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## **WEEKLY COLUMN – 26 NOVEMBER 2020**

After the strangest year for many of us, it's nearly December and with only 29 shopping days left until Christmas and Black Friday tomorrow, many of us are now turning to planning our shopping for the festive season (some strange people have already completed their gift shopping!). With the second lockdown coming to an end we can finally welcome back many of the shops and services around our town from next Thursday. It's more critical than ever to support our local businesses. I'm not going to pretend my family and I don't shop online; of course we do. We lead busy lives and the choice and convenience of online shopping mean it's a part of our everyday life. But with small businesses facing huge disruption this year, many having to close in the run up to Christmas, now more than ever it's important to support our local businesses. The reasons are many; it is well proven that money spent in the local economy disproportionately supports the local economy. Small businesses disproportionately employ more people. And with smaller premises and slower footfall than big box stores, they are arguably the Covid-safest way to shop! Many also offer their own online and click and collect services, so you get the convenience of online shopping while supporting your neighbours!

I'm pleased to say the Shepton Mallet Chamber of Commerce has two events planned this season to help add some festive cheer to the season. Firstly, put Thursday 17 December in your diary for late night Christmas shopping night, with many shops taking part. And secondly, look out for the 'Best Dressed Window Competition' running from 5th to the 19th December with the winners chosen online on the 19th. Further details can be found on the Shepton Chamber of Commerce's Facebook page or at [sheptonchamber.co.uk](http://sheptonchamber.co.uk)

If you're a local business and are not yet a member of the Chamber, it's worth checking out their website; membership is free to new members until 31st December. With light at the end of the Covid tunnel, 2021 will be the year of not only rebuilding the nation's health but also our economic health; starting to support local businesses is the first step we can all take to do just that.

Shepton Mallet Town Council

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Shepton Mallet Town Council, Town Clerk – Ms Charlotte Starkie  
Shepton Mallet Town Council Chairman – Councillor Matthew Harrison