

As I sit here writing this week's report I wonder how far into the future it will be before I am able to Chair a meeting in the Council Chamber? Many of us are realising that we can work efficiently from our own homes. Is this the future, will more people work remotely using platforms such as Zoom to host video conference meetings? It would certainly help to reduce our carbon footprint if less people travelled to ever busy cities to work, on a daily basis.

I would rather not have to discuss a global pandemic on a weekly basis but whilst our lives are disrupted, and in some cases put at risk, I feel the need to reiterate a couple of points. Please don't congregate in large groups in places such as Collett Park, keep moving whilst enjoying your exercise and remember the social distancing guidelines. Shepton Mallet is surrounded by beautiful countryside crisscrossed with footpaths that are well worth exploring where the chances of meeting others are minimal.

Although it must be frustrating to watch the garden waste mount as we busy ourselves doing the chores that have built up, please refrain from lighting bonfires. It is unfortunate that garden waste is not being collected and the recycling centres are closed but it won't be for ever.

Whilst shopping at Tesco you will hopefully have seen the Town Council notice prominently displayed on a truck [www.HelpShepton.info](http://www.HelpShepton.info) or call 0800 0614089. This website gives access to much information. Help is also available from the Corona virus volunteer group available on 01749 200200. I know I said this in last week's report but I feel it important to always have the information to hand.

Rather than filling this column myself every week I would like to use this space to introduce you to the work and projects of fellow Councillors at certain times of the year. As we hurry towards summer and the blossom starts to fall from the trees who better to introduce to you than Councillor Tristan Faith with his report on the Food Forest Project?

"The team at the Food Forest Project is well underway in helping the people of Shepton eat for free. With two food forests currently planted up and developing, one in west Shepton on the Old Wells Road, and one in north Shepton at Rock Farm, and the edible bed at the bottom of the Town Street, there's a mass of fruits, nuts and herbs growing for the town to harvest at no cost. Our goal is to plant as much food producing vegetation around the town as possible in little ecosystems called food forests. These food forests are great for the local people, for the local wildlife and biodiversity, and to help build on Shepton's rich agricultural heritage. Our next big project is "Hillmead Agri-Gardens", where we will be working with the local community, Shepton Town Council, Aster Homes and other community groups to create productive growing spaces within the estate. There will be a series of kitchen gardens, and an area full of raised beds within a small food forest. The Food Forest Project is a small Community Interest Company with big goals. We've set up to help low income households get access to high nutrition food, to plant valuable habitat for endangered wild life like Turtle Doves, Hedgehogs and Nightingales, and to help sequester carbon through the planting of woodland. See our web site for more information, [www.thefoodforestproject.org](http://www.thefoodforestproject.org)."

**Edric Hobbs, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council**