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## **WEEKLY COLUMN – 03 September 2020**

While not everyone enjoyed time off over the Bank Holiday weekend, it's worth remembering that public holidays like these have not always been a given. The August Bank Holiday was one of just four bank holidays recognised in the Bank Holidays Act of 1871, introduced by the Liberal politician Sir John Lubbock, in addition to Christmas Day and Good Friday. Back then, the average worker in the UK worked about 56 hours a week and had just 14 days off in a year (vacation and national holiday combined). Nowadays the average worker in the UK enjoys around twice the amount of days of paid leave. Food for thought: a survey conducted in 2019 showed that the average person in Britain spends 3 hours and 23 minutes on their mobile phone every day. Which equates to...some 50 days a year.

Last week was a busy week for the town council again, the town clerk and chairman of the council attended a site visit of the Market Square with Somerset Country Council. A proposal for the surface design will be submitted to the council in the autumn and – pending agreement by councillors – the works will be on course to begin in spring next year. The refurbishment of the market square will in many ways be symbolic of this council's intent to bring about visible, tangible change to the appearance and experience of the town centre. Other projects underway such as the library refurbishment and the review of the town's wayfaring signage all help with the objective of making our town a more attractive, more welcoming and more vibrant place to be. While these bigger projects are crucial, smaller-scale initiatives are just as important in nurturing a sense of civic pride. If you have an idea for something you would like to do to improve your area and think that the town council could help, please let us know how we can support you.

Of course, the town could not be what it is without its people. Which is why the Town Council is delighted to announce the dates for its Civic Award and Honorary Citizen Award. Nominations for both awards can be made from 01 October to 30 November 2020 either online or by paper form. The Civic Award is a yearly award to recognise local residents who have made an outstanding contribution to the local community either through voluntary work, charitable activities or a material contribution for the advancement of the community's wellbeing and welfare. The Honorary Citizen Award is the highest level of recognition awarded by the town council, nominations for which will only be considered every four years. This award will be given to residents who have made a truly exceptional contribution to the town, including outstanding acts of bravery, sporting achievements and long-standing service to the town.

Finally, our congratulations to the winners of the Shepton Innovator Awards 2020 who were announced last night via a live-streamed award ceremony. Despite being planned at the drop of a hat in response to the announcement of the cancellation of Mendip Business, the response has overwhelmingly been positive. Our thanks to the five judges - Kelly Knight, Justin Sargent, Helen Sprawson-White, Alan Stone and Claire Sully - who spared their time to deliberate over the nominations and to local business owner Erica Pease of Studio 37 for her help in organising the awards.

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

Shepton Mallet Town Council, Town Clerk – Ms Charlotte Starkie  
Shepton Mallet Town Council Chairman – Councillor Edric Hobbs