

Chairman's Report 20th February 2020

We've just experienced another weekend of disruption with a second brutal storm sweeping across England and Wales. Once again we escaped the worst of it. We were lucky not to face the most extreme outcomes of the wind and rain that pounded nearby counties causing misery, and in the saddest incidents, loss of life. Here in Shepton we got away with some damage to trees and disruption to local events. However, we must be prepared for more of these extreme weather episodes that are going to come our way.

At the weekend Shepton hosted a Climate Emergency Workshop arranged by Somerset County Council. Braving Storm Dennis, local people visited in impressive numbers. When asked how worried individuals were about their future and that of their children and grandchildren, virtually all expressed extreme concern.

Government should be leading the way, but only this week I read that only a handful of more than 500 schools that are being rebuilt or refurbished across England are installing renewable green energy technology. In Somerset, one school, Kingsmead Secondary in Wiveliscombe, Taunton, has decided to take a stand. They have rejected plans for a much needed rebuild since the design does not meet the aspirations of parents, pupils and staff to protect the planet.

Since every one of us is going to be affected by these extremes of weather and climate, it is important that we all have an opportunity to participate in the County Council's Climate Emergency Workshop initiative. You can still have your say by going to: [SurveyMonkey.co.uk/r/Somerset-Climate-Change-Survey-2019](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Somerset-Climate-Change-Survey-2019). Meanwhile the Town Council's Climate Change Committee has started its work, led by Councillor Tristan Faith. I will report back here on their progress and recommendations. It is essential that this group includes residents prepared to work together on practical measures that can contribute to global solutions to address climate change.

Due to the bad weather, many outside events arranged by the Shepton Snowdrop Festival last weekend had to be abandoned, along with the Sunday Market. However, the festival organisers managed to secure an indoor venue at point blank notice so the event could successfully defy the elements. The remarkable community spirit shown by the volunteers for the now well-established and well-organised Snowdrop Festival has to be recognised. Through the wind and the rain they cheerfully directed visitors to the various events. For me, the highlight was dropping into the church to hear our young people read their poetry, which was delivered with confidence and clarity. I'm sure their parents were glowing with pride!

The Town Council is advertising for a new member of staff. The rôle of Project Officer has been created to assist in delivering key priorities identified by the council. We welcome interest from anyone with the skills, aptitude and vision to help to make Shepton an even better place to live, work in and visit. You can find more details here: <https://www.sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk/2020/02/12/were-hiring-is-this-you/>

At the Town Council, we enjoy a close relationship with the local police team. The beat manager regularly visits the Town Council office to brief us on specific local issues of crime and disorder. Last week, I attended a meeting with the local police team where they explained how their Youth Offending Team operates.

The message was quite clear: if a crime or anti-social behaviour incident occurs, it is essential that residents tell the police, giving as much detail as possible. It will never be a waste of your time as the information can help build an evidence base that the police can use when tackling offenders.

Thankfully, crime rates in Shepton are below national average. The Police have been successful in building up a detailed picture from people's reports that have led in many cases to the apprehending of those who have been responsible for criminal acts or anti-social behaviour. By reporting an incident, we can all contribute to keeping the town safe.

Chris Inchley, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council