

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 69 Week ending 01/08/2021

SWT Council's priority strategic themes and outcomes

Somerset West and Taunton Council's four strategic themes are as follows:

- Our Environment and Economy
- A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
- Homes and Communities
- An Enterprising Council

[Click here](#) to view SWT's expected outcomes.

Key Messages this week

1. Voters urged to check their registration details are up to date

Local residents are being warned not to lose their voice on decisions that affect them by making sure their electoral registration details are up to date.

With the next scheduled elections taking place in May 2022, this is an important opportunity for residents to make sure they can take part.

Following the recent decision by Secretary of State for Local Government, MP, Robert Jenrick to replace all five councils in Somerset with a single unitary council, the annual canvass will ensure that the new shadow authority, which will be in place by May next year, can keep the electoral register up to date by identifying any residents who are not registered to vote so that they can be encouraged to do so.

Annual canvas letters will be sent to residents in the first week of August to ensure everyone can have their say at all future elections. It should be noted that any constituents not currently registered will be absent from the letters they receive, in which case if they wish to register, the easiest way is online at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote), or SWT's Electoral Services team can send information explaining how to do this in the post.

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

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 couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- Wednesday 4 August – Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 30 July)
- Thursday 12 August – Planning Committee, 1pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 9 August)
- Friday 13 August – Licensing Sub-Committee, 10.30am
- Wednesday 18 August – Executive, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 13 August)

From 7 May 2021, meetings can no longer be held virtually.

These meetings will take place in the Chamber at Deane House following the Government COVID-19 safety guidelines. As we are very limited to the number of people we can safely get into the Chamber, we are asking people to register if they wish to attend in person.

Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT website. This also gives alternatives to participating without attending in person.

The meetings will still 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.

Contact the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

3. Electric Vehicle Charge Points go live

Further to the announcement that Electric Vehicle (EV) charging would be introduced in council-owned car parks earlier this year, Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) has now completed the installation of five charging points in partnership with EV charge point supplier, [InstaVolt](#).

In Taunton, a single charging station at [Blackbrook Sports Centre](#) was installed and switched-on for public use at the end of May. A further two charging stations are scheduled for installation later this year at [Deane House](#).

Additionally, twin charging stations at [Alexandra Road Carpark](#) in Minehead and [Exmoor House Carpark](#) in Dulverton were also recently completed and brought on line between 22 and 23 July.

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

4. Council leaders seek Government help on Phosphates

The leaders of all four District Councils and the County Council in Somerset have called on the Government to urgently address water quality issues impacting national sites including the Somerset Levels and Moors, and to work with them to help unlock much needed housing development.

They have written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, saying the issue requires urgent attention if they and other affected authorities are going to be able to help address the national housing crisis.

The letter follows up on one sent in December 2020 which sought Government support following the Natural England advice concerning unacceptable levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors RAMSAR site.

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

5. Celebrating Norton Fitzwarren Hillfort

Celebrations are being held to mark the official opening of Norton Fitzwarren Hillfort, one of the hidden archaeological gems of Somerset. Somerset West and Taunton Council and Historic England have been working with the South West Heritage Trust and Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council to protect the hillfort - a nationally important scheduled ancient monument whose origins were in the Bronze Age more than 5,000 years ago.

The Council secured funding from Historic England to acquire the site in 2018 and further funding for a programme of works to enhance the site's archaeology and ecology. The initial focus has been on scrub clearance and tree management.

The official opening of the Hillfort and the transfer of the site's archaeological management to the Trust will take place on **Saturday 31 July**.

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

6. Reminder - Important Changes to Homefinder Somerset

Some important changes are being made to Homefinder Somerset this summer. This includes improvements to the website and the online application form.

Because of this work:

- There were no homes advertised in the week beginning **Monday 26 July**. Homes will be advertised as normal again from Wednesday 4 August

- It is currently not possible to make changes to your application. You will be able to make changes to your application again from Monday 2 August.
- New applications that were not completed and submitted by the 28 July will be deleted.
- It will not be possible to start a new application between Wednesday 28 July and Monday 2 August. **You will then be able to start a new application again from Monday 2 August.**
- It may take longer to assess applications and respond to queries. Please allow extra time for your local housing team to respond to you.

