

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 7. Week ending 10/05/20

#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](#).

Key Messages this week

1. Committee Meetings

Scrutiny Committee Meeting

The first virtual meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will take place on Wednesday 13 May at 6.15pm. This will include a discussion on Taunton Bus Station and Bus Transport in the Somerset West and Taunton area. The Managing Director from First Group South West will be attending the meeting. Further details of this meeting can be found [here](#).

Planning Committee Meeting

The first virtual meeting of the Planning Committee will take place on Thursday 14 May at 1pm.

Three applications are being considered relating to the areas of North Curry, Wiveliscombe and Minehead. Further details of the meeting being held on 14 May 2020 can be found [here](#).

Since the last Planning Committee meeting, which was held on the 12 March 2020 no decisions have been made outside of the normal procedure that is set out in the Constitution. Now that we are able to hold virtual meetings, where applications meet the criteria to go before the Planning Committee they will go to the next appropriate virtual meeting of the Committee.

Public Participation:

Both of these meetings will be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences please use the link above for the relevant committee. 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 submit your questions or statements by the following dates:

- Scrutiny Committee – by 4pm on Friday 8 May 2020
- Planning Committee – by 4pm on Monday 11 May 2020

2. Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership Active at Home Packs

SWT is proud to be working with the Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) who have created an Active at Home Pack for older people, and those self-isolating or spending a lot of time at home due to medical conditions.

One of SWT's Localities Team "Speedy" Mike Parsons has delivered 177 of the packs containing an elastic resistance band (latex), a helpful booklet with exercise instructions and a self-isolating sticker.

SWT has also signposted SASP to the local foodbank which is including some activity packs for younger families through their delivery network.

For more information about SASP please see their [website](#).

3. 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.

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline *will be open over this Bank Holiday weekend.*

4. "For those that gave so much, we thank you."

SWT plans to mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) despite coronavirus restrictions, and wants as many people as possible to join in the virtual commemorations by sharing stories, photos and videos on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram tagging @SWTCouncil #VEDay75.

The Council had been hoping to help communities run a host of activities on VE Day, Friday 8 May 2020, to remember the sacrifice so many made in the fight for our freedom. However, these were cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak so SWT is hoping that people can still get involved and show their support while following government advice on social distancing.

SWT would very much like to encourage everyone to take part in the Nation's Toast from the safety of their homes. This is an ideal opportunity for the nation to gather with those in their households for a picnic and pay tribute to the many millions in the United Kingdom and overseas who sacrificed so much to secure the freedom we have today.

You are invited to stand at 3pm, raise a glass or cup of refreshment of your choice and undertake the following toast:

"For those that gave so much, we thank you."

To find out more on how you can participate, please visit the SWT [website](#).

5. Monday 11 May: recycling sites reopen, garden waste collections restart

Eleven recycling sites will reopen on Monday 11 May for essential visits only – in line with updated government guidance, and garden waste collections will resume from the same day.

To ensure social distancing, protect the public and staff, and limit numbers, there will be a range of temporary restrictions; queues and delays are likely.

The guidance states visits should only take place if waste cannot be stored safely at home without risking harm or ill-health, or harm to public health and amenity. If yours is not an essential journey, please wait until sites are back to usual.

For further information please visit the [SWP website](#)

For information on garden waste subscriptions visit <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/garden-waste-collections/>

The bank holiday for VE Day on Friday 8 May will see no waste collections so those recycling and rubbish pick-ups will be on Saturday 9 May from 7am.

Collection crews are asking all residents to ensure their containers are out on time, with contents sorted, plastic bottles squashed, cardboard flattened, and - if safe - cans crushed.

Other updates

- **New container** deliveries were reinstated last week, and SWP is now taking requests via its website <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/>.
- **Bulky waste collections** have resumed and can be booked via the website. If you wish to look at the fees and charges please click [here](#).
- SWP are finalising plans to provide a subsidy for up to **1,000 home composting kits** to make them a more attractive option for managing garden waste. It is hoped that composting, as well as significantly increased levels of recycling, will become positive habits that continue long after we have emerged from the Covid-19 crisis.
- SWP have **temporarily suspended kerbside collections of textiles and shoes**. With charity shops closed and international trade in textiles severely affected, they cannot be sure that these will be recycled or reused. They will look at all options to restart this service, but do not want to undermine their commitment that everything that is collected for recycling is recycled properly.

