

**Minutes of Shevington Parish Council Meeting
Held Wednesday 22 July 2020
7:30pm – Virtual Meeting**

Present: Councillor I Whiteley (*Chairman*), Cllrs C Horridge, J Higham, J Whiteley, M Grimes, W McKnight and V Galligan
Dist Cllrs M Whitham and J Brown
No members of the public were present

Officer in Attendance: Mrs K Pilkington (Clerk)

In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman at the beginning of the meeting the Council agreed that Cllr M Grimes should take the Chair.

227 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs J Ball and M Crosby

228 Declaration of Interests

None

Standing Orders were suspended.

229 Matters Introduced by Members of the Public

None

230 District Councillors' Reports

Dist Cllr M Whitham reported:

Covid-19 Crisis

Dist Cllr Paul Collins had circulated regular updates on progress throughout the Borough during lockdown. Many Wigan Council staff had been re-deployed so that vital services could continue. Of the 52 care homes in the Borough 50 were now virus-free.

Throughout lockdown there had been many issues in relation to data sharing by central government. Thanks to the pressure exerted by the country's senior regional politicians the LA were now receiving more timely data. Local authorities would soon have powers to introduce small local lockdowns, if localised increases in infection rates made it necessary.

Dist Cllr Whitham commended the fantastic work that had been carried out by volunteers in the area. There was much still to do. Information had recently been received about a large increase in the number of people in the ward in receipt of universal credit.

Traffic & Road Issues

During lockdown the ward councillors had received many enquiries and complaints in relation to speeding traffic and other road issues. Yellow lines should have been introduced along the stretch of Wilton Road between Shevington Lane and Lyndon Avenue, but this had not happened. Dist Cllr Whitham would chase it up. A consultation about the possibility of introducing a zebra crossing in Old Lane was currently in progress.

TechMates

TechMates was a digital mentor service run by Wigan Council's volunteers and council staff. It was introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent isolation for the Borough's most vulnerable residents. Personnel provided one-to-one basic digital support over the telephone to those residents who were unable to leave their homes. The service helped these residents to use digital technologies such as smartphones, tablets, computers or laptops and several had benefitted from the service locally.

Brighter Borough Funding

Funding continued to be available and the ward councillors were particularly pleased to have used some of it to support our community venues as they planned to re-open. Local voluntary and community groups were to be encouraged to get in touch if they would benefit by applying for specifics such as new equipment or a stock of extra cleaning supplies.

Cllr W McKnight and Cllrs I and J Whiteley joined the meeting.

Dist Cllr J Brown reported:

Covid-19 Crisis

The Community Watch volunteers had done a wonderful job throughout lockdown. A Health & Wellbeing Market due to have been held on the coming Friday had been postponed because holding events had not been deemed safe in the present climate. However, Wigan Council staff would still be handing out information packs to residents outside the library and were willing to include information in them from community groups. If they wished to do this they should contact Lynne Prescott.

Shevington Food Pantry

This was due to be opening in the near future.

Illegal Parking and Speeding

Many emails had been received from residents about people parking illegally and speeding in the area. Residents were encouraged to ring Greater Manchester Police on 101 to report issues. Alternatively they could report these matters on GMP's website. The Police also suggested using speed reduction equipment to capture vehicles speeding along specific roads. If Police found vehicles parked illegally and causing an obstruction, they could issue penalty notices, but they preferred to speak to the owners first. If a vehicle was discovered parked partly on a pavement where there was a yellow line, the owner of the vehicle could be prosecuted and fined.

Pedestrian Crossing

The ward councillors were considering using Brighter Borough funding to contribute to the cost of the introduction of a pedestrian crossing in Old Lane.

Horses Along Footpath

Horses had been observed using the footpath from Old Lane to Central Drive. This had caused residents great concern and a request had been submitted for signage asking riders not to use it to be erected.

East Quarry

Residents were very worried by the activities of the owner. He has to have two licences in place simultaneously – one for abstraction and one for discharge. So far he has only submitted one application and it could not be considered on its own. The timeline for the work involved in bringing his plans to fruition was such that it would take a couple of decades to achieve his goal. He needed many permissions to proceed legally and many investigations had to be carried out as part of the process. It was observed that opposition to the owners plans was enormous and was more likely to be successful, if all took the same approach.

Calico Brook Culvert

The culvert was not working properly and this was causing issues such as blockages, possibly leading to flooding. However, no one would admit to ownership of the culvert and, therefore, to the responsibility for its repair.