Mutual Exchange on Homefinder Somerset ended on **31 July 2021**.

Are you a council or housing association tenant? If so, please note that it will no longer be possible to register for mutual exchange or advertise your home for mutual exchange on Homefinder Somerset. You will still be able to bid for homes that are being advertised by partner landlords.

You can use other websites to seek a mutual exchange such as [Homeswapper](#) or [House Exchange](#). Please contact your landlord for more information. SWT has agreed a new contract with Homeswapper which will be free to access for SWT tenants.

7. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Important: Suspension of garden waste collections

After a pandemic year in which crews worked far longer hours with heavier waste loads, the LGV driver shortage and COVID self-isolation of staff have badly hit services. SWP have apologised for the recent delays to many collections, and are working hard with collections contractor SUEZ to maintain services. But there is no quick fix. Somerset is not alone; many councils face similar pressures.

SWP has reluctantly decided to suspend garden waste collections for six weeks from **Monday 2 August**. Collections are expected to restart from **Monday 13 September**. Should that date change, SWP will let subscribers know. SWP apologise for this temporary measure, which is essential to maintain rubbish and recycling collections.

Suspending garden waste collections allows them to redeploy staff to support vital rubbish and recycling services. It will not get the services back to normal, but it will help minimise disruption. Garden waste subscribers do not need to do anything. The subscription will be automatically extended by eight weeks, including an extra two weeks for the disruption, especially at this key time for gardeners.

Garden waste collections will continue up to and including **Friday 30 July**. From that date, SWP will not return for missed collections. Garden waste sack collections cannot be booked during the suspension.

Delays and disruption are frustrating but SWP would ask for your patience. From training to recruitment - see: [suez.co.uk/en-gb/join-our-team-in-somerset](https://www.suez.co.uk/en-gb/join-our-team-in-somerset) - everyone is working hard to improve services.

Alternatively, if you have read this post, checked the information and FAQs at [somersetwaste.gov.uk/gardenwaste-suspension](https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/gardenwaste-suspension), cannot use the online form, and it remains vital to have a response, **DO NOT** contact the district council but call this dedicated phone line Monday-Friday 9am-5pm 01823 589900. SWP apologise for this temporary measure, which is essential to maintain rubbish and recycling collections.

If your refuse and/or recycling collection is missed...

SWP would like to send you their apologies. You can report any missed collection after 7pm on the due day via [My Waste Services](#). If you report that your rubbish or garden waste has not been collected, SWP will be back within the next two working days. You can find more information on extra materials, space, storage and waste [here](#).

Recycle Soft Plastics

Supermarkets are in a war to recycle your soft plastics, from carrier bags to bubble wrap, from pet food pouches to bread bags and from cling film to crisp packets. Many Co-op stores and larger branches of Tesco and Sainsbury's are bidding for your footfall by collecting a wide range of soft-stretchy-crinkly plastics and plastic-foil packaging from all brands as well as their own.

From Wellington to Wells, Minehead to Yeovil, many of the growing number of supermarkets taking soft plastics can be found on the Flexible Plastic Fund website at: <https://flexibleplasticfund.org.uk/find-a-collection-point>.

In Somerset West and Taunton kerbside collections **do not** take any soft plastics, and neither do any recycle sites.

For more on Tesco soft plastic collections, including materials taken and locations: [facebook.com/SomersetWaste/posts/4088466287856086](https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWaste/posts/4088466287856086).

And more on Co-op soft plastic collections, including materials taken and locations: [facebook.com/SomersetWaste/posts/4207164539319593](https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWaste/posts/4207164539319593).

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) SCC Highway Maintenance Update

Another sudden turn-around in the weather. This time, from the hottest week of 2021, back to showery, windy and cool. It must be the school summer holidays! Despite the conditions, SCC Highways did manage to complete the first phase of their carriageway surface dressing programme, in Bishops Hull and West Buckland. The crews are now off working on other roads around the county. They will be returning to Somerset West and Taunton for the week commencing 9 August for work on **Exmoor**; the **Brendon Hills**; **Quantock Vale** and the **Blackdowns**. The verge and embankment repairing at Hartford Road, Brompton Regis have now been completed. SCC Highways have also carried out a small drainage repair on the Dunster Back Road.