6. Grants – Business Support

As of 4 May, SWT has so far received 3,221 requests for the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant fund and has paid out nearly **31.9m** to around 2,670 small businesses. Although our offices are closed our staff are working from home to ensure we get payment out to eligible businesses as soon as possible. Generally cases are being passed for payment within seven working days from receipt of the required information.

Additional funding announcement

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 are waiting for details of how much funding will be given to them as well as more detailed information in relation to this announcement. Once this is known, SWT will create an application process and promote its availability.

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

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council

SCC is stepping up operations to support Somerset's communities and keep people safe during the coronavirus emergency. SCC will be increasing spending in several key areas in response to the pandemic.

This includes expected spending of in excess of £10m for vital personal protective equipment (PPE) needed by carers, social workers and other key staff, £2m on new pop-up care homes to ease the pressure on the NHS, plus millions more to protect vulnerable children, childcare settings and key contractors.

For more information about SCC's response to the coronavirus emergency please visit their [website](#) where you can also sign up for regular email updates.

Rural Highway Verge Maintenance

Road users and residents of Somerset West and Taunton will have noticed that, with the onset of spring and warmer weather conditions, the grass and cow parsley has started to grow on the verges of our road network. This can present a safety hazard in certain locations if unattended and Somerset County Council carries out an annual programme of cutting in order to deal with this.

The SCC "Environmental Maintenance Information Sheet 2020" is attached and the Travel Somerset [website](#) also has lots more information.

Advice from Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service

Take care when charging your devices

D&SFRS attended 75 fires in 2019 which started from an electrical issue, such as a laptop, PC, wiring, cables or plugs. This includes chargers for devices. To avoid potential risks:

- always use the charger that came with your device and don't buy a fake replacement
- charge your device on a hard, safe surface, and never on a carpet or bed (and definitely never under a pillow)
- never leave a device charging unattended.

Village & Community Agents in Somerset

The Village & Community Agents have produced a short film to celebrate their work which continues to go above and beyond to find solutions for the most vulnerable people living in our communities in Somerset.

Please click [here](#) to watch this lovely video.

Community Support – What help is out there?

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal, managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF), has grown to over £565,000 since its launch on Thursday 19 March *[correct as at 29/04/2020]*.

The appeal is raising money to fund local charities and community organisations supporting those in most urgent need during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and donations have come from local individuals, charitable trusts and businesses. Over £275,000 of grants have now been awarded to more than 110 groups across the county, including foodbanks and food delivery schemes, support services for older people, and virtual counselling, with more funding going out every week.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available and to apply, groups need to complete a short application form via: www.somersetcf.org.uk/coronavirus.

For information on how to donate to the appeal visit:

<https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/appeal> You can now explore an interactive map which shows the grants that have been awarded, the different types of projects they are funding, and gives a sense of how donations have been focused in the most affected communities.

[Explore the map here](#)

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 your 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 South West urges people to continue their vaccinations

The NHS is urging people across the South West to continue getting their regular immunisations during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are concerns that children and adults may miss their essential, routine [vaccinations](#) such as the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccination and whooping cough (pertussis) for pregnant women. GP practices across the South West continue to offer all routine immunisations and are doing so in a safe way in accordance with Government social distancing and infection control guidelines.

Medical Appointments and Advice

As a consequence of social distancing measures and some of the messages associated with it, there has been a significant reduction in people attending their GP practice or hospital appointment for important medical checks. Over the last few weeks the NHS has made many adjustments to ensure it can continue to see people safely. Community partners are asked to help convey the following messages as appropriate to a person's situation:

If you need medical help, the NHS in Somerset is still here for you.

- If you need medical help from your GP practice, contact them either online, by an app or by phone to be assessed.
- If you need urgent medical help, use the NHS online service. If you cannot get help online, call 111.
- If it's a serious or life-threatening emergency, call 999.
- If you are told to go to hospital it is important that you go to hospital.
- You should continue to attend your appointments, unless you have been told not to attend.

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](#)

FAQS

Q. Who is eligible for shielding support from Government?

- A. To receive support, people must be in receipt of a letter from the NHS or their medical practitioner, advising them to follow Government Shielding guidance due to their medical condition.**

Many of these people will have a support network of people around them, who can help with shopping or collection of prescriptions, to be left at the front door. There will be however, some who have no friends, family, neighbours or other nearby networks to do these things for them; Government's Shielding programme has been created to provide assistance and support to this specific group.

