

## Chairman's Report

It was great to catch up with so many friends at the Mid-Somerset Show on Sunday. I'm always amazed at all the enthusiasm, effort and commitment that gets poured into both organising and taking part in this single day event in our annual calendar. Although the weather was a little unsettled it was good to see so many happy and familiar faces, as well as lots of folk who were visiting Shepton from further afield.

Parking was once again an issue on neighbouring streets with some drivers avoiding using the official car park. Residents on the Ridgeway Estate next to the show-ground found their streets and driveways blocked by inconsiderate drivers. A few who tried to get away without paying for parking did get served with parking tickets. Hopefully this did not deflect from people's enjoyment too much. Certainly I didn't spot too many sad faces, but rather saw happy smiles all round from individuals and families who had come to see the livestock, or were browsing the arts and crafts on show, or even meeting John Challis of "Only Fools and Horses" fame.

This week Edric Hobbs was elected as Chair of the Open Spaces Committee of the Town Council. This sub-committee oversees a wide range of services, everything from footpaths and cycleways to floral displays, and has a particular focus on improvements to the town centre.

One of Edric's first tasks will be to meet officers in Somerset County Council Highways Department in Taunton to discuss the plans to resurface Shepton's Market Place and Town Street. The Town Council has already agreed to provide substantial financial support to match the limited money that the County Council are willing to spend on upgrading the town centre surface. We considered that we had no choice since the current state of the pavement is both dangerous with many trip hazards and makes the town centre appear unsightly and uninviting. This council remains committed to enhancing the centre of town wherever we can. We will act to make improvements that make our town safer and more welcoming to locals and visitors alike.

One of our key concerns is a lack of public conveniences in the High Street. Nick Tolson brought a proposal to the Open Spaces Committee that could offer local businesses a financial donation if they permit their facilities to be open for public use during business hours. Councillors agreed that this scheme was worth trialling and the Town Clerk will now make approaches to shops and businesses to test their reaction and gauge their support. A further update will follow once more details are available.

The Town Council has also agreed to a "Buskers Charter" to give police the power to advise buskers that becomes a nuisance to move on. Hopefully only talented musicians will lift our spirits in future!

Mendip District Council has managed to extend the "Section 106" legal agreement monies that was earmarked for a footpath from Whitstone Road to Fosse Lane. Unfortunately this link proved impossible to deliver and the money looked like it would have to be handed back to the developer. But the £15,000 originally for a specific footpath has now been made available for other footpath or cycleway projects and can be used by the Open Spaces Committee. It is my hope that this now can be assigned to support our commitment to complete the Strawberry Line in and through Shepton. The very minimum we want to deliver is a continuous multi-user path from the East to the West of Shepton.

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