

# Somerset West and Taunton

## **Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

### **Issue 79 Week ending 10/10/2021**

#### **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. SWT secures £136K grant towards EV charging project**

SWT's Climate Change team has successfully secured a government grant worth £136,000 to boost the roll-out of Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points in council-owned car parks.

The grant, which is administered by the [Energy Savings Trust](#) on behalf of the [Office for Zero Emission Vehicles](#), was awarded as part of the [On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme](#) and is available to local authorities to increase the availability of plug-in charging infrastructure for residents without access to off-street parking.

The roll-out of EV charging infrastructure is a key action within the council's [Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience \(CNCR\) Action Plan](#) to reduce carbon emissions across the district.

The roll-out is further supported by the county-wide approved [Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy](#), which provides a blueprint for the charging network needed in Somerset.

Please [click here](#) to read the full 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 13 October – Licensing Sub-Committee – **CANCELLED**
- Thursday 14 October – Planning Committee, 1pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 11 October)
- Tuesday 19 October – Special Full Council, 6.15pm in the JMR at the Deane House (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 14 October)
- Wednesday 20 October – Executive, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 15 October)

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 [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

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

## 3. Local Validation Checklist Updated

SWT has updated the Local Validation Checklist for planning applications following a public consultation.

Since 2008 local planning authorities have been required to publish a list of information they require to "validate" the planning applications they receive.

The Government requires local planning authorities to review their Local List every two years. As such SWTs validation requirements have undergone a significant review to reflect changes in planning legislation, policy and guidance.

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

#### **4. SWT Housing Newsletter – Autumn 2021**

SWT Housing has produced the latest tenants' newsletter which is due to hit doormats soon. Approximately 6000 publications are being printed and will be distributed to all SWT tenants and leaseholders signposting readers to help and support. There has been a particular emphasis on post pandemic recovery such as debt management, employment and how tenants can access available services.

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

#### **5. Reminder - Consultation to begin on Firepool plans**

SWT will begin a programme of consultation on detailed plans for the redevelopment of its flagship site at Firepool this autumn.

Work is also taking place to accommodate the new vaccination centre relocating from Taunton Racecourse to Firepool in early October as part of the Somerset COVID vaccination programme.

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

#### **6. Reminder - Get prepared for National Tree Planting Week 2021**

In the run-up to this year's winter planting season, SWT is once again offering free trees to town and parish councils, including unparished areas. The scheme, which was first introduced last autumn, supports the Council's commitment towards reaching a carbon-neutral district by 2030.

The closing date for requests is **Friday, 22 October 2021**.

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

#### **7. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)**

**Keep it. Pin it. Check it:**

**Key Recycle More info on its way to Taunton Deane**

Vital information about Recycle More will hit doormats across Taunton Deane next week. The striking orange and blue leaflets containing must-know information about the expanded recycling collections should be arriving from Monday next week, ahead of the launch of the new service at the start of November.

If you live in the area – including Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe – look out for them, keep them safe and encourage friends, family and neighbours to do the same.

Each leaflet includes a collection day calendar specific to that address, showing when recycling and rubbish will be picked-up for the next 12 months. More than a half of homes will have a change in collection day and with rubbish collections

going three-weekly the calendar will help people keep track of what SWP will be collecting and when.

Whether you stick it on the fridge or pin it to a notice board, it is important to keep the leaflet somewhere safe for future reference. The leaflet gives residents their first Recycle More collection date - the first time they should put out new materials and use the new Bright Blue Bag recycling container.

What needs to go into each container changes with Recycle More, so the leaflet includes a simple, colour coded 'What goes where?' diagram.

Note: Some people will also have a one-off, extra rubbish collection before their Recycle More starts. This is to make sure no-one goes more than three weeks without one. These collections will be on either Saturday 30 Oct or 6 November - they will be made clear on the calendar where it applies.

## **Recycle More Roadshows**

SWP staff are hitting the street to share information and answer questions about the expanded collections that come to the Taunton Deane area at the start of November.

