The background of the entire page is a collage of autumn leaves on branches against a blue sky. The leaves are mostly yellow and orange, with some green ones interspersed. The branches are dark and silhouetted against the bright sky.

Shevington Parish Council

The Parish Plan

January 2006

FOREWORD

This Parish Plan has taken almost two years from inception to publication. Everyone who has taken part in whatever capacity is to be thanked for the contributions that have been made.

A parish council – more properly it should be called a village council – is the most local of forms of government but its ethos is one of cooperation and encouragement, of effective lobbying and advocacy of local wishes and concerns. It has to prove its worth; this plan is one means of checking that Shevington Parish Council never ceases to demonstrate that it does seek to prove its worth.

Published with the support of The Government Office for the North West and Community Futures by Shevington Parish Council



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CONTENTS

SECTION	SECTION TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
01	Introduction	5
02	A Little History and Background	6
03	The Parish Now	10
04	The Questionnaire	13
05	The Survey and its Results	20
06	Conclusions	25
07	The Action Plan	27
07.1	Tasks for the Parish Council	28
07.2	Work for the Parish Council	29



01 INTRODUCTION

The planning for this project began two years ago when Shevington Parish Council saw that the Countryside Agency was encouraging councils to think about the past, present and future of the communities that they represent.

It is obviously a worthwhile endeavour in that it gives shape to the work that parish councils do not only in the short term, but in the medium and long term as well. It has the added benefit of making small councils think about their relationships with the larger local authorities and with all the bodies, statutory and voluntary, with which they work, and with all the members of the communities that make up the civil parish.

The work for the Parish Plan was carried out by way of consultations at Annual Parish Meetings, the construction of a questionnaire based upon comments by consultees and by parish councillors. The questionnaire was distributed to every household and to every business and institution in the civil parish; in total, 4,000 were delivered with a freepost return address to encourage as high a number of respondents as possible. Just over 10% were returned. The post-codes, which most respondents gave, indicate that there was a good geographical

spread of response across the whole civil parish. Every authority consulted indicates that this is a very good percentage return and one that can be relied upon to give statistically significant results. These results will help shape the final section of the plan, the future, with an encouragement to think about what the whole of Shevington will be like in five, ten and twenty years.

There were opportunities in the questionnaire for respondents to comment upon particular issues and to offer their views by way of solutions, changes and variations to current practices. Some of these will be worth implementing by the parish council or urging upon the borough council for their urgent action.

The work so far has been worthwhile, and the Parish Council would like to thank all those who have made contributions to the creation of the plan.

02 A LITTLE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

**The Civil Parish of Shevington in the year 2005
is a very different place from the settlement of
1894 when the Local Government Act of that
year created what were called then – and are
still called - parish councils.**

The writer Richard Curtis has had a great success with his TV situation comedy, *The Vicar of Dibley*. In commenting on its genesis he admits to conflating the roles of the parish council and the parochial church council for obvious comic effect. The success of this show has allowed those who know nothing about this most local level of government to assume that it does have something of the batty and absurd qualities that this programme celebrates. It is true that the powers conferred under the 1894 act were and are limited, but they do give powers to improve the quality of life in direct and practical ways, and the giving of revenue raising powers does provide parish councils with the means to carry out those improvements.

There may be an argument for having a change to the naming of this level of local government; already some larger bodies are able to call themselves town councils, so it might be a solution by way of analogy to call councils with an annual budget of below, say, £100,000, village councils. The communities of Shevington – and there are at least four distinct communities – still see themselves as constituting a village

with approximately 12500 inhabitants with five churches, four primary schools, an 11 to 16 secondary school, a library, four public houses, two railway stations (neither is in the parish but most of their passengers live there and the Parish Council has adopted Gathurst Station), a youth club, two bowling greens, a recreation ground, a memorial garden and park, allotments, a large and recently extended and refurbished garden centre and an 18 hole golf course; there are three pharmacies, an eight partner medical practice and around 35 shops of all kinds across the village.

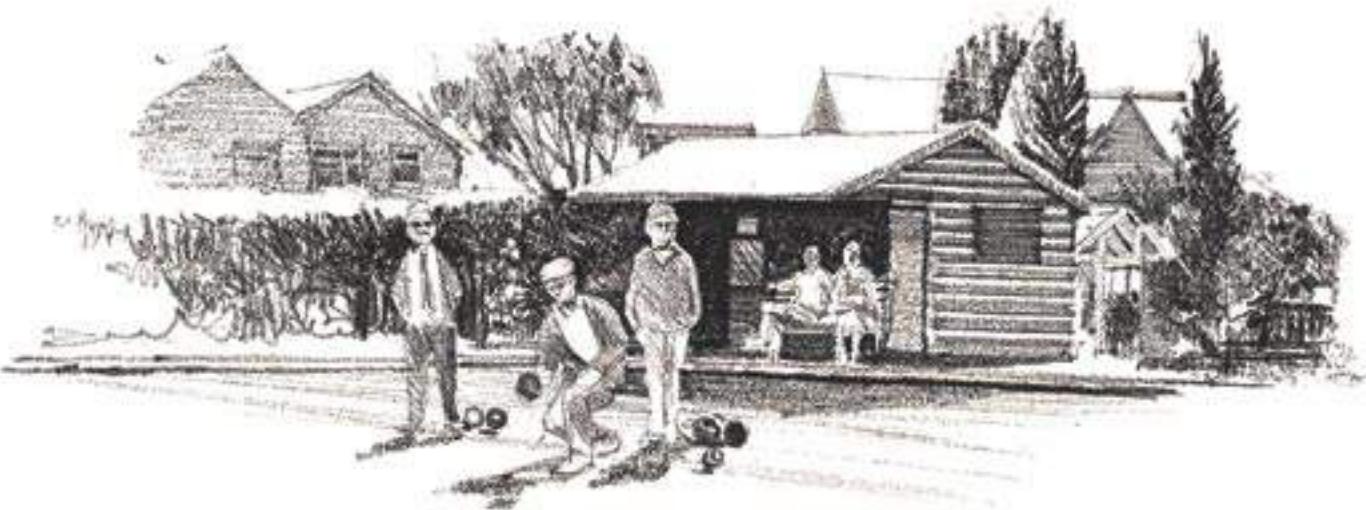
The original boundaries of the council were defined in 1894 and they remain so today: streams that run broadly north south forming the northern, eastern and western boundaries, and the River Douglas the southerly boundary. Then the village was a cluster of houses around Broad O'th Lane in the village centre, in Crooke, at Shevington Moor and in the Shevington Vale / Appley bridge areas with the farms, mines and quarries making up the rest. Whilst the passage of time brought the transformations that are profoundly significant but barely seen – mains



