

# Somerset West and Taunton

## Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

### Issue8. Week ending 17/05/20

### **#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives**

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

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

#### **SWT Council priorities**

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

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

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

## **Key Messages this week**

### **1. Current Working Arrangements to Continue at SWT...**

The guidance from the Government around the easing of lockdown during COVID-19 is getting clearer but the situation at SWT remains the same. SWT will keep this under review and are taking this situation seriously, but there is still a significant risk in our view and the safety of our staff is a primary concern until the coronavirus is under control. The Council remains open for business but the offices remain closed and staff continue to work from home.

### **2. Committee Meetings**

The next virtual Committee meeting taking place will be the Executive on Wednesday 20 May at 6.15pm.

Items on the agenda are:

- Wellington and Cullompton Railway Station Project: Phase 1 (Strategic Outline Business Case) - Approval of Project Governance Arrangements
- Monkton Heathfield: SS1 Policy Area and MH2 Concept Plan and Design Principles

For more information please go to:

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=326&MId=2297&Ver=4>

### **Public Participation:**

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

### **3. Income Management Cheque Payments**

Information that has gone out in local newspapers 'Please do not contact us by post until further notice. Many of our services can be accessed online or we can be contacted by email or telephone as usual. From 11 May 2020 we will temporarily stop processing cheque payments. Payments can instead be made by credit or debit card 24/7 by telephone on 0300 304 8000.'

We appreciate that a number of Parish Councils only make payments by cheque so if you are unable to pay by the method above, you are able to take a cheque, along with the invoice containing the barcode, to the Post Office to make payment.

### **4. Businesses urged to be Legionella aware**

SWT is urging owners of public buildings and volunteer-run premises to service their water and air conditioning systems before re-opening to staff and the public. Shops and offices, hairdressers, beauty salons, hotels, pubs and restaurants, sports centres, gyms, residential buildings, campsites - anywhere that has a water supply and is currently shut down - are being reminded to check and maintain their systems. To read this press release in full please click [here](#).

### **5. Key Government Messages**

- **Furlough Scheme extended till October**

The Government furlough scheme will be extended to October with workers continuing to receive 80% of monthly wages up to £2,500. New flexibility will be introduced from August, with furloughed workers able to return to work part-time and employers will be asked to pay a percentage towards the salaries of their furloughed staff. Click [here](#) for more information.

- **The UK Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy**

The Government has now set out its roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions. You can find a summary of the key points affecting Somerset communities and businesses [here](#).

- **Self Employed Income Support Scheme**

The process is being run by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), which has been operating and overseeing loan schemes and the Government's furlough payments.

The Self Employed Income Support Scheme is designed to match the support being given to furloughed employees. The scheme will allow an eligible applicant to claim a taxable grant of 80% of their average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering March, April and May and will be capped at £7,500 altogether. **This is a temporary scheme, but it may be extended.**

For further information, advice or to check if you are eligible to claim a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, please click [here](#).

## 6. Somerset Waste Partnership Update

Eleven **recycling sites** reopened on Monday 11 May for essential visits only – in line with updated government guidance – and [garden waste collections](#) resumed on the same day. Please refer to the attached leaflet for more information.

**To ensure social distancing, protect public and staff and limit numbers, there will be a range of temporary restrictions; queues and delays are likely. Please refer to the [SWP website](#) before making your journey to ensure compliance with government guidance.**

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 not an essential journey, please wait until sites are back to usual

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 have been reinstated, 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.

**For the Spring Bank Holiday, Monday 25 May 2020, household collections (including clinical waste) will be one day later than usual.**

## **7. Grants – Business Support**

As of Monday 11 May, SWT has so far received 3,367 requests for the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant fund and has paid out nearly **£34.2m** to around 2,860 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.

SWT is still trying to reach out to those businesses that are yet to apply for a grant by a variety of means. For further information about accessing the business grants available, please click [here](#).

