

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 19. Week ending 02/08/20

#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. Deane House Hub to Reopen For Appointments Only

The health and safety of SWT staff and residents remains a top priority but there is an understanding that there will be circumstances when people need a one to one service. Consequently, SWT is following advice from Public Health England to maintain social distancing and implement safe working practices while gradually reintroducing services. Therefore, from **Monday 3 August**, Deane House will be open for appointments only.

You will remember that SWT closed the offices in March to protect the community and staff while still delivering critical services and ensuring residents were fully supported. The Customer Services team are continuing to answer calls on **0300 304**

8000 between 8am – 6pm, and customers are being encouraged to access services [online](#). However, when a face to face meeting is the only way to solve an issue appointments, please call Customer Services on the number listed above.

All visitors and staff will be required to **wear a mask, unless exempt**, and follow **social distancing guidelines**. Staff manning the interview rooms will be wearing face visors rather than masks to make communication easier, minimising any impact on visitors with a hearing impairment.

2. Taunton to host innovative electric vehicle charging project

Taunton residents will be able to enjoy free electric vehicle (EV) charging as part of an innovative new project that is being hosted in the town.

Local electricity operator Western Power Distribution (WPD) has confirmed that Taunton will be the site for the pioneering DC Share project due to site suitability and the proactive engagement of the local councils.

The project is trialling new technology which harnesses spare capacity in local substations to power EV chargers quickly at a lower cost for consumers. The project, a first for the UK, could help deliver an estimated 217,000 EV chargers in urban spaces across WPD's licence area by 2023. The scheme aims to get over 110,000 EVs moving across the South West by 2023.

The trial will use smart technology to unlock spare electrical capacity from across Taunton to power 15 rapid EV chargers. This will include five chargers which are intended to fully recharge the average electric vehicle in around 30 minutes.

Following site confirmation, work will now begin preparing the local plans for the EV charge stations in central Taunton. With building work scheduled throughout 2021, the charge points are due to be available for public use by the spring of 2022.

Throughout the trial, local residents will enjoy 12 months of free electric vehicle charging. Following the conclusion of the project, the EV charge stations will be passed on to a local service provider so that visitors and residents can continue to reap the benefits of this increasingly essential low carbon infrastructure.

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

See [here](#) for more information on the DC Share project.

3. More Free High Street Webinars

A further series of webinars are being held next week to give local businesses, members of the community, shoppers and visitors a chance to share their ideas and views on what the high streets should look like, what type of 'offer' they should have post COVID-19; and what businesses need in order to adapt, recover and flourish. During July, SWT consulted with the three main town centres, of Minehead,

Wellington and Taunton. Now it is keen to hear from neighbourhood retail centres in Wiveliscombe, Watchet, Dulverton, Dunster and Porlock.

The webinars will focus on two discussions -

- What do businesses and the Town Centres need to help them to stay open urgently in the next 12 months?
- Reimagining our high streets - How should the high streets be shaped, what they should look like, what the offer should be in the future?

Places can be booked using this [Eventbrite link](#) - joining instructions will be sent nearer the time:

Watchet	(Monday 3 August at 6pm)
Wiveliscombe	(Tuesday 4 August at 6pm)
Dulverton	(Wednesday 5 August at 6pm)
Porlock	(Thursday 6 August at 6pm)
Dunster	(Friday 7 August at 6pm)

If you are unable to make these events and have any views that you would like to share with SWT please email them to Openinghighstreets@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

4. Democracy and Governance

Committee Meetings

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

August Committee meetings

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

- Wednesday 5 August – **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm – **NOW CANCELLED**
- Thursday 6 August – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 3 August). Applications are being considered relating to the areas of Oake, Milverton, Ruishton and Stogumber.
- Monday 10 August – **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for questions or statements is 4pm on Wednesday 5 August)
- Wednesday 19 August – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 14 August)
- Thursday 20 August – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 17 August)

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 by [clicking here](#). 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 the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

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

5. Last chance to apply for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant

To date SWT has processed 3418 claims amounting to **£40,576,751**. This equates to 87.6% of those eligible, which is in line with the national trend and other neighbouring Somerset authorities.