- Priorswood Community Centre: **Friday 8 October** 11am-2pm.
- Taunton Fore Street: **Thursday 14 October** 9am-2pm (outside Accessorize opposite Lloyds).

SWP will be sharing information and answering questions and giving people the chance to get to grips with the Bright Blue Bags.

Remember, Recycle More adds the following items to weekly recycling collections: plastic pots, tubs and trays; food and drink cartons; small batteries; and small electrical items.

The Blue Bags will be delivered to all households in the two weeks leading up to launch. At the same time, recycling boxes will be stickered explaining what needs to go in them under the new service.

Extra support is available for anyone with Recycle More concerns. Check the leaflets or visit [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more) for more information.

## **Recruitment**

The nationwide driver shortage remains a big issue, hitting authorities and businesses up and down the country. There are no quick fixes. Intensive recruitment and retention work continues and SWP are monitoring the COVID situation closely.

If you know anyone who may be interested in a career with SUEZ (Somerset Waste Partnership's collections contractor) as a driver, supervisor or loader, please sign-post them to [www.suez.co.uk/join-our-team-in-somerset](http://www.suez.co.uk/join-our-team-in-somerset)

For more information on kerbside services, recycling sites, and on COVID-19 and waste, visit: [somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://somersetwaste.gov.uk), sign up for the SWP e-newsletter or follow @somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter.

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

### **Somerset County Council (SCC)**

#### **SCC Highway Maintenance Update**

A very stormy few days have now passed over and once again the weather is calm and dry which will assist with highway maintenance activities.

In **Minehead**, the upgrading of the **West Somerset Railway** level crossing on Seaward Way continues with temporary traffic signals covering the work site for most of the time. There is also a series of temporary road closures and the next pair will be from **11pm on Monday 11 October to 6am on Tuesday 12 October**, with more to follow.

Nearby at **Carhampton**, the Somerset River Authority funded drainage improvement works will start on **11 October**. The **A39 Williton Road**, heading eastwards out of the village will be closed between 9.30am and 3.30pm each day, Monday to Friday, for the weeks commencing **11, 18 and 25 October**. This will involve changes to the bus timetable which are covered later in this newsletter.

**Hill Lane** between **Carhampton** and **Withycombe** will also be closed as part of these works for five weeks, also commencing on the **11 October**.

In Taunton there will be two weeks of evening works on the A3027 Bridge Street for carriageway resurfacing. The road will be closed between 6.30pm and 11.30pm each evening, Monday to Friday, for the weeks commencing **11 and 18 October**.

Near Wellington, the road between **East Nynehead and Poole** is closed until **28 October** whilst repairs to the bridge crossing the River Tone are carried out.

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

## **Highways England**

### **Consultation launched on A358 Dualling Scheme**

National Highways is holding a consultation on the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme. This improvement scheme will help to improve the route between the South West and London and the South East, while also delivering benefits for local people.

The consultation runs from **Tuesday 12 October to Monday 22 November 2021** with feedback helping National Highways develop its application for a Development Consent Order (DCO), the type of planning permission needed for the scheme.

From 12 October you will be able to find out more about the proposals and have your say, by visiting National Highways' online exhibition at [www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields/](http://www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields/).

### **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](#)

[Report noxious weeds here](#)

[Street light not working](#)

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

### **Buses of Somerset (*John Perrett Transporting Somerset Service*)**

#### **A39 Road Closure at Carhampton**

From Monday 11 October for three weeks the A39 is due to be closed during the off-peak between 0930 and 1530 each day.

On service 28 (Taunton to Minehead) buses will operate as normal until arrivals/departures in the area just before 0930. From this time the route will then split in two with the service continuing to run as per the current timetable between Watchet and Taunton until approximately 1530 when the service will return to normal.

