

Clerk's Report
Shevington Annual Parish Meeting
Held 15 March 2023
7 pm The Community Centre at Vicarage Lane Fields

Good Evening, everyone, and welcome. The aim of my report is to share with you an overview of the work of the Parish Council over the past year.

This is 2023 and we have come a long way since May 2021, when, because of Covid restrictions, the Annual Parish Meeting was socially distanced and took place outside in Memorial Park. Luckily, it was a lovely, sunny evening.....

Projects

Over the past year work on our projects has continued.

The football and rugby pitches at Vicarage Lane Fields are all well used. During the Spring the two sporting seasons overlap. This created car parking issues in 2021 and battles came close to erupting on a number of occasions between the residents of properties in the immediate vicinity of the Fields and the sports clubs, who manage the activities on the pitches.

Mediation between the parties concerned in 2021 can be counted as one of the Parish Council's successes, as it resulted in the implementation of a traffic management plan, which, until recently, seems to have been working. Plans for enlarging the car park are coming to fruition. The clubs have recently spent £10,000 on materials and equipment and volunteers from the sports clubs have given up their valuable time to lay the extension to the car park and double its capacity. Unfortunately, recent events in Vicarage Lane have resulted in the need for further mediation and a re-assessment of the way forward with regard to the parking issues.

The community centre we are in, which includes team changing facilities, was completed in 2021. It now has a management committee and is available for hire for indoor activities.

The cultivation of allotments at both the Vicarage Lane Fields and Forest Fold sites continues to see a great deal of healthy activity. The Tenants' Associations at both sites are communicating with each other and have started holding joint social activities and exchanging views. The new Tenants' Association at the Forest Fold site have thrown themselves into managing the site with great enthusiasm and have led in the preparation of a new Allotments Policy that came into effect on 1 March 2023.

Having remained closed throughout 2020, the bowling green at Forest Fold re-opened in April 2021 for Covid-secure activities organised by the home teams. From 1 June 2021 it re-opened for individual play and team fixtures resumed. The greenkeeper, the caretakers and the grounds maintenance team are now in the process of getting the site ready for opening for the new season at the beginning of next month.

Because of technical issues beyond our control our plans to improve the drainage and develop Memorial Park have had to be delayed. Some of those issues have now been resolved and, hopefully, we will be able to move forward. We have recently assessed the condition of the existing play equipment in the enclosures and are intending to replace the older items with new ones. In 2021 the paving flags in the main body of the park were re-laid. In 2023 we are proposing to re-lay the flags in the Memorial Garden.

Throughout the past year the Council have:

- continued to fund the general maintenance of Shevington Recreation Ground;
- continued to maintain Shevington Memorial Park & Garden;
- continued to maintain the bowling green and other elements at Forest Fold;

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- provided community Christmas trees (together with lights) in the centre of Shevington village, on Crooke Village green, in the centre of Appley Bridge and in Shevington Moor;
- provided Christmas motifs for the lamp standards for the shopping area between the two mini-roundabouts in Gathurst Lane and Christmas garlands for lamp posts in Appley Bridge and Shevington Moor;
- trialled the use of battery-operated Christmas lights on three live trees at Woodnook Road in Shevington Vale and on the Christmas trees at Shevington Moor and Crooke green;
- continued to support all the activities of 'In Bloom' groups by funding the maintenance of some 45 planters, which are located in all areas of the Parish, and also paying for the plants for some of the flower beds in several locations in the Parish and the watering of most of the planters and flower beds during the Summer months;
- tried to encourage and support the development of an 'In Bloom' group in Shevington Moor;
- maintained its provision of litter bins in the green spaces around the Parish.

We propose to continue with all of the above.

In 2022 Appley Bridge in Bloom submitted entries in several categories of the RHS competitions and were very successful. The planters provided by the Parish Council and maintained by our contractor made a significant contribution to these entries.

Our gratitude goes to the members of Shevington in Bloom, who did not submit a competition entry last year, but continued to maintain all of their projects to their usual very high standard. Congratulations must go to the small group of enterprising residents of Crooke Village who have started a Gardening Club and in a short space of time have made huge progress towards the re-birth of the Village as the Jewel in the Crown.

