

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue10. Week ending 31/05/20

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives

Up to date information on the Council's response can be found on the SWT website:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/>

SWT Council priorities

Somerset West and Taunton Council's continuing priorities during the Coronavirus outbreak are to:

- Preserve critical services;
- Safeguard the public; and
- Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported.

The situation is being reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the Council follows the [latest advice from Public Health England](#).

Key Messages this week

1. Committee Meetings

At the SWT Council Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 26May, the following appointments were made for the 2020/21 Municipal Year:

- Chair of Council – Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey
- Vice Chair of Council – Cllr Simon Coles
- Chair of Scrutiny Committee – Cllr Gwil Wren

A number of meetings have been scheduled for June 2020, which are as follows:

- Wednesday 3 June – **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for questions has passed)
- Monday 8 June – **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Wednesday 3 June)
- Thursday 11 June – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 8 June)
- Monday 15 June – **Licensing Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Wednesday 10 June)
- Wednesday 17 June – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 12 June)
- Thursday 25th June – **Planning Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 22 June)

Public Participation:

The meetings will all be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences please visit the SWT website

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx>

If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Members of the public are still able to participate in the meeting by submitting their questions or statement to the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and these will be read out by an officer at the meeting. Please see above for deadline dates

2. NEW Discretionary Grant about to launch

On Friday 1 May the Government announced that they will be providing Councils with [additional funding](#) to enable them to provide financial support to small businesses which don't qualify for Small Business Fund and Retail Hospitality and Leisure Fund grant payments.

SWT is intending to start inviting applications for this scheme from **1 June 2020**.

SWT has been given limited funding from the Government to provide this grant and therefore it will be operated on a phased basis and may become oversubscribed quickly.

Once open, SWT will keep the number of applications received under review and will close the scheme at any point, if it feels the number of applications received may use up all of the funds available.

The Government has asked Councils to prioritise four business types. Therefore, the scheme will initially apply to the following types of businesses **only**;

- **Small businesses in shared spaces** that are not responsible for the payment of business rates (excludes working from home)
- **Regular market traders** with fixed property costs, such as rent/licence fees, who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- **Bed & Breakfasts** which pay Council Tax instead of business rates
- **Charity** properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for [Small Business Rate Relief](#) or [Rural Rate Relief](#).

Further details, and the application form, will be available on the [website](#) from 1 June.

Please note: If you have previously applied for the Small Business Grant or Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant and were unsuccessful, but wish to apply for this grant, you will be required to submit a new application under this scheme.

For more information, or to submit a grant request, please [click here](#).

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advice and Information page of our [website](#) also contains the latest links to wider advice, support and guidance for businesses. For more information and to sign up for the newsletter, please visit www.visitsomerset.co.uk/business

3. Illegal Encampments

SWT has issued the following press release today:

We are aware of a growing number of illegal encampments at prominent sites across Taunton.

Each and every case of illegal encampments puts the land owner in a very difficult position. We will attempt to regain possession of our land as soon as practical and there is a set legal process to follow

The practicalities of working through court proceedings during a pandemic means that the normal processes may take longer than usual.

We have made a visit to the illegal encampment on our land and we will work to find the balance between meeting the needs of those setting up an illegal encampment and the needs of those impacted by it.

That work is running alongside our legal efforts to seek possession of our land as soon as legally possible.

4. New Subscription Service Launched

To better support communications with residents, businesses and visitors, SWT has implemented a new subscription service on our [website](#). The subscription function allows visitors to our website to subscribe to particular topics of interest and these include:

1. Tourism and Events
2. Economic Development
3. News
4. Council Tax
5. Voluntary and Community Sector Newsletter

5. Restoring the Wellington Railway Station

The Department for Transport (DfT) has announced that Wellington station, closed in 1964, is now being considered as part of their "Restoring your Railway" scheme.

The reopening of Wellington and Cullompton stations is one of 10 bidders for the first round of the Government's Ideas Fund which have been successful.

The DfT will fund 75 per cent of costs up to £50,000 of successful proposals to help fund transport and economic studies and create a business case. Future funding to develop projects would be subject to agreement of the business case.

