

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 37. Week ending 6/12/20

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. Somerset in Tier 2 of local Coronavirus restrictions

Somerset West and Taunton, South Somerset, Mendip and Sedgemoor are all in Tier 2: High alert. Tier 2 is for areas with a higher or rapidly rising level of infections, where some additional restrictions need to be in place.

Neighbouring areas – Bristol and North Somerset – are in Tier 3. Please [click here](#) to read the full list of what you can and can't do in each tier.

2. Deane House Open for Appointments Only

The Deane House Hub has re-opened for appointments only following the end of national lockdown restrictions. SWT offices remain closed to protect the

community and staff while still delivering critical services and ensuring residents are fully supported.

The customer services team are continuing to answer calls between 8am – 6pm, and people are being encouraged to access services [online](#). However, when a face to face meeting is required appointments can now be made at the Deane House Hub in Belvedere Road.

All visitors and staff will be required to wear a mask unless exempt and to follow social distancing guidelines. SWT staff manning the interview rooms will be wearing face visors rather than masks to make communication easier and minimise any impact on visitors with a hearing impairment. To make an appointment at the Deane House Hub please call **0300 304 8000**.

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

3. Stronger Somerset

You will find the latest version of the Stronger Somerset business case and other associated documents [here](#). You can also sign up to receive the Stronger Somerset newsletter by [clicking here](#).

On the 3 December 2020, all four District Councils in Somerset (Somerset West and Taunton, South Somerset, Mendip and Sedgemoor) voted to endorse the Stronger Somerset business case. Now it has been approved the Stronger Somerset proposal will be submitted to the Secretary of State, by 9 December.

4. 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:

- Monday 7 December – **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4.00pm on Wednesday 2 December)
- Tuesday 8 December – **Special Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4.00pm on Thursday 3 December)
- Thursday 10 December – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4.00pm on Monday 7 December)
- Tuesday 15 December – **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4.00pm on Thursday 10 December)

- Wednesday 16 December – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4.00pm on Friday 11 December)
- Thursday 17 December – **Special Audit, Governance and Standards Committee** to consider the Statement of Accounts, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4.00pm on Monday 14 December)

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.

5. Additional Restrictions Grant scheme

SWT's grant scheme providing extra support for businesses affected by the current national lockdown is now open. The [Additional Restrictions Grant](#) (ARG) is part of a package of measures announced by the Government to assist businesses severely impacted by restrictions put in place to control the spread of Covid-19.

Any business owner or sole trader whose business has been severely impacted by Covid-19 restrictions can apply for the ARG including homeworkers and mobile workers. The Government has recently provided **additional clarification** around seasonal and part-time businesses as well as seasonal sports clubs.

Where a business operates seasonally and was therefore closed on the date before national restrictions were introduced, as long as the business was not insolvent, in liquidation or subject to a striking off notice on that date, it can be considered to be trading and is therefore eligible to receive grants under this scheme.

Seasonal sports clubs such as cricket clubs and bowling greens can be considered to be trading and therefore eligible to receive grants under this scheme even if their season ended before 4 November 2020.

Online applications with all relevant supporting information must be submitted before the closing date at 9am on **Monday 14 December**. The application process can be accessed [here](#).

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

6. Community Chest Fund Update

The Community Chest Scheme supports one-off initiatives that are:

- supporting COVID19 recovery
- seen as valuable to the area
- are not able to secure mainstream funding from the Council or other sources

SWT continues to have a tremendous response to the Community Chest fund and after two months SWT has allocated just over **£150,000** to local communities benefitting 39 different schemes. There are a number of other proposals that are under consideration, which, if granted, would allocate 80% of the available funds.

Very few applications have received an outright rejection (less than 5) and these have been because they have not met the scheme criteria or are a business, who have been directed to other funds.

In a number of cases, SWT has been able to link to other funding providers to enhance the value of the Council's contribution. Grants have been allocated across the district area and for a range of providers.

At the outset, it was hoped to achieve a geographic spread for these funds. Whilst this has been the case, SWT is now particularly interested to hear from those areas that are yet to benefit. All requests will be dealt with strictly in date order as this fund draws closer to its full allocation.

Please do remind contacts in your area about this scheme. It is quick and easy to register www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/communitychest

7. SWT approves new zero carbon affordable homes

SWT has given the go ahead for new zero carbon social housing in Minehead and Taunton. The proposals approved at a Special Full Council Meeting on Tuesday 1 December, include the redevelopment of council-owned land to provide 54 housing units at Seaward Way, Minehead and a further 11 units at the old Oxford Inn site on the corner of Roman Road and Outer Circle in Taunton.

