

## **Chairman's Report 5th March 2020**

As days lengthen and we get glimpses of Spring in-between the many recent storms, we can see trees and shrubs budding and breaking into leaf. It's my favourite time of year with anticipation of lush blossoms and warmer days to come. Nature certainly never stops, unlike one iconic object in Shepton where time is soon about to stand still.

The Town Council has decided to call it a day on the town clock in the High Street. This prominent timepiece used to indicate the location of the Post Office, and also do what clocks are supposed to do: tell the time! Unfortunately, for many years, it has singularly failed in both of these simple functions.

The Post Office has moved on to other locations, and whatever efforts the council makes to get this clock to tell the correct time, this has repeatedly failed. Some years ago specialist clock-makers changed the internal mechanism assuring us the clock would only lose a minute every 5 years! Yet it has never kept good time before or after this overhaul. Successive councils have spent thousands of pounds over many years trying to make it work and tell the correct time.

Last week we were asked to choose between three options: 1. make yet another attempt to finally fix the clock at a steep cost with no guarantee of success; 2. remove the clock and place it in storage at an even greater cost to the council, or 3. leave it in situ, and set the hands permanently to 12 o'clock. We chose the last option since few of us today rely on public clocks to tell the time. The clock will of course remain a part of Shepton's street scene, but we can't justify spending thousands of pounds trying to make it accurate.

For the clock at least time will soon stand still, but it's not an option for the town council. We are already planning for Christmas 2020, 2021 and 2022 since the 3-year contract with our festive lights supplier has just come to an end. The council has to decide the best way forward for the future and we will be seeking a refreshed and imaginative scheme within our allocated budget. We welcome people's opinions on the design and style of the lighting scheme before a final decision is made in the coming months.

Many will be aware that Collett Park has enjoyed Green Flag status for the past two years. We are still the only park in the Mendips to have been awarded this accolade. It means that our park meets the highest national standards and that our plans for its future protection and development are judged to be sound and appropriate. We are justly proud of this but keeping Green Flag status is never a certainty. We must have an ongoing up to date management plan that keeps the park in tiptop condition.

As a part of this, we need to reach out to the wider community who love and use our park. To this end, we are forming a new voluntary group called the Friends of Collett Park to help with community projects, wildlife schemes and events in the park. Anyone interested in finding out more or who can offer a little time to support the future of Collett Park can contact our Town Clerk, Charlotte Starkie. You are also holding an open meeting at the SWEDA offices in Harvest Court on Park Road (next door to the Town Council offices), on Wednesday 11th March at 6.30pm. All are welcome.

The annual Keep Britain Tidy campaign is fast approaching. From 20th March to 13th April the "Great British Spring Clean" will be all about demonstrating that we care about where we live. Everyone can make a difference, whether it's by pledging to pick up some litter while out walking

the dog, or while taking the kids to school. It all counts. You might even think of starting a clean-up of your street or neighbourhood green area or joining in an organised litter pick.

The Town Council has access to litter pick kit and hi-viz jackets that can be borrowed by arrangement. We want to do all we can to keep Shepton clean and well-kept. We continue to respond to residents' wishes wherever possible to provide dog waste bins, and litter and grit receptacles. So far this year, we have already installed several bins around the town, and are always open to suggestions as to the best places to site these items to help to keep our town tidy.

When the recent very successful Snowdrop Festival was pounded by storms and pouring rain, the owners of Cabbages and Roses allowed their shop to be used by the festival. Originally events were to be held in a marquee, but this had to be cancelled since it was judged too risky and dangerous to erect it. At very short notice, the kindness and generosity of Cabbages and Roses saved the day. We will be writing to thank them. The Town Council had allocated funds to pay for the cancelled marquee. We have now agreed that this money should be reallocated to help commemorate our famous local horticulturalist and 'Snowdrop King', James Allen. We hope this will lead to the return of the obelisk marking his final resting place in Shepton Cemetery.

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