SWT has received confirmation from the Government that expects final payments to have been made by Friday 28 August, so will, therefore, cease accepting new applications from **Friday 14 August** in order to allow time for processing by the cut off. The Government will expect any remaining unspent funds to be returned.

These grants, which are non-repayable, could provide a vital lifeline for businesses to survive and prosper as restrictions begin to ease. They have proved invaluable to so many of our local businesses so SWT wants to make sure that everyone who is eligible to claim has a chance to do so before the scheme closes.

SWT is writing to all businesses that it believes are eligible to encourage them to apply and has also asked members to reach out to any business in their ward that they think may be able to benefit.

Eligible businesses that have not previously claimed will be able to make a claim up until **5pm on Friday 14 August**.

Please [click here](#) for further details or to make a claim.

6. The Discretionary Grant Scheme(Now Closed)

The Discretionary Grant Scheme for those that did not qualify for other Covid-19 schemes has now closed. SWT will continue to process applications in the order they were received and expects to have distributed a further **£2,128,250** to approximately 350 businesses.

7. Paul Street Car Park

SWT will reopen levels 2 and 2A of the Paul Street Car Park in Taunton from 8am on Monday 3 August.

This will provide an additional 37 car parking spaces for Blue Badge holders and 67 general use spaces, and will enable the Shopmobility Taunton service to resume.

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-opens-more-levels-at-paul-street-car-park/>

8. Are your voter registration details up to date?

Local residents are being warned not to lose their voice on decisions that affect them by making sure their electoral registration details are up to date.

SWT is legally required to undertake an annual canvass of all residential properties in the area to ensure its Electoral Register is up to date so that eligible residents can take part in any elections.

The Electoral Services team has made the decision to contact all households across the district by post this year due to the challenging public health situation. The correspondence will be addressed to the occupier and includes full details of the steps to take.

If amendments are needed to voter details this can be done simply and safely [online](#) using the unique security code provided in the letter. If there are no changes this can be confirmed online or by Freephone or text.

It takes just five minutes to check the details, and either confirm they are correct, or update them. For more detailed information visit our [webpage](#).

9. SWP Recycle More to be Rolled Out

After successful trials in 2014, the Somerset Waste Board has approved plans to introduce a new Recycle More service in Somerset. At the beginning of April, 2020, Suez replaced Kier as SWP's waste and recycling collection contractor with a commitment to bringing in the new service.

As existing services return to 'normal' following COVID-19, the Board considered a proposed Recycle More roll-out timetable which will start with Mendip in October this year.

Key features of Recycle More:

- Expanded weekly kerbside recycling, notably adding plastic pots, tubs and trays.
- All households to receive a new recycling container – a 'bright blue bag'.
- Three weekly rubbish collections - as more recycling means more space in bins.

- New collection days for many households.

Please note: The new service will be introduced area by area so SWP's five depots can be upgraded to handle thousands of tonnes of extra recycling. This means Recycle More will not reach some parts of the county for some time and until it arrives it is important that people continue to recycle as they do now.

Please find attached a 'Bite-sized Briefing Pack' that provides more detail about Recycle More.

Please [click here](#) for more information,

Urge others to follow [@Somersetwaste](#) on Facebook and Twitter.

Sign up [here](#) to subscribe to e-news.

10. Reminder - BT Phone Box Removal Consultation

Last week SWT reported on BT's proposal to remove 23 payphones across the District due to them not being used enough. BT is proposing to remove them under a 90 day consultation process that is due end on **Friday 28 August 2020 at 12 noon**.

