

**Clerk's Report
Shevington Annual Parish Meeting
Held 20 March 2024
7 pm The Community Centre at Vicarage Lane Fields**

Good Evening, everyone, and welcome. The aim of my report is to share with you an overview of the work of the Parish Council over the past year.

By last year we had come a long way since May 2021, when, because of Covid restrictions, the Annual Parish Meeting was socially distanced and took place outside in Memorial Park, with everyone bringing their own chairs and a PA system being the order of the evening. This is 2024 and having to risk assess events in line with Covid is no longer a legal requirement.

Projects

Over the past year work on our projects has continued to develop.

The football and rugby pitches at Vicarage Lane Fields are all well used. During the Spring the two sporting seasons overlap. This created car parking issues in 2021 and battles came close to erupting on a number of occasions between the residents of properties in the immediate vicinity of the Fields and the sports clubs, who manage the activities on the pitches.

Mediation between the parties concerned in 2021 resulted in the implementation of a traffic management plan, which, on the whole, seems to have been working. Plans for enlarging the car park to double its original capacity have come to fruition.

The community centre we are in was completed in 2021 and now has a management committee. It is available for hire for indoor activities.

The cultivation of allotments at both the Vicarage Lane Fields and Forest Fold sites continues to see a great deal of healthy activity. The Tenants' Associations at both sites are flourishing. They are communicating with each other and have started holding joint social activities and exchanging views. On Saturday, 13 April they will be holding the first ever Spring Show in conjunction with Shevington Garden Club. 2024 marks the fortieth anniversaries of the founding of both the Garden Club and the Forest Fold Allotments.

The greenkeeper, the Parish caretakers, the grounds maintenance team and members of the Shevington Village Bowling Club are now in the process of getting the bowling green site at Forest Fold ready for opening for the new season at the beginning of next month. After many years absence the green supports have been re-instated by the volunteer workforce from the Bowling Club. Flowers have been planted along the borders, and wooden buildings have been painted.

Last Summer a small team from the SVBC worked with Millbrook Community Primary School to provide pupils at the school with a crown green bowling experience. The pupils enjoyed this so much that over the Winter months they designed artwork which they have recently introduced both on the inside and on the outside of the Bowling Club pavilion. The SVBC hope in future to be able to extend this provision to other local schools.

Work on accessing funds to improve the drainage and develop Memorial Park continues. The condition of the old play equipment in the enclosures was assessed in 2023 and over the Summer four of the older items were replaced with new ones. The largely unpopular sand surface continues to be in use, but the newly re-formed Friends of Shevington Memorial Park have committed themselves to raising funds for a wetpour surface to replace it. They launched their appeal in September by holding a successful Family Fun Day in the park on the day that the new play equipment was officially opened when Mrs Ira Whiteley and Mrs Debbie Davies jointly cut the ribbon.

Appendix A

In the Autumn of 2023 the flags in the Memorial Garden were re-laid and we are now exploring possibilities with regard to sourcing funding for the repair of the gravel footpath..

Throughout the past year the Council have:

- continued to fund the general maintenance of Shevington Recreation Ground;
- continued to maintain Shevington Memorial Park & Garden;
- continued to maintain the bowling green and other elements at Forest Fold;
- provided community Christmas trees (together with lights) in the centre of Shevington village, on Crooke Village green, in the centre of Appley Bridge and in Shevington Moor;
- provided Christmas motifs for the lamp standards for the shopping area between the two mini-roundabouts in Gathurst Lane and Christmas garlands for lamp posts in Appley Bridge and Shevington Moor;
- continued to support all the activities of 'In Bloom' groups by funding the maintenance of some 45 planters, which are located in all areas of the Parish, and also paying for the plants for some of the flower beds in several locations in the Parish and the watering of most of the planters and flower beds during the Summer months;
- maintained its provision of litter bins in the green spaces around the Parish.

We propose to continue with all of the above.

Our gratitude goes to the members of all 'in Bloom' groups, who did not submit competition entries last year, but continued to maintain all of their projects to their usual very high standard.

