

## **Chairman's Report: 23 July 2020**

I have often read and heard that Chard is the highest town in Somerset, at 500 feet above sea level. Being a lover of maps and statistics, I thought I would look at how we fare here in Shepton Mallet, as I always thought we were fairly high. Pike Hill is enough of a slog when cycling back from Wells! On investigation our Town Council offices are at about 150 metres - a quick conversion tells me this is 492 feet. Just missed out then! But if I look at the contour line running through Tadley Acres I see 165 metres which is 541 feet. I guess it all depends where you decide to measure. If we use the Market Cross as the centre of town for example, we lose this one as it's much lower than either of the other measurements. You can't blame me for trying! I did think it would be nice to say on our town signs 'Welcome to Shepton Mallet, highest town in Somerset'.

We are aware that our town signs are in need of changing and this is a top priority for our new project officer. Our aim is not just to change the town boundary signs but also the information signs and display boards around the town centre. We don't just want to replace the old signs, we want new signs which look modern, display the correct information, and make our town more inviting and easier to navigate. This will involve working with both Mendip District Council (who own some of the current signs) and the Highways Office at Somerset County Council. Do expect to hear more about this in the next couple of months.

Talking of signs, has anyone spotted the metal marker posts marked Shepton Mallet UDC or RDC? These were boundary posts for the Urban District Councils and Rural District Councils before local Government reorganisation in 1974. There is one on The Old Wells Road on the left as you go up the Bridleway before Society House Farm. It's rusty and needs restoring and there are two others as you go towards Wells on the main road. These date from the 1890s and I can't help but wonder what signs of local government will be around 130 years from now?

Although only July, this week we looked towards Christmas as the Christmas light working party met to decide what our light display will be this year. A nice Christmas light display will be something to look forward to and cheer people up whilst they shop in town, after an uncertain and stressful 12 months. Talking of shopping, please remember that Mendip District Council carparks are free until August 6th so please do take full advantage and visit our local shops. Haskins have also extended the free parking in theirs to 3 hours to allow for socially distanced shopping which will take longer because of the queues. Let's hope the good weather continues if you are waiting outside.

Well that's this week's ramble over! Keep shopping local and I'll be back with more next week.

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