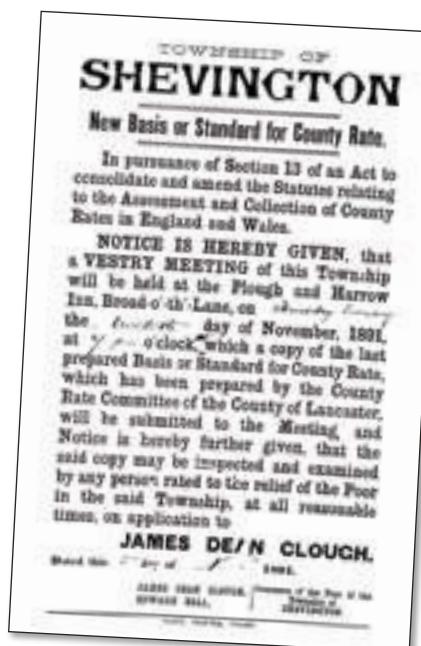
drainage, town gas and electricity – in many ways the most important was the coming of the motorway, the M6, in the early 1960s. It divided the parish with its six lane highway travelling north south, most of it in a cutting; that, as it was excavated, it revealed what all the local miners knew: the coal measures here are very close to the surface – close enough in the 1970s to bring the threat of open cast mining to the area. The motorway crosses the valley that forms the southern edge of the village in a way that brings the 18th, 19th and the 20th centuries into a conjunction of characteristic forms of transport. The River Douglas was made into a navigation in the late 18th century, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal was cut alongside the river as it runs

.....
“It is true that the powers conferred under the 1894 act were and are limited, but they do give powers to improve the quality of life in direct and practical ways”
.....

through the valley and the railway, originally part of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, follows the line of the river again, on its route from Wigan to Southport.



“Between 1951 and 1981 the population rose from 3,057 to 10,122, an increase of more than threefold in thirty years.”



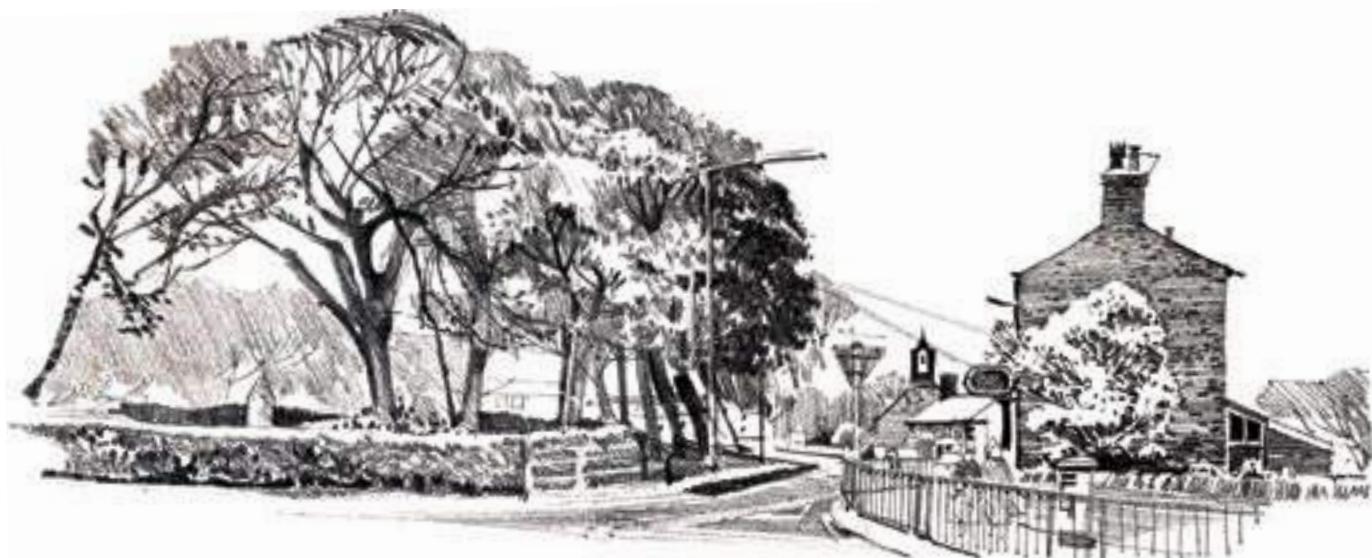
By the time the motorway was built in the early 1960s the development of Shevington as a dormitory and commuter village had begun. The most important effect was that between 1951 and 1981 the population rose from 3,057 to 10,122, an increase of more than threefold in thirty years. Wigan Rural District Council, and, from 1974, Wigan Borough Council gave permission for private housing development in each of the communities that made up the village, so that what had been relatively minimal ribbon development of the inter-war years saw major infilling and the creation of a web of minor roads that connected to what had once been quiet country roads that followed long-standing routes to Wigan, to Orrell, to Wrightington, to Parbold and to Standish. At the northern end of the village there is a junction of the M6 that allows quick access to all parts of Shevington, to Standish and to Parbold, Wrightington and beyond. A small pointer to the amount of commuter traffic that returns to and traverses the area each work day afternoon and evening is that there are now part-time traffic lights controlling the exit from the north bound slip road and the west bound circulating traffic. This necessity confirms what borough wide surveys have recently shown: 30,000 people in the borough work outside the borough; a significant number travel back from Liverpool, Manchester and the north west generally to the part of the borough in which Shevington is situated. Another 20,000 travel into the borough, many of whom seem to use this same junction.