Please [click here](#) to read the full article.

6. Public consultation on Taunton's Debenhams building

With a consultation by the owners of Taunton's Debenhams building now live, the Council is asking the public to make sure they have their say. The council does not own the site, so any views on its future must be made at [19 to 26 North Street](#).

Please [click here](#) for the full news article.

7. Vivary Park Golf Course

Everyone Active has advised that the Vivary Park Golf Course re-opened on Saturday 23 May. Following Government permission to open golf courses, England Golf, the governing body has issued an official statement on how to comply with coronavirus guidelines whilst enjoying the sport. Please [click here](#) for further information.

8. SWP Sites and Services from 27 May 2020

All this week's pick-ups - recycling, rubbish, and garden waste - are one day later with an additional collection to take place on Saturday.

Recycling sites are back in action, with new materials - metals, engine oil, and cooking oil being taken. Sites are open and closed on the following temporary schedule:

- Friday 29 May 9am-6pm (even number plates only): Ten sites open, including **Minehead, Taunton and Wellington**
- **Dulverton and Williton** are closed.
- Saturday 30 May 9am-4pm (odd number plates only): all 16 sites open. Odd (01, 03, 29 etc.) - Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays only.
- Sunday 31 May 9am-4pm (even number plates only): all 16 sites open. Even (10, 20, 36 etc.) - Tuesdays, Fridays, Sundays only.
- **All sites closed Thursdays**

Please [click here](#) to see all other restrictions that will remain at SWP sites.

Queue cams at Bridgwater, Chard, Taunton and Yeovil can be viewed [here](#).

Expect queues and delays. If queuing, turn off engine, maintain social distance with those waiting, and then unload on site swiftly to let others take your place.

Urge others to follow @Somersetwaste on Facebook and Twitter. Sign up [here](#) to subscribe to e-news.

9. **SWT Public Toilets**

The public toilets in Vivary Park and Wellington Park are open daily from 0800-1800. All other SWT public toilets remain shut, however, this situation continues to be reviewed on a weekly basis.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

Highway Maintenance Update

In recent SWT newsletters SCC has reported on two major road closures that were being put in place to allow the resurfacing of two important footways in Williton: Long Street on the A39 Bridgwater Road and High Street on the A358 Taunton Road.

As readers may know, these are particularly difficult locations to work at due to the volumes of traffic running along them. However, SCC has managed to take advantage of the current quieter road conditions to bring these two schemes forward in the programme.

Long Street was completed on Thursday 21st May, a day earlier than planned. High Street was completed on Thursday 28th May, on schedule. SCC Highways would like to thank all residents and road users for their patience whilst work at these difficult locations was undertaken. There will now be much smoother conditions for pedestrians, wheelchair and pushchair users, which will be a great improvement.

The resurfacing of the carriageway of B3187 High Street in Wellington was successfully completed on Friday 22nd May. The surfacing crew are now working at the other side of the county in Wincanton. They will return to our area on 8th June to resurface the section of **A358 Staplegrove Roadthrough the Manor Road traffic lights**, another difficult location, for two weeks of evening road closures.

Church Street, Timberscombe is currently closed for drainage improvement work near Beasley Farm. Progress has been good and the road is likely to remain closed until 12th June. The new footway at **A358 Cross Keys, Norton Fitzwarren** (a Small Improvement Scheme, SIS) is progressing well with the works being protected by temporary traffic signals.

The cutting of grass verges on the rural "A" and "B" Class network is nearly complete. SCC will then move on to "C" and "D" roads. Carriageway surface dressing ("tar & chip") is progressing well elsewhere in the county and will be with us in the Somerset West and Taunton area shortly.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit the SCC Highways' website www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

SCC Highways are grateful for the continued support of the public whilst they undertake these necessary works.

Parking – On-street parking patrols are due to restart in Somerset on Monday 1 June following the easing of coronavirus restrictions.