### **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](http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk/business)

## **Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas**

### **Somerset County Council (SCC) Highways**

SCC has issued a press release (attached) detailing two road closures taking place over the next fortnight in **Williton** on **Long Street (A39)** and **High Street (A358)**. These works are to

resurface the two footways which are in very poor condition and were originally scheduled for October. The footways here have always caused an issue with regard to resurfacing as they require a road closure (due to there being only one footway) with reduced working widths for safety. SCC Highways has negotiated with their partners to bring these works forward to take advantage of reduced traffic flows mindful of the minimal effect on tourism or schools under the Covid-19 restrictions.

SCC Highways are grateful for the continued support of the public whilst they undertake these necessary works. To read the full press release please click [here](#).

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 Bonfires during the coronavirus lockdown**

Do not have a bonfire during the coronavirus lockdown. Try composting your garden waste instead. Do not call Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service to report someone having a bonfire unless it is an emergency.

If someone is burning bonfires regularly this may be considered a nuisance. Please visit SWT [website](#) for information on how to report nuisance bonfires.

## **Exmoor National Park(ENP)**

### **Exmoor National Park Authority's latest statement on Coronavirus**

Whilst some travel restrictions have been relaxed from 13 May 2020, please be considerate to our communities and staff if you choose to visit ENP. The majority of visitor facilities including hospitality facilities and our National Park Centres remain closed for the time being. Social distancing measures continue to apply - please observe these at all times for your safety and the safety of communities, businesses and staff working and living in the National Park.

**ENP car parks and public toilets** were re-opened on the afternoon of Wednesday 13 May to enable people to park safely without blocking highways and to follow Government advice to wash hands frequently. Some basic facilities managed by other organisations within the National Park will also be re-opening where possible. When accessing any of these facilities, please follow any measures put in place locally to support social distancing and good hygiene.

**Hospitality:** In line with Government measures and the current COVID alert level, all non-essential retail, food & drink outlets and accommodation providers are closed until further notice.

**Public Rights of Way and Access Land:** The risk of the coronavirus being passed on to others from people using public rights of way and other paths and trails is considered to be very low as long as people follow the Government's instructions to maintain social distancing. ENP have no legal powers to close Rights of Way but can provide signage or

way-marking and support optional alternatives where these are appropriate. Please see their [Out and About Essentials page](#) for more information.

**Accommodation and second homes:** Going on holiday and visiting second homes is still not permitted, the Government has clarified. Hotels, bed and breakfasts and other holiday accommodation will remain closed, except when providing accommodation for specific reasons, such as for critical workers needing a place to stay for work. Overnight stays in camper vans are not permitted.

For more information, please click [here](#).

## Community Support – What help is out there?

### The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

The Somerset

Coronavirus Appeal, managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) continues to raise 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.

You can 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.

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](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/coronavirus).

You are invited to click [here](#) if you wish to make a donation to the appeal.

### Talking Cafes: Village & Community Agents in Somerset

CCS (the Community Council for Somerset) is delighted to announce Talking Cafés are starting up again! Not in the physical sense, as sadly venues are still closed, but you can access the same invaluable help and support from the comfort of your own home through a new Facebook Live stream that began on 14 May. Following this first session, the Talking Café will be a live daily event with the rest of the CCS team from **Monday 18 May at 11 am**.

Go to [www.facebook.com/talkingcafesomerset/live](https://www.facebook.com/talkingcafesomerset/live) to set a reminder to listen in and take part!

### 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](mailto:VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Update on wearing face coverings in public places**

If you can, it is suggested you wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas, for example, on public transport or in some shops.

Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you. However, if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms, it may provide some protection for others you come into close contact with.

Face coverings do not replace social distancing. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (cough and/or high temperature), you and your household must isolate at home: wearing a face covering does not change this.

For more visit the staying safe at home webpage.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home>

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment (PPE) by healthcare and other workers; these should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

### **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 12May 2020.**

- [Staying safe outside your home](#)
- [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#)
- [Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)

**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. What can I do from Wednesday 13 May that I couldn't do before?**

**A.** From Wednesday you will now be able to do the following:

- spend time outdoors – for example sitting and enjoying the fresh air, picnicking, or sunbathing
- meet one other person from a different household outdoors - following social distancing guidelines
- exercise outdoors as often as you wish - following social distancing guidelines
- use outdoor sports courts or facilities, such as a tennis or basketball court, or golf course –
- with members of your household, or one other person while staying 2 metres apart go to a garden centre.
- At all times, you should continue to observe social distancing guidelines when you are outside your home, including ensuring you are 2 metres away from anyone outside your household.

