

# Somerset West and Taunton

## Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

### Issue 25. Week ending 13/09/20

### **#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. Stronger Somerset Approved at SWT Full Council**

Somerset West and Taunton Council has given its overwhelming support to the Stronger Somerset Business Case, which proposes two new unitary Councils and a combined authority.

The Full Council met on Thursday 10 September, to debate the proposal which was approved by 46 votes in favour, with three against and one abstention, following its endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee earlier this week. To watch a replay of this meeting, please [click here](#).

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

To see all the details of the ambitious and exciting plan for reform, please visit [www.strongersomerset.co.uk](http://www.strongersomerset.co.uk).

## 2. **SWT Housing Newsletter – Autumn 2020**

SWT Housing has produced its first tenants' newsletter which is due to hit doormats next week. Approximately 6000 publications are being printed and will be distributed to all SWT tenants and leaseholders signposting readers to help and support. There has been a particular emphasis on COVID-related issues and how tenants can access available services.

Please [click here](#) to read the Housing Newsletter.

## 3. **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.

A number of Committee meetings are scheduled to take place over the next couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- Monday 14 September – **Licensing Committee - CANCELLED**
- Wednesday 16 September – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 11 September). Items on the agenda include Small Scale Industrial Space Local Development Order, Emergency Town Centre Recovery and back-fill of Economic Growth & Prosperity Fund. There is also a commercially sensitive confidential item on Delivering Regeneration – Setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle.
- Thursday 17 September – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 14 September). Items on the agenda include applications relating to Rumwell, Taunton and Wellington.
- Wednesday 23 September - **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 18 September)
- Tuesday 29 September – **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 24 September)
- Wednesday 30 September – **Special Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 25 September)

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](mailto: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.

#### **4. East Street Consultation Underway**

SWT is encouraging members of the public to have their say on the effect of temporary changes to traffic flow in Taunton. The current temporary closure of East Street to all vehicles except cycles was initiated as a joint response from SWT and Somerset County Council (SCC) working with the police and other partners, to enable social distancing and encourage walking and cycling in line with the first round of Active Travel funding to support the re-opening of high streets.

The impact in East Street is being monitored and SWT is working with SCC to mitigate concerns already raised such as installing more crossing points with ramps to support those with low mobility, and considering the potential of more dedicated off street parking for blue badge holders near East Street.

The consultation will allow SWT to seek wider views on the temporary closure while awaiting the outcome of a bid for Active Travel phase two funding which would enable an extension of the scheme.

The public consultation begun on 10 September and will run for two weeks. It asks if people would support an extension of the temporary closure and seeks input on the positives and negatives of having the road closed such as the ability to cross the road safely and cleaner air, against loss of on street parking and the impact on traffic movement around town.

The consultation also asks what changes people would you like to see if the scheme is extended and whether they would like to see activities on the street, for instance market stalls and entertainment.

The consultation can be found [here](#).

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

#### **5. Emergency Services Day**

SWT was proud to support the Emergency Services Day on 9 September. Please [click here](#) to view the video message.

## 6. Somerset Waste Partnership Services

**Recycle More** is the next big leap forward to drive up recycling

It will add new materials to weekly recycling collections: household and food plastic pots, tubs and trays; food and drink cartons; small household batteries; and small electrical items.

With so much more recycled each week, rubbish will be collected every three weeks. Extra advice and support will be available for families using nappies and similar hygiene products.

Recycle More will roll out across the county in phases, starting with all households in Mendip in Phase 1, all household in South Somerset in Phase 2, and all households in Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton in Phases 3 and 4. Please [click here](#) to read more about Recycle More will recycle and how to be prepared for when these changing are implemented.

All residents will be sent full information well ahead of the change in their area. Garden waste and clinical waste collections remain unchanged.

For information about how to reduce and reuse your waste, visit [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk) and follow @somersetwaste on Twitter and Facebook.

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

### Somerset County Council (SCC)

#### Highway Maintenance Update

SCC Highways are currently focusing on the routine tasks of gully emptying, safety defect repairs and patching. As we enter the autumn months, SCC Highways are moving to another phase of highway maintenance. Finished is the grass cutting and the main surface dressing programme, which are works typical of the summer and the warmer weather.

