

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 84 Week ending 14/11/2021

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. Joint Committee Meeting signals first steps to Unitary Council.

A new Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Committee has met in Somerset to steer the move to a single unitary council for the county.

The two-hour public meeting was hosted by Mendip District Council at their offices in Shepton Mallet (5 November 2021).

The Committee consists of nine members from both District and County Councils, including the five Somerset Council Leaders, plus four Somerset County Councillors.

In July of this year the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, confirmed that Somerset would move to a single unitary council from 1 April 2023.

Since that announcement, the five existing councils in the county, Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset District Councils and Somerset County Council, have been working together on plans for the new council.

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:

- **Tuesday 16 November** – SWT Special Full Council at 6.15pm in the JMR (To consider the appointment of the Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive. Agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#)).
- **Wednesday 17 November** – SWT Executive at 6.15pm in the JMR (Agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#)).
- **Monday 22 November** – Tenants Strategic Group at 6pm in the JMR. (Agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#)).
- **Wednesday 24 November** – Community Scrutiny Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm Friday 19 November).
- **Thursday 25 November** – Planning Committee at 1pm in the JMR. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm Monday 22 November).

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.

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

3. Full Council to consider appointment of new CEO

A special meeting of Somerset West and Taunton Council is being held to approve the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer.

Members will be asked to ratify the appointment of Andrew Pritchard at the full council meeting on Tuesday 16 November, as recommended by the Appointment Panel.

If approved the new CEO whose post includes the roles of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer will begin on 17 November 2021.

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

4. Remembrance in Taunton

On Remembrance Sunday, **14 November**, a service will be held at [St Mary Magdalene Church](#) at 9.30am.

Following the church service, a parade of veterans, scouts, guides and cadets will march through the town where a civic party will take the salute on the steps of the Old Municipal Buildings in Corporation Street at 10.30am.

The civic party will then process into [Vivary Park](#), where the Service of Remembrance and wreath laying ceremony will take place in front of the War Memorial at 11am.

Temporary road closures will be in place throughout the commemorations.

This year's commemorations are unique as they coincide with the 100th anniversary of the [Royal British Legion](#), whose role is to help serving and ex-serving personnel and their families.

Anyone wishing to commemorate Remembrance can pick up a poppy at [Taunton Visitor Centre](#). Alternatively, poppies can be ordered online at poppysshop.org.uk.

5. Ground-breaking start for a ground-breaking project

A ground-breaking ceremony has heralded the start of construction of a ground-breaking project for Somerset.

The £11m Digital Innovation Centre, to be developed by Somerset County Council on Somerset West and Taunton Council's Firepool regeneration site in Taunton, will build on local strengths in the digital sector and form a key part of plans for recovery and transformation of Somerset's economy, including the creation of high-quality jobs.

The new 2,613 square-metre building will provide modern office, workshop, collaboration, and meeting space over four floors, as well as specialist innovation support services targeted at digital economy businesses.

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

6. SWT charging network continues to grow

SWT's charging network continues to grow with the addition of two 50kw InstaVolt charging points at the front of Deane House. □

These chargers will be available 24/7 on a non-subscription basis, helping to reduce Carbon emissions across the district.

Starting on 15 November, 14 bays in the Belvedere Road car park will be closed off for two weeks to allow for the installation of electric vehicle charging points.

7. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Use My Waste Services and My Collection Day at somersetwaste.gov.uk to get things done now, including:-

- Check collection days and calendars
- Order recycling containers free
- Purchase garden waste subscription
- Buy garden waste sacks and book pick-ups
- Arrange clinical and assisted waste collections
- Set up paid-for bulky waste collections
- Remove a refuse or garden waste bin
- Send a comment, complaint or compliment
- Pay to drop off asbestos/plasterboard
- Get a free recycle site van or trailer permit
- Log any missed collections after 7pm on due day; SWP aim to return for any reported missed collection within two working days.

Recruitment

Amid national LGV driver shortage's acute effect in Somerset and COVID's impact, SWP are training their own drivers, recruiting hard - including £1,000 welcome bonus - and using no-LGV vans to collect card so main truck LGV drivers keep collecting other materials for longer.

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.

For more information on kerbside services, recycling sites, and on COVID-19 and waste, visit: 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 quiet spell of weather at the moment, which is of great assistance for highway maintenance activities, especially at this time of year.

Completed works include footway repairs at Style Road and drainage works at Hartswell both in Wiveliscombe and further drainage works at Exford Road, Winsford.

In Carhampton, the Somerset River Authority funded drainage improvement works are progressing well. The work on the B3191 Blue Anchor Road is now complete and the team will now move on to the next phase on Orchard Road.

On 21 November there will be temporary traffic signals on the A38 Wellington Relief Road, at the Bagley Lane junction for the installation of a new winter weather station. Bagley Lane itself will be closed temporarily to permit the works.

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

Consultation deadline approaches for A358 Dualling Scheme

The National Highways consultation on the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme is due to end soon. 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 ends on **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.

