

Chairman's Report 14th March 2019

One of the most inspiring and regular events in Shepton is the Saturday morning parkrun. It seems unbelievable that this weekly gathering of a wide cross-section of the community has now been up and running for nearly two years, and is fast approaching its 100th outing.

No one can dispute that the Shepton parkrun has delivered significant community value. It brings folk together, from the volunteers who make it all happen to the hundreds of runners encouraged by parkrun to have healthier lifestyles. It also delivers economic benefits, as visitors get to see the best of our town, visit our shops and enjoy our welcoming cafés. It's also a joy to have the park used by not just our local residents, but people who come from far and wide to race, run, or walk round the parkrun course.

Building on the success of the 5km Saturday parkrun, plans are now well advanced for a regular 2km junior parkrun on Sunday mornings. The town council is particularly proud that Collett Park recently gained Mendip District's very first Green Flag Award. The inaugural junior parkrun, due to take place on April 14th, is also a first for the Mendip region.

Shepton is immensely fortunate that John Kyte Collett donated our park to the town in a series of separate parcels of land over 100 years ago. In the legal documents that he drew up when he gave the park to the town, Mr Collett made it clear that his gift was to be used for events and celebrations. No doubt he would be delighted to see two health-giving events taking place every weekend in the safe surroundings of his beautiful park.

Collett Park borders the old railway line on Millennium Way, and this leafy pathway, together with the other abandoned railway lines that criss-cross the town, offer wildlife corridors for many species including bats and owls. It's vital that we do all we can to encourage and expand biodiversity. Consequently, the Town Council plans to invite Somerset Wildlife Trust to help us develop habitats for flora and fauna. This important initiative is likely to come to fruition after the forthcoming elections.

The latest Sunday Market will be held this weekend. It's planned to be a great St. Patrick's Day shindig! There'll be entertainment with a mixture of traders and stalls, and again, I will be representing the Town Council stationed in our gazebo. I look forward to seeing everyone in the Market Square between 10am and 3pm where I can advise those interested in standing for election in May what serving on the Town Council entails.

Also coming up soon, the Friends of Shepton Library are organising the annual "Love Your Library" day on 30th March. Over the last 12 months, the Friends have campaigned to maintain our library in Shepton. They continue to do all they can to convince Somerset County Council that the best place for this vital community asset is in the heart of the town.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council