

## **Chairman's Report 4th July 2019**

One of the Town Council's key aims is the connecting up and completion of the old Strawberry Line railway track. This multi-user path will eventually create a continuous cycle and pedestrian loop across much of Somerset to attract tourists and deliver a safe route linking Shepton to Wells and outlying villages. In a previous planning application Mendip District Council negotiated with the developer to agree that £15,000 would be allocated to help create a pedestrian link from Tadley Acres to Fosse Lane. Sadly, for many years, nothing was done to make this connection a reality.

As with all of these so-called Section 106 legal agreements made between developers and local authorities, the work has to be commenced within a limited time period. The Tadley to Fosse Lane arrangement expired in May, meaning Mendip Council had to either hand the money back to the developer, or request that the cash be kept and reallocated for a different purpose.

Happily, Mendip Council and the developer have now reached agreement to extend the period that the £15,000 can be used. However one of the caveats is that it must be spent on community open space. Mendip has asked the Town Council for recommendations on how this money can best be utilised to benefit the community in Shepton.

The Town Council's Collett Park Management Committee will meet next Tuesday and will consider the future of Collett Festival following on from last month's single event fair. There has been much discussion about the best way forward, but without a longer term view the council will find it hard to secure sponsorship and or attract a range of stalls. Many people have expressed their opinion in print and social media. The overwhelming response I have received in person has been from families who missed the free Children's Day that had been a regular feature at the festival from 2016 to 2018. Others want the concerts to be revived, and a vocal minority want to go back to way it was before it became a multi-event festival.

The problem with turning the clock back is that the world has moved on and our community is growing. The demands of the various authorities to ensure that the event is well managed and safe for all have increased and the town council has been praised for its high standards of care. What we decide next week will set the agenda for the next 4 years and beyond, and no matter what decision is reached, we will continue to support this annual celebration of all that is best in Shepton.

The Town Council had employed a specialist consultant company to recommend future plans for the development of Collett Park. Our aim is to make sure this lovely community amenity is in good shape for its second hundred years. The outline plans and ideas around building new facilities at the top of the park received very positive comments in the series of open days held in the council's gazebo. Plans include building a new toilet block, café including community space, and providing a new service and storage area for our ground-care staff. The scheme will also include a new updated play area to offer a much better choice of high quality equipment.

The new town council is ready to make these plans a reality for the betterment of our park and the wellbeing of our community.

**Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council**