

Chairman's Report: 25 June 2020

This week and next we celebrate both the Armed Forces - with [Armed Forces Day](#) being June 27th - and [Pride Month](#). Armed forces day is a national day of recognition our veterans and serving military community. We in particular thank those in our community for their valiant service. The Town Council will then proudly fly the Pride rainbow flag during the week starting June 29th.

This year is only the fiftieth anniversary of the first Gay Pride March in Central Park New York. Britain's first Pride March was in 1972. It is not that long ago that the likes of Oscar Wilde and Alan Turing were persecuted for their sexuality. The British armed forces now recognise the right for soldiers, sailors and air personnel to be treated with respect whatever their protected characteristic or background, not my words but those of Lieutenant General Chris Tickell CBE, Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Army LGBT+ Champion. At last, Armed Service personnel should be able to be themselves without being persecuted. We are lucky to live in the society we do. Captain Hannah Graf MBE, now a civilian adviser on transgender policy, highlighted how backward the policy is in the USA where President Trump does not allow transgender people to serve or enlist in the United States military. Captain Graf was the highest ranking transgender member of the British armed forces.

The world will be a better place the sooner we live as one: regardless of sexuality, race or creed. When you see the Pride flag flying proudly following The Armed Forces Flag, be thankful that we live in the society we do.

Edric Hobbs, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council