

**Shevington Parish Council
Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting
20 March 2019**

Good evening everybody. Welcome to this Annual Parish Meeting. It's good to see you all here! Thank you for coming. This occasion is an opportunity for us - the Parish Council to explain ourselves to you - the residents. Many people in the village either confuse us with the Parish Church Council or don't know why we exist at all!

So let's take a look at what we have done over the last 12 months.

This time last year leases had finally been signed off for the allotments at Vicarage Lane ... and, as a result, on April 5 an opening ceremony took place. Wigan Councillor Chris Ready cut the red ribbon. Councillor Ready is a very nice man, but then I thought just because he is a nice man doesn't mean he has the right to have all the red ribbon to himself. So I brought my own pair of ribbon cutters along and the allotments were officially open by Chris Ready and Ira Whiteley.

It was a day of terrible weather! But allotmenters are made of tough stuff and so a jolly assortment of wellies and wheelbarrows, children, mums and dads and grandparents with coloured umbrellas celebrated the opening with hot bacon barm, sausage rolls and chocolate cake while the rain poured down.

It has been five years of hard work and frustration to get to this stage and particular thanks should go to Andy Moakes and Eileen Longmore and all members of the Gardening Club who have worked together to make this happen. The allotments are now well and truly established.

The leaders of the rugby and football group have similarly worked hard. The fields there will soon be ready to play on ...AND Planning permission has been granted for changing rooms and a community room. Grant Funding is being sought for the building and we wish Steve Bates and his team all the best.

A less positive note! You may be aware that the Parish Council received a gift of 300 trees and shrubs free of charge from the Woodland Trust. These were intended to increase the biodiversity of the area around the Vicarage Lane development. Everybody was delighted. 80 people turned out on a November morning to plant Wild Rose and honeysuckle and hazel and other attractive species. Representatives of many village organisations came to help - including some young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award - with the planting. Do you know what happened to that gift of shrubs and young trees? they were stolen!!! .. very few, if any, remain. A sad reflection on some aspects of our society. But our thanks go to the 80 people who showed positive community spirit and turned out to support us.

Our Park

The issue of our Memorial Park and the long term problem of flooding has naturally been of concern for the PC for some time.

The Park needs drainage but also needs refurbishment of pathways, new play equipment and a new play surface.

Appendix B

The park is our park. It belongs to us here in Shevington. Unlike Whiteacre and Stockley Parks, our Memorial Park receives no input from Wigan Council. It is the responsibility of us the residents of Shevington and it is our problem!

The Parish Council came up with a plan of action based on drainage, healthy living and heritage. It was presented at the village fete last June. The result was that over 300 signatures of approval were collected that day. But, even more importantly, a group of enthusiastic young and older residents came together to form the Friends of Shevington Memorial Park – the FSMP. They are amazing and, since September, they have done a great deal of fund raising and public consultation to raise awareness. In many of our shops you will find collection boxes for the park project. Whenever you have any spare change please use the Friends of Shevington Memorial Park boxes.

The Parish Council too have made an important move forward. A comprehensive drainage plan has been drawn up and costings have been sought for a drainage system to once and for all solve this problem! The cost: £90,000 -£100,000!!! That's all !

How do we meet such a cost?!

Well we have made a start. The Parish Council have pledged £20,000 plus the drainage plan which cost nearly £4,000.

We cannot go to Wigan Council, because the Park belongs to us. So we have recently drawn up a bid to the Heritage Lottery. The Community Fund and the War Memorial Fund are other bodies we will apply to.

Commemorations

2018 was a very special year. It completed 5 years of commemoration of the terrible events of World War One.

You will have seen the replica Tommy. I am sure you will agree it was a fitting and poignant symbol of the lives lost between 1914-18. The Tommy was purchased by public, private and Parish Council donations. It has been displayed at all public venues, schools, libraries, etc and was the focus of a great deal of public appreciation. It has been a very tangible reminder of the thousands who died in that terrible war. The PC would like to thank Cllr Chris Horridge who personally committed to transferring the replica Tommy from venue to venue and generally making sure it was safely installed at every point along the route.

Also this year large commemorative poppies were made available by the British Legion as a special symbol of remembrance. The PC contributed to the cost of 230 poppies. These were attached to lamp posts throughout the Parish. They were also much appreciated by residents I would like, on behalf of the Parish Council, to thank the caretaker who had the task of climbing a ladder 230 times to attach them. It was not an easy job! Then there was the additional task of dismantling them ! Not a small task, so thank you On November 11th we estimate that 800 to 1000 people attended the Remembrance Day Service! This time we were treated to a particularly poignant and uplifting element to the end of the service. The Scouts' drummers suddenly surrounded the War Memorial and gave a stirring rendering of 'beating the retreat'. It was a stirring end to 5 years of Special Remembrance.

Appendix B

Christmas Decorations

We really hope you enjoyed seeing the jolly Christmas lights brought to you by the Parish Council with contribution from District Councillors. We received lots of positive comments. However there is always a problem with such innovations to the centre of Shevington. The outcry is “...why can't we have those in Appley Bridge/ Shevington Moor / Crooke...why is it always the centre of Shevington? We pay the Precept too.” That, of course, is a very fair complaint. Honestly, we do try to be fair and to find a balance!!! In an effort to find suitable decorations for other areas of the Parish we have consulted Wigan engineers about further installations.

However, the engineers inform us that the lamp posts in Apply Bridge, in Shevington Moor and in Crook are simply not strong enough to take these motifs. We are seeking more imaginative ways of adding decorations to parts of the Parish. Meanwhile, we understand your pain and we hope you will bear with us.

The Christmas Shop Front Competition was very successful again this year. Pam Powell, who was our judge this year, found it very hard to choose first, second and third among the artistic displays and persuaded us to hand out a number awards of special merit in addition! Many thanks to Pam for her enthusiastic help in the Competition. £100 was donated by the Parish Council to Wigan Hospice as a result.

In the New Year we received news about the development of the school site. It will in time become an Extra Care facility, providing care in a safe environment for vulnerable people and the elderly. People from Shevington will receive priority.

This coming year the Parish Council will concentrate on findings solution to our Park flooding problems. We will look also into more imaginative solutions for distribution of Christmas decorations around the Parish.

We will continue to monitor the development of the school site and communicate with Wigan Council.

We will co-operate with the Vicarage Lane developments and help where we can. We will begin to seek the best way forward for our Parish Council acquired Woodland so that this can become a real community asset.

Thanks should go to our 'in Bloom' groups who work so hard and have brought so much pleasure to so many residents! Eileen Longmore's vegetable plots and fruit trees at Forest Fold are proving a popular and fruitful project. Shevington In Bloom gained Gold again and not in the village category either but in the Town category ...and in Bloom also helped the Parish Council to gain a gold award this time for our small Memorial Park. Thanks to them and to all those groups who work in many different ways to make Shevington a better place to live.

I would like also to thank the Clerk who really does go the extra mile in keeping Parish matters on track and our other employees too for their hard work and commitment.

Thank you again

Ira Whiteley
Chairman (Shevington Parish Council)