In a way that many studies of town and community development have shown, the most desirable area in which to develop is to the west of the major conurbation; Shevington, in relation to Wigan, and beyond it to the major urban spread of the towns and cities that make up Greater Manchester, is in such a location. It has reached the point where to quote a local borough councillor, 'Shevington is full'. This is not quite true, in the sense that developers still recognise the desirability of the area and can find ingenious ways of circumventing the wishes of local residents who do say the village is 'full'. One method is to build three large and, by definition, expensive houses in the very large gardens of some of the older houses that were themselves part of the inter-war ribbon development along the old roads.

If the village is full then it does give the parish council one firm place from which to plan for the future: the council knows the size of the community it serves. For, in truth, it is a diverse community where many are incomers – almost by definition – since the developments of the last 40 years have meant that very many in that threefold growth have come from outside

the area. By now, however, very many of the incomers have lived here at least a generation and see Shevington as home.

One of the communities that make up the civil parish resists the picture that is theorised here: Crooke is a unique community. It is a canal side community that has a short but narrow and difficult approach road that even now is barely a century old – before that its connections with the outside world were by footpaths and the canal; it opens out into a double row of houses, a Methodist chapel, a pub, a nursery and now a marina that caters for the many leisure narrow boats that travel the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. It is, in effect, a cul de sac; the metalled road ends and there is gated access to a very well used footpath that heads north west to Church Lane near the centre of Shevington. Thirty years ago Wigan Borough Council thought it had outlived its viability as a community and saw it as one of those that under the then legislation would be classified as a Category 4 village and allowed to fall into desuetude. A vigorous campaign of opposition was successful and Crooke now thrives as a unique community in which the local residents take enormous pride.



03 THE PARISH NOW

The latest statistical analysis of the civil parish is represented in the 2001 UK National Census. It is one of the principles of local government boundary distribution that civil parishes are not split between wards; Shevington Parish Council has been part of two wards in the last twenty-five years following ward boundary revisions in 1980 and 2004.

From 1980 to 2004 it was rather more than 60% of Langtree Ward, which also included the north western part of Standish; since 2004 it has formed the major part of the new Shevington with Lower Ground Ward. Standish Lower Ground is a small community with an historically strong mining background; it has, like Shevington, seen public housing and private development add to the ribbon development of the older terraces that formed the spine of the then mining community.

What the census reveals, and this is supported by other analyses, is that Shevington civil parish is one of the more prosperous communities in the whole borough of Wigan, even though, when the national picture is considered, the ward just crosses the 50th percentile in terms of prosperity. It is a reminder that this is a relatively deprived part of the country; the

average income for the borough is £16500 a year, which is £2000 a year less than the regional average. A further consequence is that even in prosperous areas there are significant evidences of deprivation, and this true in some parts of the parish. Nevertheless, it has over the last fifteen years been one of the most prosperous places in the borough with high levels of employment – always in the top three wards in the borough; within the top three in terms of owner occupation, households with car ownership, within the top three in terms of the numbers of detached houses, and it has a younger population than the borough average. And whilst this anticipates an important finding from the questionnaire, the lack of sheltered housing in the parish is an issue for the parish council, for the borough council and for the community at large. A statistic that needs to be further explored is



that the percentage of the population aged 65 and over in the parish is 13.3%, whilst in the borough generally it is 14.4%. Statistically it is a remarkably homogeneous community with 86.8% indicating that they acknowledge themselves to be Christian and in terms of ethnicity 98.9% indicate that they consider themselves to be white in the terms that the national census offers.

A representation of the parish that the national census and other statistically based analyses produces is, of course, interesting but rather bloodless. A telling example of this is that, statistically, Shevington's communities are the safest in the safest borough in the whole of Greater Manchester, but this has little meaning when someone in the community is a victim of anything from low level nuisance to assault or burglary. The communities that make up the

.....
“Although a contemporary photograph would show the developments that have produced the threefold population increase of the last thirty or forty years it would still show that the parish is still surprisingly green.”
.....



parish are themselves networks of extraordinary complexity; to take one simple example: there will be a Rainbows group, Brownie and Guides groups, a Parent Teacher Association, a Weight Watchers' group, the Mothers' Union and the Community Association all meeting on a regular basis in one church hall every week of the month, every month of the year. Such a pattern will be matched across the country in every community but the intersecting patterns of social and voluntary activity as well as patterns of work and levels of qualification that the national census reveals are what make the community what it is.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the coalition of ballooning, fixed wing flying and photography allowed the development of aerial photography. Although a contemporary photograph would show the developments that have produced the threefold population increase of the last thirty or forty years it would still show that the parish is still surprisingly green; the western aspect of the parish is the broad green sweep of the ridge

that runs from Billinge Hill to Ashurst Beacon, a reminder that the green belt abuts the parish. The heart of the parish is a very large green space bisected by Church Lane. The Recreation Ground, the Memorial Garden and the Memorial Park create an approximately ten acre green space in the very middle of the village. Each of the communities that make up the parish has at least one large green space, and each could be developed to provide further facilities and opportunities for everyone in that community. It is a feature of the topography of the parish that it is crisscrossed by a network of footpaths that in total extends for about fourteen miles; all of these seem to be of considerable age and their starting and finishing points show how the communities that make up the civil parish were – and are – connected by paths that in some cases predate the roads that now exist. One feature of the architectural history of the parish is the comparative rarity of buildings that have survived from earlier than the late 19th and early 20th centuries; a simple count suggests one 17th, two 18th and perhaps less than a dozen 19th century buildings.

04 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire, a blank version of which follows this section, was produced after a period of discussion by the Parish Council and consultation with those who attended Annual Parish Meetings.

“The most important task faced by the parish council is the integration of the priorities revealed by this survey with its strategic vision for the civil parish.”

