

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue13. Week ending 21/06/20

#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 updated priorities during the coronavirus outbreak are as follows:

- Preserve critical services;
- Safeguard the public;
- Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported; and
- Planning economic resilience and recovery

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. Reopening of the High Streets

SWT worked hard last week with shop-keepers, traders and business groups to prepare for the re-opening of the High Streets and retail centres, following the Government announcement that non-essential shops could re-open from **Monday 15 June**.

This week people flocked back to the county town. Long queues were seen in East Reach, and East Street was closed to traffic to assist with social distancing measures.

West Somerset's retailers have been able to welcome back shoppers for the first time since the start of lockdown this week. Residents headed back into town to make purchases from non-essential retailers able to open their doors for the first time in three months.

It has been a difficult period, with an area so reliant on tourism already missing a large chunk of the busiest part of the season, but there was certainly cautious optimism among traders and customers on Monday that this was a big step in the right direction.

SWT is following Government guidance and using money from the European Regional Development Fund for Reopening High Streets Safely to implement a range of measures to keep shoppers and staff safe. This includes signage that was distributed on Friday 12 June, messaging on posters, banners and social media reminding people about the importance of social distancing and hand washing. There are also regular deep cleaning regimes taking place.

SWT staff were at hand on the day to offer operational support and provide reassurance to businesses and customers whilst keeping everyone safe. Pinch points were noted, and pedestrianised one-way systems were put in place, where necessary.

Information and advice for business is freely available from SWT. You can contact the Economic Development team for help or advice at OpeningHighStreets@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

2. Discretionary Grant Extended

The criteria for the COVID-19 Discretionary Business Grant Scheme was widened on Monday 15 June. By 2pm on 17 June the overall figures for the scheme were as follows:

Taking out the applications that have been refused, and assuming remaining applications are all eligible, of the £2,128,250 originally available the potential total spend currently stands at £1,437,500, leaving £690,750 remaining in the fund.

The actual amount approved for payment so far is £882,000. The intention is to close the scheme once it appears that the applications are likely to use up all of the available funds. 319 claims have been received to date (48 of which have been under the wider criteria).

The revised criteria now includes early years child care providers who are in receipt of nursery discount, and an increase in the rateable value eligibility limit from £51,000 to £120,000, which will benefit some larger businesses who have missed out on the Small Business Grant Fund or the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund schemes. To qualify organisations must have fixed property-related costs of at least £200 per calendar month and be able to demonstrate they have experienced a significant fall in income as a consequence of COVID-19 (other conditions also apply).

SWT continues to promote the scheme widely through both broad and [targeted communications](#).

The criteria and application process is accessible from the Council's COVID-19 page by clicking on '[New Discretionary Business Grant](#)'.

3. DEMOCRATIC/GOVERNANCE

Executive

There has been a change of personnel on the Executive with Cllr Sarah Wakefield becoming the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.

So the Executive now consists of:

- Leader of the Council – Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts
- Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communications and Culture – Cllr Benet Allen
- Portfolio Holder for Community – Cllr Chris Booth
- Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources – Cllr Ross Henley
- Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development - Cllr Marcus Kravis
- Portfolio Holder for Sport, Parks and Leisure – Cllr Richard Lees
- Portfolio Holder for Climate Change – Cllr Peter Pilkington
- Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation – Cllr Mike Rigby
- Portfolio Holder for Housing – Cllr Francesca Smith
- Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services – Cllr Sarah Wakefield

Licensing Committee

At the Licensing Committee meeting on Monday 15 June the following appointments were made:

Chair of Licensing Committee – Cllr Mark Lithgow

Vice-Chair of Licensing Committee – Cllr Janet Lloyd

Planning Committee

The next virtual Planning Committee meeting takes place on Thursday 25 June at 1pm.

Two applications are being considered relating to the areas of Norton Fitzwarren and Minehead

Public Participation:

The meeting 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.

The deadline for public questions or statements for the Planning Committee meeting is 4pm on Monday 22 June

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

SWT Councillors are reminded that if they do not wish to receive paper copies of agendas to please let the Governance Team know.

4. **Blue Anchor Bay Sea Defences**

Following a planned inspection alongside Environment Agency Officers SWT has discovered an issue with the sea defence wall to the east of the slipway onto the beach at the eastern end of Blue Anchor Bay.