There is one surface dressing task that SCC Highways are now starting and this is preparation for next summer's programme. Readers may have noticed that yellow spray paint has been applied to some roads. This is typically dashed lines with numbers. This is to mark up the pre-patching that is an important part of any surface dressing programme. Doing the work now will allow the patch to settle it, especially as regards the bituminous oils on the surface. Having this worn off by traffic or weather for a few months will help prevent bleeding through the new dressings when they are laid in the summer. Working at this time of year will also assist with co-ordination of road works on the network and minimise disruption for road users.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

## **M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme Toneway/J25 Gyratory**

The final surfacing works on the Toneway will be undertaken during overnight road closures starting on the 21 September. This work will run alongside the final surfacing of the gyratory also starting on the 21 September at the M5 north bound off slip road. Following the final surfacing, the traffic management will resemble the pre-construction layout until the new link road is completed.

Work will continue with the installation of the new traffic light system along with the new pedestrian cycle route within the inner gyratory.

Please [click here](#) for further information on the works being undertaken to the new Blackbrook Bridge and the New Nexus 25 roundabout. You can also read about the return of the water voles to their natural habitat!

### **Drone Footage**

Alun Griffiths' latest drone footage is available on their project pages at the Griffiths in the Community website. Please [click here](#) to view the drone footage.

If you would like to subscribe to receive future Newsletters and Bulletins from Alun Griffiths, please [click here](#) and complete the online form for Mail Chimp.

### **IMPORTANT: Toneway Road Closures Next Week**

**Monday 14, Tuesday 15 and Wednesday 16** -Full closure of Toneway out – M5 North off slip CLOSED – lane closure A358 P&R – Lane closure south off slip – Full closure J25 Inner Ring.

**Thursday 17**-Full closure of Toneway out – M5 North off slip CLOSED – lane closure A358 P&R – Lane closure south off slip – Full closure J25 Inner / Outer Ring

**Friday 18**- Full closure of Toneway out – M5 North off slip CLOSED – lane closure A358 P&R – Lane closure south off slip – Full closure J25 Inner Ring

### **Blue Anchor coast and road protection**

Somerset County Council is preparing to fund a West Somerset coastal defence that will help protect a key road at Blue Anchor. The investment of up to £4m is being funded through a Government highways grant and will enable rock armour to be installed at the foot of eroding cliffs to protect the road; and will also benefit nearby properties. The cliffs will also be re-profiled to stop future slippage and stabilised with coir mesh and turf.

The County Council is working with Somerset West and Taunton Council - the Coastal Protection Authority - to deliver and maintain the rock armour.

The decision is being considered following a consultants' feasibility study, commissioned by Somerset County Council, looking into the best ways to protect the B3191.

The stretch of coast at Blue Anchor has a long history of erosion and the two councils are working with the Environment Agency (EA) to identify and address the issues.

Some large voids were discovered behind the sea wall immediately in front of the Blue Anchor Hotel in June 2020. SWT began emergency works and the first phase was completed in July 2020. This involved filling the voids to stabilise the wall and reduce the risk of collapse.

A second phase of work is planned to start this autumn and will involve placing rock armour to protect the wall and cliffs from wave action. These two phases of work, funded by Flood Defence Grant in Aid from the Environment Agency, will be incorporated into the design of a comprehensive permanent scheme to protect the road which will aim to commence construction next year.

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

Note: A Report on the Coastal Protection Works will go through the SWT Democratic pathway of the Scrutiny Committee on the 14 October and Executive on 20 October before going forward to Full Council (date to be arranged).

## **Somerset Community Foundation**

### **Somerset Coronavirus Appeal**

Somerset Community Foundation launched the Coronavirus Appeal in late March 2020 to raise vital funds to help our communities through this difficult time. So far, thanks to donations and support from the [National Emergencies Trust](#), **£1 million** has been raised. This funding has provided more than [180 grants](#) to local charitable groups to help them respond to urgent need. Donations have provided food, medicine, counselling, emotional support and housing to name but a few.

### **Demand for housing support service in West Somerset continues to increase**

A recent survey has suggested that since the coronavirus pandemic started, more than 170,000 private tenants have been threatened with eviction by their landlord or letting agent, and an estimated 230,000 renters in England have fallen into arrears [*source: [Shelter](#)*].

Local charity, [West Somerset Advice](#), fear that this will increase when the Government lifts the ban on evicting tenants. Based in Minehead and delivering their service across West Somerset, West Somerset Advice runs a housing advocacy project which was set up in response to increasing demand for housing advice. In 2018 they were awarded a 3-year grant for £108,923 from the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Community Fund, administered by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF).

