

# Somerset West and Taunton

## Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

### Issue 32. Week ending 1/11/20

#### **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. Stay safe this Halloween**

Somerset's Director of Public Health is urging families to give a new Covid-friendly twist to Halloween this year and keep safe. With cases of the virus rising throughout the county, trick or treating is a "no go" but that doesn't mean there is no spooky fun to be had. It just means trying a different approach and making alternative plans.

Cases of Covid-19 are still lower in Somerset than in many other parts of the country, but health officials say cases are still rising in most areas – and there is no room for complacency. Please avoid 'Trick or Treating' and at all times follow the rule of six as well as the 'hands, face and space' guidance. Knocking on doors and picking up sweets can increase the risk of catching and spreading the virus through touch and

close contact. If you absolutely must go outside then outdoor activities such as Halloween scavenger hunts or walking trails are a good idea. Please also remember that a Halloween mask is not a substitute for a cloth one.

Instead of venturing out, why not use the opportunity to be creative and find Halloween activities within your own home. Organise a Halloween themed treasure hunt around your house and garden and hide the trick or treat sweets to be found in the safety of your home! Watch a spooky movie, carve a pumpkin, decorate the house and or make ghostly costumes. Have fun, but most of all stay safe!

## 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 3 November – **Special Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 29 October)
- Wednesday 4 November – **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 30 October)
- Wednesday 11 November – **Special Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 5 November)
- Wednesday 18 November – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 13 November)
- Thursday 19 November – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 16 November)

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.

### 3. **Food Support for families in Somerset**

Somerset County Council has pledged £125,000 of additional support for families in Somerset who may be struggling to find food this winter. They want to ensure no child or adult in Somerset goes hungry. The aim is to meet the immediate need for food, and work with the family to address underlying needs. This is because if a child is hungry there are usually other issues which the family need help to address – such as finances, housing, mental health and wellbeing, employment, and skills.

Throughout the pandemic the **Coronavirus Helpline** has been providing information, advice and support to families, adopting the same community orientated approach as that developed in the Adults Service. The Village Agents' offer to families has been extended so that they can get support to address underlying issues and regain, or retain, their ability to be as independent as possible.

This has enabled many families in Somerset to get the support they need to become more resilient. One element of this has been to make sure families can access nutritious meals - this remains a focus of work for the Village Agents.

The **Coronavirus Helpline** now includes the option to access food support for families during half term and any family in need should contact the **Coronavirus Helpline on 0300 790 6275 and select Option 1.**

You can also get help with urgent food supplies on these websites:

<https://helpoutwhenschoolsout.co.uk/>

<https://www.kidsmealsmap.co.uk/>

### 4. **BT Payphone Update**

It may have come to your attention that an article has appeared in the media in the last couple of days regarding the removal of a number of BT payphones in the District. Unfortunately, the article doesn't accurately reflect the outcome of the consultation process and final decision made by the Council.

For your information, an email has been sent to all SWT Councillors and Town and Parish Councils clarifying the fact that SWT makes the decision as to which payphones are retained. A copy of this decision was sent to BT and the Secretary of State for their information.

The decision made was to retain 19 out of the 23 payphones. There were only 4 where we didn't receive a response or where the Parish Council did not wish to adopt or object:

- Farrant close, Bishops Hull, Taunton
- Liddymore Road, Watchet
- Stogursey Bridgwater

- Forge Corner, Burton, Stogursey, Bridgwater

Please contact the Governance Team if you need any further information.

## 5. Self-isolation payment scheme

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.

SWT and Sedgemoor District Council 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 payment scheme 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.

## 6. REMINDER - ShopAppy Webinars

SWT is gifting the e-commerce platform [ShopAppy](#) to local businesses in Minehead, Wellington and Taunton 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. To find out more about the scheme, ShopAppy.com and SWT are offering **FREE** zoom webinars on:

- Monday 2 November – 10.30am
- Tuesday 3 November - 2pm
- Wednesday 4 November - 6.30pm

To book onto a business webinar please [click here](#).

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

## 7. REMINDER - SWT Community Chest Fund

SWT continues to assess applications made to help communities recover from the effects of Covid-19. The Community Chest of £250,000 is 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](#).

## 8. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

**Carve with Care, Eat with Gusto this Halloween!**

There are easy ways to reduce waste, reuse resources and recycle well when marking Halloween on **Saturday 31 October**. With recipes galore on the net, almost every part

of a carved pumpkin can become tasty meals and snacks, from soup and hummus to pies and toasted seeds. Parts of the pumpkin not eaten should be composted at home or added to the food waste bin.