SWT welcomes your feedback on whether the payphones are still needed and would appreciate your help. **All responses are required whether you wish to accept or reject the closure of the payphone. Please email your responses to governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.**

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

Highway Maintenance Update

SCC Highways is currently focusing on the routine tasks of gully emptying, safety defect repairs and patching. You may well also see the carriageway surface dressing team out and about, carrying out aftercare tasks on the dressings that were laid in June.

Rural verge cutting on the "C" and "D" road networks is approaching completion and SCC will be starting the second cut on the "A" and "B" roads in the first week in August. More information on this can be found on the [Travel Somerset website](#).

Following on from SCC's item in Edition No.16, if you should spot any ragwort out on the highway verges then please [click here](#) to report it.

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

Business Survey Launched

Somerset's five local authorities are undertaking a joint business survey to assess the impacts of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on the economy. It went live on Friday 24 July and can be found [here](#). It will close on **Friday 14 August**.

Prepared with input from stakeholders across the county, including the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses, the survey will provide vital intelligence to help support local business response and recovery work.

To read more please [click here](#).

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support Fortnightly Newsletter Edition 14 OUT NOW!

SWT continues to produce a fortnightly e-newsletter to support the work of the voluntary and community sector across the district.

SWT would welcome your feedback on the frequency, or even need, for such a newsletter as we move into August. It would be great to hear your thoughts - please email: VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk Thank you.

Fix your Bike Voucher Scheme: apply for a voucher

If you are a keen cyclist and have an old bike gathering dust at home, you can apply for a £50 voucher to get it repaired. The Fix your Bike Voucher Scheme is a Government initiative that has been set up to encourage more people to embrace cycling, boost the number of commuting and leisure trips, and promote an alternative to public transport, while social distancing measures are in place.

It also aims to help reduce the number of short journeys made by private cars.

The scheme is open to anyone in England who has an unused cycle in need of a repair. However, as there are a limited number of vouchers available, please consider the needs of others before applying for a voucher.

Vouchers can only be used with bike repairers or mechanics that are registered for the scheme in England, and up to two vouchers can be claimed per household.

A full list of terms and conditions and eligibility criteria is provided when you register.

How the scheme works

From 11.45pm on Tuesday 28 July 2020, find a Fix your Bike Voucher Scheme-registered bike mechanic to repair your bike using [Energy Saving Trust's map of participating bike shops and mechanics](#).

Please [click here](#) to apply for a £50 voucher.

Over £1m raised for Somerset Coronavirus Fund

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal, launched by local charity Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) in late March of this year, has grown to **over £1 million** *[correct as at 29/07/2020]* thanks to generous contributions made to the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal by local individuals, charitable trusts and businesses, as well as funding from the national appeal, run by The National Emergencies Trust (NET).

Donations to the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal are providing grants of up to £10,000 to groups delivering frontline support to help local communities recover from the impact of the coronavirus outbreak and reduce disadvantage. Grants of over £500,000 have already been awarded to more than 180 local good causes across the county, including food deliveries for older people, online counselling, activity packs for disadvantaged children and support for struggling families.

Please [click here](#) to view a map which allows you to explore the grants awarded in Somerset so far. Each blue dot represents a grant. Larger dots are larger grants and smaller dots are smaller grants. You can click on a dot to find out who was awarded the grant, how much they received, and what it's being used for. Remember that some groups are based in a particular location but work over a larger area.

SCF is passionate about doing as much as possible to support communities, and is encouraging local people, businesses, charitable trusts and organisations who feel able to donate to the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal by clicking [here](#).

Any groups wishing to apply should visit the SCF website where they can find guidance on how [to make an application](#).

Health and Welfare

Boots Pharmacy Consultation Rooms become safe spaces for victims of domestic abuse

Beginning in May, Boots UK announced that it was working in partnership with the charity Hestia and its 'UK SAYS NO MORE' campaign to offer victims of domestic abuse access to safe spaces in Boots pharmacy consultation rooms across its 2,400 stores.

Once inside the consultation room, victims can contact specialist domestic abuse services for support and advice, including information on Hestia's Bright Sky app, which saw an increase of 47% in downloads during lockdown.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone.