In the last year, West Somerset Advice has provided specialist housing advice and support to 709 people in communities in West Somerset, with an additional 600 family members

also benefiting. In the last 12 months the charity has seen an increase of more than 150% of welfare cases related to the affordability of renting.

The HPC Community Fund is part of a wider £20 million commitment of funding, provided by EDF through Section 106 agreements, for communities that are affected by the development of the new nuclear power station, to promote their social, economic and environmental wellbeing and enhance their quality of life.

Some of the most recent organisations to be awarded a grant from the HPC Community Fund are:

- **Quantock Hills AONB:** Somerset Nature Connections  
A contribution to a partnership project working across Somerset to connect individuals with poor mental health to local green spaces through short courses, work with community groups and training for professionals (grant award refers to work in Sedgemoor and Somerset West & Taunton only)
- **ATWEST (Accessible Transport West Somerset):** A new minibus for ATWEST community transport. Contribution to purchase a new minibus to facilitate work with care homes, a travel service and a new shopping route
- **Stogursey Parochial Church Council:** Stolford and Wick Community Hub To make alterations to St Peter's Church, Stolford to enable it to expand its community use for the area
- **Bishops Hull Hub Ltd:** Bishops Hull Hub  
To pay for solar panels for a new build community hub on the outskirts of Taunton

If you run a local community project in Somerset and would like to find out more about grant funding from the HPC Community Fund please [click here](#) or call Somerset Community Foundation on **01749 344949**.

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

## Community Support – What help is out there?

### Voluntary and Community Sector Support

#### VCS Newsletter – Break From Publication

SWT has taken a break from publication during September and will consider the options for autumn 2020.

### Government Gear Change

Central Government has released an updated Cycling and Walking Plan and promise a review of the Highway Code to improve the safety of cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders. Some of the alterations to the Highway Code will include clearer guidance on cyclist priority at junctions and establishing guidance on safe passing distances and speeds when overtaking cyclists and horse riders.

To have your say, take the Department of Transport's survey via the Government's website [here](#).

## **Steam Coast Trail**

The Steam Coast Trail is creating a network of safe routes throughout West Somerset for cyclists, walkers and people with reduced mobility. Unlocking beautiful stretches of previously inaccessible countryside and coastline it is hoped these trails will boost tourism, create jobs and help our economy.

We all know that we should use our cars less and use more active forms of travel, so why don't more people cycle in West Somerset? To learn more about the barriers to cycling, the team behind the Steam Coast Trail have created this super-quick 10 question survey.

It's really interesting to hear what you have to say. If you haven't yet then please [click here](#) to help evidence the need for more cycle infrastructure in West Somerset. Thanks!

## **Eat Out to Help Out Scheme**

The Eat Out to Help Out Scheme officially ended on 31 August, however, some larger restaurant chains have extended the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.

[Click here](#) to see the list of restaurants who will continue to offer the discount.

## **Inspiring and supporting social action in your community**

**SPARK Somerset** are hosting a Forum along with **Somerset Association of Local Councils** (SALC) on **Tuesday 15 September** aimed at Parish and Town Councils. It will be an opportunity to showcase some of the Councils in Somerset who really engaged in the COVID-19 response in their communities, co-ordinating local efforts and experimenting with new ways of working.

To register for this event which is open to Somerset Parish and Town Councils please [click here](#).

## **Health and Welfare**

### **New Government Announcement: - Hands Face Space**

The Government has announced new measures to suppress the virus and keep the number of infections down.

There are three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other:

1. Wash hands – keep washing your hands regularly for more than 20 seconds each time
2. Cover face – wear a face covering in enclosed spaces
3. Make space – stay at least two metres apart, or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions

'Rule of 6'

From Monday 14 September, you must not meet with people from other households socially in groups of more than 6. This will apply indoors and outdoors, including in private homes.

There will be a limited number of exemptions. COVID-19 Secure venues, such as places of worship, restaurants and hospitality venues, can still host larger numbers in total but groups of up to 6 must not mix or form larger groups.

'The Rule of Six' will not apply to individual households or support bubbles of more than 6 who will still be able to gather together. Education and work settings are unaffected, and organised team sports will still be able to proceed, as will weddings and funerals up to 30. From Monday, this limit will be enforceable in law.

To read more about the new measures to suppress the virus please [click here](#).

A number of Councillors have asked the question as to how this affects Parish Council meetings.

