

**Minutes of the Shevington Parish Council
Policy & General Purposes Committee Meeting
Held Wednesday, 2 February 2022
7pm Virtual Meeting**

Present: Councillor William McKnight (Chairman), Councillors Christopher Horridge, Ira Whiteley, John Whiteley, Jessica Higham and Michael Crosby
Co-opted Committee Members: Mr Charlie Neve, Dist Cllr Janet Brown, Mrs Eileen Longmore and Mr Brian Lomas
No members of the public were present.

In Attendance: Mrs Krystyna Pilkington (Clerk to the Council)

1. Apologies

Cllrs John Ball, Mike Grimes and Mr David Crook

2. Declaration of Interests

Cllr Chris Horridge and Mrs E Longmore w.r.t. Item No.8.

3. Village Issues

Collapsed Fence at Property in Shevington Lane

A member reported that part of a fence surrounding a property in Shevington Lane had collapsed. The property was on the right hand side of Shevington Lane when travelling out of Shevington towards the motorway. Because the fence was no longer carrying out the function for which it was intended, the land behind it was being used for fly tipping. Dist Cllr Janet Brown explained that, as this was private land, it was the owner's responsibility to ensure that the rubbish was removed. Dist Cllr Brown agreed to report it to the Environment team at the LA, who would issue a compliance notice to the landowner.

Car Parking on Zig Zags Outside Shevington Library

It was reported by a member that a vehicle belonging to the same company was regularly parked on the zig zag lines outside Shevington Library. Dist Cllr Janet Brown informed the Committee that she had reported this practice to Parking Enforcement. Unfortunately, because of a shortage of personnel, the Traffic Wardens very rarely visited areas like Shevington.

Locations of Defibrillators in the Parish

A suggestion by a member that residents might find it helpful to know the locations of defibrillators in the Parish was discussed. The member agreed to formulate a list of the locations, which could then be published in the newsletter.

Banners Attached to Fencing

A Co-opted Committee member reported that three banners had been attached to a fence opposite the access road to J27. During the brief discussion that followed the Committee were advised that this was only allowed if the appropriate permission had been obtained. As one of the banners belonged to Shevington Methodist Church and

was advertising their coffee mornings, Cllrs Ira and John Whiteley agreed to speak to contacts on the Church's committee about it.

Double Parking Along Whiteacre in Shevington Moor

A Co-opted Committee member reported that issues with commuter traffic parking along Whiteacre had returned. Vehicles were now double parking, making it difficult for other vehicles to travel along the road. This was particularly apparent recently when the bin wagon was prevented from gaining access. This had resulted in several bins not being emptied that week. The Clerk was asked to write to Wigan Council about the issue and Dist Cllr Janet Brown agreed to report it as well.

Damaged Planter and Appley Bridge in Bloom

Appley Bridge in Bloom had been given a large planter by Wigan Council. When it had been delivered it had been found to be damaged. Unsuccessful attempts to persuade Wigan Council to remove the planter had followed. The Co-opted Committee member for 'in Bloom' wished to thank the Clerk, as, thanks to her recent approaches to the LA, the damaged planter had been removed and was to be replaced by a planter that was in good condition. The Co-opted Committee member also reported that the storm damaged glass at the greenhouse had been replaced and that she wished to thank the Clerk for making the arrangements.

Cleaning of Shevington War Memorial

The Committee were reminded that towards the end of 2021 it had been agreed that early in 2022 a small working party (Cllrs John Whiteley and Chris Horridge and Mr Charlie Neve) would meet with a resident who had offered to carry out restoration work on the War Memorial free of charge. The Clerk agreed to make the necessary arrangements for a date in the near future.

Off-Road Biking Activities at John Pit

A Co-opted Committee member reported that a resident had complained about the poor and intimidating behaviour of off-road bikers in the vicinity of John Pit. The resident had reported it to the Police via 101 and had been told by them that they were aware of the problem. The Co-opted Committee member had subsequently reported it to the LA via the 'Report It' app as an Anti-Social Behaviour issue. The LA had advised him that the way to deal with the matter was to report it to the Police. He suggested that, if this was becoming a major ASB issue in this area, this should appear as an article in the newsletter.