Both developments will be used as exemplar schemes to showcase the latest innovations in environmentally friendly construction and design, and will incorporate a comprehensive data collection regime to benchmark energy and carbon use, enabling customers and development partners to support and adopt a higher standard in building regulations.

Based on the housing need for Minehead, the scheme mix proposed for Seaward Way includes houses, flats and chalet bungalows, with adapted options for disabled residents for the latter two types. A play area space will also be included.

The scheme mix for Oxford Inn proposes 9 flats and 2 houses as the most viable approach. Replacement of the derelict buildings that currently occupy this site will improve the appearance of this prominent corner location. Funding will be determined once the finalised design has received planning

approval and tenders have been received. Please [click here](#) to read the full SWT press release.

8. SWT scheme supports National Tree Week

Parish and town councils across the district are giving their open spaces a boost during National Tree Week thanks to SWT.

The Council offered free trees to parish and town councils as part of its commitment to working towards carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030. In total 223 trees with stakes, ties and guards were delivered by SWT ready for planting out during National Tree Week (28 November – 6 December). Councils chose from Oak, Beech, Lime and Hawthorn bare root trees.

Three hundred hedging whips have also been supplied to Wellington School as part of the scheme.

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

9. SWT offers Christmas Parking incentive

SWT is offering free parking to help support businesses in towns and villages across the district this festive season. The Council is offering free parking all day on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas in its car parks at Dulverton, Dunster, Minehead, Porlock, Watchet, Wellington and Williton to support traders, residents and visitors.

In Taunton parking will be free after 3pm on the same three Saturdays - **5, 12 and 19 December**. This offer excludes the Kilkenny car park which is a long stay commuter car park.

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

10. SWT brings festive cheer to Taunton

With the announcement of Somerset West and Taunton being placed under Tier 2 restrictions, the Council is pressing ahead with a range of events and activities in Taunton, bringing some much needed festive cheer for those hoping to visit the town centre.

Extra measures adhering to the government's Covid-safe guidance will be put in place to safeguard shoppers. These include management of social distancing by stallholders; mandatory wearing of face masks inside enclosed spaces (unless exempt); limiting the number of customers in marquees at any one time, and regular disinfection of hand-contact surfaces.

The events have kicked-off with the opening of four Alpine food huts located in the town centre, which will be in place until 10 January. The huts are selling a variety of items including cheeses, German sausages, sweets and treats, and a hot Christmas carvery! The annual Christmas craft fair, which has been

trading for over 15 years, will be held between **Saturday 5** and **Sunday 20 December**.

The Christmas Craft Market will join other high street stores in staying open until **9pm on Thursdays** for those wanting to do some late night shopping. During the weekends of **12** and **19 December**, Castle Green will host the return of Taunton's quality Independent Market, which has been on-hold until now due to the restrictions. Shoppers can expect to browse a range of food, drink, crafts, homewares, beauty and fashion all from the best local producers.

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

11. SWT scheme will allow limited access to East Street

SWT is implementing temporary arrangements for access to East Street during the festive season. East Street has been closed to all vehicular traffic except emergency vehicles and retail deliveries since non-essential retail reopened in July following the first national lockdown.

With the second round of restrictions easing and significantly reduced daylight hours Blue Badge holders are being granted access to East Street between 8am and 10am only throughout December. This comes ahead of a longer term solution to allow improved traffic flow around Taunton town centre and provide increased parking for Blue Badge holders following a consultation by SWT.

The proposed scheme will see an automated barrier which would allow access to all traffic in a one-way direction on East Street during peak hours, seven days a week. For more information regarding the restrictions and further consultation please refer to the full [SWT press release](#).

12. Have your say on climate positive planning

SWT is now consulting on 'Climate Positive Planning', an Interim Policy Statement on Planning for the Climate Emergency. The consultation is taking place now until **Monday 4 January 2021**.

To have your say on the new Interim Policy Statement, visit the Council's [consultation portal](#).

13. REMINDER- Somerset West Lottery Christmas bonus draw

SWT is inviting people to support local good causes this festive season and be in with a chance to win a great prize in the Somerset West Lottery. Everyone who signs up to purchase one or more tickets before **19 December 2020** will be in with the chance to win one of five bundles containing an Amazon Echo Show 8, Echo Dot 3rd Gen and a Fire 7 Tablet courtesy of the external lottery management company Gatherwell.