On the section of route from Minehead SCC have agreed with Buses of Somerset that they will look to operate a half hourly service from 0930 to 1530 between Butlins and Dunster Steep. This is dependent upon a suitable location being found to turn the bus around at Dunster Steep.

**This does mean that during the off-peak period there will be no through service between Taunton and Minehead.**

On the Exmoor Coaster Service (Doniford to Lynmouth) the route will be cut back during the hours of the road closure to operate between Minehead Butlins and Lynmouth.

The plan is to operate these sections of route as close as possible to the normal timetable, which is possible on the Watchet to Taunton section, but a slightly revised timetable to cover Minehead to Dunster Steep may be required.

### **Hinkley Point Community Bus**

As a result of the A39 road closure, the Community Bus Service will be restricted to operate between Watchet Railway Station and Bridgwater only. Minehead, Blue Anchor and Carhampton **will not be served**.

### **Driver Shortages**

The U.K. bus sector is currently suffering from a significant driver shortage. This is principally caused by staff isolating due to COVID-19 at short notice, combined with delays in securing medical examinations required for new starters to secure their

provisional licences, and then long-standing delays in receiving those provisional licences from the DVLA.

In Somerset First Bus has found it necessary to curtail a very small proportion of journeys. They understand that while it may be a very small proportion of journeys, this is a very significant disruption for the customers affected.

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

To keep up to date with the latest timetable changes and current service issues please visit the website [here](#).

## **Step Up Somerset Virtual Careers Fair**

Step Up Somerset is a co-ordinated network of support for individuals, employers and businesses seeking information in relation to employment, skills, careers and apprenticeships across Somerset under the Step Up Somerset brand to boost existing provision in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

This includes a new one-stop-shop website [www.stepupsomerset.org.uk](http://www.stepupsomerset.org.uk) which will provide support for individuals who are job hunting, seeking training in new industries or working to strengthen their skills by providing details of employment and skills services and resources. Those who find themselves at risk of or being made redundant can find a full range of support including help with reskilling, financial assistance and wellbeing information.

Following the success of the first virtual fair last year, the Somerset Careers Fair is hitting screens again on **Thursday 14 October**.

The event will have 3 virtual exhibition halls to explore with live chats with industry professionals. This event will be a great opportunity to speak to experts and find out about the career opportunities currently available.

The event is free to register and will be live from 8.30am – 7pm on the day. Please [click here](#) to find out more.

## **Exmoor National Park (ENP) Exmoor Day – 19 October**

Exmoor National Park came into being on 19 October 1954 – making it the 8th National Park in the UK. [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/exmoor-day](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/exmoor-day)

Exmoor Day is just two weeks away and is a great opportunity for communities, businesses and visitors to join together to celebrate all that is good about Exmoor.

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

## **Exmoor Dark Skies Festival 2021**

A night-time adventure on board open top bus 'the Exmoor Coaster' with an expert astronomer is just one of the brand-new experiences on offer for those lucky enough

to secure tickets at this year's [Exmoor Dark Skies Festival](#), running from **22 October to 7 November 2021**.

The full programme has just been announced, with printed copies available free from National Park Centres at Dunster, Dulverton and Lynmouth and online at [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/darkskiesfestival](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/darkskiesfestival).

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

## **Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS)**

### **Archaeological dig in Bicknoller**

Ever fancied becoming an archaeologist? Now you can in your own back garden!

On the **16/17 October** Past Participate are visiting Bicknoller to conduct archaeological excavations. 400-500 years ago the people who lived in the village worked in the cloth and clothing industries, as weavers, dyers, tanners, glovers, and clothiers. Help learn more about them during the excavations.

Get in touch with the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme at [qlps@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:qlps@somerset.gov.uk) or [info@pastparticipate.co.uk](mailto:info@pastparticipate.co.uk) to find out more.

## **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)**

### **Stop a chimney fire happening to you**

It's fast approaching that time of year again (where did the summer go?) when your thoughts are turning to cosying up in front of a fire. Log burners and open fires are a great way to keep warm as well as create a welcoming, autumnal atmosphere, but there are risks that come with fires too.