Road at the Rear of Shops in Gathurst Lane

During the lockdown four vehicles that had been left there illegally had to be removed by the Environmental Protection Officer. This was the third time that this action had had to be taken in recent years. Many of the businesses had served the community well during the lockdown and had provided a lifeline to older residents who were unable to leave the village. The community needed to show its support by arranging for the repair work on the road to be carried out as soon as possible. The road was now in such poor condition that the Village Kitchen had been unable to drive their supply van along it. This would be a future agenda item.

Cllr I Whiteley took the Chair

The Great British Clean Up

The Clean Up had been delayed to September. Whether it would go ahead had yet to be confirmed.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

Dist Cllr J Brown left the meeting.

231 Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Council (26 February 2020)

The previously circulated Minutes were considered.

Amendment:

Cllr M Grimes had been recorded as being absent and having tendered his apologies. He reported that he had been present at the meeting and had not tendered his apologies.

Resolved: That, subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the last Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council, held on 26 February 2020, were approved as a true and correct record.

232 Chairman's Report

Covid-19 Lockdown

The Chairman began by thanking all the volunteers in the Parish who worked very hard throughout the Covid-19 lockdown to help those in need.

Funeral of the Late Mrs V Maloney

She reported that in early April she and Cllr J Whiteley had attended the funeral of the Late Mrs Veronica Maloney, who had served as a parish councillor for West Ward for more than twenty years. A minute's silence would be held in her memory at the beginning of the next Council meeting.

233 Reports from Councillors

Replies from Wigan Council Officers to Enquiries

A member reported that the Parish Council were still receiving complaints from a resident about the lack of response from Wigan Council officers to enquiries he had submitted to them. He had also understood from the Clerk that she had not received replies to some of the enquiries she had submitted to Wigan Council officers. Another member informed the Council that he had been told by sources at Wigan Council that during the lockdown many officers working in services that were deemed non-essential had been re-deployed to services deemed essential and had not been dealing with enquiries in relation to matters deemed non-essential.

Shevington Food Bank & Pantry

At the beginning of lockdown a member was contacted by Lynne Prescott (the North Wigan footprint manager) who had been tasked by Wigan Council to set up a Community Hub team to provide lockdown services in Shevington. The member was invited to get involved in creating a voluntary shopping service. About 20 people used the service – some once or twice – others throughout the lockdown period. The need for the service was now easing off, as it had become easier to access shops.

At the same time a Food Bank was set up – operating simultaneously at Shevington Youth Club and at St Anne's Parish Centre. The feedback provided was that people found it useful, because some had already been struggling before the lockdown. Lockdown for some had meant that they had either lost their jobs or been furloughed. Consequently, their income had been reduced and they had often had to go on to universal credit.

The outcome of all this had been that, after liaison with Fur Clemt, it had been agreed to set up an outlet for them. The outlet would be based at St Anne's Parish Centre and would be open for a couple of hours twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For a small subscription people could join for year and buy discounted food. In general they would be able to buy 20 items for £5 on each visit. It would be environmentally friendly and would reduce the need for people to go out of Shevington to shop.

234 Reports from Representatives

Shevington & District Community Association

The Community Association had not met since the beginning of lockdown.

Crooke Village Residents' Association

The CVRA had met virtually.

Shevington Youth Club

It was reported that the Youth Club had been closed to all throughout the lockdown, with the exception of the Food Bank. The owner of the Gym had provided certain exercise opportunities outside. Risk assessments having been carried out, it had been accepted by the LA as a venue for a holiday club for vulnerable children. It was being

made Covid-secure and would be opening for this purpose on 11 August. It would have to be sanitised after each session.

Shevington Recreation Ground Trustees

There had been no meeting.

'in Bloom' Groups

An update on the activities of the groups had been provided in the Clerk's report.

Patient Participation Group

The Doctors' Surgery was due to re-open for face-to-face consultations on 3 August.

Audit, Governance & Standards Committee

The representative reported that he would not be able to join the virtual meeting of the Committee the following evening because he was on an external email address. The LA were hoping that the issue might have been resolved by September.

Shevington Rugby & Football Clubs

There was no report.

Vicarage Lane Fields Developments

A member who had not been able to join the meeting had sent a message reminding the Council that the tree line over the footpaths and the drainage issues for the allotments needed to be addressed.

Friends of Shevington Memorial Park

The Chairman reported that the Covid-19 crisis had meant that the HLF had terminated consideration of all submitted applications and had closed for all new applications for the time being. A new application could be submitted in October, but it would have to be a different application.

Dist Cllr M Whitham left the meeting.