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

14. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Give problem parking a festive break

Waste bosses and fire chiefs are asking Somerset motorists to put the brakes on problem parking this festive season. The Covid-driven rise in home working has meant more access issues for collection trucks and fire engines as space on residential streets is at a premium. And with the usual seasonal parking pressures on the way, it is feared that a difficult situation could get even worse. The cars are often legally parked, but in a way that makes it difficult for recycling and rubbish collections trucks to negotiate narrower streets.

If recycling crews cannot get through, fire engines will struggle too. The fire service is becoming increasingly concerned that its crews could be seriously delayed getting to an emergency incident, putting lives at risk. As they did during the first lockdown, SWP and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service are urging people to park considerately.

The Service is asking people when parking their vehicle to:

- Park close to the kerb
- Leave enough space for a fire engine or an ambulance to pass
- Leave extra room near tight corners
- Fold in your wing mirror

For the latest information about services and any disruption [click here](#).

Check your collection days for Christmas and 2021

At somersetwaste.gov.uk, check all your collection days with *My Collection Day*. While there, if you need a recycling box, click on *My Waste Services* and select *Managing waste containers* from the drop-down menu. No fuss, no queue, no calls 24/7. *My Waste Services* is also for reporting any missed collection after 7:00pm on the due day or within the next five working days (rubbish, garden waste) or three working days (recycling).

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

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. Work has been progressing well with the construction of the new cattle grid on the road leading up to **North Hill, Minehead** and now works are approaching the end. The new concrete walls, drainage and steelwork have been installed over the last few weeks. The current task that SCC Highways are undertaking is the resurfacing of the road approaching the new grid on each side.

Unfortunately, last Thursday, SCC Highways had to cancel the planned carriageway resurfacing that was scheduled for that day due to the poor weather forecast that they received, with rain, heavy at times, being forecast throughout the day. This was to ensure that the finished road surface is delivered in a good, robust condition. Instead, SCC Highways completed this element of the scheme on the Friday. This meant that the work originally scheduled for Friday, fencing, hanging gates etc, will now be carried out on **Monday 7 December** instead and the temporary road closure covering the works will be extended until then.

SCC Highways would like to thank local residents and people who like to visit North Hill and Selworthy Beacon for their patience and co-operation whilst this major item of road safety work was carried out.

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.

Useful links to report faults

As the clocks have now changed and it's getting dark earlier, there are more queries about overgrown trees, verges or hedges, blocked drains and street lights that don't work.

To report faults in the following areas, please click on the relevant link:-

[Dangerous/Overgrown Tree alongside the public highway](#)

[Report an overgrown verge or hedge on the road](#)

[Street light not working](#)

[Blocked surface water drain on the highway.](#)

IMPORTANT- Road Closures

Week Commencing **7 December**

M5 Junction 25

Full closure on Southbound off & on slips 8pm-6am.

Lane 2 closure on Northbound off & on slips 8pm-6am

Toneway outbound closed from Hankridge Roundabout to M5 Junction 25 roundabout.

Community Council for Somerset

The Gift of Small Things

This winter, the Village Agents are putting together Christmas gift boxes for people in need in Somerset. Please spread the kindness and donate small useful gifts to one of the many Christmas boxes in a shop near you!

Boxes will be collected from the various locations on the **7 December** and delivery of gifts will commence 14 December. To donate, please drop off your box in one of the many [locations in Somerset](#) or call **01823 331 222**.

Browse for Books again in Somerset Libraries

Following recent announcements regarding Somerset 's Covid-19 Tier 2 status, Somerset Libraries are delighted to reinstate browsing of shelves for books, talking books and DVDs from 2 December.

Once again, anyone with a library card can come to their local library and choose from thousands of titles and borrow up to 20 items at a time – free of charge!

Other services will also continue, such as computers for public use and the ever-popular ‘Library Choice’ service whereby library staff can pick a selection of titles based on what customers say they like to read, watch or listen to. The online offer has also been enhanced so that customers can download free books, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers and comics.

Daily posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are helping libraries keep in touch and there is a growing following for the many videos posted each week, including pre-school story-times and tips on reading, baking, walking and other ideas for things to do during the Christmas period.

For more details of opening times during the Christmas and New Year period and various library services, including the Mobile Library, and a Home Library doorstep delivery service for those who may not be able to leave their home, visit www.somersetlibraries.co.uk or contact librariesmail@somerset.gov.uk
Telephone: **0300 123 2224**

LiveWest

Barns Close Mead, Dulverton

SWT is pleased to report that a new affordable housing scheme has completed this month. [Barns Close Mead](#) is in Dulverton and consists of 18 affordable homes – six for shared ownership, six for social rent and six for affordable rent. A number have a local occupancy tie, meaning they must be lived in by someone with links to the area.