As with before, you cannot:

- visit friends and family in their homes

- exercise in an indoor sports court, gym or leisure centre, or go swimming in a public pool
- use an outdoor gym or playground
- visit a private or ticketed attraction
- gather in a group of more than two (excluding members of your own household), except for a few specific exceptions set out in law (for work, funerals, house moves, supporting the vulnerable, in emergencies and to fulfil legal obligations)

**If you are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household are self-isolating, you should stay at home - this is critical to staying safe and saving lives.**

**Q. Are day trips and holidays ok? Can people stay in second homes?**

**A.** Day trips to outdoor open spaces, in a private vehicle, are permitted. You should practise social distancing from other people outside your household. Leaving your home - the place you live - to stay at another home for a holiday or other purpose is not allowed. **This includes visiting second homes.** If, however, a student is moving permanently to live back at their family home, this is now permitted.

Premises such as hotels and bed and breakfasts will remain **closed**, except where providing accommodation for specific reasons set out in law, such as for critical workers where required for a reason relating to their work.

**Q. My employer is asking me to come to work but I'm concerned.**

**A:** Employers and staff should discuss and agree working arrangements in association with their relevant trade union, where applicable.

Employers should make all efforts to help people to work from home where they can. But where work cannot be done at home, employers should take clear, practical steps to help protect workers and create safe places to work, such as shift working or staggering processes.

To identify the precautions needed to manage risk, your employer should discuss the workplace risk assessment with you to identify the practical ways of managing those risks.

If you remain concerned that your employer is not taking all practical steps to promote social distancing then you can report this to your trade union, SWT Environmental Health using our [general enquiries](#) online form or the [Health and Safety Executive](#) who can take a range of action, including where appropriate requiring your employer to take additional steps.

## **Crime / Fraud / Safeguarding**

### **Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP)**

**Police patrols detect over 1300 speeding drivers putting others at risk, as they respond to community concerns**

Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP) have stepped up traffic patrols having seen the weekly number of complaints around speeding double in the weeks during lockdown. The dramatic increase comes as some drivers choose to abuse quieter roads by driving well in excess of speed limits, putting other road users including families and cyclists taking daily exercise at risk.

From 23 March to 22 April, Avon and Somerset Police's Traffic Units detected 1,391 drivers exceeding the posted speed limit, including travelling over 45 mph in a 20 mph zone, and over 70 mph in a 30 mph zone. Of this figure, 144 were high end offences with motorists travelling so fast that they will automatically face prosecution due to the severity of their offences.

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

Motorists who speed through residential neighbourhoods are often unaware of the impact their actions have on local residents, or the danger they pose to other road users and pedestrians. This is something A&SP are working with communities to address.

Community SpeedWatch Schemes have been suspended until further notice due to the coronavirus outbreak. If you have concerns about your parish however, or are affected by speeding in your area, please fill in the [raise a community speed concern form](#).

## **New Rules to be enforced**

The police and local authorities have the powers to enforce the requirements set out in law if people do not comply with them. Please click [here](#) to view The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

The police will act with discretion and common sense in applying these measures, but if you breach the law, the police may instruct you to go home, leave an area or disperse, and they may instruct you to take steps to stop your children breaking these rules if they have already done so. The police can also take you home or arrest you where they believe it is necessary.

Financial penalties will be imposed against people breaking the law.

## **Live Beat Surgeries**

Unfortunately, due to the Prime Minister's most recent announcement and the easing of some restrictions, the live beat surgeries that had been scheduled for this week, have been postponed. Revised dates will be advertised in due course.

## **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.

**#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives**

***Attachments:***

***SWPMay 2020 Recycling sites, Garden waste collections & more***  
***SCC Highways Press Release***