

# Somerset West and Taunton

## Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

### Issue 2. Week ending 05/04/20

**#StayAtHome    #ProtectTheNHS    #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](#).

There has been some ground-breaking work taking place across all the Council services this week, as we come to the end of Week 2 of the Government lockdown. With even the best laid plans needing last minute changes given the fast pace of this virus, staff remain competent and flexible, willing to be at hand, at all times of the day to serve and undertake duties that support all those both living and working within our wider communities. Redeployment of staff and resources is considered on a daily basis to ensure that we preserve our critical services and to ensure our most vulnerable people and local businesses are protected and supported during this unprecedented time.

## **Key Messages this week**

### **1. Accommodation for rough sleepers**

The Council and its partners have been working to identify and provide self-contained accommodation for rough sleepers and tenants of homeless hostels who find it difficult to self-isolate and social distance, within their current environment. The government recognises rough sleepers as particularly vulnerable to coronavirus and we are doing all we

can to provide suitable accommodation quickly, that will enable them to keep safe during this outbreak.

As of Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April rough sleepers and tenants of homeless hostels will move into Canonsgrove to keep safe during this outbreak.

The Bridgwater and Taunton College have offered use of their Canonsgrove halls of residence in Trull, and the YMCA, Dulverton Group, have at short notice, stepped in to manage this site on the Council's behalf as well as making their Beach Hotel in Minehead available. We will provide the residents with three meals a day and support services tailored for their needs. Arc, who manage Lindley House on East Reach, Taunton, will also be supporting us to speak with their tenants to encourage them to move to Canonsgrove. Unfortunately, the design of Lindley House makes self-isolation and social distancing a major challenge to continue with the current number of tenants in this building.

The Council has been working with a whole range of other organisations at very short notice who continue to donate their time and support to make all of this possible and to ensure the new residents of Canonsgrove will receive the right support once they move in. These include Raft, the Salvation Army, Open Door, Turning Point, Arc and many statutory bodies. We are also very grateful for the generosity of the local church and their response. TrullParish Council has been notified of our plans, but pressing urgency did not allow consultation in this instance.

Simon Lewis, Head of Customer has sent the residents of Trull living near Canonsgrove a letter to offer reassurance that every possible step is being taken to address important health and safety, security and operational matters relating to this situation. The facility will be fully and appropriately staffed from YMCA and SWT Council 24 hours a day, and the Police and other supporting agencies are fully involved in the initiative. Every practical measure is being taken to enable those being based there to self-isolate and/or adopt full social distancing guidelines.

## **2. Parish Data Sheets and Community Led Action**

SWT is using the data sheets from the Parish Councils to identify how the vulnerable are being supported within their communities. We have had a good response from the parishes but some data sheets have yet to be returned. Can the parishes please remit their forms to [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk) SWT will be using them to share knowledge, prevent duplication of services and identify where there are gaps.

We are working alongside the other public sector organisations, including village agents, charities and community groups to provide help and advice. This information will be an invaluable tool, once the hubs are launched and the helpline is operational.

## **3. Disruption to Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) services**

SWP are working hard with partners and contractors to keep services going, with collection crews classed as key workers providing an essential service.

- Suspended - all garden waste collections until further notice. Subscribers are advised to leave the waste in their green bin until collections resume.
- Suspended - new requests for bins, recycling boxes and food waste caddies. Teams will try to deliver those already ordered, but no new requests will be accepted for the time being.
- Suspended – bulky waste collections.

***Update: Coronavirus-related staff shortages mean that if recycling collections are missed, we cannot make return pick-ups. If you are missed, do not leave containers out or report it; take everything in and put it out again the following week. To help crews: rinse containers, squash all but glass and aerosols, flatten and tear up card, sort-segregate materials without using carrier bags, and put out by 7am. All food waste must go in the food waste bin.***

Coronavirus is affecting the delivery of many key projects. Unfortunately, this includes the roll-out of the new Recycle More service which will eventually allow people to recycle more from their kerbside, notably considerably more plastic. SWP and contractor staff are focussed on maintaining essential services, which means they are unable to prepare for what is a big change to the way they work. SWP will develop a new timetable and roll-out the new service out as soon as possible once the current crisis is over.