235 Draft Minutes of the Policy & General Purposes & Finance Committee Meetings (4 March 2020)

The draft minutes of the Policy & General Purposes & Finance Committee meetings on 4 March 2020 were received.

236 Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (11 March 2020)

The draft minutes of the Annual Parish meeting on 11 March 2020 were received.

237 Annual Parish Walk

Arrangements for the Annual Parish Walk were discussed. The Council were informed that the route was being prepared by Alan Mohring and would include the path from Vicarage Lane to Crooke Village. There was uncertainty about whether refreshments would be provided.

Resolved:

- The Annual Parish Walk would take place on August Bank Holiday Monday, starting at 10am from Shevington Methodist Church and ending there in the early afternoon.
- Cllr J Whiteley would act as Steward and carry the First Aid kit, sanitiser and PPE.
- Covid-19 precautions would be undertaken and social distancing would be observed.
- Walkers would be reminded of the guidance at the start of the Walk and advice would be carried on the poster.
- Cllr J Whiteley would carry out the risk assessment.
- A collection would be taken up for Shevington Community Pantry.

238 Meeting with Wigan Council Officers

Senior Wigan Council officers had offered each of their parish councils the opportunity to meet with them four times a year. For the time being the meetings would be virtual using the 'Teams' platform. At present the following dates had been set:

20 October 2020 – 3pm

18 January 2021 – 2pm

Members considered the offer.

Resolved: The Council agreed to try the offer out for a year.

239 East Quarry Issues

Issues that were giving residents concern had recently arisen at East Quarry because the owner had begun draining the quarry into Calico Brook despite not having received permission to do this. As a result water from Calico Brook had been overflowing onto associated footpaths. The owner's activities had been reported to the Environment Agency, who had investigated and had put a halt on the activities, which the owner had claimed to be accidental.

Draining of the quarry would pose serious issues for the locality in terms of such things as atmospheric and water pollution. Once drained, it was estimated that it would take approximately 15 years to fill with solid matter and the owner was required to carry out an impact assessment before he submitted an application to drain the quarry. The Environment Agency would not consider anything to do with the application until he had submitted it.

Resolved: A letter raising concerns about the owner's activities and objecting to the drainage of the quarry would be prepared and sent to Lancashire County Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, the Environment Agency, Wigan Council, Lisa Nandy MP and Rosie Cooper MP.

Some residents supported the draining of the quarry because it posed a danger to young people who swam in it in hot weather. Parts of the quarry were of scientific interest, but machinery had been left at the bottom when the quarry was flooded and this also presented a danger to swimmers. It was suggested that feedback from residents on the issues should be requested via the newsletter, social media and the website.

Legal powers were available to force the owner to properly secure the site to prevent people from using it. Residents thought that the fencing needed to be improved and

had generally been up in arms about what was happening at the quarry during the hot weather in the Spring.

There had for many years been rumours that the owner was planning to build houses on the site once the quarry had been drained and filled in.

Resolved: A letter would be sent to Wrightington Parish Council to seek clarification about the situation and what their plans were. Cllr Katie Jukes of Wrightington PC would be invited to attend a future meeting to provide the Council with an update.

240 Tree Issues in Memorial Park

Information about the issues being caused by a tree in Memorial Park to a neighbouring property and an advisory from the LA's Trees & Woodlands Officer were considered.

Resolved: It was agreed that the Council would look at the tree during the Annual Inspection of Property on 5 August. The LA's Trees & Woodlands Officer was to be invited to attend the meeting in the Park.

241 Path from Vicarage Lane to Crooke Village

Wigan Council had invited feedback from residents about the improvements that they would like to see being made to footpaths, canal towpaths, etc. So far some 50 signatures and comments had been registered with the online 'Safer Streets' survey from this area. The initiative was intended to promote cycling and walking. It was reported that there was considerable opposition to the initiative in Crooke Village, as the view was that the area already had too many cyclists. Boroughwide there had so far been 1500 responses and some money would be allocated to the project.

The footpath from Vicarage Lane to Crooke Village badly needed to be upgraded and it was agreed that the issue would be explored further.

242 September Newsletter

Resolved: The following were approved for inclusion in the September newsletter:

- (a) Precept & Budget 2020/21
- (b) VE Day Anniversary Celebrations in Shevington
- (c) Gill Rigbye's VE Day Stall
- (d) Annual Achievement Awards
- (e) The Covid-19 Crisis and its Impact on Life in the Parish, Events & Initiatives
- (f) Car Park at Woodnook Shops
- (g) Car Park at Shevington Methodist Church
- (h) East Quarry
- (i) Memorial Park and the HLF Bid
- (j) Annual Parish Walk
- (k) Standard items

Cllr M Grimes agreed to write an article on the East Quarry issues and Cllr V Galligan would write an article on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the local community.