The development is made up of one, two and three-bedroom homes which will accommodate a range of family sizes. All of the homes have an Air Source heating system. Air Source heat pumps are designed to draw air from outside and convert it into heat which transfers to radiators inside the property. They are generally cheaper to run, better for the environment and do not need any fuel storage.

LiveWest is the housing association that led this development. They are Registered Provider partners, and have worked closely alongside SWT and Exmoor National Park Authority to bring these homes forward.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

Online Survey

Have you had your say yet? You still have time to give your view on the level of council tax contribution to the fire service for the coming year. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service also would like to know how satisfied you are with the service they provide. Let them know what you think by completing the online council tax precept [survey](#).

To request an alternative format, please contact the Communications and Engagement team on **01392 872347**. The closing date is **18 December**.

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

EU Settlement Scheme Deadline – have all your staff and service users applied?

Most EU citizens living in the UK (as well as those from the EEA and Switzerland) need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to gain Settled Status so they can continue to live and work in the UK after **30 June 2021**.

The pandemic is having an impact on application times to the EU Settlement Scheme, so it's vital that people apply as soon as possible. Although there is no obligation for employers to remind staff to apply, it's worth considering that despite the pandemic, the Scheme will not be extended. You should consider the impact on your organisation or business if staff do not have Status, as they will not be able to work after June 2021. You can also play an important role by sign posting your service users to the Scheme, as some people in our community may not be aware of the need to apply or may need help.

Local charity Diversity Voice, in partnership with Somerset County Council are working with the Home Office to provide help from regulated advisors for those who need it, including vulnerable people and employers. They can provide posters, hand-outs for service users and one to one help for applicants in any language. There's no charge for this service. Contact euss@diversityvoice.org.uk, or phone **0300 075 0105**.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) Hinkley Point C Community Fund

An incredible **£4,280,592** (as at 25 November 2020) has been awarded to local initiatives in Somerset since the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Community Fund was launched in 2017.

The HPC Community Fund continues to support many groups and organisations' projects to increase opportunity and improve the quality of life and wellbeing in communities most affected by the construction of Hinkley Point C, reaching smaller 'grassroots' charities as well as larger organisations.

The HPC Community Fund delivers the Open Grants Programme for larger applications, typically over £10,000, and the Small Grants Programme awards grants of up to £5,000 - or up to £10,000 over three years - for charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises that normally operate on less than £100,000 per year.

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

Visit www.hpcfunds.co.uk for more details on deadlines for applications.

REMINDER- Surviving Winter Campaign

SCF hopes to build on the fantastic support they received last year to help even more older people in the county this winter. Thanks to support from a generous funder and The Big Give, online donations to the campaign that are made **during**

the week-long Big Give Christmas Challenge - midday **Tuesday 1 December to midday Tuesday 8 December** - will be doubled! So, not only will your donation be worth twice as much, but SCF will also be able to help even more elderly and isolated people across Somerset feel warm, safe and well this winter.

If you would like to donate to Surviving Winter, visit www.somersetcf.org.uk/winter or call 01749 344949. Don't forget that the first £15,000 of donations made **online** between midday **Tuesday 1 December and midday Tuesday 8 December** will be **doubled**.

Somerset Wildlife Trust Somerset Nature Connections

With winter just around the corner, it's never been more important to get outdoors and connect with nature for our physical and mental health!

The new Somerset Nature Connections Project is going to be running a #WildAboutWinter social media campaign over the next three months where they will share ideas on ways you can connect to nature over the colder months.

To get involved, you can give their Twitter page a follow [here](#).

Somerset Wildlife Trust will also be sharing some of their ideas and tips throughout the winter on Facebook, and on their Instagram account. Got any tips of your own or want to share what you get up to? Tag Somerset Wildlife Trust and use #WildAboutWinter!

National Trust Beavering away: nature's heroes

Earlier this year an adult pair of Eurasian beavers were released at Holnicote Estate in Somerset to improve flood management and support wildlife on the rivers we care for. The beavers are helping to make areas of the river more resilient to climate change and the extremes of weather it will bring. The dams they create will hold water in dry periods, help to lessen flash-flooding downstream, reduce erosion and improve water quality.