For further advice about safe disposal of waste please refer to the SWP website. Please check [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus) and follow @somersetwaste on Twitter and Facebook for the latest service updates

#### **4. Small Business Grant Fund, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.**

There has been a very good response to the offer of help from the various grants launched in response to COVID-19, with over 200 local businesses registering for the fund within 48 hours of the online form being launched. The business rate grant form is now live on the SWT website and can be accessed from the following link:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/business-rates/business-grants-covid-19-response/>

SWT have advised business stakeholder contacts, publicised this via social media as well as writing to all businesses which they believe might qualify for these grants.

If you have any questions about the form or the grants themselves, please contact our Revenues team by email

[brgrants@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:brgrants@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

There has been a significant increase in coronavirus related frauds. Information has been added to the Council's coronavirus webpage to assure businesses that:

- SWT will not cold call you to ask for your bank details or business rate account number over the phone or by email
- Do not provide this information to anyone claiming to be from the Council or acting on behalf of the council

- We have not employed any external companies to assist with Business Rates Grants, this is a process that we are completing ourselves
- Only use official forms on our website [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk) for providing this information

## 5. Council Meetings

The Government have now produced the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels Regulations 2020 and these come into effect from Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020. From this date Councils can legally hold virtual meetings to transact any items of business.

For more information on the Regulations at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/392/contents/made>

In terms of SWT meetings we are looking to hold meetings virtually and are currently considering a revised schedule of meetings. Before we go live with a meeting we plan to test our kit and provide Councillors with training.

## 6. Taunton BID – suspension of ballot

For more information on this story please read the following article

<https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/18347723.taunton-bid-vote-suspended-due-coronavirus/>

## 7. Bereavement Services

The Taunton crematorium and cemetery in Wellington Road will be closing to everyone except mourners attending services from Monday 6 April. Our other cemeteries remain open but we ask visitors to observe appropriate social distancing.

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/bereavement-services/useful-contacts/>

# Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

## SCC Somerset Care - Pop Up Care Homes

Somerset Care are bringing residential homes back into use, to relieve pressure on hospital bed spaces. This includes Popham Court in Wellington and care spaces in Minehead which have been secured to help convalescing patients. These homes will care for some of the most elderly and frail residents as Somerset County Council look to safely discharge patients from hospital whilst supporting and protecting the NHS.

The residents will be people well enough to leave hospital but with continuing care needs and who need a bit more support before they can safely go home. In short, these homes will be our own local care versions of Nightingale.

It would normally take around 18 months to set up a care home, but Somerset County Council have stepped in and are looking on track to turn this around in two weeks.

Now there is an urgent need for people to staff these facilities, particularly administrators, nurses, healthcare assistants and support staff who can help with meal preparation, cleaning and kitchen/laundry. Anyone interested can email [recruitment@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@somerset.gov.uk).

## **Update from EDF – David Eccles, Head of Stakeholder Engagement (Hinkley Point)**

I know many people are worried about Coronavirus, so I want to let you know about the steps we are taking at Hinkley Point C to keep workers and the community safe.

Firstly, we have significantly reduced our activity on site from more than 4,000 to around 2,000 workers. This allows us to enforce social distancing. Where we have needed to improve social distancing, we have taken action. If we aren't satisfied that social distancing is being properly observed, we will reduce numbers further.

We have introduced many other steps over the last few weeks, like extra cleaning, working from home, banning visitors, temperature checks and bringing in more buses to allow workers to stay apart. We also have first class medical facilities on site to look after workers and give expert advice.