Congratulations must go to the small group of enterprising residents of Shevington Vale who formed a 'Friends of Stockley Park' group and in a short space of time have made huge progress towards introducing improvements to the park. The Parish Council awarded the group with a grant, which has been used to buy and plant a living Christmas tree for the area.

Support for Local Organisations and Other Bodies

Elected members have continued to represent the Parish Council

- on the Youth Club management committee,
- as Trustees of Shevington Recreation Ground and
- at meetings of Shevington & District Community Association.

The Council have also maintained links with Crooke Village Residents Association and Appley Bridge Community Association.

Civic Occasions

Formal Remembrance Sunday services took place on 12 November 2023, and our Chairman, Cllr Bill McKnight, laid a wreath on behalf of residents at Shevington Memorial, while Cllr Mike Grimes did the same at the Memorial at Appley Bridge. Issues experienced in 2022 with the Parish Council's PA system were resolved by hiring a PA system and a sound technician from a local company. In the days immediately prior to Remembrance Sunday small services were led and wreaths were laid by parish councillors and co-opted Committee members at other locations.

While the weather on Remembrance Sunday was cold and bleak, ceremonies arranged for the 10th and 11th – on the other hand – experienced good weather. Cllrs Jess Diggle and Mike Grimes attended the ceremony on 10 November organised by Shevington Vale Community Primary School in Shevington Vale, where Cllr Diggle laid a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council.

On Saturday, 11 November Cllrs John Whiteley, Helen Thompson and Mike Crosby led the ceremony and laid a wreath at Whiteacre Park in Shevington Moor, Mr Charlie Neve led the ceremony and laid a wreath at Crooke Village and Cllr Chris Horridge led a short ceremony at the War Memorial at Shevington.

Appendix A

Supporting Local Businesses

The 'Christmas Shop Front' competition was held for the sixteenth year running. The winner in 2023 was Appley Blossom, who nominated Woodlands Animal Sanctuary of Ormskirk as their chosen Charity. Thanks go to Cllr Helen Thompson for judging the competition.

Planning Matters

The Council have continued to screen planning applications and make comments, as appropriate, commenting on several contentious applications in both Shevington Vale and Shevington Moor.

Communication

The Parish Council engages with residents in a number of different ways: via its websites, notice boards, its newsletter - a bi-monthly publication that is delivered to each home – and its Facebook page. The calendar of meetings is advertised on the websites and over the past year many have been attended by residents. In 2023 the Council once again had an information stall at Shevington Fete.

Members of the public are always welcome at meetings of both the full Council and its committees. They may speak during the first thirty minutes of the Full Council Meeting about any issues or suggestions they have.

Finance

This year, as in past years, we have included information on the Council Tax bill about the Parish Council and the work it does. We are proud to say that up to now our finances have been sound and we have been able to make ends meet, despite having kept precept increases to a bare minimum for several years. However, because inevitably things wear out and need repair, in 2020 we took the step of increasing the precept by 10%. This took us back to levels similar to those in 2010 and meant an increase to the value of the cost of a cup of coffee per year for every household.

Subsequent years have witnessed much more modest increases. The rate of inflation rose above 10% in 2022, but has been slowly falling since reaching a peak and by the end of January stood at 4%. In setting our precept for this year we have had to consider the fact that we would be facing higher costs and at the same time be mindful of all the other cost increases that residents could expect to absorb in 2024. In view of this we have only raised the precept by 4% and are looking at making savings where we can without reducing any of our services.

Public Concerns

The Parish Council is always willing to take any matters of concern seriously and works with the Community Safety Team and the GMP whenever possible to combat anti-social behaviour. It will continue to do so until all unacceptable behaviour is under control. In connection with this in 2019 the Council made a commitment to fund the Data Plan and on-going maintenance of the movable CCTV system that was installed in the centre of Shevington that year. As the past few years have witnessed frequent episodes in anti-social behaviour centred on Memorial Park, we are continuing to look into the possibility of introducing CCTV in Church Lane.

Conclusion

Over the past year Parish Councillors and co-opted Committee members have tried to work with many groups in the parish to achieve various goals – too numerous to mention. The Parish Council is always keen to support and encourage local activities.

Krystyna Pilkington
Clerk to Shevington Parish Council