Drainage repairs and improvements continue at **B3187 Burn Hill**, which is between **Langford Budville** and **Milverton**. The temporary road closure will be in place here until 27 August. SCC Highways will also be undertaking drainage work at **B3224 Exford Road, Wheddon Cross** under temporary traffic signals on 2 - 3 August.

The rural highway verge cutting programme will be moving on shortly from the minor road network back on to the "A" and "B" Class roads for their second safety cut.

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

Harmful or poisonous weeds

SCC are responsible for controlling certain noxious weeds, including ragwort. You can [report noxious weeds here](#).

When you contact SCC, please give them the following information:

- Your name, address and phone number in case we need to contact you
- The location of the weeds. including the road name and parish
- The type of weed (if you know)

Reminder- Emergency Road Closures: Honiton Road & Staple Fitzpaine Road

Please be aware that SCC have received notification of emergency road closures at **Honiton Road, Otterford**, and **Staple Fitzpaine Road, Taunton** which commenced on 19 July 2021 and are expected to last until **20 August 2021** (the closures are between the hours of 00:00 - 23:59).

These works are for **Richard Cole Contracting to fell and clear diseased Ash Trees on behalf of Forestry England**.

For any further information about these closures please contact Richard Cole Contracting on **(01803) 865098**, quoting reference: ttro458739.

Maps of the affected areas (in red), together with the recommended diversion routes (in purple) are shown [here](#).

Reminder- Date Change for Temporary Road Closure: Honiton Road, Trull

Please be aware that SCC have received notification of a date change to a temporary road closure at Honiton Road, Trull for approximately 40 metres.

The new date for the works to commence is **26 July 2021** and is expected to last until **6 August 2021** between the hours of 00:00 - 23:59.

These works are for Wales & West Utilities to carry out works to the gas main, their works reference is XY275003001563404_01. Please [click here](#) to view the new Notice.

For any further information about this closure please contact Wales & West Utilities on **0800 9122 999** quoting the above works reference number.

A map of the affected area (in red), together with the recommended diversion route (in purple) is shown [here](#), along with the link to One.Network.

Reminder- Temporary Road Closure: Coal Orchard, Taunton

The order becomes effective on 8 July 2021 and will remain in force for eighteen months. The works are expected to commence on **12 July 2021** and last for 33 days to enable Wales & West Utilities to carry out works to upgrade gas main.

Please follow the [link](#) to view the above road closure and the [Notice 2](#). For any further information about this closure please contact Wales & West Utilities on **0800 9122 999**, quoting reference: ttro446242.

Please note that should you require to view a closure which is more than two weeks ahead you will need to register for free with www.One.Network

Useful links to report faults

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.](#)

Grants available to tackle child minder shortage

Somerset County Council (SCC) is renewing its campaign to tackle a shortage of child minders across the county through a ['Golden Hello' grant worth £250.00](#).

The number of child minders in Somerset has fallen year upon year, in line with what is a national picture. The number of registered child minders in the county has decreased by over 31% since September 2015. In response, SCC has been working hard to boost numbers and is extending an initiative aimed at encouraging more people to start their own childcare business.

The grant is available to new child minding businesses offering early years funded places who apply before **28 February 2022**. The Council also offers guidance and training to newly registered child minders and supports them through Ofsted registration and beyond.

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

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)

Happy Healthy Holidays Somerset

The Happy Healthy Holidays Somerset Programme Activity Finder is now live and parents/carers can use the finder to find fun local activities (with food) taking place throughout the summer holidays.

To book an activity, you will need to have received your unique Booking Code from your child's school. You will not be able to make a booking without it, so please ensure you have done this first and contact your child's school in the first instance.

If you are having problems booking, please see our helpful FAQs and 'how to' videos at the bottom of the page or call the support hotline (Monday - Wednesday 10am - 2pm) on **01823 653990**.

[Click here](#) to head to the activity finder to find your nearest centre.

Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Keep safe this summer

If you're planning any long journeys in your car, be prepared:

- Plan your journey - allow plenty of travel time & consider rest stops
- Check your route before you drive for road closures and blockages
- Take regular breaks
- Stay hydrated
- Don't drive with fatigue
- If you have someone else in the car who is insured to drive your car, let them drive.

Drive safe and enjoy your holiday.

Flooding

DSFRS respond to flooding and weather-related incidents to rescue people at risk in floodwater and to help the community in many other ways. When flood warnings are issued, the Environment Agency will activate a widget on their [website](#).

If you are in an area liable to flooding, then it is a good idea to start making a personal flood plan which should include the following points:

- Know who to contact and how and keep a list with all your important contacts to hand
- Think about what you can move to a safe place before the waters arrive
- Check your insurance cover
- Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water mains supplies
- Prepare a flood kit of essential items including home insurance documents and keep it handy

For more advice on preparing for a flood, follow the Environment Agency advice on <https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood> or call Floodline on **0345 988 1188**.

The Met Office issues weather warnings about predicted severe weather conditions on its [website](#).

Please [click here](#) for further information relating to flooding. You can download a copy of 'Driving in floodwater' [here](#).

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Avoid tragic consequences near open water

Please take care near open water this summer and avoid tragic consequences. In recent weeks more than twelve people have sadly died in the UK while visiting the coast and inland lakes/lochs. These aren't just numbers. These tragedies have changed the lives of mums, dads, children and whole families as well as friends and colleagues. Forever.

HM Coastguard advise the public to think twice about what you're doing at the coast that might put you, your family and friends and even those who come to rescue you in danger. Watch out for each other and those you love. Get home safe. The Coast Guard have seen too many tragedies already this summer and they are sad for those whose families have been left heartbroken by the loss.

Please [click here](#) for more information and read how to stay safe this summer. Remember, in an emergency at the coast, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard (day or night).

South Western Ambulance Service

Ambulance Service experiences busiest week in its history

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) is urging people to use its service sensibly – after experiencing its busiest week on record for the second time so far this month.

SWASFT responded to 23,088 incidents during the seven days up until Sunday 18 July, which is equivalent to one incident every 26 seconds. A number of factors are thought to be contributing to the rise in calls including the warmer weather, an increase in COVID-19 transmission rates in the community, and an increase in the public spending time outside as restrictions ease.

SWASFT is encouraging the public to use NHS 111 online for medical advice, with demand for 999 calls increasing and ambulance staff helping more patients.

The 111 online service offers patients quick advice on the best option for them to get the care they need, including getting a call back from a trained clinician or nurse, booking them an appointment in A&E or providing advice on how to help them recover.

Ahead of what is expected to be a very busy school summer holiday period in the South West, SWASFT says it must continue to prioritise speaking to and treating the most seriously injured and unwell patients.

To allow it to prioritise patients effectively, the Trust is asking everyone who uses its service to do so sensibly. People should only call 999 in a genuine, life-threatening emergency, for example:

- Chest pain / breathing difficulties / heart attack
- Stroke
- Severe bleeding
- Severe allergic reactions
- Severe burns or scalds
- Serious head injuries
- Major trauma such as a road traffic accident or a fall from height.

They should not ring back to ask for an estimated arrival time and should only call back if the patient's condition worsens or they no longer need an ambulance.

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

The Woodland Trust Campaign in your community

Local communities taking action is the most effective way to protect woods and trees. Need help with your campaign? You can make a difference to woods and trees near you. Please [click here](#) to find some useful resources the Woodland Trust have put together to help you campaign to defend the local woods and trees you love.

Reminder- State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021 Report

The State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021 report has identified four significant findings:

- Woodland cover is increasing, but woodland wildlife is decreasing.
- Woods and trees are vital for a healthy, happy society.
- Woods and trees are subject to a barrage of coinciding threats.
- Not nearly enough is being done.

The report provides clear evidence that there is an urgent need to act. Please [click here](#) to download a copy of the report.

Exmoor National Park (ENP) COVID-19 Latest update

England moved to step 4 of the government's roadmap out of lockdown on 19 July, meaning [the rules on what you can and cannot do](#) changed. While almost all legal restrictions on social contact have been removed, staying safe and looking after yourself and others remains everyone's responsibility.