The project continues – it is judged as equivalent to a project of National Critical Infrastructure by the Government as it plays a key role in providing the UK with the clean, reliable power needed to fight climate change. I am aware that supporting suppliers now will protect livelihoods and enable the local economy to come back strongly when the crisis is over.

Self-isolation and social distancing will help us all in the current crisis, both in the community and on the site. We have the capacity to house all our remaining workers in our Campus facilities where safety measures are in place. If you have concerns or questions, we are ready to listen, please get in touch via the details below.

Alternatively, the latest information can also be found on our website <https://www.edfenergy.com/energy/nuclear-new-build-projects/hinkley-point-c>

## **Bonfires – Advice from the Fire Brigade**

During the coronavirus outbreak, the Council has received an increase in calls from people concerned about their neighbours having bonfires in their gardens. There are no byelaws relating to set times when bonfires can be lit. However, people should avoid having bonfires in the evening or at night.

For more advice/guidance around bonfire safety, please refer to our website: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/environmental-health/environmental-protection/laws-and-rules-surrounding-bonfires/>

Alternatively, you can visit **Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service** webpage on:  
<https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/Bonfires/Index.cfm?siteCategoryID=4&T1ID=35&T2ID=445>

The Fire Brigade ask that people planning on having a bonfire, should call the non-emergency number to advise them: 0333 3999 0014

## Community Support – What help is out there?

SWT is working with partner organisations across the county to identify and support the network of volunteers offering help to the elderly, people self-isolating, and those identified as at risk across our communities. The Council would like to thank all those that have come forward with offers of help and would remind everyone to only make essential outings and follow [advice on social distancing](#) to reduce the risk of transmission. Information on local community groups [you can volunteer with or get help from](#).

A number of community groups are emerging on Facebook/WhatsApp which are trying to coordinate activities locally.

- The Spark Somerset website has lots of useful information on the informal/formal support groups which are popping up across Somerset and the Corona Helpers database which you can use to register your group and recruit volunteers.

Visit [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/covid-19](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/covid-19).

Spark is available to support our communities. If you need any help, please give us a call on 01460 202970 or email [support@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:support@sparksomerset.org.uk).

- **Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK** has started to compile a list of local groups set up on social media sites such as Facebook or WhatsApp in an effort to share learning, resources and support. You can [find out what groups are in your area, or to register a group](#)
- **The Community Council for Somerset** (community/village agents) are already working in communities with different groups and individuals to make sure the vulnerable are identified and supported. [Find local village agent details](#)
- **Citizens Advice in Somerset** have closed their face to face services (including outreach) and increased capacity on their phones and email services. Clients can visit their respective websites for full details of their options or phone their advice line on 03444 889 623.
- **Mindline** is an out of hours helpline in Somerset that is a confidential listening service providing a safe place to talk if you, or someone you know, is in distress. We can also give basic information about mental health and local services. [Find out more](#) or phone 01823 276 892 (lines currently open 8pm to 11pm)

## Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal, launched by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) to fund local charities and community organisations supporting those in most urgent need during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, has grown to over £275,000 in just over a week [*correct as at 31/03/2020*].

The incredible sum has come from donations from local individuals, charitable trusts and businesses, and was boosted by funding from a national appeal, run by The National Emergencies Trust (NET) in partnership with the British Red Cross. An additional £107,000 was added to the pot from existing funds managed by SCF on behalf of donors across the county.

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

To support the national appeal, please visit:

[www.nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk/coronavirus)

To visit the Somerset Community Foundation website, please visit:

<https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/>

## FAQS

**Q. I need help. I am self-isolating or have other needs that make accessing support difficult. Who can help me during this time?**

**A.** Community Council for Somerset are happy to take calls from vulnerable/ self-isolating individuals, the number to call is **01823 331222**. People can also ask for a call back if they need help via their website. They just need name, number, postcode and outline of need and they triage getting help out to them via village agents and volunteers. They cover the whole district. Professionals can also refer via this service.