In winter DSFRS attend more than 10 chimney fires a week. Plus, they're the leading cause of thatch fires.

Chimney fires are often caused by dirty chimneys that become filled with tar, which is extremely flammable. There are many simple ways you can avoid this and burn a fire safely in your home.

Please [click here](#) to find out how you can reduce the risk of a chimney fire.

## **Exmoor Search and Rescue (ESR)**

### **Exmoor 91 – Incident Control Unit (ICU)**

Ex.91 is the result of a three-year project to replace the now retired ICU, which saw operational deployments with [Exmoor Search & Rescue Team](#) spanning nearly twenty years. The ICU is a hugely important vehicle within the ESR fleet of specialist rescue vehicles as it provides the platform from which the team deploys and operates, during both extended search deployments and time-critical rescues.

Ex.91 boasts the ability to transport two team members and a full complement of specialist search and rescue equipment, as well as housing the teams command and



control centre, comprising of radio communications, computer workstations and office space to accommodate multi-agency strategy meetings.

This project wouldn't have been possible without the support and generosity shown by communities and donors which included a grant from the Somerset West and Taunton Community Chest Fund.

The Team is sincerely grateful for the ongoing support and generosity shown by local communities; Ex.91 will enable the Team to continue to deliver life-saving search and rescue services to the communities of Devon and Somerset, and across the South-West.

Photographs of the new vehicle are available [here](#).

## **Community Support – What help is out there? Voluntary and Community Sector Support Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Reminder - Loneliness Engagement Fund**

The Loneliness Engagement Fund provides small grants between £15,000 and £50,000 to organisations who can engage with target groups at high risk of loneliness. The fund will give out up to £260,000 of grants in total.

The objective of the Loneliness Engagement Fund is to reach the groups in England most affected by loneliness during COVID-19 with communications and engagement activity that will help reduce feelings of stigma and encourage people to take steps to help themselves and others.

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 13 October 2021**.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information.

## **Somerset Activity and Sport Partnership (SASP) Jump Start – Inspiring Children and Families Thursday 14 October 9.30am – 12 noon via zoom.**

SASP is proud to bring together well known national and local speakers, along with Children's voices to provide their thoughts and knowledge on using sport and physical activity to inspire, teach, learn and make happier, healthier lives for our vulnerable young people in Somerset

Keynote speaker will be Caleb Jackson, Head of Change at the Youth Endowment Fund and CEO Centre of Youth Violence to provide a national perspective, with other key local speakers to allow us to learn more about Somerset priorities and interventions. All of this interspersed with some young people, mentors and sports clubs telling their stories.

Please [click here](#) to find out more.

## **Spark Somerset**

## **Become a COVID Champion in your community**

Does your organisation need a [COVID Champion](#)? As more people return to work and volunteering, would you like to ensure that your employees and volunteers know who to turn to for the right facts and information about COVID-19?

After attending a short, online welcome session, COVID Community Champions can help their colleagues, family, friends and the wider community to understand the latest guidance around COVID-19. There is also the opportunity to attend regular meetings with other Champions and everybody who signs up will receive weekly updates by email.

If you, or someone you know might be interested in becoming a COVID Community Champion, you can find more information and sign up [here](#).

## **Open Mental Health Grants**

Funding is available from the [Open Mental Health](#) Community grants programme for projects which have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of people in Somerset and meet the shared ambitions of the Somerset Mental Health Alliance.

The deadline to submit your application for a grant of over £2,000 is **Wednesday 13 October**. Applications for grants under £2,000 can be submitted at any time.

Click [here](#) for further information.

## **St John Ambulance – Fore Street, Taunton**

### **Restart a Heart Campaign 9 – 23 October 2021**

The Taunton adult and cadet volunteers will be holding an event on **Saturday 16 October** to raise awareness of cardiac arrests and train as many people as they can on life-saving and effective CPR by guiding participants on what to do in an emergency.