Support is available:

- If you are in immediate danger dial 999
- Call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline (Freephone. 24/7) 0808 2000 247
- Call the Men's Advice Line on 0808 801 0327
- Download the free mobile app, Bright Sky to find your local specialist domestic abuse service. You will find support and information should you find yourself in an abusive relationship or if you have concerns about someone you know.

Important Information for Travelling Abroad

The guidance for travelling abroad remains the same but further Government restrictions now apply to Spain.

You may have seen in the news that **Spain has been removed from travel corridors exemption** list. Therefore if you arrive in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland from Spain on or after 26 July 2020 you will need to self-isolate.

As a result:

- People already in Spain can stay for the remainder of their holiday and will have to self-isolate upon return for 2 weeks (includes Canary Islands and Balearic Islands)
- Advice against all but essential travel to mainland Spain (does not include Canary islands and Balearic Islands)

If you are affected by this new guidance please contact your employer as soon as it is reasonably practical to discuss your self-isolation and possible alternative working methods.

For a full list of countries where people do not have to self-isolate when arriving to the UK [click here](#).

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 Covid-19 guidance can be found here

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

[Public Health England](#)

[NHS – Help and Advice](#)

FAQS

Q. Can I get an antibody test if I believe I've had COVID-19?

A. An antibody test is a blood test to check if you've had coronavirus (COVID-19) before; however, it's not widely available yet. It's currently offered to NHS and care staff, as well as some hospital patients and care home residents. This will help show who has had the virus and how it is spreading in the UK.

Home antibody test kits are not currently recommended, as it has not been confirmed if they're safe and reliable yet. You can pay for a test to be done at a private clinic if you want to.

Q. Can we hold our summer outdoor entertainment, such as live music gigs or summer fêtes/festivals?

A. It is currently against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces). Businesses and venues following COVID-19 secure guidelines can host larger groups for events taking place in public outdoor spaces that are organised by businesses, charitable or political organisations, and public bodies, provided they take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of transmission, in line with COVID-19 secure guidance and including completion of a risk assessment.

The Prime Minister announced on Friday 31 July that plans to reopen higher-risk settings from 1 August will be postponed for at least a fortnight.

That means that, until 15 August at the earliest:

- Casinos, bowling alleys, skating rinks and remaining close contact services must remain closed;
- Indoor performances will not resume;
- Pilots of larger crowds in sports venues and conference centres will not take place; and
- Wedding receptions of up to 30 people will not be permitted, but ceremonies can continue to take place, in line with COVID-Secure guidelines.

In addition, the government will extend the requirement to wear a face covering to other indoor settings such as museums, galleries, cinemas and places of worship. This will become enforceable in law from 8 August.

The national pause on shielding will continue as planned. At this stage, the government is not changing the rules on social contact nationally.

Full details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-31-july-2020>

Crime / Safeguarding

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Police face busy weekend with almost 5,000 calls

The increasing demand on police resources as lockdown restrictions ease was again evident over the weekend with almost 5,000 calls to the control room.

Between 8pm on Friday 24 July and 8am on Monday 27 July, police arrested 141 people who were taken into custody.

A&SP received almost 2,000 emergency 999 calls from the public and a further 2,976 non-emergency 101 calls. Of those, 896 were graded as requiring an immediate deployment and a further 963 were classified as 'priority' jobs.

To read the full press release including a statement from the Chief Constable Andy Marsh, please [click here](#).

Police Crime Statistics for Your Area

A&SP have recently added the crime statistics for each beat area to their website, so you can find out for yourself what crimes have been recorded in the neighbourhood where you live, and who the local beat officers are.

By [clicking this link](#) and then inputting your address, it should take you to the relevant page on the website. You can send your local beat team a message by filling out the online form.

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

Attachments:

SWP Members Briefing launch decision

Bite Sized Recycle More Briefing