**As a food, pumpkin should never be thrown in the rubbish.**

Any seeds not toasted can be planted to grow free future pumpkins.

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

## 9. Stronger Somerset

You will find the Stronger Somerset campaign [microsite](#) contains recently updated information, as well as the proposal and executive summary. You can also sign up to receive the Stronger Somerset newsletter by [clicking here](#).

All SWT Councillors have been invited to consider the Stronger Somerset business base at the Special Full Council scheduled for **Thursday 3 December 2020**. The business case will not be available to be published until the **25 November**.

An all Member Briefing has been scheduled for **Thursday 26 November** so that Members can learn more about the contents of the Business Case and ask any questions.

## 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.

This week SCC Highways took advantage of the school half term and the reduced traffic flows in Taunton to carry out drainage improvement works on Station Road and to upgrade the pedestrian crossing and traffic filter phases of the Wellington Road/ Castle Street junction near Tesco. The previous week the team also resurfaced **Summerland Road in Minehead** and **Broom Street in Oare**.

Next week SCC Highways will be moving on to a completely different task on one of our major routes. On the **A39** between **Dragon Cross, Bilbrook** and the **Washford Inn**, the hedge on the railway side is growing into the road and is causing problems for high sided vehicles. The area of land between the road and the railway is owned by Somerset County Council so they will be cutting the vegetation back in order to improve the situation. When inspecting the site prior to ordering the work, SCC Highways also noticed that this area contains some dead and dying trees so, whilst the contractor is there on site, they have been instructed to remove these on safety grounds. Temporary traffic management will be

by manually operated "Stop/Go" boards and the work will take place on site between **Monday 2 and Friday 6 November**.

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

### **Emergency Road Closure: TTR0404120 Wood Street, Taunton**

Please be aware there will be an emergency road closure at **Wood Street, Taunton** which will commence on **2 November 2020** and is expected to last until **4 November 2020** (the closure is between the hours of 8am - 6pm).

These works are for Michael Riley Associates to carry out demolition works to an unsafe building - the building is formally known as Grahams Motorcycles.

For any further information about this closure please contact Michael Riley Associates on **(07776) 130999**, quoting reference: TTR0404120 Wood Street, Taunton.

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

## **M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme**

### **Toneway/J25 Gyratory**

Contractor, Alun Griffiths has now completed surfacing works on the A358 Toneway inbound and outbound. Traffic signal cabling and apparatus has also been installed in preparation for the commissioning of the new traffic signal controls and laid the white lining and high friction surfacing.

Upcoming works:

Traffic signal equipment will continue to be installed for the next few weeks and dressing and seeding the verges in November.

### **Creech Castle**

Alun Griffiths has installed new kerb alignments and surfaced the footpath.

To help ALDI with their opening times, the workforce has been working out of hours, this has also helped to reduce impact on traffic flows. In addition, Alun Griffiths has recently started to construct foundations for the new retaining wall on Bridgwater Road, Taunton.

The enabling works are progressing well and are on track to be finished in December. The new footpath will also be completed by December. Alun Griffiths would like to thank everyone on this route for your patience and understanding during these works.

### **Ruishton Junction**

Footpath works around Ruishton junction and heading towards the Toby Carvery are still ongoing – this is currently planned to stop now until traffic has switched to the new link road.

Please [click here](#) for updates on the new Blackbrook Bridge and the 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.

## **Important:**

### **Junction 25 Road Closures**

**9 November 2020(8pm – 6am)**

- North bound entrance and exit.
- South bound entrance 1 lane and South bound exit.

### **Sign up to The Big Vote! urge Somerset Youth Parliament**

The call is out to make sure as many young people as possible across Somerset have their voices heard in the UK's biggest youth survey 'Make Your Mark'.

Somerset Youth Parliament and Somerset County Council are encouraging schools, colleges and youth projects across the county to have their say, make a difference and ensure young people's voices are heard on key issues.

The online British Youth Council survey encourages all young people aged 11 to 18 years to vote on issues which are most important to them. These top issues will then be debated and voted on by elected Members of Youth Parliament, helping create the next UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) manifesto.

Schools, colleges, clubs and youth projects are able to register and find out more by clicking [here](#).

You can find out more about Somerset UK Youth Parliament group, Make Your Mark BIG VOTE and/ or local Campaigns by contacting: [Kdarlington@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Kdarlington@somerset.gov.uk)

## **Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

### **Candle Safety**

Battery-powered candles – are they a trick or a treat?

Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Services' answer: treat!

They're safer around your house (and in a pumpkin!) than candles with a real flame. You won't have to worry about forgetting to put them out or having them too close to the curtains or your costume. Buy your battery candles now so you're all ready for Halloween night!

Please [click here](#) to read the top tips to keep your home safe and to download a handy candle safety leaflet (see attached PDF).

## **Bonfire and Firework Safety**

Due to Covid-19 there are no public firework displays this year, and more people are likely to celebrate at private gatherings in their own gardens. The Fire Service would like to remind the public of the firework code and share some important information:

### **Did you know?**

- On average, 127 fires in homes and buildings in the UK are started by fireworks every year.
- The majority of firework-related injuries happen at family or private parties.
- It is an offence to throw or discharge a firework in a street or public place and can result in prosecution and a fine of up to £5,000.
- It is against the law to carry fireworks in public if you're under 18.
- Fireworks must not be sold to anyone who is under 18.
- It is an offence to let fireworks off during night hours (11pm to 7am), except on Bonfire Night (midnight), Diwali, New Year, and Chinese New Year (1am).
- It is an offence under the Explosives Act 1875 to tamper with or modify fireworks.
- Sparklers can reach temperatures more than 15 times hotter than boiling water.

For information on how to celebrate Bonfire Night safely at home please [click here](#) or see the attached PDF leaflet.

## **Community Support – What help is out there?**

### **Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

#### **The Somerset Move-In Fund awards £70,000 of grants to support homeless charities**

Grants worth over £70,000 have been awarded to eight local charities and community groups directly supporting homeless people to move into independent living. Funds were awarded from The Somerset Move-In Fund, managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF).

After consulting a range of homelessness charities and community groups earlier in the year, SCF were told that many homeless people couldn't move into their own homes because they couldn't find the funds to purchase essentials such as curtains, carpets, furniture, white goods, and pots and pans.

The Somerset Move-In Fund has been designed to help local charities give homeless people the best possible chance of finding a place to live and make it a home, with each individual receiving up to £500 of support.

Local organisations that have been awarded the grants are:

ARC (formerly Taunton Association for the Homeless) - £10,000

Second Step, Somerset West & Taunton - £10,000

West Somerset Advice, Minehead - £8,040

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

If you run a local community group or charity and would like to find out more about grant funding in general, please call Somerset Community Foundation on: **01749 344949** or visit: <http://www.somersetcf.org.uk>

## **Every poppy makes a difference to the lives of the Armed Forces community**

Like so many things this year, the Poppy Appeal has had to adapt to the threat of Covid-19. The Royal British Legion is calling on the support of the public like never before, because every poppy counts. With some people unable to leave their homes as they normally would to find a poppy, and with many of the charity's collectors unable to carry out face to face collections, The Royal British Legion has unveiled a range of new ways for people to show their support remotely.

From donating for poppies through the post for your neighbours and local community, displaying a poppy in your window, donating online or undertaking a virtual Poppy run, there are many ways to support the Poppy Appeal from home in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

Get involved in Poppy Appeal 2020 by clicking [here](#).

## **REMINDER - Grants of £250 to reduce loneliness at Christmas**

This Christmas Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) would like to support community groups that can help to reduce loneliness and spread Christmas cheer through food and festive activities.

SCF wants to fund groups who can help to bring festive food – and the spirit of Christmas - to people at home. The Festive Fund for Somerset offers a £250 grant to groups if they can tell SCF how their work can combat the isolation and loneliness that many people can feel in the winter months.

To apply, you will need to complete a short application form by **Friday 13 November**. For more information on how to apply for a Festive Fund grant please click [here](#).

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Everyone can catch it, anyone can spread it**

Somerset County Council is continuing to see a rise in positive Covid-19 cases across the county. The Somerset seven-day rate is still lower (42.1 per 100,000 population) than the England rate (173.6 per 100,000) but the rise over the last few weeks is steadily continuing.

SCCare closely monitoring where local cases are, so that we can be quick to respond to any trends, clusters or outbreaks. There have been positive cases in all parts of the county, therefore it is important to stress that we are all in this together, and keeping the virus under control needs all of us to stick to the 'Hands, Face, Space' guidance. Anyone can catch Covid-19 regardless of age, gender or geographical location.

It's vital everyone acts to reduce their own risk, and the risk to others, from getting ill with coronavirus. Please [click here](#) to read important information available to help Somerset residents, businesses and visitors take all-important precautions.