The Restart a Heart campaign is held every October to encourage more people to learn CPR. St John's Ambulance goal is to increase the number of people surviving out-of-hospital cardiac arrests.

When someone collapses and stops breathing normally, it is important to quickly call 999, perform hands-only CPR and use a defibrillator. This gives that person their best chance of life.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about this event.

## **Community Council for Somerset (CCS)**

### **Somerset Community Connect Event**

**Tuesday 19 October 10am – 12pm**

The CCS are thrilled to be able to host another Community Connect Event at the Canalside Conference Centre in Bridgwater. This is a chance for the public and professionals to meet health, social care, charities and organisations that can help people in Somerset, all under one roof.

This year's focus is on unpaid carers - if you are a carer - or you or the organisation you work for support carers - come along and have a chat. The event is open to the public, professionals and exhibitors who want to book a stand.

In order to be COVID safe, pre-booking is essential to manage numbers. Please [click here](#) to find out more.

## **Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)**

### **Festive Fund to combat loneliness**

Christmas can be a difficult time for some of our neighbours, and this year will be a tough Christmas again for many in the wake of the coronavirus. SCF want to support groups that can help to reduce loneliness and spread warmth and cheer through food and activities around the festive period.

The money can be used towards the cost of providing food and/or festive activities for isolated people between December and January. The grant is supported by Somerset businesses and the SCF Surviving Winter Fund.

Applications must be submitted by **20 October 2021**.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about eligibility and make an application.

## **Young Somerset**

### **Bold & Brave – new shop launched in Taunton**

Bold & Brave, a vision which began back in 2019, is finally becoming a reality and opening its doors to the public for the first time on **Saturday 9 October**.

Bold & Brave, situated in Taunton's Independent Quarter, is an exciting new retail experience, bringing together young people and the community. Working in partnership with Young Somerset, Bold & Brave is no ordinary shop; it's a place where unique handmade goods and locally sourced products, all made by young people or to support young people can be purchased.

But it's also so much more; it's a community hub, a social enterprise space and a place that provides young people with the opportunity to have visible roles within Bold & Brave, whilst gaining work experience and life skills training.

Young Somerset are also on the lookout for talented young producers, designers, artists and entrepreneurs who'd like to showcase and sell their work in Bold & Brave. This unique opportunity will allow products an audience, develop skills and confidence, network with other young entrepreneurs and be mentored by Young Somerset staff. Find out more: <https://www.youngsomerset.org.uk/are-you-bold-brave>.

## **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**

### **World Health Organisation (WHO)**

#### **World Mental Health Day – 10 October 2021**

On World Mental Health Day, 10 October, it will have been more than 18 months since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In some countries, life is returning to some semblance of normality; in others, rates of transmission and hospital admissions remain high, disrupting the lives of families and communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on people's mental health. Some groups, including health and other frontline workers, students, people living alone, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions, have been particularly affected. And services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders have been significantly disrupted.

This year's campaign slogan is "Mental health care for all: let's make it a reality". The WHO can provide materials in easy to read formats, on how to take care of your own mental health and provide support to others too.

Please [click here](#) to find out more.

## **Cancer Research UK**

### **Breast Cancer Awareness**

Breast cancer it's a scary thought and all too many women assume that it won't happen to them. Fact is though, every ten minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK. So, don't be ignorant, during October (breast cancer awareness month 2021) go for a medical check-up, it might save your life. For more information about breast cancer, please [click here](#).

## **COVID-19**

### **Somerset COVID Cases**

In the week up to 25 September approximately 82,996 tests were carried out across the county with 1,811 new confirmed cases. The rates have increased to 322.1 per 100,000, which is above the South West average and only just below the national average of 332.3 per 100,000.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset continues to show improvement on previous weeks with just over 20 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals.

