recognise it on the grounds that the contracts are with individuals and not with any group.

Responsibilities for the whole of the Kingsmead area have been clearly defined. KLMC through CPM are responsible for the whole area down to the riverside path (which is the responsibility of British Waterways) with the following exceptions: the area owned by Legat Owen around the shops, the Kingsmead Primary School area (which is the responsibility of Cheshire County Council), Electricity sub station buildings and the small parcels of land which surround them (which are the responsibility of Scottish Power) and Registry Close (which is outside the scope of the KLMC agreement and thus the responsibility of the relevant Councils). There are some small isolated areas not covered by CPM for which Redrow/Wimpey (through KLMC Ltd.) still have responsibility. For example, Redrow should have completed repairs to the spine road fence and the grass verge opposite Tesco during July.

There have been suggestions that KLMC Ltd has financial difficulties and that CPM has not received payment from them on occasions. For information an extract of the latest filed accounts of KLMC Ltd and the list of Directors is attached. At 31/12/2004 KLMC Ltd declared current assets of only £363. KLMC are due to file accounts again on 31st October and it will be interesting to see the position at that time. However, once again, the way that business is conducted between KLMC and their suppliers is outside the scope of either the Parish or Borough Councils.

One of the problems here seems to be the wind, in that this blows the grass cuttings and litter around, making things look worse than they really are. It is agreed that there is a shortage, or misplacement, of waste bins and this is dealt with elsewhere in this report, but in the case of 'municipal' grass cutting it is quite normal for the cuttings not to be collected and the problem is essentially only temporary.

Other than continuing, in association with the Borough Councillors for the Kingsmead area, to maintain a dialogue with the various commercial organisations involved there is little that we can do to change this situation. Agreement to the maintenance contract is a condition of purchase for the vast majority of the houses in the Kingsmead area and is not a matter over which local government can exert significant leverage.

(Full size versions of the maps are available)

In most places where bins are provided there is still litter nearby, this is probably a result of bins not being emptied frequently enough and possibly carelessness by those who do empty the bins. I observed bags of household waste in many of the bins.

In a number of places there seem to be 'litter drop' areas around 50 metres from the nearest bin. It would seem more appropriate in these cases to move bins rather than add new ones.

I propose the following changes and additions:

1. A new bin is required at the 'cut through' between King Edward Close and Moor Park Way
2. A new bin is required at the 'cut through' between Blakemere Drive and Kingsmead (spine road) by the bus stop
3. A new bin is required on the Registry Close side of the roundabout opposite the Kingfisher
4. A new bin is required in the area of the pelican crossing on the opposite side of the road from the Kingfisher
5. A new bin is required in the play area below Moreville Close
6. The bin to the north of the end of the 'school path' where it meets Monarch Drive should be moved to the end of the path itself.
7. The bin on the roundabout at Kensington Way should be moved inside the play area
8. One of the two Dog bins near the pond in Moor Park Way should be moved to the path between Monarch Drive and the River Weaver path where there are instances of dog fouling
9. The bin on the corner of Kingsmead and Monarch Drive could be moved to half way along the path that runs behind the school field, or a new bin could be provided.
10. A new bin is needed at the entrance to Sir John Deane's (responsibility of Northwich Town Council)

I propose that DPC purchase an additional 5 bins for the Kingsmead area and cover the costs of moving various bins.

I don't as yet have any figures for costs of moving bins but I have been given the following costs for provision of new ones.

- Baltic Slatted standard green Litter Bin - Supplied and installed - £274 + vat
- Standard red retriever 50 steel Dog Bin - Supplied and installed - £339 + vat

These come from Steve Bakewell, Head of Environmental Operations at Vale Royal so it seems there is some inconsistency in policy as regards provision of dog bins as they are apparently still available.

In addition, although I don't have an accurate figure, the black 'Designer' bins currently installed in the Kingsmead area cost something in the region of £500 + vat.

In addition to the provision of additional bins CPM should be requested to pay increased attention to the play areas, the hedges and grass verges on either side of Kingsmead (the spine road), the ponds and streams, and the grass verges of Regency Way and Monarch Drive.

I propose that the Clerk write officially to CPM expressing our concerns in this matter.

Parish Planning

I attended a presentation by Bron Kerrigan, Cheshire Community Council's Parish Plans Officer on 10th July at Nantwich.

Parish Plans and associated instruments such as Village Design Statements and Parish Landscape Statements are considered an essential part of the local government infrastructure. The Parish Plan improves communication within a community and sets out the vision of what is important for the future of a community. Originally conceived as a 'land use' plan it now has a wider scope and incorporates social, economic and environmental issues.