The questionnaire mixes open questions with prompts beginning, ‘what I would like...’ and asks for responses to the ten priorities that the parish council offered. All respondents indicated how they evaluated the council’s priorities on a 1 to 5, low to high scale. There were, of course, a number of unusual, quirky and revelatory responses to the open questions, which, most importantly, remind the Parish Council that it needs to inform those who live within its boundaries and pay its precept within their council tax demand about what the council’s powers are, and how it works with statutory and voluntary bodies within the area. At the same time, there were a number of comments and suggestions that are of such value that they can be used and put into practice as soon as possible or incorporated into medium and long term planning. The answers have been analysed and a detailed summary is included as part of the plan. The most important task faced by the parish council is the integration of the priorities revealed by this survey with its strategic vision for the civil parish. The plan must be a dynamic document and a touchstone for the council’s determination of priorities in the years to come.



Such a plan, particularly in the communities that make up the civil parish of Shevington, cannot, does not, and should not exist within a vacuum. Its relationships are spatial and temporal; the parish exists within a complex space, on the northwestern edge of but within the relatively dense urban space that stretches east and south across the city region that is Greater Manchester. The corollary is that to the west, north and south there are the low hills of Ashurst Beacon and Harrock Hill with the Lancashire plain, Longridge and, on clear days, Black Coombe in the far north-west and Snowdonia in the far southwest beyond those hills. The plan must relate to the plans that Wigan Council is in the process of updating and revising; the whole of the parish is part of the borough and its plan needs to have a productively dynamic relationship with the borough's Community Plan. Its five principles are interesting and worth considering at the level of the parish of some 12,000 citizens as well as at the level of 350,000 citizens of the borough. They are:

- Social inclusion
- Strong communities
- Working in partnership
- Sustainability – looking after the environment
- Learning from experience

One of the tasks of the Parish Council's response to the findings of the questionnaire is to see how these principles might be adapted and used. The example of social inclusion makes a useful case study: there are two groups that the questionnaire responses identify as having a sense of being excluded: older people and the young. Their identification of how they are excluded is, of course, different: the old see the lack of purpose built sheltered accommodation as a potential mechanism of exclusion. Expert opinion on the matter of sheltered accommodation that can respond to whatever level of need is expressed, suggests that the best sheltered accommodation in the borough

is at least seven miles away in Platt Bridge. There is a second element to this sense of exclusion that is more difficult to characterise from the questionnaire. It is one, however, which ongoing research being conducted by Salford University and Age Concern Wigan Borough has identified as having a significant impact: it is the devastating impact of loneliness and isolation. This is being addressed by a large-scale study conducted borough-wide; its aim is not only to characterise the condition but to offer remedies that are developed and refined as the study goes on. The Parish Council will need to see how its response should be framed to answer its community needs when the results of the study are published in 2006.

For the young, their exclusion is one that is identified by many who are evidently not young; the young are seen by many as, individually and collectively, nuisances and trouble-makers. The statistics compiled by the borough's community safety partnership suggest that complaints about youth nuisance predominate numerically over any other problem. Some commentaries suggest that there is an exaggerated and uncalled for demonisation of the young, but there is convincing evidence that underage drinking to a very large degree, and some drug abuse to a very much lesser degree have exacerbated anti-social behaviour that has resulted in sustained damage to street furniture, vandalism and intimidation. Greater Manchester Police find themselves endlessly badgered by borough and parish councillors to do something about

“Some commentaries suggest that there is an exaggerated and uncalled for demonisation of the young”

“There are two groups that the questionnaire responses identify as having a sense of being excluded: older people and the young.”

the nuisance; covert surveillance, remote CCTV, reinforced patrols have all been deployed.

Whilst these two groups, the old and the young, are exemplars of excluded groups, the fact that a catalogue of coercive measures to 'control' the young can be cited, it is not so easy to cite any action to address the causes of exclusion of the old. At the same time, the action to control the young is conceived wholly in terms of suppression of anti-social behaviour and not nearly enough in terms of positive action, even though within Shevington there is an active and hard-working youth club, and in Appley Bridge another that serves very many young people within the parish, and there are Scout, Guide Brownie and Rainbow groups within the parish that give excellent service. The very great majority of the children of the parish attend schools that come under the aegis of Wigan Council; the education authority has a well-developed citizenship curriculum that is delivered to all children, beginning in the primary school, and yet, the issue of youth nuisance seems to loom ever larger. The Parish Council will need to look to working with its statutory and its voluntary sector partners to develop positive and effective policies that give something worthwhile to as many young people as possible.

The challenge is the same for both of these groups: to develop and implement effective policies in time. This needs to be done before the old are no longer with us and the young

“The plan must be dynamic, regularly revisited and revised, successes celebrated, failures acknowledged, new elements introduced; it must be a second level, strategic driver for the council.”



drift into paths that bring them to criminality and failure.

The issue of partnership is one that an authority of the size of a parish council must necessarily approach positively; it has to and it does work at every level: with voluntary bodies, the churches, the borough council, grant funding bodies and the local business community, and, of course, with the residents of the civil parish. Whilst the council must work with its partners in the borough, it must have a sensible timescale in which to implement the plan. It is of the essence of a plan that its aims are realisable and can be achieved within a realistic timetable. Nevertheless, it is also worthwhile to have a list of those wishes and desires that only the parish council equivalent of a National lottery Jackpot win could make possible, if only for the fun of it.

The plan must be dynamic, regularly revisited and revised, successes celebrated, failures acknowledged, new elements introduced; it must be a second level, strategic driver for the council. Parish councils, as do all councils at whatever level, operate year to year; their budgets must allow them to operate effectively within their financial year, but this hand to mouth element of local government is clearly not enough: the parish plan must work with the community plan and the local development plan to ensure the maximum enhancement of the lives of all who live in the parish and the borough, rather than creating a redundancy of provision. This is the very essence of sustainability – that the plan knows what it, either alone, or working with its partners, can deliver over whatever timescale is appropriate.

There is a further dimension to this context of cooperation for Shevington Parish Council. Wigan Borough Council has created ten

townships within the borough; Shevington is within the Aspull, Standish and Shevington Township. Townships have identified priorities that they wish to see implemented and the parish plan can be framed to refine and direct any proposals that the township might make. The principle of cooperation has a second element that can help the development of the plan; at every level the experience of success and failure can provide valuable learning to ensure that things are done better.

