

Shevington Parish Council

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

Cancelled and Delayed Events Due to the Covid-19 Crisis

The following were among local events – which were planned to take place over the Summer – to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis: Appley Bridge Summer Festival and Duck Race, most of Wigan's 75th Anniversary of VE Day celebrations and services, Shevington Fete, RHS 'In Bloom' competitions, Greater Manchester Walking Festival 2020 and Elnup Woods working parties. The Great British Spring Clean was delayed and is now planned for September.

75th Anniversary of VE Day Celebrations

In early May the residents of many streets in the Parish held socially distanced street parties. They were encouraged to do so by both central government and Wigan Council. The weather was glorious and the events helped to lift people's spirits.

Memorial Park Sample Flag Re-Laying

Fir Tree Fishery CIC have not got back to me to let me know the position with respect to re-laying a small sample stretch of the flagged footpath in Memorial Park. However, in mid-March Cllr C Horridge had to carry out a small repair to a flag that was being lifted by the roots of a neighbouring tree.

Parish Council Newsletter

The March edition of the newsletter did not go to print, as most events that were being advertised in it had been cancelled and Local Life contacted me to let me know that they would not be publishing and distributing until further notice. This also affected the May and July editions.

Forest Fold Site

The allotments were able to function as normal, but we did not provide a skip in the Spring, as providing one would have meant that it would have to have been supervised while being filled. That meant the Caretaker would have had to have been provided with adequate PPE that was impossible to procure because the NHS had priority.

The new Tenants Association would like to get started, but several tenants have not yet paid their rent, thereby delaying progress.

The water on the site was turned on by the Caretaker at all points just before lockdown, except on the main allotments site. It did not happen there initially because the tap at the mains snapped. The plumber attended, but was not able to carry out a repair because he could not obtain the part. Two tenants agreed to resolve the situation. They followed the plumber's advice and dug out a hole large enough to enable them to access the pipe joint and turn on the water. The plumber agreed to return once he was able to and I have just been reminded about this.

The bowling green has been closed throughout. It has been maintained throughout and has been in excellent condition – apart from during the hot spell in the Spring, when the grass turned yellow. It has now bounced back. The Green keeper has repaired the flags and loose coping (as agreed) and has even carried out minor other minor repairs free of charge.

Bowling outdoors has been allowed as a form of exercise for some time, but the guidance (based on government guidelines) produced by the Crown Green Bowling Association meant that the bowling green could only be used if a group of volunteers were willing to supervise the activities. There were plenty who were willing to pay their fees and bowl, but no one offered to organise and supervise play, so it has remained closed. Competitive matches have not, as far as I am aware, been able to resume. This would involve the use of indoor facilities and sterilising equipment during matches. As the former has not been allowed, I cannot see anything happening any time soon.

Members of Shevington and Appley Bridge in Bloom have continued to use the facilities at Forest Fold, where they grow plants in the greenhouse, and have been planting them and tending them in the usual locations, albeit to a lesser extent than most years, as many of the volunteers have been shielding.

Vicarage Lane Fields Developments

The building contractor has been working on site throughout most of lock-down, although at times he has had to pause work because of shortages in materials. However, work is progressing quite well and is on target to finish on time.

Memorial Park Drainage

Following the news that the grant application to the HLF had been paused the consultants and the successful contractor were informed that the start of work would have to be delayed until next year. The consultant advised that both they and the contractor would have the right to increase their prices, if they thought it was necessary. The contractor has confirmed that they are available to carry out the work in 2021.

Memorial Park Play Area

The play area has been closed throughout the lockdown. There have been several issues with people using it illicitly, but these have been dealt with by both Wigan Council and, on one occasion, the Police. Wigan Council are gradually opening up the play areas they own or manage, with those where there are staff or volunteers on standby to sanitise equipment periodically during the day being given priority.

FOI Request

I was asked to submit an FOI request to Wigan Council to try to find out why the alterations to the z-bends in Wigan Road that were proposed several years ago did not go ahead. This was duly submitted. I received an acknowledgement, which was followed up by a reply telling me that the request was being sent to the appropriate department and I should hear within the usual 20 working days. However, I was also told that, due to the Covid crisis,, many staff had been re-deployed or were on leave of absence, and that the ICO had lifted restrictions on FOI request deadlines. In view of this it might be 3-5 months before we would receive a reply. We are still waiting.

K.M.P. 21.07.20