Chairman's Report: 09 July 2020

Last week I chaired a full council meeting via Zoom, this is a way of still conducting business in a live format over the internet. It's actually harder than you think to manage 21 people and their requests to speak on a computer screen. We had two very interesting items on the agenda. Firstly, we welcomed Ros Wyke, the leader of Mendip District Council, who gave us an overview to the proposal to create a new unitary authority. This proposal, called One Somerset, would mean the County and District Councils disappearing to be replaced with one council, sitting above Town and Parish Councils. There are mixed views as to the viability of this. The town council was asked to submit its comments on the proposal and these can be found on our website.

The second debate of the evening, saw us discussing granting Shepton Mallet Leisure Centre £25,000. It had been hit hard by being closed due to the pandemic and was at risk of seriously curtailing its trading hours at best, or at worst closing. The majority of us felt that it was too important an asset to the town - as our major leisure and community facility - not to invest in. We agreed to grant them £20,000 on a majority vote. We can now add them to the list of local facilities that we as Town Council support, along with The Library, The Citizen's Advice Centre and The Youth Club.

Finally, have you seen our large banner on a lorry outside Tesco? It's promoting our Shepton Innovator Awards. You have until the end of the month to nominate businesses that have gone the extra mile (or is that 1.609 Kilometres?) during the pandemic lockdown to keep trading and serve our community. Not just Shepton but in the villages around us that use our great little town as their hub. Details are on our Town Council website, or give the office or a councillor a call for guidance.

I'm off, I have windows to clean as I have just done the equivalent of homework on the bus and written this just before deadline!

Edric Hobbs, Chair, Shepton Mallet Town Council