The beavers have created a dam nine months after they were introduced into their new home. This modest but effective construction, made from trees and vegetation, is thought to be the first beaver dam on Exmoor in more than 400 years.

Beavers build dams to create deep pools of water, which offer shelter from predators and allow them to access and store food. The dams, ponds and channels these creatures create have the added advantage of preventing flooding by slowing, storing and filtering water as it flows downstream. They also transform the landscape into a mosaic of wildlife havens that improves biodiversity and makes the river catchment more resilient.

Please [click here](#) for more information and to view the video.

National Tree Week

Free Online Events

National Tree Week is the UK's largest annual tree celebration, marking the start of the winter tree planting season (November to March each year). This year, it's taking place **28 November – 6 December**.

A programme of completely free tree-inspired art and culture events [National Tree Week](#) has celebrated the start of every tree planting season since 1975, planting millions of trees around the UK. However, this year, coronavirus measures will mean many events must be cancelled to keep everyone safe. While we cannot gather to plant and care for trees as we usually do, The Tree Council is still bringing people together to celebrate trees by offering a free online programme of arts and culture events. Please [click here](#) to see the calendar of events.

Health and Welfare

Somerset preparing for mass Covid vaccinations

Plans are fully underway in Somerset to prepare for a mass Covid-19 vaccination roll out now the Government has authorised the Pfizer vaccination for use across the UK, starting from next week.

Somerset County Council (SCC) is working closely with health colleagues to support the vaccination programme. This includes having hundreds of SCC staff on standby ready to be redeployed to assist the programme and identifying vaccination locations.

SCC is working with the NHS on a plan to make the vaccine available to the people of Somerset in a planned way and in line with national guidance – [click here](#) to keep up to date with the headlines.

Advice for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable at Christmas

You can choose to be part of a Christmas bubble if you are clinically extremely vulnerable, but it does involve greater risks for you as you will be increasing the number of people you have contact with.

From **23 to 27 December**, the Government will be changing some restrictions on social contact. This allows you to form a 'Christmas bubble' in which you can spend time indoors and outdoors with people from up to three households, including your own.

If you do decide to form a Christmas bubble, it is advised that you maintain social distance from those you don't normally live with at all times, avoiding physical contact. Everyone should wash their hands more often and touch points, such as door handles and surfaces, should be kept clean. It is also important to allow fresh air into the space where you spend time with those you don't normally live with. You may want to think about who you sit next to, including during meals, and also consider wearing a face covering indoors where social distancing may be difficult.

If you don't feel comfortable spending time with other people indoors, think of other ways that you can safely spend time together, for example on walks outdoors or supported by technology, and how you can make that time feel different and special. Going outdoors carefully for exercise is also encouraged. It is important that you do not feel pressured to celebrate Christmas in an environment that makes you anxious. There may be a lot of expectation and pressure around celebrating Christmas together, but you should feel comfortable to do what is right for you over this period. To do that, it is important that the other people in your Christmas bubble understand your needs and increased risk. They can help by being extra vigilant in the days before you get together, reducing any unnecessary contact with people, especially as some people with the virus have no symptoms.

Once the Christmas bubble period ends on **27 December**, you should follow the guidance that was in place before Christmas, in line with the restrictions for your local area.

It is important that you and the other people in your Christmas bubble consider these risks carefully before agreeing to form a bubble. Forming a Christmas bubble is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection. More information on Christmas bubbles can be found [here](#).

[Click here](#) for more information and guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable individuals from Covid-19.

Christmas bubbles with friends and family

The Government has published the guidance for [UK Christmas arrangements](#).

The main points are:

- You can travel between tiers and UK nations to and from your Christmas bubble between **23 and 27 December**.
- Once at your destination you should follow rules in that tier.
- Three households can form a Christmas bubble together.
- You can only be in one Christmas bubble.
- You cannot change your Christmas bubble.
- You can only meet your Christmas bubble in private homes or in your garden, places of worship, or public outdoor spaces.
- You can continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to the rules in the tier where you are staying.
- If someone is in your Christmas bubble, you can visit each other's homes and stay overnight.

Further details

- Making a [Christmas bubble with friends and family](#).
- Student movement and [plans for the end of term](#).
- Local restriction tiers: [what you need to know](#).

Mind in Somerset Online Wellbeing

In response to what is likely to be a very challenging Christmas this year Mind in Somerset have put together this free event. This will be an opportunity for people to find out what's available, and to share that with others in their community who may not be able to access the internet.

