

Chairman's Report 27th June 2019

It's that time of the year when this corner of Somerset welcomes thousands to the longest and best music and cultural celebration that is the Glastonbury Festival. This extraordinary event plays an important part in our community life. Many groups and clubs benefit from the financial rewards from stewarding and other essential support activities. These local people all contribute to make it possible to stage a safe festival at such a vast scale.

The opportunity to do a few shifts as a volunteer is also a chance to see groups like The Killers and The Cure and pop icons like Kylie Minogue. But the festival offers much more than just these big headliners with dance, comedy, theatre, political discourse, cinema, circus, cabaret, and other arts and crafts in a dazzling array and profusion.

The festival site is the largest greenfield festival in the world and is attended by around 175,000 people. It requires an extensive infrastructure in terms of security, transport, water, and electricity supply. Mendip District Council is instrumental in regulating this world class event, and scores of Mendip staff serve at the festival's sophisticated control centre alongside the police, medical, engineering and other safety personnel.

Glastonbury has been the inspiration and the reason that Shepton Mallet now has its year-round Art Bank in the Market Square. "The Rubbish Arts Project", which takes trash and turns it into art, has its roots in the Festival, and the Town Council has helped this novel initiative, providing grant aid for specific projects. The Art Bank promotes a varied range of creative activities for a wide cross section of our community, and the café/bar has become an essential hub for the cultural life within Shepton. With such close proximity to the Glastonbury Festival site, the town council will continue to do all it can to welcome and support this kind of year round benefit for Shepton.

This weekend marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in the United States. Sparked by a series of police raids on clubs in New York, the subsequent violent demonstrations served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the US and around the world. Most recently the Art Bank in Shepton hosted its inaugural gay/gay-friendly "Rainbow Night" welcoming everyone in our community to celebrate diversity and equality. To celebrate inclusiveness and mark the anniversary of Stonewall, the Town Council will be flying the LBGT rainbow flag to recognise fifty years of struggle to extend and promote equality, tolerance and respect for all.

The Town Council has agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss final proposals to maintain our library in the town centre. The Friends of the Library will present their plan for the Council to consider, and for members of the public to comment. To help to keep the library in the heart of Shepton, Michael Eavis has offered financial support spread over the next five years. This further strengthens our links to the Festival that Michael founded 49 years ago, and brings direct community benefit to Shepton. I will make sure that I inform you on the date of the meeting.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council

