

## **Annual Town Council Report 2024 - Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre**

We were especially proud to win the Community Action Suffolk Award for best Community Building last September. This prestigious event had a host of winners in different categories from across the county and was held at The Food Market, Stowmarket. Along with our trophy we were given the following accolade:

*“This award recognises the positive contribution made to a community by its Village Hall or Community Building, the panel were really impressed with your work and achievements.”*

This was great recognition of the hard work and community events we hold here and well done to all the staff, volunteers and trustees that work tirelessly for the community.

We have a new Facilities Manager in Steven Dean at KWMCC. Over the last year or so the amount of redecoration, repairs and work that has been completed inside and out the centre has received great feedback from hirers and visitors alike. A lot of the work has been completed by Steve himself to a very high standard and this has helped reduce spend on external contractors. We are very pleased with how the facilities look and we continue to work on improvements throughout the site.

Our very own Chinwag run by KWMCCs Fiona Farrell has now become a firm part of the social diary for the over 65s in Kesgrave. We have a regular 150 attendees for this free community event, and we are very proud to host it. This is held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month 2-4pm and as well as helping with isolation, new and old friendships, it encourages people to come out, dress up and entertained. Sincere thanks to Fiona and all her ever-growing band of volunteers.

Since Molly Jarrett joined us in 2022 residents will have noticed the number of events we are putting on at KWMCC. We introduced new free or low-cost activities to help with the cost of living. Our Time Together Tuesdays which sees families invited on school half-term / summer holidays for art and craft activities on-site free of charge has been well received. It proved so popular that we have decided to continue this year and already we have had large numbers attend over the Easter.

Other free community events included The Coronation Tea Party, HAF free Summer Activities (with lunch provided by Café 66), MacMillian Coffee Morning, Dementia Awareness Information Day as well as the Be Well Bus (back on 8<sup>th</sup> May this year) and Dent Aid.

We have another free facility in the form of Citizens Advice Bureaux every month which is held in our Deben Room, and this has seen many residents get confidential advice on personal issues. Thanks to Barbara & Rob from CAB who have helped so many residents.

Similarly, we host regular free sessions from Bates Wells & Braithwaite Solicitors (who sponsor our Networking Events) who give their initial advice free of charge. Thanks to Chris and Denise.

Our Networking event goes from strength to strength for local businesses. This gives small and medium enterprises the opportunity to chat to other like-minded entrepreneurs and help with new contacts, advice and self-promotion. Last year entry donations were given to our friends at Project 21 and this year will go to ICENI.

The Pétanque piste we had built with thanks to SPARK during Covid is now regularly used and we are pleased to say there are now 3 x local Teams practising and playing on a regular basis which is great news. This free community area has many users and a good community facility.

It was great to see so many turn up to our ITFC Foundation Day held on the fields at KWMCC. Thanks to Cameron Burgess who represented ITFC and all the youngsters playing football tournaments throughout the day. This is something we will be looking at hosting again and hopefully by then Ipswich will be in the Premier League!

Our gardener David Mears has done very well over the last year with the flower areas looking excellent. We also introduced a Therapeutic Garden situated by the side of the Bowls Pavilion. This gives residents the chance to sit down, relax and reflect and is a lovely addition to our facilities and already well used.

As many families will know we have held children friendly parties in terms of Easter Parties, Halloween, Summer Specials etc and are cost effective way for entertaining sessions for parents and youngsters alike.

We have had some instances of Anti-social behaviour on site during the year unfortunately. We have excellent CCTV which is noticeably clear, and we have been able to identify those who seem to want to cause damage and upset hirers/visitors. Banning orders to half a dozen youngsters were sent out and with the help of Heads and the Police visiting the parents and the number of issues has reduced.

It will soon be Christmas! Since the last report we have worked in conjunction with the Salvation Army to have Christmas Carols in the Bandstand. This has proved very popular within the community with circa 200 residents coming by to have a festive sing-along. As we very much listen to feedback this has now become an annual event with this years Community Carols Night on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 7-8pm.

We have worked hard to build partnerships during this time with the Police (thank you PC Matt Finch) 4YP, SPARK, local groups, charities and our Headteachers. Special thanks go to everyone at Kesgrave Town Council from the Clerk Jo Abbot, the office team, to all the operatives for all of their help and support.

Id also like to thank our Chair Richard Baird, Charity Secretary Rod Gibson and our board of Trustees who work so hard, free of charge, for the good of KWMCC and our local residents.

It has been a wonderful year, and we will strive to continue to put the community at the heart of what we do.



Right to Left: Chair of Trustees Richard Baird, General Manager Stuart Lawson. Office Manager Rosanna Lancaster, Marketing & Events Manager Molly Jarrett and Charity Secretary Rod Gibson