The distribution costs of the newsletter had increased by 10% - the first increase since 2015.

Resolved: The Council approved the new distribution costs of £106.

243 New Laptop & Software

Approximately four weeks prior to this meeting the Parish Council's laptop had failed and, because, due to its age, it was no longer supported, was deemed to be beyond repair. Costings for a replacement laptop and associated software (which would also need to be replaced) were obtained and discussed with the Vice Chairman and three members. It was agreed that a replacement laptop should be ordered.

(a) Hardware

A new laptop had been ordered from the HP Store and had been delivered the previous day.

Resolved: The purchase of an HP Pavilion laptop with Windows 10 and a 3 year Care Package from the HP Store – to the value of £457.49 in total – was approved retrospectively.

Dist Cllr M Whitham left the meeting.

(b) Software

Microsoft Office packages available and their costs were considered.

Resolved: The Council approved the purchase of the Standard Microsoft Office Business package at £112.80 per user per month.

244 H&S Risk Assessments

As the Parish Council had fewer than 5 employees there was no legal requirement as far as the HSE was concerned for the Council to maintain written H&S risk assessments. However, municipal insurers insisted on written assessments being kept and reviewed regularly. If they were not maintained it could lead to cover being voided. Statements to this effect were included in the Insurance Policy Schedule and had been circulated for members' information.

The H&S risk assessments had been updated to include Covid-19 risks and were received and considered.

Resolved: The H&S risk assessments were approved. Future risk assessments would carry a scoring matrix that would alert members to issues that needed to be addressed sooner rather than later.

245 Annual Inspection of Property

Resolved: The Annual Inspection of Property would take place on Wednesday, 5 August at 6pm.

The inspection would start at Memorial Park and would then take in Vicarage Lane Fields and footpath, Stockley Park and Whiteacre Park in Shevington Moor.

246 Memorial Park Play Area ROSPA Report

The ROSPA Report on the Play Area in Memorial Park was received and discussed. Attached to the report was an appendix listing the remedial work that would be carried out by Wigan Council under the terms of the SLA and highlighting that which would incur additional expenditure.

Some members queried whether, in view of its age, the small double slide should just be removed instead of being repaired. It was agreed that the equipment would be discussed further during and after the Annual Inspection of Property.

247 Letter of Thanks to Shop-Keepers

It had been suggested by a member that the Parish Council should send a letter to those shops and businesses in the village which had remained open during lockdown. The text proposed had been circulated previously. Some members were of the view that a letter should also be sent to those shops that had been forced to close.

Resolved: One letter covering both scenarios would be prepared by Cllr J Whiteley and signed by the Chairman. It would then be forwarded to the Clerk to circulate.

248 Consultation on Code of Conduct

The National Association of Local Councils had drawn attention to the Local Government Association's consultation on an amended member code of conduct. Member parish councils were encouraged to respond to the LGA before 17 August. High standards of conduct and behaviour were of huge importance to the local (parish and town) council sector as they were needed to protect the integrity of decision making, maintain public confidence, and safeguard local democracy. In view of this NALC were also calling for further action by the government to introduce a new power for local authorities to suspend councillors for a period of up to six months, and for the Committee on Standards in Public Life to review progress on the implementation of the report's wider recommendations.

Resolved: Members agreed to all of the proposals in the Model Code of Conduct. Responses to the questions would be prepared by Cllr M Grimes and forwarded to the Clerk to circulate to members and submit to the LGA before the deadline.

249 Budget Out-Turn 2019/20

The Budget Out-Turn for 2019/20 was received and discussed.

Balance of budget left unspent at financial year end = **£32,308**
Total Balances in bank accounts on 31 March 2020 = **£97,790.**

Cheques for expenditure in March were only presented in April.

Taking the above into account, **actual** year-end balances in the bank accounts on 31 March 2020 = **£72,134**

Total Reserves at the year end stood at **£39,826**.

VAT re-claimed in August 2019 = **£3,289**

Amount of VAT outstanding to be re-claimed = **£4,417**

All outstanding invoices had been received and settled by the end of the financial year. Three of the 'Maintenance' cost centres exhibited small over-spends by the end of the year.

Resolved: The Budget Out-Turn for 2019/20 was accepted and approved.