## **Have you had your jabs? Update on COVID-19 Booster Programme**

Vaccines are the best way to protect people from COVID-19 and have already saved thousands of lives. Use the link below to find out more about where the local 'Grab a

Jab' clinics are taking place this week. [COVID-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#).

The NHS are now rolling out the [COVID-19 Booster Vaccination Programme](#) across Somerset to those who are eligible. You do not need to contact the NHS to arrange your booster vaccine. Once you have received the national invitation you will be able to go on the **National Booking site**: [nhs.uk/CovidVaccination](https://nhs.uk/CovidVaccination) or call 119.

It is important to note that even if you fall within one of the early cohorts (due to your age or existing health conditions) you will only be eligible for your COVID-19 booster **vaccine at least 6 months after your second vaccine dose**.

The booster programme will be delivered through existing and additional vaccination sites including pharmacies, hospital hubs, some GP practices and vaccine centres. Care home residents and staff will be prioritised ensuring they are offered a vaccine by the beginning of November.

### **Vaccination Programme for 12–15-year-olds**

The UK's Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) all agree that while COVID-19 is typically mild or asymptomatic in most young people, 1 dose of the vaccine will provide good protection against severe illness and hospitalisation and help reduce disruption to education and minimise the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools.

Invitations for the jabs have begun and parental, guardian or carer consent will be sought by vaccination healthcare staff prior to vaccination. This is a well-established process used for all school vaccination programmes.

The Somerset Foundation Trust manage the childhood immunisation programme with SAINT (School Age Immunisation Nursing Team, part of the NHS). SAINT deliver the nasal flu vaccination to all schools in Somerset between October and December every year.

This year, the COVID-19 and flu vaccines are being rolled out together for 12-15-year-olds through the schools' immunisation programme. The role of schools is to facilitate access for those who wish to receive the vaccine.

The vaccine is not mandatory; the decision to have the vaccine is a personal decision. No vaccine will be given to any child without parental consent being sought.

These two videos from the Department of Health and Social Care help explain how Public Health know the vaccine is safe in more detail: [video 1](#) and [video 2](#). The UK has also benefited from having data from the US, Canada and Israel, countries already offering the COVID-19 vaccine universally to young people aged 12 to 15 years. You might also like to watch actor Jason Forbes tackle some common myths about the vaccine in this brilliant [short video](#).

### **Stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19**

Coronavirus remains a serious health risk. You should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

- Meet outside, or open windows and doors for indoor visitors
- If you think you have symptoms stay at home and [take a PCR test](#)
- Wear face coverings in crowded places and on public transport
- Check in to venues when you go out
- Wash your hands with soap regularly, and for at least 20 seconds
- [Get vaccinated](#).

### Twice weekly testing

For people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19, it remains very important to participate in twice weekly asymptomatic testing if you are out and about and meeting up with people. Please make sure that you take a test **before** you travel anywhere and if it is positive, stay at home and arrange a PCR test.

**If you have symptoms of COVID-19** it is important that you take a PCR test, which can be done by phoning 119 or ordering a test here: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

### Lateral flow test

From Monday 4 October, changes will be made to the pharmacy collect service to improve traceability of lateral flow test kits. The main changes you will notice are:

- You will only be allowed to collect two packs of LFT kits, rather than four.
- You will need to register for a collect code on [gov.uk/get-collect-code](https://gov.uk/get-collect-code) or by calling 119 prior to making a collection from a pharmacy. If you do not wish to register for this collect code, a supply can still be made as an anonymous collection, but we encourage everyone to use collect codes wherever possible

There have been reports of increased rates of positive lateral flow test results, followed by a negative follow up PCR result. If you receive a negative PCR result, you can stop self-isolating, as the result from a PCR test is considered to be the correct result. **To lower the chances of obtaining a false positive lateral flow test**, please do not eat, drink or vape for 30 minutes before performing a lateral flow test.