The experience of consulting those who live within the civil parish, discussing the format of the questionnaire at parish council meetings, and analysis of responses to the questionnaire all suggest that regular, specific consultations on important local matters will be of benefit. An example of this approach, which the questionnaire highlighted, is that of local parking, particularly in the village centre. At times during the day the demand for parking spaces exceeds places so that there is pavement parking, parking on double yellow lines, parking on residential streets so that entrances are blocked and overcrowding in the limited off-street parking. Ways of finding solutions are not in any one body's gift, so there is a clear need for widespread consultation on this specific issue.

The analysis of responses to the plan's questionnaire will show the need for such specific consultations on a significant number of issues.

There follows on the next page a blank copy of the questionnaire that was sent out to the nearly 4,000 homes in the civil parish of Shevington. The return, as stated elsewhere in the report on the plan, was nearly 11%.



“Townships have identified priorities that they wish to see implemented and the parish plan can be framed to refine and direct any proposals that the township might make.”

BLANK COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SENT OUT TO THE NEARLY 4,000 HOMES IN THE CIVIL PARISH OF SHEVINGTON

SHEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Plan

Dear Resident,

Shevington Parish Council is drawing up a Parish Plan. This is an audit of what the Civil Parish of Shevington is, what its strengths and benefits are, what it lacks and what it needs. The Plan will look at all of these elements not only now but in the short, medium and long term, stretching the time frame out as far as twenty years ahead.

A vital part of drawing up the Plan is to ask for your help, first by completing the questionnaire, and then, indicating your willingness to take part in local public discussions about the important themes and issues that the questionnaire raises.

The Plan will have as its central element an action plan in which all the desirable outcomes will have an indication of their priority, an estimate of their likely cost, the partner bodies with whom the Parish Council will be working in partnership will be identified and a time scale for the implementation of the objectives laid out.

The Parish Council is sending this letter and a copy of the questionnaire to all the households in the Parish, to the statutory bodies, to all businesses and commercial enterprises, to all voluntary bodies and churches, and to all the schools.

Once the completed questionnaires are received and analysed, the Parish Council will be hosting a series of public meetings on the major issues raised. The discussions and conclusions of these meetings will help to formulate the Plan.

Our thanks for taking part in this work.

Yours faithfully,

Shevington Parish Council

SHEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Plan

Please answer as many of the following questions as you wish.

If you wish to take part in the discussions on the material that the answers give please give your personal details in the box at the end of the questionnaire. It would help identify the coverage of responses if you would, in any case, give us your post code in the space provided.

All answers and informative given will be treated in confidence and individual or corporate respondents will not be identified.

THE PARISH PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

For the following sets of statements please circle the number which most closely corresponds with your view:

5: Extremely important, 4: Important, 3: Worth consideration,
2: Not a priority, 1: Unimportant

The first set relates to suggestions that have already been made by local people and Parish Councillors in discussions about what is needed and what improvements can be made.

i. An upgraded Recreation Ground	5	4	3	2	1
ii. More children's play areas	5	4	3	2	1
iii. New facilities for children and young people	5	4	3	2	1
iv. Developing local schools as community resources	5	4	3	2	1
v. A Village Hall	5	4	3	2	1
vi. Sheltered housing	5	4	3	2	1
vii. Local policing and Community Patrols	5	4	3	2	1
viii. CCTV for village centres	5	4	3	2	1
ix. Traffic controls for local roads	5	4	3	2	1
x. Comprehensive Public Transport	5	4	3	2	1

The second set is a set of general statements about improving the quality of life.

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. The Community must be a safe and comfortable place for everyone | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| b. The environment - streets, open spaces, play areas, parks and woodland - needs protection and improvement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| c. There should be more amenities for the community, particularly for those with special needs and for all age groups | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| d. Safe roads and streets need more and better traffic calming measures | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| e. Health and welfare for all should have first priority | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| f. We must work in partnership with the Borough Council, and with the Township Forum for Aquall, Standish and Shewington | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

For the next set of questions please complete the statements in whatever way most clearly expresses your view.

1. What Shewington needs most is

2. Life in my community would improve most effectively

3. My first priority for people of my age would be

4. Five years from now I would like to see

5. Ten years from now I would like to see

6. If there were one thing that I could have in Shewington it would be

In the final section there is a space for you to say what you want for where you live.
Please say what you want and why you think it is important.

Thank you for taking part in this very important work for the place where you live.

If you wish, please give your name and address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Tel. No.: _____

E-mail Address: _____

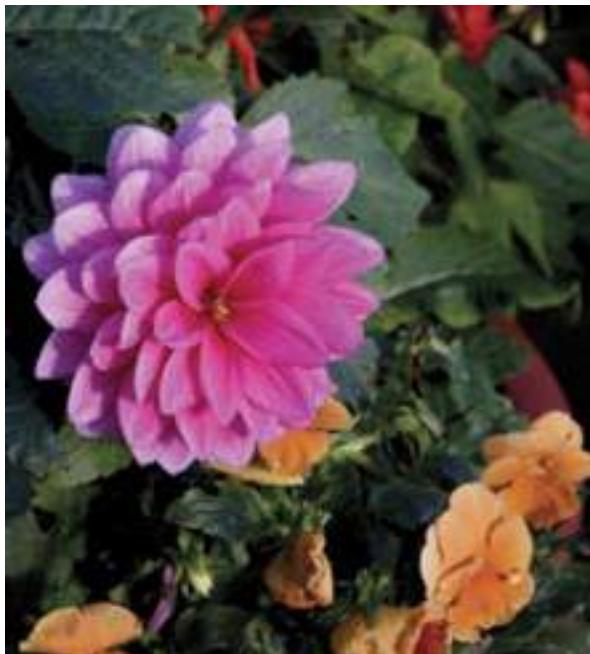
Please return your completed questionnaire in an envelope to the following freepost address - no stamp is necessary.

