



Kent Muslim Welfare Association

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GENERAL SECRETARY AND CHAIRMANS REPORT FOR 2023-2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Islam – Assalamu – alaikum wa rahmatullahe wo barakatuhu.

The Masjid has operating normally for some time now, with the issues with COVID feeling like a distant memory - for all Salaat and the challenges remain regarding crowding and the ability to cater for everyone – both men and women at the busiest times. Ramadaan was our peak time of year with Iftaar arrangements as per normal and a full Masjid for Taraweh and 5 and even 6 packed Jamaat for Salaat-ul Eid. We were able to provide a community Iftaar session for non-Muslims to experience a part of Ramadaan and our thanks to everyone else who took part.

We realise that we are just scratching the surface when it comes to providing for and interacting with our community, but we feel that we are trying to make positive steps forward. The building of the new Masjid is always forefront in the long-term development of the community and is immensely time consuming for all those involved, however the building is bricks and mortar, and we must not forget that as Trustees, although we are trying to improve the infra structure and facility which is the new Masjid, we primarily are here to serve the people who come to the Masjid for their worship. This is our primary role which we should not forget or lose our focus with. There are many people who are not Trustees who contribute to the running of the Masjid and activities for the community. Some of them will be named in this report, but it is not a comprehensive list of helpers.

The current phase of work at the new Masjid site to build the concrete steel structure / framework going up to the roof as well as the minaret has continued over the year and is ending. The sheer size and structure is impressive and it is exciting to see the building starting to shape up. We think it will be an iconic building in the area. Allah, subhana wa ta'ala has blessed us and the community with this opportunity and task of building his house. May we all help to complete it and gain the reward and blessings of Allah subhana wa ta'ala. We were very fortunate to receive financial backing as qarde hasana from one of our community members to start and complete this phase but we will need to pay this back as quickly as our funds allow. We have to keep the funding going for the Masjid to be built. We appeal to the whole community to make whatever sacrifices you can for the reward of Allah subhana wa ta'ala.

The KMWA school's liaison group has carried out some great work over the last 12 months with many school visits to the Masjid and many visits to present at school assemblies. Imam Irfan, Brs Ajaib, Zaki, and Sajid have put a lot of effort into the activities this group to form an important part of serving the requirements of local schools and delivering some teaching about Islam which we hope will form part of our Dawah activities and promote tolerance for Muslims and Islam amongst the young. The visits are always well received and feedback from the schools is great.

KMWA Kids (Children's Group): The children's group, headed by Br Faheem, has continued to offer a range of activities within and outside the Masjid. The seasonal summer, autumn, winter and spring nature walks are highly informative, the kite flying has been much fun as were the craft workshops in the Masjid in January.

Youth Group: The Youth Hubb have continued to hold regular gatherings at the Masjid on Saturday evenings. This helps to bring young people to the Masjid who may not otherwise attend. Br Fayaz and his team put much of their time and effort into this activity, the benefit of which we will see in shah Allah over time. This can develop with the right balance of social and religious exposure and is important for the younger people to connect with the Masjid. Outside of the Masjid, the group enjoyed a football tournament in November/ December 2023, as well as a table tennis tournament and there are plans with funding applied for, to expand the sports activities for young Muslims. Part of the objective for such activity is to bring young people together who go to different Masajid in Medway and the surrounding area, and this can help promote the sense of brotherhood in Islam. Sports activity is an important and healthy outlet for the youth, and we should facilitate this however we can.

Ladies Group: The ladies have continued with their activities which are based in the Masjid. They have a coherent group which we hope will form a part of the formal structure of KMWA as they do represent 50% of the community.

KMWA Volunteers: Sister Rizwana has produced a report, and she has been very proactive in coordinating and running this group and providing opportunities for the Muslim community and may Allah subhana wa ta'ala reward her for everything that she is doing for the community.

Sister Rizwana Shelley's summarised report for the KMWA AGM on Sunday 30th June 2024:
Asslamu Alaikum

1. The Institute of Physics Public Engagement Team and the London & Southeast Branch of the Institute of Physics are going to host a

whole day of activities for KMWA families including Lunch & Transport on Tuesday August 13 2024. The families will be picked up from the Masjid at 114 Canterbury Street And brought back to the Masjid by 6 p.m. THERE IS NO COST TO KMWA. The coach has already been booked and paid for by the IOP.

2. On 28th May 2024 Medway Plus provided FREE boating experience for 12 KMWA children. The families went away very satisfied.

4. Food for the NEEDY -PICK & DROP from COOP, Asda & Tesco - this is continuing seven days a week, twice a day.

5. Several refugee families have been located to Gravesend and in hotels in the area. KMWA families have provided household items too numerous to mention, including ironing boards, new carpet, bicycles (for adults as well as children), baby buggies, wheelchair, new clothes for Eid and good quality used clothes etc. The generosity of KMWA families is awe inspiring.

