



**TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
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WEEKLY COLUMN – 24 September 2020

One thing many of us have been reminded to not take for granted this past year is the gift of friendship and company. Deprived of our usual means of socialising, we were quick to turn to technology to enable us to stay connected with friends and loved ones. Virtual pub quizzes, coffee mornings, cocktail parties and even weddings briefly became the norm. However, not everyone will have stayed connected during lockdown. For whatever reason, some people do not have the rich social networks we sometimes take for granted. A report from 2017 showed that in the UK, 1 in 20 people feel lonely 'all the time'. Shockingly, a 2010 study showed that loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. While loneliness is often associated with the elderly – indeed half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all – they are not the only ones. People with certain conditions, having been through certain life experiences, or just those who through a series of events and circumstances have never had the opportunity to build up a robust friendship group. Befriending services are set up to help fight against loneliness in our communities and there are some groups active here around Shepton Mallet. Health Connections Mendip, SPARK Somerset and Shepton Mallet Town Council are hosting a number of public discussions (via Zoom) to look at what can be done to improve befriending services in Shepton. The second meeting is tomorrow, Friday 25 September at 10am and anyone can join – please email info@sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk if you wish to find out more.

There are a number of services, activities and events that the town council supports every year in different ways. Sometimes this means rolling up our sleeves and getting involved - you'll find us in Collett park planting snowdrop bulbs on 21 October – sometimes this means financial support. Every year, the town council welcomes applications for grant funding from community groups, charities and services that benefit our community. A grant application can be for anything over £2K, either as a one-off payment or funding over multiple years. The next deadline for applications is 20 October and you will find details of who can apply and for what on our website under 'Services' and 'Community Grants'.

Until next week!

Shepton Mallet Town Council

NOTES TO EDITORS

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