Conversations will be facilitated about how to influence and shape some Mental Health services as well as information around Open Mental Health. They have commissioned BBC Somerset Poet of the year Liv Torc to write a poem about the challenges of Christmas, and she will be delivering a workshop too. In addition 'Mental Resilience' with trainer Pete Bearder from Tough Cookie.

Date for your calendar: **Friday 18 December 2pm – 4pm** on Zoom.

To find out more and to register for this free event visit <https://www.somersetmentalhealthhub.org.uk/christmas-not-your-cup-tea>

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

If you are self-isolating or need extra help, 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.

If you would like to find out more about the Corona helpers, offer assistance, or need support please [click here](#).

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.

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. Can students leave their university residence to return home for the festive season?

A. To ensure that students can be home at the end of the winter term but also reduce any transmission risk, the Government is asking that students return home in a student travel window lasting from **3 to 9 December**. This should be in line with specific arrangements put in place by their HE provider. This excludes students who have tested positive or been notified by the NHS test and trace system.

To support all students being able to travel home in the window, face to face provision for the winter term should finish at every provider by 9 December at the latest. Those who do not return home by 9 December will be advised to undertake a further period of restricted contact either before or after returning home to minimise the risk of transmission.

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

Q. I have travelled and have to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine. What action is now necessary?

A. You will need to self-isolate for 14 days – you only need to get a test if you develop symptoms. Even if you test negative during those 14 days you must still self-isolate for the full 14 days. Others in the household **ONLY** need to isolate if they also travelled with you. Please find attached a Covid-19 testing guidance leaflet.

Crime / Safeguarding

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

A&SP Enquiries Desk Open at Deane House

The Avon and Somerset Police enquiries desk in the Deane House Hub, Taunton is now open. No appointment will be necessary but customers may have to queue outside so that social distancing can be observed.

A&SP Drink Driving Campaign, Op Tonic Underway

Avon and Somerset Police are part of a nationwide operation targeting motorists who choose to drink/drug drive throughout December as Op Tonic, the annual Christmas roads policing operation, started on 1 December. The activity comes as research shows over a fifth of people in the UK admitting to drinking more since lockdown began.

With the aim of reducing fatal and serious road traffic collisions and protecting other road users, the campaign carries a strong message that anyone who decides to get behind the wheel after a drink or two or having taken drugs faces the real prospect of ending up behind bars this festive season.

This year's drink drive operation comes after [research carried out by Drinkaware](#) showed that 22% of people in the UK – around 11.7 million – are drinking more since the lockdown began. Data also reveals that those who are drinking more are likely to be doing so on more days than usual, having their first alcoholic drink earlier in the day, drinking alone, finding it difficult to stop at one drink or drinking to cope with the day.

Whilst the initial lockdown saw dramatically fewer cars on the roads, the number of vehicles is almost back at normal levels and, with busier than usual roads predicted over Christmas between 23 and 27 December, police are keen to remind motorists that getting into the driving seat could carry severe consequences.

The public are also being called on to play their part and report if they see someone getting behind the wheel having been drinking or taking drugs, with police reminding people that they could save lives by doing so. Last year police received 218 reports from the public with 73% of these attended or resolved, with the remainder informing patrol plans.

If someone is habitually drinking or abusing drugs and driving this can be reported [online](#) or by calling 101. If someone is currently driving under the influence of drink or drugs, call 999.

Independent alcohol advice, information and tools to help people make better choices about their drinking can be found at www.drinkaware.co.uk.

Neighbourhood Policing now on Facebook

For those of you that follow PCSO and PC profiles across the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, they have changed to fall in line with their working neighbourhood.

Taunton Neighbourhood Policing

If you haven't already done so, please like and follow the new [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#) Facebook page for updates. This new page replaces PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen's page.

Minehead and West Somerset Policing

The Facebook pages of PCSO Katherine Williams / PCSO Linda Brooks / PC James Calloway have been replaced by [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#)

Wellington Neighbourhood Policing

Like and follow [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](#) Facebook page to find out what your community police officers are doing in and around Wellington and neighbouring parishes.

These new pages will be regularly monitored and will contain all the latest updates, appeals, advice and information on how to keep your communities safe. Whilst the pages are a useful source of reference, they should not be used to report crime. For non-urgent enquiries please continue to ring 101, and emergencies 999.

Finally

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the government](#).

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil)
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

If you have concerns about your own health and coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.

#StayAtHome

#ProtectTheNHS

#SaveLives

Attachments:

Covid-19 Testing Guidance Leaflet