Dist Cllr Janet Brown informed the Committee that she had been in contact with the Police, who had told her that, in order to act, they needed to have a log of a large number of incidents. In view of this, residents needed to report all incidents of off-road biking in the area and an article in the newsletter should be used to encourage them to do that. Off-road biking was an illegal activity. The LA had had done their part in introducing warning signage at access points – the Police now needed documented evidence to enable them to act.

Bollards and Parking on Grass Verges

Dist Cllr Janet Brown reported that enforcement action taken with regard to various transgressions by residents in relation to grass verges along a stretch of Miles Lane appeared to have been successful. Action in connection with another one was imminent.

4. Minutes of the Last Policy & General Purposes Committee Meeting (1 December 2021)

Resolved: The Minutes of the Policy & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 1 December 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

5. Local Government Boundaries Commission Consultation on Wigan Council Ward Boundary Changes

The Local Government Boundary Commission were currently undertaking a consultation on their proposals for ward boundary changes within the area covered by Wigan Council. Information about the proposed changes could be found on the Commission's website.

The Commission's proposals meant that the location of the boundary between Shevington with Lower Ground and Standish wards would change, causing the former to be increased and the latter to be reduced in size. The change would have no impact on the Parish boundaries – they would remain the same.

The proposals were discussed.

Resolved: The Committee noted the consultation.

6. Britain in Bloom Entry – Memorial Park

RHS Northwest were proposing to run the Britain in Bloom Northwest Campaign in 2022. Entries had to be submitted before **Thursday, 31 March 2022**. The cost of entry in the Local Authority – Small Parks category had increased from £85 to £100. Entering Memorial Park had cost implications for the Parish Council with regard to the additional costs that would be incurred in relation to grounds maintenance.

Members discussed whether an entry should be submitted this year. The Clerk reported that she did not yet know whether Shevington in Bloom would be entering the RHS competition.

The Committee agreed that Memorial Park would not be put forward for entry in the RHS Britain in Bloom Northwest competition in 2022. A suggestion was put forward that the funds saved in grounds maintenance costs as a result of taking this way forward could be used in some way to upgrade Whiteacre Park. This would be an agenda item at the next meeting in March.

7. Shevington United Charities

It was reported that the terms of office of the three representative trustees of the SUC appointed by the Parish Council ended in mid-January. Two of the trustees had stated that they did not wish to be re-appointed. Mr Ken Shaw, who was currently the Treasurer, had stated that he would like to continue. Trustees had to be residents of or conduct business in the Parish – they did not have to be members of the Parish Council. The Committee discussed the best way forward with regard to the appointment of the new representative trustees.

Resolved: The Committee recommended to the Council that Mr Ken Shaw should be re-appointed and that the vacancies should be advertised in the March edition of the newsletter.

8. Forest Fold Allotment Matters

The Allotments Working Party had met with representatives of the FFTA on Thursday, 13 January. A report on the meeting had been circulated to members for the Council meeting in January and had contained requests and recommendations from the meeting with the FFTA. Due to a lack of time at the Council meeting in January only two of the recommendations from the working party had been considered. The remainder had been referred to this meeting.

Allotment Policy Update

The current Allotment Policy had been reviewed and adopted in 1999 and had, since then, occasionally been slightly amended. The FFTA had asked if the Allotment Policy could be shared with them with a view to its being updated.

Resolved: The Committee recommended that the Council approve this request.

FFTA Committee Representation at Parish Council Meetings

The FFTA Committee had asked if they could be represented officially at Parish Council meetings.

Resolved: The Committee recommended that the Council include a report from the FFTA under 'Reports from Representatives'.

Tenancy Agreement Alteration

An individual's name was currently being included as the contact for allotment issues on Tenancy agreements. The FFTA had asked if it could be replaced with '*...please contact a member of the FFTA Committee*'. Contact details for the FFTA Committee members were circulated to tenants as a matter of course.

Resolved: The Committee recommended that the Council approve this request.

Proposed Rent Increases

The FFTA Committee had thanked the Parish Council for sharing the proposed rent increases and had expressed their views. They were of the view that it would not be appropriate for them to consult their membership about the proposed rent increases, some of which they considered to be too high in the current financial climate.