250 Budget Rollover 2019/20 to 2020/21

The following budget rollovers were recommended for approval:

COST CENTRE	ROLLOVER AMOUNT	REASON
Clerk Salary	£23	National pay increase awarded higher than 2% extra in 2020/21 budget.
Employer's Superannuation	£165	As above.
Employer's NIC	£22	As above.
Churchyard Fund	£500	Donation committed, but not made.
Xmas Decorations	£2,564	New tree lighting will be needed to replace lights that no longer work.
Memorial Park Play Area Maintenance	£597	Commitment for gate replacement.
Plants & Planters	£908	Contribution towards 4 th quarter invoice due at the end of May.
WW1 Commemoration	£989	On-going project
Street Furniture	£980	Commitment to the purchase of new notice board.
Memorial Park Drainage	£19,688	On-going project

Resolved: The above budget rollovers were approved.

251 Income/Expenditure Account 2019/20

The Income/Expenditure Account for 2019/20 was received and discussed.

Resolved: The Income/Expenditure Account 2019/20 was approved.

252 Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2019/20

(a) Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Resolved: The Annual Governance Statement was approved.

(b) Accounting Statements 2019/20

Resolved: The Accounting Statements 2019/20 were approved.

(c) Period for the Exercise of Public Rights

Resolved: The Council agreed that the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights should run from Monday, 3 August to Monday, 14 September 2020 inclusive.

253 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was received. *See Appendix A.*

254 Financial Aid Applications

None.

255 Payments, Income & Bank Balances

The Income / Expenditure schedules for March through to July were received.
See Appendix B.

Resolved: That the Accounts be approved, the cheques signed and internet transfers made in payment, due notice being given to the bank statements exhibited.

The RFO advised that previously cheques for expenditure in a specific month were dated the 1st of the following month and were accounted for in the following month. July payments would leave the bank account on 31 July 2020 and in future payments would be set up to leave the bank account on the last day of a month. Because the Parish Council made annual returns on a Receipts/Payments basis, the 2020/21 accounts would cover 13 months of expenditure.

256 Quarterly Budget Monitoring

The budget monitoring report was received and discussed. The RFO reported that all cost centres were on line at the end of June.

£2,441 in cheques had not been presented by 30 June. The six cheques consisted of three to the GMPF, a donation to the Royal British Legion and two payments to Moss Bank Nurseries. These had been taken into account when calculating the reserves.

Resolved: The Budget Monitoring Report to the end of June was accepted.

257 Application for Internet Banking

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis online banking facilities had not been available for the type of accounts held by the Council. The crisis had caused the Council's bank to change things and, following consultation with the authorised signatories, an application for online banking was submitted. After about five weeks the application was approved by the bank. Four out of the five authorised signatories were provided with full access to the account. The fifth signatory did not have access to the internet. Hence, the June payments had all been made by internet transfer.

Following standard Guidance, instead of signing cheques, two of the authorised signatories checked and signed the invoices (as usual) and then the payments schedule to authorise the payments.

A Protocol for authorising payments online would need to be prepared and approved. This would be an agenda item at the Finance Committee meeting in September.

Resolved: The Council approved the establishment of online banking facilities retrospectively.

258 Planning Applications

- **A/20/88490/FULL – Conversion of one retail shop into two, single storey extension to rear together with dormer to front – 4 Gathurst Lane, Shevington**
The Council noted that this application for changes to the premises at Manor Pharmacy had been approved.

259 Next Meetings

5 August (Annual Inspection of Property); 26 August (Council)

The Council agreed that the Council meeting on 26 August would be held virtually.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Resolved: That, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

There were no members of the public present.

260 Pest Control Contract

The proposal for the renewal of the Pest Control contract for Forest Fold Allotments was considered.

Resolved: The Council approved the renewal of the contract for 2020-21 – to the value of £327.54 - with Wigan Council's Pest Control unit.

261 Play Area SLA

The SLA for the play area in Memorial Park was discussed. It was observed that the ROSPA report had provided evidence that Wigan Council's team had not been meeting their obligations during the Covid-19 crisis.

Resolved: The Council approved the Memorial Park Play Area SLA for 2020/21 – to the value of £759.17 – with Wigan Council retrospectively.

A letter would be sent to the Play Area unit to raise concerns about the fact that the weekly inspections were apparently not being carried out properly.

262 Plants & Planters Contract

Resolved: The Plants & Planters contract – to the value of £6,100 – was awarded retrospectively to Moss Bank Nurseries.

263 Forest Fold Grounds Maintenance Contract

Resolved: The Forest Fold Grounds Maintenance contract – to the value of £1,835 – was awarded to Envirocare Maintenance Solutions Ltd.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the Meeting at 10:10 pm.

Chairman