There have been some health and welfare orientated activities with blood pressure and health checks organised via Br Ajaib and a managing mental health event organised by Maulana Irfan (in February 2024). This was followed by a fostering event. The health and blood pressure checks have been running for the last few years and we hope that members of the community will continue to take advantage of them.

Br Ajaib is also the head of Medway Interfaith Action who organise an annual 'peace walk' travelling to different places of faith over the course of a days programme. Gillingham Masjid forms one of the stops and we hope to continue to be a part of this. The peace walk this year is Saturday 13th July.

A trip to Woking Masjid was organised by Br Farris Wilson in August 2023. Br Farris has also manned the Dawah stall in the Street Angels shop in Chatham High Street but is not able

to at the present time for personal reasons. We hope we can find other volunteers who may be willing to devote some time for Dawah purposes.

In response to the last AGM discussions regarding cleanliness of the Masjid, a cleaning group was set up whereby volunteers have been helping to look after the Masjid and keep it clean. This was an initiative coordinated by Sister Momtaz and our thanks goes to her for her time and effort. May Allah subhana wa ta'ala reward all of those people who give up their time to keep his house clean. We also thank Sister Momtaz for maintaining our Instagram Page. In this day and age of social media, this is an area which we could expand with the right help of course.

Many other people help in the Masjid, during Fridays, Eid days and Ramadaan where the numbers of worshippers are very high (over 2000 worshippers on Eid day). It is hard to mention everyone but Br Abdul Subhan has been a real help over the last year, and may Allah subhana wa ta'ala reward him for his time.

In December 2023 – we had some sad news that our long time Uncle, Trustee and community servant Sherebaz Khan passed away. May Allah subhana wa ta'ala forgive him and shower him with his blessing and mercy and grant him the highest station. He had been a member of the community since the early -mid 1960s and was a founder member of this community and this Masjid. He has served this Masjid his whole life here and was a Trustee for decades, only stopping in the last few years when his age and health made it difficult for him. There are few people who could serve Allah in the way that he did. He looked after the house of Allah, making sure that everything was working and clean and for want of a better word was the caretaker of the Masjid. He carried out his roles with hard work and dedication and with modesty. Many times, he would collect the money for renovations and oversee them and he would often start his collections from within his own family. The amount of time and dedication he had I have seen from few others. It is very difficult to do this when you have your own family to look after and support. There were many years that he was the only person in Itekaaf during the month of Ramadaan, thus preventing the sin on the community. He was very down to earth, popular and loved by those who met him both young and old. We miss him and can only make Dua that Allah subhana wa ta'ala rewards him fully for his efforts in his life and blesses and forgives him and gives his soul peace.

Since October 2023, we have been focussed on the events in Gaza. May Allah subhana wa ta'ala protect the people of Gaza from the injustice and inhumanity and barbarity of their occupiers and the world powers that support it. We produced a statement which we felt was representative of the Muslim Community back in October 2023, and our position has been forwarded to MPs and the press. We have also raised funds and sent the Sadaqa, and Zakaat collected to try to help the people in their terrible conditions. We have tried to raise awareness where we can and help advertise the marches and demonstrations, locally and more further afield.

There are many challenges – there are many different opinions as to how the Masjid should be run, and how we should engage with the community and what kind of activity we should cater for. Whatever the opinions, the fact is that we have an aging group of Trustees with a lack of youth involvement. It is critical that we are more forward thinking so that we look to connect with the youth and all ages and that we have an ability to communicate with all of the community in an engaging way so that we can understand what people want and what they expect from us. An accounts summary was posted in October 23, mainly for transparency and so that people could understand the fine balance between money coming in and the expenditure especially in this time of increases in the cost of living. I think that it is very important that we work together as a community to bring about positive changes, but if we

start from a negative or critical perspective, it will not result in this. I think that people in this community, whether it be Trustees or community members who come to the Masjid daily or less often need to understand and accept each other's point of view as long as they are in the boundaries of Islam. I think that as Trustees, we need to be our harshest critics as we are here to serve the public, and if criticism comes our way, which no person would like to hear, we must listen to it and see what solutions we can provide to facilitate the lives of our community. The most important aspect of leadership means having a vision or a goal and working towards it, Leadership means being empathic by which people feel that their voices can be heard. It is also about having strong convictions but being open to learning new perspectives and change. The core of leadership starts with listening and then being able to balance the external points of view with a strong sense of values, direction and belief. We have elections where people want to be involved in the leadership process, they want to make decisions that affect the community in one way or another, but have they considered the responsibility, do they have a vision for the community short or long term and do they listen to all the community or just serve a narrow section. The people have rights on us as we have asked them to elect us into this position.

We hope and pray that you and your families remain in good health and gain the blessings and rewards from Allah in this life and the next.

Assalamu – alaikum wa rahmatullahe wo barakatuhu.

Azeem Nader aka Dr C. Nader Kennett – General Secretary

& Issa Rumjaun - Chairman