Please note, if people do not register for Government support, Government cannot provide them with the assistance they require. If you are aware of someone who has received the NHS letter, and requires Government support but has not registered, it is imperative that you encourage them to access the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website or call the number on the letter – **without registration, they cannot get assistance.**

Q. What does the Governments Shielding programme provide?

- A.** The Government's offer to shielding individuals who request support covers the following three areas of assistance:

- **Essential groceries** – a free, standardised weekly parcel of food and household essentials, and priority delivery slots with supermarkets;
- **Medicines** – arrangements to have medicines delivered to people's homes by local community pharmacies or their dispensing doctor;
- **Social contact and basic needs** – for example, emotional or social support such as people to talk to on the phone or via a computer.

Q. What else is being done to provide support to other people at risk?

- A.** There are other people who do not qualify for shielding support, but who are affected by coronavirus for a range of reasons. In Somerset the Local Authorities are working together with health providers to identify people who may be at risk and are taking the following steps to ensure people are able to access advice, information and support as required:

- The establishment of the Coronavirus Helpline and promoting this in the local press and across parishes and communities.
- Sent letters to over 70,000 people who have been identified as potentially at risk with the helpline contact details.
- Made welfare checks and outbound calls to over 2,000 people who have been identified as most at risk.
- Provided support to homeless people – 75% provided with temporary accommodation (all offered).
- Continuing to provide regular contact and support to all 15,000 people known to Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing, SDAS, SIDAS, Mental Health.
- Provide additional support to just over 15,000 people in Somerset who are shielding – they have all received the letter giving details of the Coronavirus Helpline and in partnership with community /social prescribing organisations, contact is being made with those who have said they need additional support to ensure that local solutions

are in place. This also includes providing top ups to the Government Food Parcels and catering to specific dietary requirements.

Q. When can I use my car?

A. When using a private vehicle to make a journey that is permitted, you should only travel with members of your household. Those who normally share a car with people who are not members of their own household - for example, to get to work - should consider alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport where you can maintain a distance of two metres from others.

If the journey is permitted, such as travel to work, and there is no option but to share a car with people who are not part of the same household, journeys should be shared with the same individuals and with the minimum number of people at any one time.

Good ventilation (i.e. keeping the windows open) and facing away from each other may help to reduce the risk of transmission. Private vehicles that are used by people from multiple households should be cleaned regularly using gloves and standard cleaning products with particular emphasis on handles.

Crime / Fraud / Safeguarding

Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP)

Special Constables supporting police and public during coronavirus crisis

Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Cullen said:

"The national coronavirus emergency has highlighted the importance of volunteering and caring for the wider community.

A&SP always value the contribution of our Special Constabulary but over the last six weeks, volunteers in our specials team have responded in speculator style to help bolster our policing response.

Volunteers have always played an important role in policing, but never has there been a more important time for the police and the public to work alongside each other, reaffirming our legitimacy and the fundamental principle that we police by consent.

The individual and collective commitment and sacrifice over recent weeks has been extraordinary. I would like to say thank you on behalf of everyone across Avon and Somerset."

For more information about the work of the local special constabulary in Williton, please click [here](#).

Live Beat Surgeries

On **Tuesday 12 May at 12 noon** [PCC Sue Mountstevens](#) is going to put your questions to Chief Constable Andy Marsh Live on Facebook. Please send in your questions about Covid-19 and policing in advance so that they can be discussed live on air.

You can watch previous Facebook Lives on their YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/AvonandSomersetPCC

[PCSO Katherine Williams](#) (Minehead) and [PCSO Linda Brooks](#) (Exmoor), will be holding their next Facebook Live Beat Surgery on **Thursday 14th May at 2pm**. If you have any questions you would like answered, please message them beforehand and they will answer live on the beat surgery discussion.

Computer Security

The **National Cyber Security Centre** has published some helpful guidance on using **passwords** to protect your data and devices. The document is attached with the newsletter and covers the following areas:

- Creating strong passwords
- Looking after your passwords
- Using two factor authentication to protect your account
- What to do if your password is stolen

SCAMS: The Use of Persuasive Language

Please see the attached PDF produced by The National Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work and Professional Practice at Bournemouth University that might be useful for those living and working in your communities.

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.

#StayAtHome #ProtectTheNHS #SaveLives