M. N. Holden Esq, ACIS
Clark to Shewington Parish Council
FREEPOST RU1Y-RUTB-GXPH
Glo 69 Whitehall Avenue
Appleby Bridge
WIGAN, WN6 8UY

Published for and on behalf of Shewington Parish Council

05 THE SURVEY AND ITS RESULTS

Expert opinion regards a 10% return as very good, and the information received as having a high degree of validity. The use of a five point scale to indicate views about the importance of both specific ideas and broad general statements meant that almost every one of each received an agreement or approval level of 3.5 on a five point scale.



The significant deviations from even this generally high level of approval were in response to the statement relating to policing in the communities that make up the parish and in the provision of sheltered housing. Both showed an approval rating of very close to 5, policing being so close – 4.89 – as to be seen as essential by almost all respondents.

The elements of the questionnaire that were most revealing were the comments that very many of the respondents made. The range was, of course, immense; it stretched from the very local – traffic calming on the road where the respondent lived – to the community wide – rerouting of heavy vehicle traffic away from the village roads altogether. There were comments that recurred so often as to create a thematic pattern that is possible to map, and which give a guide to the Parish Council for its subsequent actions. The order does reflect to a large degree the frequency with which the topics were mentioned:

THE PRESERVATION AND GROWTH OF A SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

For many this means a wish to return to the village as it was thirty years ago; something which is an impossible dream but which recognises the differences between then and now in terms of the size of the community and the change in the provision of services of all kinds – even though, in some significant instances, these have been for the better. It is ironic that many who made this point chose to reply anonymously, and of those who gave contact details only two respondents made specific offers of help; they will be contacted and thanked for their offer – which will be taken up.

THE NEED FOR A VISIBLE POLICE PRESENCE

This ranged from a wish to see police officers and community support officers on the streets of the village throughout the day and particularly on evening patrol close to areas which many respondents recognised to be at risk of vandalism and public disorder to the re-establishment of a police office in the village at which officers could be contacted on a twenty four hour basis. This seems to indicate a widespread fear of crime and/or the possibility of becoming the victim of crime.

THE NEED FOR SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT MAKE UP THE PARISH

Again, respondents indicated a wish for this provision to be local – in Shevington Vale and Appley Bridge for those who live there and do not, should their circumstances change, wish to have to move even to the other side of the parish – to those who pointed out that there is virtually no provision within the whole of the parish and that it would add to the quality of life were there to be some provision for sheltered housing close at hand.

.....

“The semi rural nature of the area was often commented upon and there was recognition that this quality has made the whole parish a very attractive place to live.”

.....

PLANNING ISSUES AND FURTHER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The semi rural nature of the area was often commented upon and there was recognition that this quality has made the whole parish a very attractive place to live. At the same time there is a feeling very strongly expressed that there is no further room for development. Sometimes this is clearly nimbyism – not in my back yard – very often it is a concern that the green belt areas that separate the communities that make up the parish from one another and from other communities around the parish are not inviolate and may be under threat. The community cited very often as a warning of the consequences of over development is Standish, which is, at the northern edge of the parish, contiguous with it.

YOUTH ISSUES

In reading every one of the responses and summarising the comments of respondents it became clear that there were three main elements: a fear and at times even a hatred of what was perceived as the menace of young people gathering in groups at different places in the parish; the second was a wish to offer facilities to young people as a way of diminishing the threat; the third was a plea for a planned development of existing and new facilities and opportunities

05 THE SURVEY AND ITS RESULTS

that offered stimulation of a positive kind to as many young people as possible who wished to take advantage of them.

PARKING

The ward of which Shevington Parish Council is part is shown by the 2001 National Census to be one of the two or three in the whole of Wigan Borough to have the highest percentage of car ownership. It means that the shopping centres – none of them large by any measure – are often congested and sometimes dangerous; on street parking where vehicles park wholly or partly on pavements is seen as inconsiderate and dangerous for pedestrians, particularly for those using wheel chairs and baby buggies; the provision of off street parking is perceived to be inadequate; and there is a general wish for thought and consideration by those who use cars when they are parking. A number of respondents asked that people in the area should use their driveways for long term and overnight parking rather than roads and pavements. There was a general desire to see parking restrictions enforced regularly and consistently. Journeys to and from local schools and parking around schools were often mentioned as being the cause of congestion and danger, where the victims were very likely to be the children who were supposed to be protected by being driven to and from school.

“The provision of off street parking is perceived to be inadequate; and there is a general wish for thought and consideration by those who use cars when they are parking.”

“Very many people wanted traffic calming measures for roads which they used regularly and/or on which they lived, where they perceived speeds to be too high and dangerous.”

TRAFFIC CONTROL

A topic that produced more contradictory responses than any other; very many people wanted traffic calming measures for roads which they used regularly and/or on which they lived, where they perceived speeds to be too high and dangerous. Many suggested that there should be speed limits lower than the 30mph maximum and that speed bumps should be installed to deter speeding. One suggestion was that on certain roads there should be advisory speed monitors that show drivers their excessive speeds and tell them to slow down; Back Lane was frequently mentioned as a road on which excessive speeds were common, as were Miles Lane and Gathurst Lane. The proximity to the motorway network has created the phenomenon of an unofficial ‘park and ride’ arrangement: vehicles park on residential streets in Shevington Moor close to Junction 27 of the M6 motorway and their occupants join others to share a vehicle to some onward, presumably inner city destination where parking is even more difficult. A significant number of respondents believed that the number of heavy goods vehicles making their way to and from the M6 on the relatively narrow and winding connecting roads that run roughly north south and east west through the village constitutes a

danger, a hazard and a potentially grid locking obstruction. There was much anecdotal comment about large vehicles travelling south on Gathurst Lane ignoring the low bridge signs at Gathurst station, and there were several about very large vehicles exiting the motorway on to Back Lane and thence on to Miles Lane – neither a suitable road for a lost and or confused driver, very often without any language in common with the person trying to direct him out of the maze he had entered. There were those who wanted all traffic calming measures removed – in one case, and rather bizarrely, suggesting that all residential street pavements should be removed to allow more on street parking without obstructing traffic flows!