Support for Local Organisations and Other Bodies

Elected members have continued to represent the Parish Council

- on the Youth Club management committee,
- as Trustees of Shevington Recreation Ground and
- at meetings of Shevington & District Community Association.

The Council have also maintained links with Crooke Village Residents Association and Appley Bridge Community Association.

Civic Occasions

2022 witnessed both the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II in February and the celebrations associated with it in May and the sad news of her passing at the age of 96 on 8 September. To mark the Jubilee the Parish Council planned to plant a tree in each of four locations: Memorial Park, Crooke Village green, Whiteacre Park at Shevington Moor and the open space near Woodnook shops at Shevington Vale. We did this quietly in November.

Within days of the passing of a monarch the accession of his/her successor is proclaimed. The Chairman of the Parish Council is the person in a civil parish whose responsibility it is to do this. When he heard that this would be happening at 6pm on Sunday, 11 September, our Chairman cut short a weekend in the Lake District and rushed back to make sure that he was in the Memorial Garden to read the Proclamation at the appointed time. Some 60 people (including local dignitaries and a musician) braved the pouring rain to take part in the making of history.

Formal Remembrance Sunday services took place in November 2022, and our Chairman, Cllr Bill McKnight, laid a wreath on behalf of residents at Shevington Memorial, while Cllr Mike Grimes did the same at the Memorial at Appley Bridge.

Appendix A

Supporting Local Businesses

The 'Christmas Shop Front' competition was held for the fifteenth year running. The winner in 2022 was Carlton & Stanley Opticians, who nominated Wigan Macular Society as their chosen Charity. Thanks go to Pam Powell for once again judging the competition.

Planning Matters

The Council have continued to screen planning applications and make comments, as appropriate. The draining of and developments proposed by its owner for East Quarry at Appley Bridge, which have caused huge divisions among the residents of the village, have recently come to the fore once again. This time the Council were consulted about an appeal made by the owner to the Planning Inspectorate and have responded.

Communication

The Parish Council engages with residents in a number of different ways: via its websites, notice boards, its newsletter - a bi-monthly publication that is delivered to each home – and its Facebook page. The calendar of meetings is advertised on the website and many have been attended by residents. In 2022 the Council once again had an information stall at Shevington Fete.

Members of the public are always welcome at meetings of both the full Council and its committees. They may speak during the first thirty minutes of the Full Council Meeting about any issues or suggestions they have.

Finance

This year, as in past years, we have included information on the Council Tax bill about the Parish Council and the work it does. We are proud to say that up to now our finances have been sound and we have been able to make ends meet, despite having kept precept increases to a bare minimum for several years. However, because inevitably things wear out and need repair, in 2020 we took the step of increasing the precept by 10%. This took us back to levels similar to those in 2010 and meant an increase to the value of the cost of a cup of coffee per year for every household.

2021 and 2022 saw much more modest increases. The rate of inflation rose above 10% in 2022, but has been slowly falling since reaching a peak and by the end of January stood at 8.8%. In setting our precept for this year we have had to consider the fact that we would be facing higher costs and at the same time be mindful of all the other cost increases that residents could expect to absorb in 2023. In view of this we have only raised the precept by 5% and are looking at making savings where we can without reducing any of our services.

Public Concerns

The Parish Council is always willing to take any matters of concern seriously and works with the Community Safety Team and the GMP whenever possible to combat anti-social behaviour. It will continue to do so until all unacceptable behaviour is under control. In connection with this in 2019 the Council made a commitment to fund the Data Plan and on-going maintenance of the CCTV system that was installed in the centre of Shevington that year. As the past few years have witnessed frequent episodes in anti-social behaviour centred on Memorial Park, we are continuing to look into the possibility of introducing CCTV in Church Lane.

Conclusion

Over the past year Parish Councillors and co-opted Committee members have tried to work with many groups in the parish to achieve various goals – too numerous to mention. The Parish Council is always keen to support and encourage local activities.

Krystyna Pilkington
Clerk to Shevington Parish Council