Content: The scope of a Parish Plan covers key facilities and services, local issues and problems and a description of the 'distinctive character' of an area.

A Parish Plan is not just a document, rather a community based and community driven project comprising a critical and constructive survey of the community by the community to form a vision of the community for the future together with an action plan to implement that vision in a defined timescale (usually 5 years). It will identify a 5 year plan of achievable goals and the appropriate alliances with other bodies and authorities that are needed to achieve those goals.

Cost: Typically production of a Parish Plan will cost between £1000 and £6000 which is part funded by Cheshire County Council through the Cheshire Community Council. Grants of up to £3000 constituting up to 75% of the cost are available. The community is expected to find 5% of the cost in finance and 20% 'in kind'. Financing of a Parish Plan project is administered through the Parish Council. There is some Borough Council money available, Vale Royal for example cover all printing and publication costs. Advantage can also be taken of donations and sponsorships.

Timescale: A Parish Plan will normally be produced in around 12 to 18 months with the first 3 to 6 months taken up in generating a proposal – or a plan for a plan – used to secure funding.

Process: The Parish Plan is a *community* project rather than a Parish Council project. It starts with consultation, usually at an open meeting, (possibly 'workshop' style – an 'event' rather than a formal meeting). A steering committee of 10-12 people is appointed from that meeting with a simple constitution and a chairman (who is usually not a Parish Councillor). All elements of the community should be involved including local businesses. The first task is to complete an application to Cheshire Community Council for funding in which there are a number of criteria to be met. The main body of work consists of fact finding through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups followed by an analysis stage leading to a draft plan. This is carried out by the community working with the Parish, Borough and County Councils, and local employers and landowners.

'Consultants' brought in from outside should not be used for any of the phases, although local expertise of this nature should be part of the project.

Why do a Parish Plan? Some of the benefits of producing a Parish Plan have been:

Increased community spirit, revelation of hidden talents, fresh focus for the Parish Council, information and evidence about the community, new partnerships, new funding streams, new councillors coming forward, tangible infrastructure benefits, traffic management & speed limits, community shops, youth centres, clarified planning policy etc. etc.

A Parish Plan is *not* just a document, a wish list or a shopping list. It is not the end result, just the beginning, and it is not 'easy'!

I propose that Davenham Parish Council adopt a policy to initiate the Parish Plan process at some time within the next few months by holding an appropriate event to establish the level of interest in the community. Whether or not the process continues will depend on the outcome of that event. Given current projects and initiatives it may be that the best time for this event would be soon after the New Year in 2007.

VR Area Meeting

I attended the Northwich Area Meeting on 27th June. The following matters which affect the Parish were covered:

Community Policing: The new Community Action Team Inspector for Northwich Area, Insp. Pete Minghella gave a short presentation on the levels of support that we can expect. Unlike previous police representatives he stayed for the full meeting and was very receptive to questions and suggestions, including that of reducing speed limits on the A556. Whether or not appropriate actions will follow the words remains to be seen.

Riversdale Bridge: There was much heated discussion of this issue following a brief presentation by David Baldacchino of British Waterways. He repeatedly stated that BW have no obligation to repair or reinstate the bridge and was clearly not listening to any of the arguments that were made by various organisations including ex BW staff who were prepared to undertake the necessary works free of charge. (In my professional opinion, having seen this tactic used frequently by Railtrack with regard to level crossings, BW have deliberately allowed the bridge to reach a state of repair such that they could justifiably close it). There is no right of way across this bridge despite continuous public use for decades because BW has always had a legal waiver against it becoming a RoW.

The 'solution' offered to this issue is that a new bridge *may* be put in place as part of the Weaver Valley Linear Park development – if that actually goes ahead, and as such is unlikely to happen before 2010. Currently BW are actively blocking any progress on this matter and the only way of unlocking the situation would seem to be high level political lobbying although it is difficult to determine to whom BW are actually answerable.

A meeting was scheduled between the various parties involved (Cheshire County, VRBC, BW and the Volunteer Group) following the Area Meeting, (I believe the date was July 10th). I am not aware of the results of this meeting.

As an aside to this the opportunity was taken by VR Cllr Helen Burder to request BW to do upgrade the maintenance of the riverside path for which they are responsible. As yet no response has been received on this request.

We should continue to monitor this situation as the route across this bridge is key to many members of our community and we should actively support any initiatives to get the bridge re-opened.