

Shevington Parish Council

Clerk's Report to the Council Meeting of 22 January 2020

Christmas Decorations

At the time of writing most of the decorations have been removed. Only the wraparound lights in Appley Bridge and Shevington Moor and the Harris fencing remain in place. The latter is due to be removed this week. Soon after my last report the tree in the centre of Shevington began to lean again and the star once again became attached to the small branches immediately above it.

Wigan Council's Street Lighting operatives refused to come out again to the tree (citing low resources) and, having been presented by the supplier with every reason imaginable as to why it kept leaning, I contacted a local tree surgeon who had on a previous occasion fitted the tree at that location and asked him to see if there was anything that could be done. He detached the star and pruned back the small branches. He also straightened the tree as much as he could and added fillers to the interior length of the tree pit which helped to keep it more upright. The whole process did not take him very long and he did not charge for the service.

There were several other issues with this year's tree order. We ordered three 18ft and one 15ft trees, all of which should have been Nordmans. Only two of the trees fitted were Nordmans – the other two were Spruces. The one at Booth's in Appley Bridge was exactly what we had asked for and a good shape. The tree at Shevington Moor was a Nordman and a reasonably good shape, but was at most 12ft tall – not 15ft, as per order. The one at Crooke Village was the correct height, but was a Spruce. It also appeared to have some small branches missing near the top crown. All of these three were sturdy, well-fitted and there were no issues with leaning.

The one in Shevington was also a Spruce. It was the correct height, but certainly not sturdy – it looked positively undernourished – and it kept leaning. The supplier we used was the same one we have used now for eight years. When challenged about this he used every reason possible, including the size of the tree pit, which is the same size as the other three tree pits. This is not the first time that there have been issues with the tree fitted at this location. On more than one occasion they have fitted a tree that has been flattened, but they have always returned on request and fitted a good tree. This season I received a message that the fitting of the trees was being delayed because one of them was badly damaged and needed to be replaced. They did not say which one, but, following our experiences, that is not too difficult to guess.

Christmas Shop-Front Competition

The awards were presented to the winners by the Chairman, who was accompanied by the judge, on Friday, 17 January.

Vicarage Lane Fields Developments

I have informed that the building contractor will now only be on site by the end of this month.

Letter from NALC Chairman

Attached is a letter from the Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils. It arrived after the meeting in December.

Grit Bin in Parish Council Car Park

The grit bin in the car park in Gathurst Lane that was found during the Annual Inspection of Property to be damaged has been removed and disposed of.

Refurbishment of Car Park Notice Boards

This work, which entailed the replacement of the backs of three notice boards and repainting has been carried out.

Message from Wigan Borough In Bloom Co-ordinator

The Wigan in Bloom Co-ordinator has written:

'It is with regret that I tell you that I leave the council on 21st February.'

There are a number of changes around the Wigan Borough in Bloom role and it will no longer be one persons' responsibility. Each of the Community Capacity Officers within the Deal for Communities Team will support and guide groups that fall within their area. I've attached a map for your information so you can see who your officer is. There may be some changes once I leave as there will obviously be a vacant patch so any queries initially after 21st Feb should be sent through to the central Deal For Communities mailbox - thedealforcommunities@wigan.gov.uk or ring 01942 486557. You can continue to contact me up until I leave.

You can obviously contact North West In Bloom info@northwestinbloom.com. Initially Julie will probably respond to your query, but Bill or Bernard are in the office on and off as well so someone will get back to you if you leave a phone number. Their website is always being updated, but anything you need should be on there - www.northwestinbloom.com. Or you can use the good old fashioned method of ringing them 01995 642101. I've spoken with Bernard and they are keen to continue the relationship with Wigan groups so the help is there if you need it. Some of you went to the co-ordinators meeting last year at Myerscough College. I've not heard anything yet if they are repeating this, but if you are interested it may be worthwhile dropping them a line.

I think I gave all the spare wildflower seeds, pens, badges and 2019 portfolios to Boroughwide Community Network so if you need any give Phil and Marion a shout. They are also on hand to help with any issues around portfolios info@bwcn.org.uk. They are not in the office every day, but they will get back to you when they pick up your email. I think it only fair to point out that they are moving offices at the moment, but by the time I leave they should be settled in their new home. I will be meeting with them shortly so hopefully will be able to send some info out about the feedback session that we are planning. Hopefully diaries will allow this to be before I leave.

I need to emphasise that the decision to leave is purely my own and there is no redundancy situation. It was an incredibly hard decision to make, but I feel the right one. My plans up to now are to get more involved with Britain in Bloom North West and RHS Bridgewater. I will continue to be a judge this summer, so who knows, I may be back sooner than you think!! I will definitely see some of you at the awards ceremony in Southport later this year so look forward to catching up.

Can I thank you all for being absolute stars, your commitment and dedication is outstanding. You are the only reason I stayed in this job so long as you made it so enjoyable and you have all been a pleasure to deal with. Good luck in the future.

Now that's all the mushy stuff over with, don't forget that you still need to send me information for the Council's portfolio. I don't know who will be writing this, but so I don't get called rotten when I've left I want to try and get it as far as I can. I'll send another email with a request for information as I'm aware that this one is long enough.'

K.M.P. 18.01.20