Please also ensure you carefully read the instructions provided inside the lateral flow test kit, to ensure you are performing the test correctly. There are three different LFT kits available now, and each one varies slightly in the way it needs to be used. The kits are: Innova (nose/throat swabbing) along with Orient Gene and Acon Flowflex (nose only swabbing).

Public Health has also received reports that PCR swabs have been distributed which have expired and are therefore not suitable to be used. Please ensure before swabbing yourself for PCR testing, that you **check the expiration date on the box** the test(s) were delivered in, the exterior plastic bag of each test kit, as well as the vial itself. If you find that the swab you have has expired, please dispose of this unused swab in your general waste if at home, or in the green healthcare bags if within a health and social care setting.

You are reminded that if you have previously received a positive Covid PCR test result, you should not re-test yourself by either using a rapid lateral flow kit or by having another PCR test within 90 days of the first positive result **unless** you develop any new symptoms of COVID-19.

If you'd like to know more, a video which shows you how to use the Lateral Flow kit can be viewed [here](#). By testing yourself regularly you are helping to reduce the spread of the infection.

## **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](http://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

## **FAQ**

### **Q. How long after having the vaccine does immunity develop?**

**A.** Guidance from Public Health England (PHE) states that it takes a “few weeks for your body to build up protection from the vaccine”. PHE guidance also emphasises the importance of continuing to adhere to existing measures aimed at reducing transmission of the virus: Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective, so you should continue to take recommended precautions to avoid infection. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

### **Q. How can I explain to my young children about COVID-19?**

**A.** [Somerset Health and Wellbeing](#) have a range of useful resources which can be accessed [here](#). This includes the NHS who have developed a [fact sheet](#) which might be useful if you want to explain the Coronavirus to children and young people. It explains what a virus is, who can catch it and steps we can all take to protect ourselves, including washing our hands and staying safe at home.

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

### **Her Majesty Revenues and Customs (HMRC)**

#### **Students beware of Scams**

University students taking part-time jobs are at increased risk of falling victim to scams, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is warning. Higher numbers of students going to university this year means more young people may choose to take on part-time work. Being new to interacting with HMRC and unfamiliar with genuine contact from the department could make them vulnerable to scams.

In the past year almost one million people reported scams to HMRC.

Nearly half of all tax scams offer fake tax refunds, which HMRC does not offer by SMS or email. The criminals involved are usually trying to steal money or personal information to sell on to others. HMRC is a familiar brand, which scammers abuse to add credibility to their scams.

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



## **Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP) SWT Community Scrutiny Committee**

On Thursday 30 September Chief Inspector Justin French, the Local Policing Commander attended and answered questions in relation to policing matters in the Somerset West and Taunton area.

Please [click here](#) to watch a webcast of the discussion.

### **Commitment to tackling violence against women and girls**

Following the terrible crime committed against Sarah Everard, a [statement](#) has been made by Deputy Chief Constable Nikki Watson on behalf of Avon and Somerset Police.

### **Firearms licensing consultation underway**

There has been heightened public concern following the recent shooting of five people in Plymouth. The Home Office is currently reviewing arrangements for the licensing of guns and will shortly be introducing new statutory guidance to be followed by all police forces.

Elected Police and Crime Commissioners are inviting the public to have their say on potential changes to the licensing of firearms and shotguns in England and Wales. Click the link to find out more about [The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#) survey which can be [completed online](#). It takes just a few minutes and will remain open for responses until **Wednesday 20 October**.

### **Mounted Police Unit looking to recruit a new horse**

A&SP mounted section are once again looking to recruit a new police horse to the team. After the success of the last Facebook post and the arrival of PH Alan, they are asking the public to get in contact with any horses that would be a good fit.

All horses will be required to undergo a 4-week trial where their suitability to the role will be assessed and a 5stage vetting process.

Please [click here](#) to find out more.

### **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](#)
- [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point 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/](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.

***Attachment:***

***Example of recycle more leaflet***