With pupils returning to schools and some businesses starting to reopen, Somerset County Council's civil enforcement officers will return to help keep roads clear and traffic moving. [Readmore here](#)

HM Coast Guard Watchet

HM Coast Guard Watchet is carrying out more patrols over the half term week with various members of the team, working in shifts visiting the local beaches and sea fronts.

With the COVID lockdown restrictions easing they has been a dramatic rise in visitors to our beautiful coastline as more people take their exercise. Safety advice was given to several visitors who were unaware of some of the dangers on the coast including several sat dangling their legs over the edge of the cliffs at [Kilve Beach](#), as well as warning of the dangers of swimming in the Bristol Channel.

Whilst out on patrol the team replaced more Life Buoy Warning / Advice stickers incorporating the location grid reference as well as the [what3words](#) location. HMCG would like to remind those visiting the coast to consider where they park as over the Bank Holiday most car parks were very busy, with cars squeezing into any space and even partially obstructing beach access.

At Lilstock Beach the team found a car had parked alongside another, narrowing the passing point on the access road, and in an emergency would have slowed the emergency response and certainly would have stopped an ambulance or fire appliance access the beach to assist.

HMCG would urge everyone to park sensibly, don't block gates or access routes, and remember to keep social distancing when on the beaches and beauty spots. In a coastal emergency, remember to dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard. HM Coastguard. #ToSearchToRescueToSave

Community Support – What help is out there?

A Plea from Exmoor Young Voices to residents of West Somerset

Its 2020, we're in the middle of a global pandemic, and we don't know about you but we'd really struggle without the Internet right now! Times like these prove the importance of digital connectivity - not only for educational and work purposes but also for maintaining personal relationships and improving general well-being.

Unfortunately, not everyone in West Somerset has access to good broadband. Those of us out in the sticks are constantly battling a bad connection and then there are the increasing prices of broadband packages to contend with.

As an organisation, Exmoor Young Voices are keen to tackle the lack of digital connectivity, as part of their goal to prioritise young people on Exmoor. To do this, they need your help.

They need to know if the lack of digital connectivity is impacting your lives. Has it hindered your ability to access educational or work material during the pandemic? Does it make working-from-home out of the question?

Answer a quick 1 minute survey.

At this time, they are keen to hear from ALL RESIDENTS of West Somerset, not just Exmoor. Your answers will assist them to find ways (and potential funding opportunities) to improve digital connectivity in this part of the county.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/X2GPK3F>

Barclays Life Skills

SWT is linking with Barclays and their 'Thriving Local Communities' initiative. On their website they offer support for young people, families, working life, educators and business. Please [click here](#) for more information.

Schools, colleges and other organisations can get guidance on using the Life Skills content directly by contacting Barclays at barclayslifeskills@barclays.com

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

SWT is publishing an e-newsletter to support the phenomenal positive response and work of the voluntary and community sector across our district.

Please share this with all you contacts and encourage people to [subscribe](#).

If you know of a group in your ward who may benefit or have something to contribute then please send them our dedicated email; VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Health and Welfare

NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter

The new NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter will provide extra beds for patients with coronavirus symptoms, if needed.

The new NHS Nightingale Hospital, which is expected to be ready for the first patients, if needed, by June, will provide beds for patients in Devon, Cornwall and neighbouring counties to meet the care needs of those who are seriously unwell due to coronavirus.

The hospital will be hosted by the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust. It will be run as a system level model to ensure resilience across the Devon, Cornwall and wider South West region, with a sub-structure of geographically aligned clinical networks.

Please [click here](#) for more information and to view the virtual walkthrough.

Government Shielding Message

As we move into the Government's new phased approach to adjusting lockdown measures, we must make sure we continue to protect our health and care services and look after those who are most vulnerable in our community.

Somerset's caring communities are urged to keep up the good work and continue to be 'good neighbours' for residents continuing to shield. People who are currently shielding because of their age or an underlying health condition, have received further Government advice stating they need to continue to stay at home and avoid all non-essential face to face contact until **30 June** as they are the most vulnerable to the virus.

The exception is carers and healthcare workers who you must see as part of your medical care.