The wall in question forms part of the historic sea defences for the cliffs in this area and in turn for the Blue Anchor Bay Hotel and the Watchet to Blue Anchor Road. You may already be aware that Somerset County Council, as Highways Authority, are currently developing a scheme to provide enhanced sea defence works in this area and in doing so to save the road 'in situ'.

It is not unusual for the level of the beach to change through the natural forces of tide and waves, and over the winter of 19/20 it appears a great deal of beach material has been lost from this area, thus exposing the base of the wall. Our inspection discovered a number of significant holes in the base and a large 'void' behind the wall where material has been washed out – at this stage it's impossible to tell whether the holes and void are linked.

SWT is working with the Environment Agency to quickly address these issues as to do nothing risks a further fall of the unstable cliffs above the wall, which in turn would cost significantly more to repair. Our plan is to fill both the void and the holes with concrete/grout and ensure that no further tidal/wave action can act on the void (through the holes). SWT is carrying out these works under our Coastal Protection responsibilities and this work began on Friday 12 June, as time was very much of the essence.

It is timely to remind everyone that the Watchet Sea Defence works have not been forgotten. SWT has an agreed solution and contractors on standby. We are awaiting the required permissions from the Marine Management Organisation and once these have been received works will begin and it's our intention to complete these works in late summer/autumn this year.

5. **Monkton Heathfield Garden Community Consultation**

SWT wants you to help shape the future of a key development site in the Taunton Garden Town. Members of the public are being encouraged to have their say on how the new **Monkton Heathfield Garden Community (MH2)** should be designed, and the different ways green infrastructure, including open spaces and areas for tree planting, could be achieved.

The Monkton Heathfield Policy area is a key part of the adopted Core Strategy for Taunton. The new draft Framework Plan shows the suite of development sites and related proposals around Monkton Heathfield.

A public consultation on the Concept Plan and Design Guide for the Monkton Heathfield Garden Community started on Monday and will run until **Friday 10 July**.

Please [click here](#) for the full SWT press release.

Please [click here](#) to have your say on the proposals.

6. Minehead Seafront ready for the Summer Season

SWT's open spaces and maintenance teams have been busy making Minehead seafront welcoming for residents and visitors as part of its commitment to coastal communities. The Council has taken on maintenance of the newly planted seafront which also has two new play areas. Sand removal started on the 15 June from the pavements and esplanade ready for the return of tourists as lockdown restrictions are gradually eased. The teams have also started to plant the flower beds and put hanging baskets out using bedding plants produced at the Council's own nursery.

To read the press release in full please [click here](#).

7. SWT Marks Armed Forces Day

SWT is commemorating Armed Forces Day on Saturday 27 June in a socially distanced format. The Council traditionally holds flag raising ceremonies to show its support for the Armed Forces community from currently serving troops to service families, veterans and cadets. However, in light of the current social distancing guidance it will be taking a slightly different approach to mark the annual event in 2020.

The Armed Forces Day flags will still be flown at both the Taunton and Williton offices from Monday 22 June but SWT will not be hosting flag raising ceremonies. Instead, the Council is producing a series of short videos to be shared on its social media feeds in the lead up to and on Armed Forces Day.

Please [click here](#) to read SWT press release.

More information on the #saluteourforces campaign can be found [here](#).

8. How to Report Fly-Tipping to SWT

Fly-tipping – dumping rubbish - is an environmental crime. If you fly-tip you can be fined or jailed. It's a blot on our landscape and a threat to wildlife. We can all fight fly-tipping by reporting dumped rubbish and, if possible, who dumped it. Everyone, including businesses, must be responsible for how they get rid of rubbish, even when it's left your home or premises. If you pay someone to remove your rubbish i.e. a man-with-a-van, builders, gardeners, carpet-layers or others - ask to see their waste carrier's licence, and make sure you know where your rubbish will go. If you don't you could be fined.

To report fly-tipping please use our report fly-tipping online form by [clicking here](#) or by phoning **0300 304 8000**. You will need the following information to proceed:

- the location and type of fly-tipping
- Photo(s) of the location to help us find it (if you can)

We may need to contact you for more information, so if you provide your contact details it will help us deal with the report.

