

Chairman's Report 24th October 2019

As winter draws in, we look forward to Fireworks Night and the Carnival, but we should also remember that it's not a favourite time of year for some. Increasingly, there are concerns about the impact of loud bangs on some who may be more vulnerable in our society. Fireworks can be magical, but we shouldn't forget that explosions and flashing lights can cause worry and concern for some older people and very young members of our society. Fireworks can also be absolutely terrifying for our pets.

Perhaps the best way to enjoy the season is to come to the safe and well organised spectacular display at the West Shepton Playing Fields on Saturday 2nd November at 7pm. Arranged by the Shepton Rotary Club charity, tickets are now on sale from the Tourist information centre and go on sale outside Tesco and Haskins from Friday 1st November.

Two of the major supermarkets will not be selling fireworks this year. Sainsbury's have joined the Co-op in banning sales of fireworks in all of its 2300 stores. Letting off fireworks late in the evening can be disruptive to young families and traumatise animals. We should also remember that the crashes and bangs can sound identical to the explosions that members of our Armed Forces may have been exposed to when they served. For some of these former soldiers, Fireworks Night is a trying time.

Remembrance Sunday of course comes between Guy Fawkes Night and the Carnival Season. Every year the Shepton Mallet Branch of the Royal British Legion does a fantastic job raising money through their Poppy Appeal. I will be out and about helping to put up large poppies around the town again this year. It's a reminder to support the annual appeal and a fitting tribute to those who paid the ultimate price to secure our freedoms. Shepton people are always generous in what they give. It means that many of the veterans who served our country will get the support from the Legion that they need.

I would like to thank all those people who completed the questionnaires that town councillors and many public-spirited helpers recently delivered to your homes.

Your responses were fascinating. You told us that your favourite thing about Shepton is that we live in a town that is friendly with a good community spirit. It was good to read that Collett Park remains a valued community space, and many residents say they like our rural, peaceful way of life.

Your day-to-day concerns include the need to improve parking and have cleaner streets. High on your feedback wish list was a plea to have a community space for arts and culture and you express a strong demand to protect and improve green spaces and have safe traffic-free pathways.

Last week councillors held the first of a series of meetings to consider all your responses and identify what the council should prioritise and deliver in the next few years. The feedback you have given us has been really useful and, you'll be pleased to know, councillors were very much in agreement with nearly all the points raised in your comments. Town councillors will meet again next month to further consider and discuss what is the best way forward. The ultimate aim is to create an effective Corporate Plan to guide us in how we protect and shape Shepton's future.

I genuinely believe the town council is moving in the most positive direction for many years. As our responsibilities increase with more and more pressure to support and replace the local services that

are being shed by higher authorities, I look forward to further updating you on your council's progress.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council