**Q. I am having problems paying my Council Tax / Rent. What help is available?**

**A** SWT is inviting anyone struggling to pay their Council Tax due to the pressures of Coronavirus to get in contact. The Council has a range of measures in place to help people having difficulty with payments. It can work with residents who have permanently, or temporarily, lost their job; stopped their self-employment or had their pay cut, to help find a solution. Further information on the support available can be found on our [website](#)

**Q. How do I report concerns around congregations and gatherings to the Police?**

**A. COVID-19 breach of restrictions:** If you have concerns that an individual or business has breached Government restrictions you can report it online at <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-policing-response/>

or ring Avon and Somerset Police on 101 (for non-emergencies) or 999 (for emergencies).

**Q. I have concerns about domestic violence or a person at risk? How do I report this?**

- A.** Don't suffer in silence – help is at hand  
Support continues to be available for Somerset residents affected by domestic abuse via the One Teams working closely with partners to make sure services continue during the current health emergency.  
It is vital that people stay at home or self-isolate to help tackle the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic but that can put strains on relationships. Please refer to the website link below for more information.  
<https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/domestic-abuse/>  
If there is a danger to life then Avon and Somerset Police will still respond to critical emergencies and you should dial **999**.

For more information and advice please visit:

[www.avonandsomerset.police.uk](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk)

## **Health and Welfare**

If you have received a letter from the NHS telling you that you're clinically extremely vulnerable, you can register on the gov.uk website to [get support as a clinically extremely vulnerable person](#).

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

### **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](#)

## **Crime / Fraud / Safeguarding**

South West Police have advised us that there has been a significant increase in coronavirus related frauds in March 2020.

Tips for staying safe when online:

**Watch out for scam messages:**

Don't click on the links or attachments in suspicious emails, and never respond to unsolicited messages and calls that ask for your personal or financial details

**Shopping online:**

If you're making a purchase from a company or person you don't know and trust, carry out some research first, and ask a friend or family member for advice before completing the purchase. Where possible, use a credit card to make the payment, as most major credit card providers insure online purchases.

**Protect your devices from the latest threats:**

Always install the latest software and app updates to protect your devices from the latest threats

**Top pieces of advice to stop fraud:**

**Check that the message makes sense:** This applies not only to the grammar and spelling, but also to the message as a whole – does what you are being asked to do sound right? Would that person typically ask you to do this action in this way?

**Always confirm that a message is genuine by calling the person or organisation involved:** Avoid using any numbers featured in the correspondence, look these up separately

**Never click on links and attachments, unless you are 100% sure that they have been verified:** There is almost always another way to check (e.g. by using your web browser)

**Stop and think before engaging with any correspondence:** This applies not only to emails but to calls/texts/social media messages. Criminals look to apply pressure in some way to force people into making mistakes, so take a step back, don't be rushed, and get a clear perspective.

**Only use official sources (e.g. Government website) for information around Coronavirus**  
**Watch out for fake login pages/URL spoofing:** When visiting a page/logging in, check the URL in the address bar to ensure that you're on the correct page, and everything operates as it should do. For added piece of mind, you can bookmark important sites and only visit those sites via that bookmark.

**More information:** The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) released a great article which you can find at <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/cyber-experts-step-criminals-exploit-coronavirus>

**Reporting:** If you have been a victim of a cyber crime, please report it to Action Fraud, which is the UK's national cyber crime reporting portal. You can make a report by telephoning 0300 123 2040 or on their website at <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk>

Reporting helps build intelligence for law enforcement, which can aid investigations as well as informational campaigns to prevent others from becoming victims.

Action Fraud operates a 24/7 live cyber reporting line for organisations. Further details can be found at <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/campaign/24-7-live-cyber-reporting-for-businesses>

## 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/](http://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.

**#StayAtHome      #ProtectTheNHS    #SaveLives**