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

More than 60% of all responses mentioned litter and dog fouling as concerns that made respondents angry because they saw both of these damaging the immediate environment, and being unsightly and dangerous. More than 40% articulated their concerns in broader terms: they wanted green open spaces to be cared for and improved, with children's playgrounds upgraded; they wanted road side green verges to be planted with trees, and lamppost mounted

“There were those who wanted all traffic calming measures removed – in one case, and rather bizarrely, suggesting that all residential street pavements should be removed to allow more on street parking without obstructing traffic flows!”

“The desire for a wider range of shops in the centre of Shevington recurred in more than 30% of responses.”

hanging baskets should be used to augment the pavement planters. A significant number of respondents pointed to the way in which the pavement installation of infrastructure services, particularly cable TV, have left the pavements in very many parts of the village in a damaged and unsightly state. At the level of looking at the landscape of the village, there was a persistent concern about threats to the green belt that is the guarantee that the communities which make up Shevington retain their quality as part of what is a village rather than a satellite suburb of Wigan – again, Standish is cited as the dangerous example of what could happen. Whilst retaining the ‘village’ and the semi rural nature of the area there were significant numbers of comments about the upgrading of street lighting as a safety measure.

SHOPPING PROVISION

The desire for a wider range of shops in the centre of Shevington recurred in more than 30% of responses, with the two most wished for being a bank and a restaurant or café or brasserie – depending upon the taste of the individual respondent; the third most often mentioned was a butcher's shop. A significant number of respondents wanted to ensure that the post offices in Shevington and Appley Bridge remain and very many commented rather despairingly on what they perceived as the unsuitability – for them - of the village pubs.

05 THE SURVEY AND ITS RESULTS

TRANSPORT

There were comments upon the number and frequency of trains, particularly to Manchester, and upon the difficulties of all day parking at the stations at Gathurst and Appley Bridge. Some comments touched upon the bus routes and the wish that they should thread different routes across the district – to Standish and to Orrell were mentioned more than once.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

There was a wide spread of comment that ranged from the provision of upgraded games playing facilities on the recreation ground to the wish to have a local leisure centre and swimming pool.

THE PERIPHERIES OF WHAT IS A RELATIVELY SMALL AREA FEEL THEMSELVES TO BE RELATIVELY NEGLECTED

Residents in Crooke, Shevington Vale and Appley Bridge and Shevington Moor all expressed feeling of being isolated and ignored

SOME OF THE LESS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED WERE, NEVERTHELESS, OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE

A small number of respondents wrote about the loneliness they experienced and the sense of isolation they felt.

“The provision of off street parking is perceived to be inadequate; and there is a general wish for thought and consideration by those who use cars when they are parking.”

.....

“The desire for a wider range of shops in the centre of Shevington recurred in more than 30% of responses.”

.....

There were some comments – a very small minority – that were pointlessly abusive or so misguided as to be incapable of being answered.

It is worth recording the lack of comment upon certain very important areas of the life of our community that seemed to suggest that in some significant and important aspects no news is good news. Other than two complimentary and supportive comments no mention was made of the quality of local medical services. Again, other than one plea to maintain its high quality, no mention was made of education provision in the area. Both of these lacunae it seems proper to read as highly complimentary of local medical and education provision.

There were a number of unique comments about specific issues that were interesting because they pointed to problems that whilst they were very local they were, nevertheless, of real concerns to those who had commented upon them; these are matters that can be addressed by the Parish Council acting as an advocate for the individual concerns mentioned.

Finally, there were about 5% of respondents who explicitly remarked upon their pleasure at living in the communities that make up the civil parish of Shevington – not a large number, but pleasing to report that there were some.

06 CONCLUSIONS

Many of the conclusions to this report on the Parish Plan have already been signalled:

- **To confirm the need for cooperation with statutory, non-statutory, community and voluntary groups in the area** and to act as a channel of communication and information between them
 - **To have regard to the policies and plans that Wigan Borough Council has and will develop**, and to subject them to rigorous and constructive scrutiny
 - **To have a hierarchy of activities that the Parish Council engages to carry out** over the short, medium and long term
 - **To act as an effective lobbyist for local concerns**, be they expressed by groups and/or individuals
 - **To ensure that the Parish Council serves all the people of the civil parish of Shevington** to the best of its ability.
-

Very many of the respondents to the questionnaire expressed a strong sense of local pride and identified most strongly with the particular community in the village in which they live – some respondents from Appley Bridge or Shevington Vale seemed not to know that they live within the civil parish of Shevington – and this is an attitude to be encouraged and sustained, but in positive ways.

Some of the strongest expressions were in relation to aspects of life that are to a degree remediable only up to a point; a good example is the conjunction, in the same response, of a wish to see the amount of vehicle traffic diminish but to have more parking spaces, or to have more parking places but not to sacrifice any of our open spaces to development.

The very many good ideas that have appeared throughout the responses will be taken forward, either by the Parish Council itself or by urging them upon the appropriate statutory authority,

and being a persistent and well-organised lobbyist for these ideas.

The results of the questionnaire, summarised in some detail in the foregoing section will, of course form an important part of the plan for future action by the Parish Council, but there will also be elements, particularly in the medium and long term, articulated by the Parish Council that will form part of the plan too.

The members of Shevington Parish Council and the Clerk to the Council would like to thank all those who have taken part in the exercise by attending Annual Parish Meetings, by responding to the questionnaire and by commenting upon the work of compiling this report as it progressed.

The Action Plan, which follows this section, will be a living document, revisited regularly, updated as the need arises and revised in the light of both successes and the inevitable failures.

HIGHFIELD AVE

DOUGLAS DRIVE

RANDALL AVENUE

MANOR RD

CHURCH LANE

HERMITAGE
CLOSE

VICARAGE LANE

ST ANNES COURT

CLOUGHWOOD
CRESCENT

MABERRY CLOSE

WOODNOCK ROAD

MARTLAND AVE

AYREFIELD GROVE

ABBEY DALE

WHITEHALL
AVENUE

KNIGHTSCLIFFE
CRESCENT

MILES LANE
← NOS 2-45

GROVEWOOD
DRIVE

ROOKERY AVE

RUNSHAW AVE

07 THE ACTION PLAN

Although the plan has discrete parts – earlier the term ‘hierarchy’ was used to indicate levels of importance – it is perhaps better seen as a matrix of points that can be each worked upon as the need and/or the opportunity arises. A good example of this in the very recent past has been the way in which the care of the trees in the Memorial Park – always an important issue for the council, since they are an adornment but one that must be safe – has become an urgent matter.

An expert survey was carried out in two parts in the late winter and late summer of 2005. It has resulted in the felling of a number of dead and dying trees and the trimming of a number that would benefit from such attention. This is a necessary - and expensive – activity that the council has carried out, but the council must think beyond the immediate requirements of good husbandry and community safety. It must look to replanting trees that will last at least another two hundred years and at the same time to provide fencing for the Church Lane boundary of the park to make it an even safer play environment for the very many children who use it.

07.1 TASKS FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

- 01** To ensure that as many as possible have a clear understanding of the role of the Parish Council, its geographical boundaries, and the extent of its statutory powers
- 02** To match its budget planning to the needs and priorities that this plan identifies and that are presented to the Council as it goes about its work
- 03** To plan for medium and long term outcomes that will require the allocation of budget reserves
- 04** To maximise the impact of its resource spending by seeking grant aid and support from all appropriate funding bodies
- 05** To ensure a positive role for the Parish Council in liaising with and lobbying Wigan Borough and West Lancashire District Councils whenever there is something that requires such a role, and to maintain a good working relationship with local borough and district councillors
- 06** To play an active part in the work of other non-statutory and voluntary bodies that contribute to the life of all the communities in the civil parish of Shevington and the surrounding district, particularly to take part in the work of the local Township Forum
- 07** To inform, and urge action from other bodies who might find the results of the Plan worth knowing, e.g. Greater Manchester Police Authority and local Chambers of Commerce
- 08** To become an effective local advocate and educator for and on environmental issues; there would be no need for litter clearances daily if everyone disposed of their rubbish in a responsible manner
- 09** To consult regularly with the residents of the communities that make up the civil parish of Shevington and to keep them informed about progress as well as seeking their opinion about new and/or required initiatives

07.2 WORK FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

Immediate and ongoing

- 01** Ensuring a clean local environment by maintaining the joint Parish and Borough Council cleaning of pavements and public areas, and by publicising the volume of distaste for littering and the thoughtlessness of dog owners who do not clean up after their pets
- 02** Providing and maintaining litter and 'doggie' bins throughout the area and increasing their number as demand indicates
- 03** Carrying on the seasonal planting in the decorative tubs near shops and at Gathurst Station, and seeking to 'adopt' Appley Bridge Station as well
- 04** Ensuring that trees removed from open spaces are replaced with suitable varieties, and that opportunities to plant trees along through routes – where they can enhance the local environment and not cause danger to road and pavement users – are taken
- 05** Maintaining the open spaces for which the Parish Council is responsible to the highest standard possible, and encouraging the increased use of the Bowling Green at Forest Fold
- 06** Maintaining and, where possible, upgrading the network of 14 miles of public footpaths that extend across the civil parish
- 07** Publicising the work of those statutory and voluntary organisations who can help alleviate loneliness and isolation

07.2 WORK FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

Medium Term Actions

- 01** Improving parking provision and control
- 02** Monitoring planning control and protecting the Green Belt
- 03** Improving and expanding the provision of recreational facilities
- 04** Bringing the communities on the peripheries of the civil parish into a full engagement with the work of the Parish Council, with a first step being a survey of the present state of facilities in those areas
- 05** Canvassing all likely users and providers of sheltered housing to establish the level and nature of the need and the possibility of provision of appropriate sheltered accommodation
- 06** Supporting and assisting larger scale environment improvements, e.g. the making of the Memorial Park and the Recreational Ground a richly planted, landscaped and functional formal and informal recreational space in the heart of the village; protecting and developing the other open spaces across the civil parish that can be used for non-intrusive recreational purposes
- 07** Working with Shevington and District Community Association to develop an annual programme of activities to promote cooperation and an the enjoyment of a burgeoning community spirit
- 08** Investigating the possibility of creating a Village Hall that would provide a space for a multitude of formal and informal activities – and would, incidentally, offer a permanent home for the Parish Council
- 09** Undertaking an ongoing survey of the pavements in the civil parish and lobbying the local authority to maintain an ongoing programme of repair and upgrading

07.2 WORK FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

Long Term Actions

This is the most challenging of the aims that the Parish Council must articulate because of the timescale involved. Many respondents, when asked what they hoped for in fifteen years time said that they'd be pleased to be alive – it's an understandable wish! It stands alongside the significant number who wished that Shevington could be as it was twenty, thirty, forty years ago; it could be argued that that is an impossible dream, but it does have kernel of worth that can give substance to the long-term task for the Parish Council.

Nevertheless, impossible wishes should not be dismissed or abandoned; we all want happiness, communal and personal safety, we all want to live in a place that is a pleasure to return to, that offers opportunities to all who live here to make their lives fulfilling and fulfilled. To strive for all of these things should be possible – and it certainly is worthwhile.

The Parish Plan Survey has given the members of the council a very clear idea of both the specific desires and dislikes of respondents, and the general principles that need to be respected. In the long-term the civil parish of Shevington and the communities that make it up need to feel that they do have their needs responded to, and their identities recognised and celebrated; the communities need to preserve their sense of being part of what must remain as a village, where the centre is improved and a sense of order and tidiness re-established. One of the best examples of the kind of community spirit that was so often extolled in the questionnaire is the annual Remembrance Sunday service in the Memorial Garden in front of the War Memorial, but that is the only event that currently brings the communities of the village together. There need to be more, but ones that celebrate the life of the community.

The long-term aim for the Parish Council must be to promote and encourage that community spirit.