9. Coal Orchard, Taunton Car Park Closed

As part of the ongoing Coal Orchard development the car park was due for closure in the latter part of the project. However, SWT's commitment to provide sustainable solutions had led to the surface water drainage system changing to a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) solution. This project change would have meant bringing the car park closure works forward earlier in the project to this side of Christmas resulting in no parking over the festive period. In order to avoid disruption at that crucial time of year the decision has been made to close the car park now. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. To support the reopening of the high streets, alternative SWT owned car parks remain free to use.

10. SWP Sites and Services

As SWP sites move towards business as usual after COVID-19 closures, please take full advantage of kerbside recycling, rubbish and garden waste collections. Unless you really need to (they will, temporarily, be landfilled), do not bring any materials you can recycle kerbside.

SWP sites are gradually widening what items they will accept on a step by step basis. This is dependent on the success of social distancing and site logistics. At the present time, SWP is still not taking the following, so please store; Tetra Paks/beverage cartons; cardboard; batteries; printer cartridges; light bulbs; textiles; clothes and shoes.

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.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) Highway Maintenance Update

Last week was once again a very busy week. SCC completed the resurfacing of A358 Staplegrove Road through the Manor Road traffic lights near Staplegrove Post Office and also delivered a number of challenging surface dressing sites.

The new footway at A358 Cross Keys, Norton Fitzwarren (a Small Improvement Scheme, SIS) was also completed.

SCC would particularly like to thank the residents and the travelling public of Somerset West and Taunton for their patience and support whilst they delivered these schemes. Particular ones to highlight were: A3065 Silk Mills Road, Bishops Hull; A39 Minehead Road, Selworthy; A358 Minehead Road, West Bagborough; B3224 Willet Hill, Elworthy; Huish Champflower to Sperry Cross, Upton; and B3187 Milverton Road, Langford Budville. The surface dressing operation achieves good results in a short period of time but it does this by using a lot of large, high-productivity machinery and vehicles. There is also a large, mobile workforce to support this operation and carry out all the various tasks. Not an easy job so SCC would like to thank all concerned.

One negative point was the vehicle incursion into the closed road section whilst SCC were working at Staplegrove Road. The driver avoided the signs and barriers by driving on the verge. SCC had gatekeepers in position too and they were also ignored. The driver was only stopped by a second row of barriers immediately before the work site. One can appreciate that this was very irresponsible behaviour and endangered both the workforce and the driver. Readers may have seen the publicity that SCC carried out in the media highlighting this incident with the aim of improving road safety.

One of the challenges in the early part of last week was surface dressing the roads whilst avoiding all the showers and spells of rain. This was successfully done until the heavy rain on Thursday curtailed operations for the week. A better forecast this coming week should allow SCC to complete the programme, with the last few schemes being in the **Upton/Brompton Regis area: Hansetown Lane; Ruggs Hill to Venne Cross; Storridge Lane; and Hartford Lane.**

The heavy rain resulted in significant flooding and there was a major landslip onto the B3227 Wiveliscombe Road just to the east of Milverton. This closed the road for a number of days and it was a major operation to remove the debris and stabilise the situation before the road could be re-opened.

On to more routine tasks: rural verge cutting continues along the "C" and "D" road network.

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

Emergency Road Closure: East Street, Fore Street, Taunton

Reference: Fore Street and East Street - COVID-19

Please be aware that to facilitate social distancing and aid pedestrianisation in shopping areas, an emergency road closure at **East Street and Fore Street, Taunton** for

approximately 407 metres, commenced on **Monday 15 June 2020** at **00:00** and is expected to last until **Sunday 5 July 2020** at **23:59**.

Please [click here](#) to view a map of the affected area (in red), together with the recommended diversion route (in purple) is shown below, along with the link to One.Network.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue (D&SFR)

New fire safety advice for businesses re-opening after Covid-19 lockdown

D&SFRS is asking local businesses planning to re-open with new social distancing measures, to consider how any changes made to the way their premises operates may impact existing fire safety arrangements.

As the country moves into the planned recovery phase and social distancing measures continue, businesses will be making changes to ensure a safe environment for staff and customers.

One of the challenges is around reducing the risk of transmission of coronavirus (Covid-19) by limiting the number of people on the premises. This may include:

- introducing shift patterns for staff;
- creating one-way systems for staff or shoppers; and
- preventing access to parts of the premises which remain unoccupied.

It is important that persons identified as having a responsibility for fire safety under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 make sure any measures implemented to limit the spread of Covid-19 do not inadvertently impact fire safety.