As such ENP will be continuing with enhanced cleaning regimes and ask that you also take the following steps when using the [National Park Centres](#):

- Please check in with the QR code and sanitise hands on entry.
- Respect others and give them space.

- Wearing a mask can protect you and others.
- Contactless card payments are preferred.

The Government has provided [advice on accessing green spaces safely during Covid-19](#), which all National Park users must follow along with the [Countryside Code](#). This includes guidance for those who own or manage land.

National Parks have played an even more important part in many people's lives during the pandemic. The ENP team know how vital connecting with the outdoors is for health and wellbeing and thank you for your support as they continue to balance the needs of all those who live in, work in and visit Exmoor.

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS)

Cothelstone Hill Excavation – Understanding the Landscape

The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) is a £2.6m, 5 year project in and around the Quantock Hills. It started on 1 April 2020 so the COVID-19 crisis has inevitably had an impact on the first year but the team are confident that their various initiatives will soon catch up.

The project area is some 400 square kilometres, essentially the Quantock Hills proper plus the surrounding ring of Parishes. This is roughly twice the size of the AONB.

There are 23 individual projects, ranging from grants for restoring hedgerows, historic features, and traditional orchards through to educational work with local schools, archaeological excavations, archival research, and a wide ranging and inclusive events programme. There is something for everyone if people wish to get involved.

A two week excavation is currently underway on Cothelstone Hill, to investigate the history of an embankment and trench of unknown origin. The dig which is being organised by the South West Heritage Trust and undertaken mainly by volunteers is supported by The Council for British Archaeology to help celebrate the National Festival of Archaeology. To find out more about this project please click here to watch a recent [video](#).

To find out more about what the QLPS has to offer please visit the [website](#).

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Spark Somerset

New study asks people how they've been affected by waiting for surgery in Somerset

As the number of patients waiting for surgery continues to grow, nationally and in the South West of England, [Healthwatch Somerset](#) are asking people about their experiences of being referred for surgery in Somerset and how they have been affected by waiting times.

If you or someone you know is on a waiting list for surgery in Somerset, or you recently had to wait for surgery, Healthwatch Somerset would like to hear about your experiences. It's easy to share your feedback and your comments can remain anonymous.

- You can complete a [short online survey](#) by **6 September 2021**.
- You can contact Healthwatch Somerset to arrange a convenient time to feedback over the phone - call Freephone **0800 999 1286** or email info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Millbrook Healthcare - Urgent Equipment Return Appeal

Do you have any borrowed equipment you no longer use? Please call Millbrook Healthcare on **0333 003 2407** Monday – Friday between 9am - 5pm, to arrange a free contactless collection – it'll only take a few minutes, and could help someone else who needs it.

CCS Talking Café Live

Get Outside in Somerset Campaign

Just in time for the summer holidays, join in the August Challenge and [click here](#) to watch a replay of a Talking Café Live; hear all about the fantastic new website packed with resources and activities from across Somerset and learn about the ambitions of the project to support and enable people to Get Outside more, improve health & wellbeing and maybe trigger a new passion!

What do you enjoy doing to #GetOutsideInSomerset? Or are you stuck for ideas? Please [click here](#) to find details of your village agent. Check out the [Get Outside in Somerset website](#) and search for activities.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)

Grow for Good Campaign

One of the greatest assets that our communities can almost universally access is land, or more specifically here in rural Somerset, soil. Alongside this, another of our greatest assets are the people who want and can do something with that soil.

In 2017 SCF started to notice an increase in enquiries and applications from groups using gardening and horticulture to effect positive change in people's lives. They saw a whole spectrum running from those that are focused on health and wellbeing, using gardening and food production as a catalyst for change, to those that are about sustainable food production, through which people might develop skills or simply find meaning in their lives.

In March 2019 SCF worked with Spark Somerset to organise a networking session called *Grow for Good*, bringing together over 20 local gardening and horticultural projects, just to get to know one another, learn from each other and maybe work together. The partners played to their respective strengths; SCF provided some funding, and Spark did the organising – but it was the participants who made it. As a result, a [Facebook group](#) started up and is still active today, and currently has over 80 members.