The FFTA Committee thought the principle of introducing equity amongst tenants with regard to plot rents and calculating them in a more precise way was a sound one and put forward a suggestion which would result in smaller increases for most tenants and reductions for others. The FFTA Committee had also suggested that the number of skips provided per annum by the Parish Council should be reduced to ONE in the Spring. This would release £250 in income to be used to fund other work that was needed at the allotments site.

The Committee discussed the alternative proposals for rent increases at length. It was observed that the plot rents agreed by the Council at its meeting in August 2021 were lower than those charged by Shevington H&A Society at Vicarage Lane Fields. The majority of the Committee were of the view that the increases were fair.

Resolved: The Committee recommended to the Council that the plot categorisation and rents to be charged from 1 March 2022 which had been agreed at the Council meeting on 25 August 2021 should be ratified.

Plot holder who were of the view that they would be paying too much rent would have the opportunity to reduce the sizes of their plots.

9. Text for Council Tax Letter

The proposed text for the Council Tax letter had been previously circulated and was discussed.

Resolved: The text for the Council Tax letter was recommended to the Council for retrospective approval.

10. March Newsletter

Proposals for the contents of the March edition of the newsletter were discussed.

Resolved: The following items would be included in the March edition of the newsletter:

- Christmas Shop-Front Award Presentations
- Shevington & District Community Association Activities
- Upgrades at Elnup Wood
- Parish Council Budget & Precept for 2022-23
- Plans for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee
- Cover Assistant's Post
- SUC Trustee Positions
- GM Clean Air Zone and Private Vehicles
- Locations of Defibrillators in the Parish
- Off-Road Biking Activities

11. Working in a Paperless Way

At the Finance Committee meeting in January a member had put forward the suggestion that other members might be willing to consider receiving meeting papers by email only. Working in a paperless was increasingly becoming standard practice in public life and several members already did this.

Proposed changes to current policy and Information about the savings that could be made by introducing them had been previously circulated. They were discussed at length.

Resolved: The Committee agreed that in future documents for meetings would be sent to councillors and co-opted committee members by email only. If members wished to use paper copies, they would print the documents on their own printers and would be entitled to submit a claim for expenses (at 4p per printed page) for the action.

The above decision would be put before full Council at the earliest opportunity for retrospective ratification.

12. Meeting Remotely – Petition

Under current legislation local councils in England were not permitted to hold formal Council meetings remotely. This was temporarily relaxed during the Covid lockdown in 2020/21, but that ended in April 2021 when the temporary statutory regulations expired. (*Local councils in the devolved nations did not lose the right to hold formal Council meetings remotely.*) The Government had since argued that a permanent provision would require a change to primary legislation and there was not sufficient Parliamentary time to enable this to happen. The Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) had made an application to the High Court (supported by the Government, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)) that existing legislation allowed for that permanent provision. The High Court had disagreed, saying that it was for Parliament to change the law. Since then, LLG and ADSO, together with other similar organisations (plus individual councils and councillors) had been lobbying the Government without success. The LGA and NALC had also been supporting their councils throughout this time.

The LLG and ADSO did not wish to impose remote meetings on councils. Their view was that councils should have the choice to decide how they ran their meetings, depending on local circumstances. The period of lockdown had demonstrated that remote meetings had brought so many benefits to local democracy and residents, apart from the obvious public health safeguards. It was no longer just a response to Covid. Therefore, they had set up a petition on www.change.org calling on the government to create Parliamentary time to agree a change in the law to allow councils in England to hold formal meetings remotely, if they wished. NALC, LALC and the SLCC had asked councillors to consider signing the petition.

Resolved: The above information was noted.

13. Planning Applications

There were no planning applications to consider.

14. Dates of Next Meetings

23 February (Council); 2 March (Policy & General Purposes and Finance Committee)

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

Resolved: That, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press, Co-opted Committee members and public be excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

The Co-opted Committee members left the meeting.

15. Employee Vacancy

A member of staff who had tendered their resignation several weeks ago had finished on 31 January 2022. The members discussed the way forward with regard to appointing a replacement and providing cover for some of the roles in the interim.

Resolved: The Committee recommended that the post would be advertised in the March edition of the newsletter.

Arrangements for one of the employee's duties – delivering newsletters to areas of the Parish not covered by Local Life – would be an agenda item at the next Policy & General Purposes Committee meeting.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 8:32 pm.

Chairman