For information on meeting with others safely and to see a list of exceptions (which looks to cover Parish Council meetings), please [click here](#).

There is a lot of useful information on the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) website – information taken from their website is included as attachments.

### Travel restrictions

The guidance for travelling abroad remains the same but further Government restrictions now apply to Portugal, Hungary, French Polynesia, Réunion and some of the Greek Islands (Crete, Lesvos, Mykonos, Santorini, Serifos, Tinos and Zakynthos), they have now been removed from the travel corridors list.

If you arrive in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland from any country not on the travel corridor exemption list you will need to self-isolate.

As a result:

- People already in Portugal, Hungary, French Polynesia, Réunion, Crete, Lesvos, Mykonos, Santorini, Serifos, Tinos and Zakynthos can stay for the remainder of their holiday and will have to self-isolate upon return for 2 weeks
- Advice against all but essential travel to countries that are not on the travel corridors list

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

### **Beat Helpline Demand Soars**

Beat is the UK's eating disorder charity, providing information and support 365 days a year through helplines which people can call, text or email, and through online support including information, message boards and online support groups.

Beat has reported demand for its Helpline services in the past six months has increased by 97% compared to the same period last year. The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on those affected by an eating disorder, with 28% of people reaching out to the Helpline from May – July 2020 linking coronavirus as the possible trigger for relapsing or developing symptoms.

Beat estimates around 1.25 million people in the UK have an eating disorder - which includes anorexia, bulimia and binge-eating. The challenges of lockdown and feeling "out of control" during the pandemic are a "perfect storm" for people with eating disorders.

You are never alone with your eating disorder. Beat can support people who have or are worried they have an eating disorder, as well as others affected, such as friends and family members. Please [click here](#) for further information about the services available.

## World Suicide Prevention

To address World Suicide Prevention day (10 September) Somerset Suicide Prevention Partnership Group is wanting to train 100 local people in suicide awareness.

Suicide can affect anybody and there isn't a community in Somerset where people haven't been touched by suicide. 'Suicide Let's Talk' is a **20-minute free course** and is for anyone in Somerset who has an interest in learning more about suicide and gaining lifesaving skills and knowledge.

Please [click here](#) to view the Healthy Somerset website and to find out more.

## 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. How can we reopen the village hall safely?**

**A.** Guidance is available for those managing community centres, village halls and other community facilities on safely re-opening multi-purpose buildings. To read the guidance on reopening the communal facility in a COVID secure manner, please [click here](#).

### **Q. My children are worried by what they are seeing, reading or hearing at school / in the news / on online regarding COVID-19. What can I do to help address this issue?**

**A.** As a parent or carer, it's good to talk to your children honestly but calmly about what is happening, and to not ignore or shield them from what is going on in the world. If your children are worried or anxious about coronavirus, please [click here](#) for Parents Helpline advice.

For more information on how to support your children with specific mental health conditions, and life events which might be negatively affecting their wellbeing, [click here](#).

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

### **Spot “County Lines” and stop the crime and the exploitation**

Somerset communities are urged to know the signs of ‘County Lines’ in a bid to stop illegal drug related criminal activity operating in their area. A new campaign has been launched by the Safer Somerset Partnership and it sets out what County Lines are, the signs to look out for and how to contact [Crimestoppers](#) if you believe County Lines are operating in your area.

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks who export illegal drugs from one area (usually a city) into another (usually a more rural county) within the UK by using dedicated mobile phone lines or another form of “deal line”.

The criminal gangs often exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money, and will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

To read the full press release and find out more information please [click here](#).

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

### **Watch out for coronavirus 'test and trace' scam**

Trading Standards in Somerset are warning residents to be aware of scammers looking to exploit the NHS Test and Trace service. NHS Test and Trace is a Government system to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). It works through quickly testing people with symptoms and phoning, texting or emailing whoever they have had close contact with to tell them to isolate for 14 days. It is a free service.

There are concerns that some people, particularly the vulnerable or elderly, could be susceptible to fake calls or messages from criminals looking to get access to personal information or trick them into handing over money.

You can [find out more on the Devon and Somerset Trading Standards website](#).

### **Avoid COVID-19 Fraud**

Avon and Somerset Police have produced a [Covid-19 Fraud guide](#) to help individuals and businesses stay safe from scammers. A PDF copy has been attached for your ease of reference.

### **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:**

***COVID-19 Fraud Guide PDF& NALC website information***