That energy and interest has, in turn, fed into discussions with Somerset County Council about sustainable food systems and food poverty, and directly influenced the creation of a £50,000 fund. Grants from this fund have now been awarded to 22 local organisations, including Westfield Community Association in Yeovil, who are creating new allotments in one of Somerset's statistically most deprived communities, and the Plotgate Community Farm on the fringes of the Somerset levels, a community supported agricultural scheme providing volunteering and traineeships.

Please [click here](#) to read the full blog written by Justin Sargent OBE, CEO.

Food Resilience

Hubbub – Community Fridges

Reducing Food Waste and Empowering Communities

A community fridge is a space where everyone can share surplus food, including donations from local food businesses, producers, households and gardens.

Hubbub coordinates the world's largest Community Fridge Network with over 150 community fridges running around the UK, and in partnership with the [Co-op](#) they will be supporting a further 100 across the UK throughout the year.

The Community Fridge Network offers free guidance to groups wanting to set up their own community fridge, and provides comprehensive support, design assets, peer support, health and safety templates as well as discounted fridges and freezers

Applications are now open for the Co-op Community Fridge fund, which means up to **£4,000** is available to support groups across the UK to establish a new Community Fridge. If you want to take part in this exciting opportunity, feed your community and help the environment, Hubbub want to hear from you. Applications will be welcomed until **9am on 16 August**.

Please [click here](#) to visit the website and find out more about the application process.

Help and support for businesses affected by COVID-19

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has made available webinars and videos about the support available to businesses to help them deal with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

HMRC cover the following government schemes:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Job Retention Scheme
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Rebate Scheme

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

Health and Welfare

Health chiefs encourage more pregnant women to get their COVID-19 vaccine

Health chiefs are encouraging more pregnant women to get their COVID-19 vaccine, as new data shows that 51,724 pregnant women in England have received at least one dose. The data, from Public Health England (PHE), shows these were all women aged under 50 years of age, who reported that they were pregnant or could be pregnant at the time of receiving the vaccine. Of these, 20,648 women have received their second dose.

On 16 April 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that pregnant women should be offered the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine at the same time as the rest of the population, based on their age and clinical risk group. Some pregnant women will have been vaccinated before this date if they are clinically vulnerable or are a healthcare worker, therefore these figures are likely to be much higher. For further information, please [click here](#).

Seeing your GP or going to hospital? Masks must be worn

Everyone accessing or visiting healthcare settings must continue to wear a face covering and follow social distancing rules. Although COVID-19 restrictions have ended in many settings in England, Public Health England's infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance remain in place for all staff and visitors.

That means NHS visitor guidance remains unchanged across all health services including hospitals, GP practices, dental practices, optometrists and pharmacies to ensure patients and staff are protected.

Staff, patients and visitors will also be expected to continue to follow social distancing rules when visiting any care setting as well as using face coverings, masks and other personal protection equipment.

All COVID-19 Restrictions in England now lifted

Please refer to the links below for the latest Coronavirus-related advice, help and guidance, should you need any help in the future.

- [Order your lateral flow tests online](#)
- [How to do a COVID-19 lateral flow test](#)
- [Log your lateral flow results here](#)
- [Book or request a PCR test online](#)
- [List of local pharmacies offering lateral flow testing](#)
- [Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- [NHS – Help and Advice](#)

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.

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

This 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 including vaccinations
- 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 visit www.corona-helpers.co.uk.

Need to seek help?

If you, or someone you know are feeling like things are too much, please know that you / they don't have to be alone. Here are some numbers of organisations that can help:

- Samaritans - 116 123
- CALM - 0800 58 58 58
- ChildLine - 0800 1111
- Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

FAQS

Q. Where can I find out more information about the NHS COVID pass?

A. Minister for Vaccine Deployment, Nadhim Zahawi MP, has provided more information on the NHS COVID Pass. At the end of September, the Government plans to make full vaccination a condition of entry to those high-risk settings where large crowds gather and interact, and that proof of a negative test will no longer be sufficient.