Where there are new or temporary measures, the premises' fire safety arrangements must remain suitable and sufficient to protect people in the event of a fire.

The fire service cannot do this for you, but to help business and business owners meet their statutory duties under fire safety law, D&SFRS have produced the following [advice](#).

Community Support – What help is out there?

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

Free Dr Bike sessions for key workers as part of the 'Big Bike Revival'

Recent weeks have seen a surge in cycling. To help key workers take to two wheels, Taunton Area Cycling Campaign is organising two Dr Bike sessions where a qualified bike mechanic from On Your Bike will check your bike over for you.

The dates:

Tuesday 21 July 10am -2pm at Musgrove Hospital for hospital staff.

Tuesday 28 July 11am -1pm at CICCIC, Paul Street, Taunton in the garden facing Billetfield, open to all key workers.

This project is funded by the Department for Transport as part of Big Bike Revival. The sessions are completely free but you do need to book a quarter hour slot for your bike.

Please [click here](#) for further information and to make your booking.

Health and Welfare

Loneliness Awareness Week 15-19 June 2020

Marmalade Trust is a charity that started Loneliness Awareness Week (LAW) four years ago. The Trust recognises that loneliness is something likely to affect us all and their aim is to help people to make new connections and to create a society where anyone can talk freely and openly about loneliness.

Last year Marmalade Trust had over 300 organisations across the UK partnering with them to raise awareness, support people to find friendship by hosting events and raise money to help the Trust do more, and this year, their campaign is set to be even bigger!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of face-to-face events the Trust is hosting a virtual campaign called 'One Less Lonely Voice'. They are taking the 'one' out of loneliness, to signify one less lonely voice. Their aim is to empower everyone to understand loneliness one conversation at a time.

By building on our understanding, we can all help ourselves and others to manage feelings of loneliness. To join the conversation, please [click here](#).

#LetsTalkLoneliness

Men's Health Week

Take action on COVID-19 is the theme for this year's Men's Health Week.

Somerset County Council has published some useful resources and opportunities for everyone to share to promote men's health on a local and national level.

Please [click here](#) to find a full list of helpline information.

With Father's Day this Sunday, some of you maybe meeting up with family that you haven't seen for many weeks, which will be lovely, but some of you may be thinking of family and friends who are no longer here to celebrate this day with.

We would encourage you to reach out to friends or colleagues who you know maybe suffering, and let's start to break the stigma of mental health.

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. Should I wear a face covering when I'm out in public spaces?

A. The Government announced that, from Monday 15 June, in England it will be mandatory to wear face coverings when travelling on public transport. In addition, hospital staff, outpatients and visitors to a clinical setting must wear facecoverings. This is in line with new [World Health Organization \(WHO\) advice](#). When out and about, please remember to wear a face covering within enclosed spaces, and if you find yourself unable to keep 2 metres from others.

Q. What can I do under the new Government legislation?

- A.** From Monday 15 June lockdown restrictions are continuing to ease across the UK as the number of coronavirus infections drops nationally. In England, a variety of non-essential shops and services will reopen under conditions that adhere to social distancing measures; however, pubs, restaurants and hairdressers will remain shut until at least July.

Secondary schools can start reopening, with pupils in Year 10 and 12 able to get some face-to-face time with teachers before the summer holidays.

Churches and other places of worship will be open for private, individual prayer.

Adults living alone, or single parents with children under 18, can now spend the night at another household and create a "support bubble". People may not switch between bubbles once they have been established and the scheme does not apply to vulnerable people who have extended their shielding until 30 June.

Crime / Safeguarding

Domestic Violence

Analysis of survey on Domestic Abuse and Homelessness in rural areas during lockdown

The Rural Services Network carried out a survey on the potential impact of domestic abuse during COVID-19 and lockdown. Responses were received from 92 organisations, predominantly comprising Local Authorities, but also from Housing Associations, charitable organisations, and police forces.

The Rural Services Network, is a member of the DEFRA Rural Impact Stakeholder Forum which meets each week to share information from rural areas and communities. These results have therefore been shared with DEFRA, who can then share as appropriate with other government departments.

For your information, please [click here](#) for the press release and to read the full report. (PDF Attached).

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

Attachment:

Domestic Violence & homelessness in rural areas PDF document