

Chair Report 14th November 2019

It was a typical grey November Sunday morning. Shepton residents turned out in their droves to attend the annual Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. The town's youth groups were strongly represented with the Air and Army Cadets joined by the Scouts and the Rainbow Troupe.

It was an honour to lay the wreath on behalf of the Town Council. Bente Height laid the Mendip District Council wreath and John Parham represented the County Council.

The Cenotaph is managed and protected by a charity. The corporate body of the Town Council is its sole trustee. We maintain this magnificent war memorial to keep alive the memory of those Shepton men and women who passed by the very spot that the Cenotaph now sits on on their way to wars and conflicts. For many it was their last sight of Shepton. We remembered them in silence as we looked down the High Street and raised our gaze to the Mendip Hills and beyond.

The Town Council are also trustees of the Collett Park charity. As many already know, our lovely park was honoured with the first Green Flag status in the Mendip area last year. To retain this prestigious award the town council has made a series of ongoing improvements. We plan to redevelop the buildings and facilities in the park, including a high quality upgrade to the play and exercise equipment. We are developing a 10 year management plan that will include improvements to the planting regime, tree management and a comprehensive review of all aspects of the infrastructure of the park, including pathways and the pond. A full survey of the existing flora and fauna has been commissioned with our intention to provide a greater range of habitats to attract birds, insects and butterflies.

Signage within Collett Park and the finger posts that direct people to the park are being reviewed and will be upgraded. This is linked to the Town Council's wider plan to improve and replace confusing and out of date signage throughout all of Shepton.

We are lucky that we have many committed local groups that use our park, including the Drifters Model Boat Club, the parkrun and junior parkrun. With the café open at weekends, Collett is a welcoming destination for families, dog walkers and visitors to our town.

In Spring, we plan to hold an open meeting to invite local groups and individuals to come together to form a "Friends of Collett Park". We want many groups and individuals to play an active part in improving facilities and maintaining the park for the 21st Century. We hope this will give everyone an opportunity to participate in the future of the "Jewel in Shepton's Crown".

Our annual celebration of the best of Shepton, Collett Festival, returns in force for 2020. The theme for next year will be "Save the Planet". This will recognise and acknowledge the climate emergency that we all face. There will be an emphasis on sustainability and a ban on single use plastics throughout the festival. Leading up to the main weekend events, including Collett Park Day, it is hoped that the celebrations will expand into a series of Collett Festival Fringe events in the town centre. The town council has agreed that the festival will have a settled format for at least the next 4 years. This will allow time to raise further sponsorship and help in the planning and long term organisation of the events.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council