Anyone can access a pass which lets people to demonstrate their Covid status including whether they have received their vaccine, their test results or whether they have natural immunity from COVID-19.

The Minister stressed that deploying the pass is the right thing to do for venues and events where large numbers of people are likely to gather and mix with people from outside their households for prolonged periods.

Organisations are already able to ask visitors for proof of Covid-status, providing they meet existing legal obligations including under equality law.

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

Q. Do I need to bring anything with me to the vaccination centre?

A. If you are taking medication, it is really important that you bring a list of these with you to the vaccination centre. Do not bring the medicines themselves. If the doctors and nurses running the clinic can't be sure what medicines you are on, they may not be able to give you your vaccine.

If you are taking a blood thinner called 'warfarin' you will also be going for regular blood tests at the GP or hospital to monitor the thickness of your blood using a test called INR. The INR test result is a number (a common example figure would be 2.5 for someone with thinned blood). Please make sure you know your latest INR reading and when that was last checked; the staff in the vaccine clinics often can't check this with the GP or hospital at the time. If you don't know this, you can get it from your GP surgery.

If you are taking warfarin but don't know your INR reading it can sometimes mean your vaccination cannot go ahead. The vaccination computers at the centre do not link back to your medical records so can't be looked up on the day.

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Pet Fraud

Action Fraud is reminding animal lovers to take extra care when buying a pet online, as new figures show more than £2.5 million has been lost to criminals through fake pet adverts. Data from Action Fraud, [the national reporting centre for fraud and cyber crime](#), reveals that £2,638,323 was lost by prospective pet owners in the 2020/21 financial year, after they put down deposits for pets they saw advertised online – an increase of over 20 per cent compared to the previous financial year.

Capitalising on the rise in people getting pets due to the national lockdowns caused by Coronavirus, criminals have been posting fake adverts on social media, online marketplaces and specific pet-selling platforms. Unsuspecting victims will be asked to pay a deposit for the pet without seeing it in person first, with many criminals using the restrictions caused by the pandemic as a reason why they cannot see the animal. After the initial payment is made, more and more funds will be requested to cover additional costs such as insurance, vaccinations and even delivery of the pet.

Please [click here](#) for more details on how you can protect yourself when purchasing a pet online.

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Partnership helps Police tackle gift card scams

Avon and Somerset Police have identified and supported a number of fraud victims thanks to a new partnership with supermarkets designed to help prevent scams. Fraud Protect Officers launched the initiative back in April after seeing a noticeable rise in scam cases where victims were being asked to purchase gift cards instead of sending money in the more typical ways. The police have since been contacted multiple times by stores who have recognised the signs of customers being coerced into buying gift cards by fraudsters.

In most cases the requests for gift cards have been a part of a bigger scam where victims have unwittingly handed over thousands of pounds to criminals over a period of time. Fraudsters in years gone by have asked victims to buy iTunes or Amazon vouchers, but recently an increasing number of crimes involve the purchase of Steam cards. Steam is an online platform where people can download and play games.

Under-reporting is a real issue with these sorts of crimes as victims wrongly believe they would be wasting police time, there's nothing that can be done or they feel embarrassed by what has happened.

A&SP urge anyone in this situation to report it to Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040** or at www.actionfraud.police.uk.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release and view a helpful video.

What do you want to see posted on Social Media Survey?

What do you want to see from Avon and Somerset Police on Facebook?

Tell the police what you like and where they can improve by taking part in the online survey. It's all anonymous and your responses will help with their social media engagement going forward.

Take the survey [here](#). Please note responses must be submitted via the survey.

Police and Crime Plan Priorities 2021-2025 Consultation Survey

Complete this [survey](#) to let A&SP know your views on the proposed objectives for PCC Mark Shelford's Police and Crime Plan. The survey consists of 25 objectives on which they are seeking public opinion. A&SP are also asking questions about equality, so it is important that they receive the views of people across all communities in the county.

For further Neighbourhood Policing Updates...

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

- [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#)

Finally

The below link may be useful to you, should there be a requirement to convert files to jpg format: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/online/pdf-to-jpg.html>

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.