



**TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
1 PARK ROAD
SHEPTON MALLET
BA4 5BS**

**Tel: 01749 343984
info@sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk
www.sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk**

CHAIR'S WEEKLY COLUMN – 24 DECEMBER 2020

Being Christmas week, Christmas cards would have you believe there should be a thick blanket of snow on the ground. But it's been another wet week in the town which follows a very damp Autumn and Winter so far. The barmy weather of the first lockdown seems a long time ago now and the ground water levels are currently extremely high. Evidence of this was experienced in the town on 4 October when, after 48 hours of constant heavy deluge, much of the town was heavily flooded, especially on Cannard's Grave Road, through the park and in Leg Square and in the lower parts of Bowlsh. These latter areas experienced water breaches into the sewage system which resulted in some very unpleasant experiences for residents as sewage as well as flood water entered their homes. It's clear that our ancient water treatment network struggles with events which used to occur very rarely but are becoming all too common nowadays. With the expected 20% housing growth expected in our town over the next decade, something needs to be done.

Last Monday, the Town Council hosted a meeting for residents to express their concerns with all the relevant authorities concerned. We had representatives from the Town Council, Mendip District Council, Wessex Water, the Environment Agency and the Somerset Lead Local Flood Authority. Quite often in cases such as these, the bewildering amount of different agencies and authorities involved means it's not clear how to steer a clear course of action on how to improve the situation. I'm glad to report that once we had discussed the known bottlenecks, the Somerset Lead Local Flood Authority agreed to add Shepton to their list of significant investigations to improve infrastructure. It's too early to say specifically when we'll see an upgrade to our network but expect it next year. The Town Council office will coordinate with local residents to continue to input into investigations. If you would like to participate in this project, please forward your name and address to info@sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk. In addition to longer term planning, the Town Council are pulling together a flood emergency plan to improve communication of what to do in extreme events and how to report flooding so the relevant people are best informed.

On a different note, the organisers of the Lantern Parade have found an innovative way to keep the spirit of the parade going this year. There are illuminated lanterns located in shop fronts up and down Town Street and High Street. These will be on display until January 2nd. Be sure to take a walk up to the Haskins Retail park on the corner of High Street and Townsend, where you can admire the ram which led last year's parade.

Now that I've talked about our typically seasonal weather – in true 2020 style – all that remains for me to do is wish all our residents a peaceful, reflective and above all safe Christmas and New Year. I have no doubt that the country still has some tough months ahead of it but with the vaccine rollout starting, the days gradually getting longer and above all, our strong local sense of community, our town, with the right support is in a good place to recover.

Happy Christmas.

Matt Harrison, Chairperson

Shepton Mallet Town Council

NOTES TO EDITORS

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