NHS Test and Trace: Workplace Guidance

On 28 May 2020 the Government announced details of the NHS test and trace: work place guidance. One of the important pieces of this guidance for employers is the advice that those who can work from home should continue to do so.

Please [click here](#) to see the full guidance.

New online portal available for coronavirus testing

Coronavirus is still circulating in Somerset so it is vital that people stay alert and self-isolate – with their household - if they develop symptoms.

The Government recently added a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste as a symptom. Therefore, the main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are now:

- High temperature - you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- New, continuous cough - you're coughing a lot for more than an hour, (or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste - you've noticed that you can't smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different from normal.

Most people with coronavirus (COVID-19) have at least one of these symptoms.

For advice about what to do if you have any of these symptoms, ring 111, or [use the 111 online coronavirus \(COVID-19\) service](#).

If you have the symptoms and you want to get tested, go through the new NHS portal to arrange a test. Please [click here](#) to go to the website

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

A single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs coronavirus-related support from their councils. The **0300 790 6275** number is available seven days per week 8am – 6pm.

Anyone who can't find help within their own local networks and volunteers, can use this number to get help and advice around:

- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Support for the homeless
- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Transport to medical appointments
- Waste collection and disposal
- Financial support

This number won't cover medical advice, for which people will need to continue to use the 111 NHS phone number if they cannot get help online.

Please refer to the websites below for the latest advice, help and guidance:

Links to the most up to date Government guidance as of 29May 2020 can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Public Health England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

[Help to protect yourself and your community - Public Health England](#)

NHS – Help and Advice

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS website](#)

[Advice about staying at home - NHS website](#)

FAQS

Q. I operate a business which has been affected by COVID-19 but I don't have any premises so I don't pay rates. Am I entitled to the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant?

A. No. Only businesses that are liable for Business Rates are eligible for this grant. You may, however be eligible to apply for the NEW Discretionary Business Grant which is available from the 1 June.

Q. I have seen people eating/drinking take away food/drink outside a business premises using the chairs and tables on the forecourt. Is this allowed?

A. No. Customers using the seating outside a business premises, is not consistent with the current coronavirus restrictions which only allow food/drink premises to serve take away. In this case, it is still being consumed 'on the premises', albeit, on the forecourt. If possible, the area should be roped off so it cannot be used and customers politely asked not to use it at the point of making the transaction.

Repeated breaches could result in loss of licence or other enforcement action being taken.

Q. How do I report service requests to SWT? (i.e: overgrown vegetation, tree concerns, abandoned vehicles etc.)

A. At the present time, SWT is concentrating its resources on the three main priorities which are to preserve critical services; safeguard the public; and ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported.

Please [click here](#) to report your concerns/ request for service via Firm Step and the Council will address these as soon as is practically possible.

Crime / Safeguarding

Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP)

Property closed over drugs & anti-social behaviour in Taunton

A three-month closure order has been granted for a premises in Duke Street, Taunton. Taunton Magistrates granted the closure on Friday 22 May. The court heard that the flat was linked to multiple reports of drug dealing and anti-social behaviour (ASB), with drug paraphernalia – including needles – being left in communal areas. Magistrates learned that people were coming and going from the address at all hours, even during lockdown.

The neighbourhood team has been working alongside the community to tackle the ongoing ASB associated with drugs misuse in the area. Local officers hope this order will have a positive impact and send a message that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

Police Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator Cerwyn Pritchard said: "We're now working closely with Somerset West and Taunton Council, the housing provider, to enable new tenants to occupy the property. I want to thank the members of the community who have supported this application by reporting incidents to us and the Council."

Don't survive lockdown only to become a different kind of statistic.

Kill your speed, don't let your speed kill you.

With the gradual relaxing of lockdown restrictions, police forces throughout the UK will be stepping up activity from May 25 to June 7 to remind motorists of the importance of travelling at a safe speed and within the speed limit.

You can follow A&SP on Twitter [@ASPRoadSafety](#) [#SlowDownSaveLives](#)

Finally

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the government](#).

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil)
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

If you have concerns about your own health and coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives