

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 30. Week ending 18/10/20

Please remember: #Hands #Face #Space

It is so important to remember the coronavirus basics as we enter autumn and winter:

- **Hands** – Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- **Face** – Cover your face in enclosed spaces
- **Space** – Keep 2m apart where possible

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](#).

[Click here](#) to read up to date information on how SWT continues to respond to coronavirus.

Key Messages this week

1. Local COVID-19 alert levels: what you need to know

On Monday 12 October the Government unveiled a new alert system - and associated restrictions - aimed at reducing the rate of infections across the country. Somerset is currently on the lowest level of alert – medium – although confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to rise in the county.

A medium level alert means a certain number of restrictions remain in place for the county. For a list of precautionary measures and the latest Government guidance, please [click here](#).

As you will be aware, we are continuing to see a rise in positive Covid-19 cases across Somerset with the seven day rate per 100,000 increasing in our districts. West

Somerset's infection rate is currently one of the highest in the county - 44.5 at the time of writing. We need businesses and communities to take action to help control the spread of the virus.

Your role as community leaders is vital in strengthening our engagement with local communities and SWT would appreciate your support in helping us to communicate these important messages. Attached is a poster for you to forward to businesses and groups as you feel necessary.

Thanks in advance for your help and support; SWT recognises that working together in a co-ordinated effort across local and national government, the NHS, care sector, businesses and employers, voluntary organisations and other community partners, as well as the general public is key to stopping the spread of Covid-19.

2. 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 few weeks, which are as follows:

- Tuesday 20 October – **Special Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 15 October). Agenda items include Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy & SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan, Coastal Protection Works associated with the B3191 and a confidential report on the sale of land
- Wednesday 21 October – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 16 October). Agenda items include confidential reports on Delivering Regeneration – setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle and Regeneration of Firepool: Business Case for Phase 1 delivery
- Monday 26 October – **Special Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Wednesday 21 October). Agenda items include Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy & SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan
- Wednesday 28 October – **Special Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 23 October)
- Thursday 29 October – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 26 October)

The meetings will all be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences please visit the SWT website by [clicking here](#). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Members of the public are still able to participate in the meeting by submitting their questions or statement to the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and these will be read out by an officer at the meeting. Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

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

3. Self-isolation payment scheme launched

SWT and Sedgemoor District Council are working together to ensure that people are not out of pocket if they are told to self-isolate and cannot work from home. The two councils have collaborated on a system to administer the Government's Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme where eligible residents can claim self-isolation payments of £500.

The legal duty to self-isolate came into force on 28 September for people who test positive for Covid-19 or are contacted by NHS Test and Trace app and are required to self-isolate.

The payment scheme opened on Monday 12 October and is due to run until **Friday 31 January 2021**. Applications must be made within 14 days of the end of your self-isolation period. Please [click here](#) for more information on eligibility and how to apply.

4. SWT to launch E-scooter trial

SWT has announced that the Department for Transport (DfT) has approved its proposal to operate an e-scooter trial in Taunton. The Council has appointed Zipp Mobility to run the 12-month trial scheme which is scheduled to commence in late October. Zipp Mobility, headquartered in Ireland, will create at least four full-time jobs for the duration of the trial.

E-scooters were made legal for use on UK roads, cycle lanes and cycle tracks in selected trial areas in July. Since then, more than 35 local authorities have submitted bids to the DfT.

SWT submitted a proposal for an e-scooter trial scheme in line with its commitment to climate and environmental responsibility, working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030.

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

5. **SWT gifts ShopAppy platform to support local businesses**

SWT is gifting the e-commerce platform ShopAppy to local businesses for 12 months, providing another way to boost trade. The scheme will give people who usually shop online a chance to support the local business community and buy local this festive season.

The Council is the first in Somerset to provide the ShopAppy.com platform which allows local businesses to sell and showcase their goods and services online. SWT is offering this service free of charge for the first 12 months, making it easier for local people to browse, book and buy local all in one place.

Orders on ShopAppy.com can be home delivered, picked up from the shop itself, or from a collection point such as visitor centres, local pubs or cafés which allow customers to get their items outside normal business hours.

The hospitality and events sector as well as community organisations can also use the platform to take bookings or stage online activities, sales or virtual events. Businesses registered will be allocated a community officer to assist and support with loading products and promotion.

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

To sign up to the scheme visit <https://shopappy.com/vendor/>

6. **SWT celebrates Green Flag Award winners**

SWT's parks and open spaces have been recognised by the Green Flag Award Scheme as some of the very best in the country. This year for the first time **Blenheim Gardens** in Minehead received a Green Flag Award thanks to the hard work of the Council's grounds team and local volunteers.

Blenheim Gardens is considered one of the jewel's in West Somerset's crown and has been carefully maintained through close working partnerships with SWT's cleansing contractor idverde and Minehead Town Council.

Taunton's **Vivary, Victoria** and **French Weir** Parks have retained their Green Flags along with **Swains Lane Nature Reserve** in Wellington, which is managed by the Swains Lane Community Group, and **Wellington Park** which also kept a Green Flag Heritage Award (one of only two in the west country). **Comeytrowe Park** managed by the Friends of Comeytrowe Park retained a Community Green Flag Award.

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

A postcard of an assortment of photographs celebrating the parks and open spaces can be seen [here](#).

7. **Vivary Park Travellers' Choice Award Winner 2020**

Vivary Park was named as a Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice winner for 2020.

The Parks and Open Spaces team feel exceptionally happy with the recognition and will continue to work hard so others can enjoy everything that Vivary Park has to offer.

8. Remembrance 2020

Remembrance commemorations will be different in Taunton this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. The usual Civic programme of events will not take place as we adhere to Government guidelines and keep the community safe. Instead, the annual observation of Remembrance will be marked with a series of videos which will be shared on SWT social media.

Members of the public are welcome to lay their wreaths at Taunton's War Memorial in Vivary Park throughout the day on Remembrance Sunday (**8 November**) but are asked to avoid 11am as there will be no formalities this year.

SWT is also encouraging everyone to take part in the nationwide 'Pause' on Armistice Day, **11am on 11 November**. Mute your phone, close your laptop, switch off the telly – for just two minutes and pay your respects to our Armed Forces community, past and present. More information can be found [here](#).

Don't forget to display a poppy in your window in the coming weeks to show your commitment to remember. For more ways to get involved visit The Royal British Legion [website](#).

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

9. SWT putting public safety first this Christmas

The Taunton Christmas Lights Switch On will not take place this year in line with Government advice around the spread of Coronavirus. The popular programme of Winterfest events and attractions has also been postponed this year following discussion with the organisers. The Council supports the decision of Winterfest that staging an event in the town centre is too much of a risk to traders and the public.

SWT will be ensuring that the town looks festive and that it supports traders with initiatives to encourage people to buy local. The magnificent Christmas tree donated once again by Langford Lakes will have pride of place on The Parade and there will be Christmas lights throughout the town centre. These will be turned on from **22 November** but there will be no formal switch on.

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

10. Reminder of SWT Community Chest Fund

SWT has started to assess applications made to help communities recover from the effects of COVID-19. The Community Chest of £250,000 is now open to support one-off initiatives run by the voluntary and community sector, and wider community groups who have been unable to secure mainstream funding from the Council or other sources.

Grants of up to £7,500 can be awarded to supplement activities and projects, covering up to 75% of the total cost with applicants needing to find at least 25% from their own or other sources.

To apply and find out more information on eligibility, please click [here](#).

11. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Stop Halloween becoming a frightening waste of resources

From costumes to the classic pumpkin, there are easy Halloween ways to reduce waste, reuse resources and recycle well. Instead of shop-bought wear-once plastic disguises, have family fun making fearful costumes from old sheets, charity shop bargains, cardboard creations, or swapped garb. And dodge shop-bought e-numbers and sugar for homemade treats.

To find out more, [click here](#).

To keep up to date with recycling sites, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter at www.somersetwaste.gov.uk and follow @Somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter

12. Stronger Somerset

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has invited all local councils in Somerset to submit their full business case for a proposed unitary authority. The Government may receive more than one locally-led proposal for each area reflecting the local debates.

The Secretary of State will consider all proposals received and decide which, if any (subject to consultation and Parliamentary approval) to implement with the aim of any new unitary councils being established by **April 2023**.

The Stronger Somerset campaign microsite contains the business case, an executive summary and the prospectus as well as FAQ's which are regularly updated. Do take the time to read through and feedback any comments via the microsite which can be accessed [here](#).

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 are approaching the schools' half term, SCC has a highway maintenance scheme coming up which, although small in scale, could have a big impact on traffic flows in Taunton.

There has been a persistent highway flooding problem on the corner of Station Road and Belvedere Road in Taunton. To resolve this, SCC Highways are intending to construct a new road gully near the junction and locally reshape the carriageway. This is not too big a job in itself but, so that it can be done safely, quite a bit of temporary traffic management measures will need to be put in place.

There will be a closure of one of the three traffic lanes on **Station Road** whilst **Belvedere Road** itself will be closed to traffic. Due to the proximity of the nearby **Priory Bridge Road** junction this could have quite an effect on traffic flows in this part of the town. To reduce this impact, the works have been arranged for the school half term week (26 to 30 October) and the lane and road closures will only be in place whilst SCC Highways are working. Working times will start after the morning rush hour and will finish before traffic picks up again in the late afternoon.

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

Emergency Road Closure:- Kingston Road, Taunton

An emergency road closure at Kingston Road, Taunton will commence on **25 October 2020** and is expected to last until **26 October 2020** (the closure is between the hours of 08:00 on 25 October 2020 - 06:00 on 26 October 2020).

For any further information about this closure please contact Wessex Water on **(0345) 600 4 600**, quoting reference: ttr0397859TD - Kingston Road, Taunton.

A map of the affected area (in red), together with the recommended diversion route (in purple) can be found by [clicking here](#).

M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme

Toneway/J25 Gyratory

The carriageway is being prepared for the final surface course by planning out the existing/temporary surface to allow the new levels/alignment to tie in. This includes changing the levels and covers of the existing ironwork (manhole covers) to suit the new road levels and new standards.

The contractor has also started to lay the final surface course on the Toneway outbound carriageway and roundabout. The large drainage attenuation tank in the centre of the roundabout has now been installed.

Ruishton Junction

Kerbs have now been installed, including the pedestrian crossing island, footpath edgings and new bus stop kerbs, along with new water main apparatus. A new drainage system has also been installed with new ducting for services including traffic signals and electrics. The surface course has been reinstated and strengthened for all vehicle types.

Please [click here](#) for further information on the works being undertaken to the new Blackbrook Bridge and the New Nexus 25 roundabout.

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.

Reminder of Climate Change Virtual Events

Thursday 22 October 2020 11am to 2pm

Saturday 24 October 2020 11am to 2pm

Virtual Climate Emergency Event for City, Town and Parish Councils

Zoom contact [Somerset Association of Local Councils \(SALC\)](#)

Exmoor National Park

#ExmoorDay

Next week on **Monday 19 October**, Exmoor lovers from near and far will celebrate #ExmoorDay on the anniversary of its designation as a National Park in 1954.

Throughout the day the National Park Authority and partners will be taking to social media to celebrate all that Exmoor means to the nation, from the breath-taking beauty of its scenery, heritage and wildlife to incredible ways you can experience it in the flesh.

Everyone is invited to follow the Day and join in by sharing their own experiences and photos of Exmoor using the #ExmoorDay hashtag. To find out more please [click here](#).

Car parking charges to be introduced

Upgrade works to Exmoor National Park Authority-run car parks, including the installation of contactless ticket machines, are planned to go ahead following a proposal passed at [last month's ENP meeting](#) (8 September).

The decision follows a 44% drop in funding from central Government for National Parks since 2011. It comes amid mounting pressure for National Parks to dial up their response to the climate and nature crises and, as the pandemic deepens, to manage unprecedented visitor numbers and provide a much-needed dose of nature's medicine.

It costs ENP £100K per year to maintain the 10 car parks and 9 public toilets it owns. The introduction of ticket machines at Tarr Steps and Valley of the Rocks more than a decade ago has helped increase income, but not sufficiently to cover these costs. Contactless methods of payment are also considered safer for staff and users in these times of COVID.

All income generated would go towards maintaining car parks and toilets and helping fund the National Park's core education, access and conservation work.

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

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

National Energy Action (NEA) Free Webinars

Understanding Fuel / Water Poverty and Health

The NEA is offering free webinars that will look at the causes and impacts of fuel and water poverty with a focus on the health impacts. It aims to help delegates identify those likely to be at risk from fuel and water poverty and signpost to assistance.

Free places are available to frontline staff and volunteers from non-commercial organisations that regularly encounter and provide advice to those in or at risk of fuel poverty – i.e. essentially those on a low income / in a vulnerable situation and who are struggling to manage their household bills.

Course options:

- 3 November (1.45pm registration for a 2.00pm start – 4.30pm)
- 20 November (9.15am registration for a 9.30am start – 12.00pm)
- 25 November (1.45pm registration for a 2.00pm start – 4.30pm)

For more details or to book contact Lynsey Thompson, Training Co-ordinator, NEA, email lynsey.thompson@nea.org.uk or call 0191 261 5677.

Mapping Food Banks across our District

For the purposes of this request, a Food Bank is defined as: -

"A non-profit, charitable organisation that distributes food (and other essential items such as toiletries) to those who have difficulty purchasing enough to avoid hunger."

SWT is mindful that new food banks have been set up in response to Covid-19 and there may be some which we are not aware of. This is where your help would be appreciated. If you know of a food bank in your parish, please contact H.phillips@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Could you run a Community Pantry? Are you interested in joining SWT's pilot scheme?

The idea of a Community Pantry is to share good, but excess food from going to landfill, by making it available to the community at low cost. A pilot scheme is [launching in Sedgemoor](#), and we are seeking a group or groups to pilot the scheme across the SWT area.

If you would like the opportunity to learn more about how this could help your community please get in touch as we plan to host an information event later this month. Please email: H.phillips@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Health and Welfare

Healthwatch Somerset Survey

A new public survey has been launched to find out more about local people's experiences of using the NHS 111 service in the region. 111 is the NHS non-emergency number.

Healthwatch, the local consumer champion for health and social care services, are independently collating public feedback from people who have recently used the NHS 111 service in the Somerset, Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay areas.

The online survey can be found by clicking [here](#). The closing date for feedback/survey is **Friday 20 November 2020**. Members of the public can also speak to Healthwatch Somerset directly to share their experience of NHS 111, or receive support completing the survey by calling **01278 264405** (Mon – Fri 9am-5pm).

Quit smoking this Stoptober

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you'll ever do for your health. When you stop, you give your lungs the chance to repair and you'll be able to breathe easier. There are lots of other benefits too - and they start almost immediately. It's never too late to quit, so join in this Stoptober.

[Click here](#) to download the free NHS Stoptober App to help you quit smoking and start breathing easier.

Reminder to Download the new NHS Test and Trace app

You can now [download the NHS Test and Trace app](#) and help control the spread of coronavirus and protect yourself and your loved ones as case numbers rise. The app will advise you to self-isolate if you have been in close contact with a confirmed case. It will also enable you to check symptoms, book a free test if needed and get your test results.

Travel Restrictions

The guidance for travelling abroad is constantly being updated by Government. Please [click here](#) to read the latest information relating to the travel corridors.

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. I'm due my flu jab but I'm nervous to attend my Doctor's surgery. What advice is out there to help settle my nerves?

A. As more people begin to visit healthcare settings for appointments such as their flu jab, local GPs, emergency department staff and healthcare teams are reminding visitors that it's important to follow the three simple steps of 'Hands Face Space': wash hands regularly, wear a face covering when visiting a health setting and maintain your distance from those not in your household.

NHS healthcare services are open and caring for people, appointments are being delivered face-to-face, online and over the telephone. If you are asked to visit yoursurgery for a face-to-face appointment, please remember to wear a face covering.

Face-to-face appointments are available to patients where clinically appropriate, but all patients will be triaged first so you may be asked to discuss your conditions over the phone or online initially to assess what would be most appropriate for you.

For more urgent healthcare needs, that are not a life-threatening medical emergency, ring NHS 111 or visit <https://111.nhs.uk/> online. You can find out when and where to get help, and be contacted by a nurse if needed.

As always, for **emergencies** such as a stroke, chest pain, or severe burns ring 999 or visit your local emergency (A&E) department.

Q. How do I book a COVID-19 test in Somerset?

A. The NHS understands that demand for COVID-19 tests has risen rapidly across the country, but it's important to remember that you cannot book a test via the NHS111 system, or in person at your GP practice, pharmacy or hospital.

If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19 you must:

- Stay at home
- Call 119 or book a test online at gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test
- Self-isolate until you get the results from that test

People with symptoms are prioritised for tests. If you do not have symptoms, please say so and help NHS tests go to those who need them most.

Crime / Safeguarding

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Hate Crime Awareness Week

This week is [#HateCrimeAwarenessWeek](#) and we must be clear; there is no place for injustices, inequality and discriminate behaviour. We must stand together united against hate crime.

Avon and Somerset Police recorded a 20% increase in the number of racially-motivated hate crimes reported by victims between January and August 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. The spike in racial hate crimes has been attributed to a number of factors including recent events in the US, and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests in the UK, which have propelled hate crime to the forefront of people's minds. This has resulted in a growing intolerance for this type of behaviour, as well as better understanding of what constitutes a hate crime and a boost in confidence in victims to report to the police.

We must reach out to victims of hate crimes who are victimised because of their age, sexual orientation, religion, race or any other reason. For more information, please [click here](#).

Catch up on the latest Facebook LIVES

Superintendent Andy Bennett and Alex Raikes MBE, of Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) hosted a Facebook Live session on 12 October to discuss hate crimes for [#HateCrimeAwarenessWeek](#).

The police would like to share this session as widely as possible, so please promote to all your channels and networks. [Click here](#) to watch the video playback to find out more.

Taunton Police Live Beat Surgery

This week PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen was joined by Berkeley Wilde who is a Director from The Diversity Trust (Community Interest Company) with a main objective to help influence social change to achieve a fairer society. You can find more information about The Diversity Trust [here](#).

Berkeley and PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen were discussing Hate Crime and the impact it has on individuals. Although this video is no longer live, you can watch the playback [here](#).

Don't become a victim of Romance Fraud #LoveNotLies

People in the South West are being warned of the dangers posed by online scammers as part of a nationwide campaign against romance fraud. Between August 2019 and August 2020, 198 reports of such crimes were reported in Avon and Somerset, worth £2.4million, but it is believed the true figure of people giving money over to fraudsters is likely to be much higher.

While more and more people find love and companionship through the internet, the number of scams conducted via dating websites and social media is increasing too. A common misconception is that only the vulnerable and elderly will fall for romance scams but the reality can be quite different. That is why Avon and Somerset Police are supporting a national operation, led by City of London Police and Action Fraud, cracking down on offenders who lie their way into their victims' hearts and con them out of money.

One of the most common scams sees the fraudsters create fake profiles online and converse with their targets, often for months on end. Having gained the trust of their selected victim, they then ask for money. The reasons for this can vary from helping them cover an unexpected cash shortfall through to investing in a business opportunity or their long-term future, such as a deposit for a property.

Requests for money, and or personal documentation should be viewed with caution and considered a red flag, especially if you have never met the person face-to-face. The Police advice is to anyone who has found themselves in this situation to come forward and report it to [Action Fraud](#) as soon as possible. By coming forward you may prevent other people being preyed upon similarly, or you may be able to recover some of the money lost.

To read the full press release and find out how to spot a potential online fraudster please [click here](#).

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.

#Hands #Face #Space

Attachment:

Stop the Spread Poster PDF