

Chairman's Report 7 March 2019

It is my great pleasure to announce that our new Town Clerk, Charlotte Starkie, has now joined us to manage and lead the professional team in our office to work with councillors to deliver a wide and growing range of services to our community.

Charlotte comes to us with a proven track record of achievement, working with business, community groups and councils of different sizes. Most significantly, in recent years, Charlotte was the Head of Finance and Administration for Chippenham Town Council in Wiltshire.

Chippenham, with a budget of £2.6 million, has expanded its services to be responsible for more aspects of local government than its previous range of functions. This was due to many responsibilities being devolved to town and parish councils. This followed Wiltshire Council becoming a unitary authority when the mid-level district councils were removed from local government in the county. Somerset is considering the possibility of following this path too. With Charlotte, we are now much better prepared for this eventuality.

Like all best practice councils, we have to constantly review our policies to make sure we are compliant with the law. We must always have processes in place to ensure taxpayers' money is managed wisely and fastidiously. Recently we have been tightening up many of our policies in response to an independent review by the South West Audit Partnership. With Charlotte's proven experience, we are reviewing all aspects of our management, covering finance, administration, data protection and freedom of information.

This town council's 4 year term is coming to an end. Local elections for 16 town councillors, and also 4 district councillors for Shepton, will be held on Thursday 2nd May.

It's always an exciting time, with the opportunity of new people coming forward to speak up for our community and have a rôle in shaping the town and area's future. It's also when existing councillors, who chose to stand again, will have their track records questioned and examined, and then get voted in or out!

I will be at the March St Patrick's Day themed Sunday Market on the 17th March to talk about what's it like to be a councillor and to explain how the council works. Nominations will open for candidates for both the town and district councils on Monday 18th March. If you are interested, you can contact Mendip District Council for their nomination packs or go online at www.mendip.gov.uk/ier

These elections will be a very important way for people to shape the coming years in our town. I firmly believe Shepton is exhibiting a growing confidence at the moment. When I speak to people both in the town and elsewhere, there is a real sense that we are on the up. Of course there is much more to do, but with so many people getting involved in a whole range of community activities, councillors will be well placed to make a big difference in the next 4 years.

We need committed, community-minded people to join our local councils to continue to make Shepton one of the very best places to work, visit, and live in.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council