## **Shift.ms**

### **An online community for those living with Multiple Sclerosis**

Many non-urgent, routine health appointments have been cancelled or postponed due to coronavirus so consequently, many people are seeking advice and support from others who are living with an ongoing health condition, such as Multiple Sclerosis online.

New to Multiple Sclerosis? Talk to others who get it. Join Shift.ms to get support and advice from others living with MS, who understand what you're going through.

Shift.ms is the social network and community for people with multiple sclerosis, with 37,000+ members globally. Shift.ms is here for you - to talk openly and honestly about what you're going through. Join the community by visiting [www.Shift.ms](http://www.Shift.ms)

## **REMINDER - 'Flu fighters'**

With Covid-19 also circulating in communities this winter, catching flu and coronavirus together is even more likely to lead to severe illness and hospitalisation. Somerset County Council (SCC) is calling all parents and carers of school aged children in Somerset to read the information about the flu vaccination issued by schools and fill in an online form to give their consent and help children become 'flu fighters' this winter.

Please [click here](#) for more information.

## **Please Download the 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 more people who download the app and contribute to the data will assist with monitoring and tracking the spread of the virus; this will enable Public Health England to allocate resources accordingly. The app will also 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. My children are entitled to Free School Meals, and I am worried about feeding them through the school holidays. Is there any help available please?**

**A.** Anyone who is struggling to manage during the winter months can contact the **Coronavirus Support Line** for help. That number is **0300 790 6275**. This is not just for those children entitled to Free School Meals but for all those families that are experiencing hardship. The Councils are working alongside community organisations and businesses to provide much needed meals and food for families most at need. With demand likely to increase ahead of school holidays, Christmas and throughout the winter, SCC is spending a further £125,000 to provide crucial meals and funding across the county.

SCC will not be giving cash, as this only solves the problem on a particular day. A Village Agent may contact you to discuss your options and work towards a more sustainable, resilient long-term solution.

**Q. Where can I find out the number of recorded Covid-19 cases near where I live?**

**A.** The latest national and local information relating to Covid-19 can be found on Somerset County Council's website. The dashboard of Covid-19 related health information can be found [here](#).

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

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

### **New Team set up to tackle Covid-19 breaches**

Avon and Somerset Police are establishing a dedicated Covid-19 team to attend reports of breaches of the emergency regulations. It is being created from the extra funding provided by the Government, dedicated to the Covid-19 response.

The intention of the team is to provide reassurance to those communities who adhere to the regulations, but also to help enforce when individuals flout the rules and place their communities at greater risk of the virus.

The team was launched on Monday 26 October and will be reacting quickly to incidents called in by the public and patrol areas highlighted by partner agencies and A&SP own intelligence that present a threat to public health.

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

### **A Short poll**

#### **Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner**

During the global health Covid-19 pandemic, police have been providing a supporting role in helping to manage public safety through ensuring community compliance of the [Government's coronavirus restrictions](#) to reduce the spread of the virus.

Since lockdown in March, Avon and Somerset Police has taken on [new responsibilities](#) following the nationally agreed Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce approach to managing 32,474 reports of breaches of the Coronavirus Regulations. They have engaged, explained and encouraged people to comply and where this hasn't worked, they've issued 397 fixed penalty notices (data correct as of 17/10/2020). This is on top of managing their usual calls for service and workload, which has now returned to the same levels it was at before lockdown. The police has also faced additional demand and responded to illegal gatherings, unlicensed raves and large scale protests across the force area.

Given the demand faced by the police PCC Sue Mountstevens is encouraging everyone to answer a quick one-question poll to enable you to share your thoughts and help A&SP strive towards their vision of better policing and fairer criminal justice services for all. Please [click here](#) to answer the online survey.

### **Drivers urged to check insurance as campaign aims to reduce uninsured driving on our roads**

The police are urging motorists to check their insurance this week, as part of a national campaign to reduce uninsured driving. Each year over 130 people are killed and 26,000 are left injured by an uninsured or untraced driver. This equates to one casualty every 20 minutes.

Since the beginning of January 2020 Avon and Somerset Police have seized 2219 vehicles for no Insurance or Driving Licence. However they have also seen cases where drivers were shocked to find themselves contacted for having no insurance. Read about #OpDriveInsured and how to check if your vehicle is showing as insured by clicking [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/](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.

**#Hands #Face #Space**

**Attachment:**

*Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Candle Safety Leaflet*

*Celebrate Bonfire Night Safely Leaflet*