

Chairman's Report 6th February 2020

What a wonderful evening we had on Saturday at the delayed annual Lantern Festival Parade! Each year the displays get more imaginative and impressive. This 10th anniversary of the event was even more astonishing in its colour and inventiveness. We really do have some very talented people in our town. We are also incredibly fortunate in having great people who regularly volunteer to make our community vibrant and better.

One of my joys in recent months has been seeing our puppy grow up. Like all Labradors, Herbie sees the world through his nose and mouth! Stopping him swallowing sweet wrappers, preventing him getting stuck in plastic bags or unearthing glass and cans that have been carelessly thrown in every hedgerow has kept us constantly vigilant. I'm not sure whether littering has become worse in recent months or whether it's just having Herbie that's making me spot it.

I really can't understand why people don't take their rubbish home and how they find it acceptable to be-spoil our rural community. When anti-social people drop their detritus all around our beautiful town they are not just being mindless; they also impose extra costs on councils to clear up after their mess. I often hear people complain about the council not dealing with litter. However, wouldn't it be much better if the individuals who dump it never acted so selfishly in the first place?

We are lucky to have many public-spirited people who volunteer their time to clear up other people's trash. Individuals like Nigel Pooley, who organises a monthly litter pick, deserves our thanks and praise. Nigel and everyone willing to pick up the mess and litter that spoils and damages our environment really perform a valuable public service. I can't help think that if more of us did our bit then Shepton would be a better, cleaner, safer town.

Making it possible to walk or cycle in our area without using polluting vehicles is a priority of our council. With Garfield Kennedy and Edric Hobbs, I am determined to move the Strawberry Line project on in Shepton Mallet, and we are pressing Mendip District Council to act decisively on this. Many town councillors support us but we need to see much more progress to deliver a safe multi-user path that extends to Wells in the West and to the Bath and West Showground to the South. We also fully support all initiatives to bring back a reliable, sustainable public transport network to properly connect our communities across Somerset.

With my fellow district councillors, we want to see action to clear up the unsightly Little Ostry café site opposite the Salvation Army building on Commercial Road. The area has been woefully neglected for many years and this eyesore makes the town look run down and uncared for. It is completely unacceptable that this blight on our street scene is being tolerated without the district council intervening to make landowners do something about it. There is very real potential to enhance Shepton by developing Little Ostry, and an opportunity to strengthen links to the town centre.

In the last year, the town council has installed defibrillators in Shepton: one in Collett Park, and another next to RS McColl on the High Street. There will be training in using a defibrillator at Mendip District Council offices at 10am on 6th March. These life saving devices are simple to use, but training makes it easier to stay calm and be ready to assist in an emergency. Anyone who wishes to receive training and advice on using a defibrillator is welcome. You could even be responsible for saving someone's life in the future.

Last but not least, a reminder that next weekend is another joyful reason to be in town. Everyone passing through Shepton can see that the Snowdrop Festival is coming soon as decorated green

barrels have sprouted up and down the High Street. The Shepton Experience returns with a snowdrop theme for its first Sunday Market of 2020 on the same weekend. Don't miss out on a wonderful time, all devoted to celebrating the little nodding harbingers of Spring.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council