

KINGSTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING

Wednesday 27th May 2025

7.00 pm in The Barn

Chairs report 2025-2026

On behalf of Kingston Parish Council, I would like to thank all those residents that have attended the Parish Council meetings throughout the past year and given us their valuable input.

We started the year with £20,025 in the bank and finished it with £13321.04. Spending last year was higher than expected as a number of tree works were completed with some rolled over from the previous year. There are a number of further tree works required this year which we will have to monitor closely for financial reasons. The precept increased this year as our 5 year plan (introduced in December 2021) to reduce the amount of money we hold in the bank has reached the level it should be at. It is worth noting that over the past 5 years the precept has only increased by 7%. It is inevitable that there will be future increases every year but the Parish Council will attempt to limit these increases as much as possible whilst maintaining our statutory duties of care. At the request of the Village Society the Parish Council now hold their funds, a memorandum of understanding was created and signed by both parties.

KCC have eventually replaced the HGV sign in Marley Lane where it meets The Street. KCC also replaced a damaged salt bin at the same location.

The Woodland Management Plan – Last year the Parish Council mentioned that 40+ trees had been infected with ash die back. We put a plan in place that will involve systematically working our way along the embankment removing the trees with Ash die back. Stage one of this plan has been completed with some 10 trees being cut down. At our December meeting it was agreed to create an Adder friendly area on the embankment. This would require a number of trees to be cut down (Autumn 2026) to create a suitable habitat. This supports the South East Water management plan to create a butterfly conservation area adjacent to the embankment. Grants are being looked at to contribute towards the work required. Other tree work that the Parish Council have done during the year include a crown reduction of the trees by the bus triangle, similar work on trees by Nailbourne Closes and the removal of a tree by the Glebe.

During the summer the bus shelter outside the Black Robin had essential works carried out on it which should last a number of years. We have had a frustrating year with the bushes on the corner of Valley Road opposite the Black Robin. The Parish Council decided last year that instead of spending money on a regular basis cutting back those bushes we would remove the bushes completely. The sticking point has been that there is a fence in the

middle of the bushes and we have been struggling with the land owner (Stonegate) as to who is the owner of the fence and to get permission to do the work.

The St Giles Church sign (opposite Church Lane) was damaged. We approached the 5th trust who gladly made us a new one. A donation was made to the trust for making us a new sign.

We purchased a new tree to replace the one bought to commemorate the Queens Platinum jubilee in 2022. The original one died as it wasn't sufficiently protected whilst grass cutting took place. A very sturdy guard has been placed round it and we are in the process of getting a new plaque, with the correct wording, made for it.

Due to Government recommendations the Parish Council changed their website address and email addresses. Could everyone please note the new email address as we continue get emails sent to the old email accounts many of which are not monitored anymore.

During the year three councillors stood down, Richard Story, Val McWilliams and Steve Reeves. The Parish Council made a presentation to Val McWilliams for all her efforts not only as a councillor but also as a previous Clerk. Despite an extensive advertising campaign we only had one person, Andrew Johnson, volunteer to become a councillor. We still have two vacancies so if anyone would like to become a councillor please contact our Clerk (Emily Arnold).

Again, we ask residents to put forward ideas on what they would like to see the Parish Council do in the village. All suggestions will be taken into consideration.

Thank you all for coming tonight.

Paul Chatley
Chair