

Shevington Parish Council
Clerk's Report to the Meeting of the Council – 25 September 2024

Repairs to Drain Grilles in Gathurst Lane Car Park

Both of the sinking drains have recently been repaired. Having had his quote accepted by the Council last financial year, the contractor has told me that he will not charge for the work undertaken because of the length of time it has taken to complete it.



Friends of Shevington Memorial Park

The Chair of the FSMP has written to say that they have been unsuccessful in finding additional Committee members and another Chair to take her place. In view of this they have decided to close the group once again and have recently made a donation of £2,649.72 to the Parish Council's Memorial Park Development Fund, which now stands at £18,393.

The FSMP have a number of things that they would like to put into storage (banners, collecting tins, etc) and have asked if the Parish Council have a place where these could be stored. There is space available at Forest Fold.

Marie Birchall – the outgoing Chair of the FSMP – is hoping to attend the Parish Council meeting at the end of October.

Community Ownership Fund

We are still awaiting news about the future of this central government fund.

Christmas Decorations

All orders approved by the Finance Committee have been placed. The decorative barriers for the Christmas tree at Crooke Green will be delivered in October. Before they are despatched from the warehouse they will be given a fresh coat of paint. The horizontal flat feet on each panel can be unscrewed and removed. The upright end posts can then be slotted into standard feet designed for Heras fencing. We have quite a few of these. If we need one or two more, they cost approximately £7 each.

I asked whether they hired out any taller decorative barriers and was told that they use Heras fencing if they need anything taller.

Pest Control

Wigan Council have let me know that they have recently rebaited all the bait boxes. On their visit they observed evidence of prolific use by both rats and slugs.

School Bowling Sessions

Millbrook Community Primary School are hoping to bring some children down to the bowling green for bowling sessions every Thursday afternoon from until the end of the season at the end of September. Contacts have also been made with Shevington Vale Community Primary School. They are hoping to come down on Thursday mornings until the end of the season.

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Shevington Recreation Ground Trustees

Jim Maloney, the Secretary & Treasurer to the SRGT has announced that he intends to resign as a Trustee with effect from May 2025. As he is one of the Trustees appointed by the Parish Council, we will need to identify a replacement.

PROW No.6

Towards the end of July I received an email from a resident, who raised concerns about the condition of PROW No.6. The resident stated that their understanding of footpath rights of way is that the path must be unrestricted by obstacles or overgrown plants or shrubs and the path should be in a reasonable and safe state for walking.

The resident reported that the footpath at the rear of the houses on Newgate Avenue did not meet the requirements as per Wigan Council rules and asked if anything could be done to improve access. A request was sent to Wigan Council's PROW Officer asking if arrangements could be made for the footpath to be cleared.

The PROW Officer has advised that work has now been carried out on PROW No.6 from Woodnook Road to Newgate Avenue. Work was also carried out on the section from Newgate Avenue south to Houghton Lane earlier this year.

The public footpath that runs parallel to properties on Newgate Avenue is PROW No. 4. This footpath is on the public rights of way annual maintenance programme single cut, carried out by the Council's Streetscene Services Team. The programme of works has commenced, so work on this PROW should be imminent, if it has not yet been carried out.

On-going Maintenance of Brighter Borough Funded Defibrillators

As requested by the Parish Council, I wrote to the Wigan ward councillors to advise them of the Parish Council's decision with regard to the on-going maintenance of Brighter Borough funded defibrillators and, also, as requested, I asked if they would raise the matter of funding for on-going maintenance with Wigan Council.

I sent the following email:

"Over the Summer Shevington Parish Council funded the replacement of the battery of the defibrillator installed outside the Community Building at Vicarage Lane Fields in Shevington. The Council were able to do this because they have a cost centre to which funds have been allocated for expenditure on the maintenance of Vicarage Lane Fields. So, they were able to award a grant to Shevington ARLFC to enable them to replace the battery.

New defibrillators were fitted at various locations in the Parish over the past few years using Brighter Borough grants from Wigan Council. Unfortunately, whilst Brighter Borough Funds could be used to purchase and fit NEW defibrillators, no financial provision was made by Wigan Council for their ongoing maintenance when the policy was first introduced. The Parish Council understands that this is still the case.

The Parish Council also understands that the batteries and pads in general need to be replaced every three / four years. As there is no financial provision made for this, very soon all of the defibrillators installed over the past few years will be of no use to anyone.

When this matter was raised during the recent Council meeting members decided to discuss it further and consider whether the Parish Council could in some way support ongoing maintenance of the defibrillators in the Parish. This was discussed by the Council's Finance Committee on Wednesday, 4 September.

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Members were agreed that, as the Parish Council had not been responsible in any way for the fitting of new defibrillators in the Parish, they would not, as a matter of course, take responsibility for providing funding for their ongoing maintenance. At about £300 to £400 per battery this would become a very expensive exercise for the Parish Council and put unexpected pressure on its finances.

I have been asked to contact you and ask you to raise the matter of financial support for ongoing maintenance of defibrillators with Wigan Council. The Parish Council are of the view that, as Wigan Council encouraged and very generously funded their initial purchase and installation, they should have made financial provision for their ongoing maintenance.

We look forward to a speedy resolution of this matter.”

Dist Cllr Paul Collins sent the following in reply:

“Thank you for notifying us of the decision of the Parish Council re the ongoing maintenance of the Defibrillators. As a parishioner I find this news very concerning. It was initially Cllr Damian Edwardson who first arranged for them to be fitted, then Cllr Marlaine Whittham picked it up and I believe Andrew Moakes is currently looking into the issue via the CA.

Unfortunately, Brighter Borough cannot be used for ongoing maintenance, so an alternative would need to be sourced. In some cases the owners of the location where they are fitted take responsibility for the Defibrillator, but it will need to be clarified as we cannot risk a situation where one is needed but has a flat battery etc.

As elected members we are always happy and keen to support any efforts to protect our residents and use our Brighter Borough allowance where necessary. We can approach the CA to see if support and a budget can be made available but if it is not possible to get them maintained then they will need to be removed and some, if not all, of the provision will be lost if an alternative is not identified.

I will discuss this with my ward colleagues.”

Dist Cllr Vicky Galligan also replied. In her reply she suggested that perhaps a solution to this issue could be for a Crowdfunder to be set up by the Community Association, specifically for the upkeep of the defibrillators. Cllr Galligan had copied the local Community Capacity Officer into her reply in the hope that she would be able to advise on funding.

I was subsequently copied by a resident into an email sent by that resident about this matter to others. The nature of what had been written in the email was such that suggested that the Finance Committee's decision and the reasoning behind it had not been understood by the resident. In the email the resident expressed dismay at the Parish Council's decision.

K.M.P. 20.09.24