To find out more about the proposals and have your say, please visit the National Highways' online exhibition at 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.](#)

Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency

New rules for towing a trailer with a car from 15 November 2021

There will be new rules about towing a trailer or caravan with a car from 15 November 2021. Find out how the changes affect you [here](#).

It's best to take training from a driving instructor if you want to start driving a car and trailer.

The 'National standard for driving cars and light vans' tells you about the [skills, knowledge and understanding you need to tow a trailer or caravan](#).

You can also read about:

- [why learning to tow is important](#)
- [safety checks you should do when you're towing a trailer or caravan with a car](#)

If you do not comply with the new legislation, you can be fined up to £1,000, be banned from driving and get up to 6 penalty points on your driving licence if you tow anything heavier before the law changes.

Department for Transport eCargo Bike Grant Fund

£400,000 has been made available by the Department for Transport in 2021/22 for the purchase of ecargo bikes, to support businesses switching to a sustainable transport solution.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about the fund. The deadline for applications is the **14 December 2021**.

Somerset Water Forum 2021 Event postponed until March 2022

Unfortunately, the event organisers have taken the difficult decision to postpone the Somerset Water Forum which was planned for Friday 19 November 2021.

The event will be rescheduled for March 2022, date to be confirmed. Those who have booked will automatically be reserved a place (those who enquired after the event became fully booked will be kept on the reserve list, and the organisers will revise capacity closer to the rescheduled date).

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

Exmoor National Park (ENP) COP 26 – #UniteForNature

GLASGOW, 5 November 2021: The organisations in charge of some of the largest tracts of protected landscapes and marine environments across the world have come together for the first time to call upon world leaders to support their work at the vanguard of the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss.

Orchestrated by National Parks UK, as host nation for COP26, the statement has been signed by, amongst others, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/ World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), EUROPARC, and Exmoor National Park Authority.

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

Art Exhibition will give boost to Exmoor Woodland Creation

Art works by the internationally acclaimed group of artists known as [The Arborealists](#) will be exhibited at Lanacre Barn Gallery in Exmoor National Park, the landscape that helped to inspire them. The Exhibition is open from **Saturday 13 November to 28 November 2021** inclusive. Opening hours are 10am-7pm on the opening weekend and thereafter 11am – 4pm.

A percentage of the proceeds from sales will support the [CareMoor Woods and Trees Appeal](#), launched earlier this summer to support tree planting and woodland creation in the National Park.

For more details about the exhibition visit www.moorlandart.com or to donate or find out how to get involved in the tree planting see www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/caremoor.

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) From Little Acorns Project

If you got involved with the QLPS 'from little acorns' project last year and grew some native trees from seeds, it's time to plant them out. QLPS hope your seedlings have done well over the summer. Now that winter is just around the corner, the QLPS would like to invite you along to a specially selected site at Cothelstone Hill to plant your seedlings, where you can watch them grow.

QLPS will be at Cothelstone Hill on **Saturday 20 November** to plant them, please message them for further details: qlps@somerset.gov.uk.

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

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) Top ways to reduce your risk of having a fire at home

There are many ways you can reduce the risk of fire in your home. DSFRS attend **973** house fires a year on average.

Please [click here](#) to learn how to reduce the risks in your home and lower the chances of having a fire.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency Safety tips for Winter Dippers

Going for a dip in the sea this winter? Refresh yourself with some top safety tips: -

- Swim with someone, so you can look out for one other,

- Tell someone where you are going and when you will be back, so that they can call for help if you are overdue,
- Be seen – a brightly coloured swim cap and tow float will help,
- Check the weather forecast and tide times,
- Take a fully charged mobile in a waterproof phone pouch so you can call for help if you need to.

If you or someone else is in danger in the sea or at the coast, call 999 immediately and ask for the Coastguard.

Community Support – What help is out there? Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Royal British Legion (RBL)

Annual Poppy Appeal

For 100 years the Royal British Legion (RBL) has been helping serving and ex-serving personnel and their families. Please [click here](#) to watch a video commemorating the last 100 years RBL100 – Creating a lasting legacy.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and the several ways to donate to the appeal.

Lendology

Home Improvement Loans

If you are a homeowner looking to make essential home repairs, improvements or adaptations, the Lendology home improvement loan scheme may be the answer you have been looking for.

Keeping homes safe, warm and ready for the colder months is key to good health across Somerset West and Taunton. A loan from Lendology can ensure homes are fully prepared for cold and wet weather – be it repairing a leaky roof, funding an efficient heating system, fitting good insulation to keep bills down, or ensuring electrics are safe and up-to-date. There are a variety of home repairs and improvements covered under the scheme.

If you need to repair your home, it couldn't be simpler to apply for a home improvement loan. Just contact the team at Lendology direct on 01823 461099 or visit their [website](#).

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)

Deadline looms on Enterprise Grants

Funding is available from Somerset Community Foundation for young people, from two grants programmes:

[Enterprise Grants](#)

Enterprise Grants are for those not in employment, education or training, aged 18-30 to launch their business idea or to support their business in its early stages. This money could be used to pay for things like equipment, materials, stock and services

to help get their business up and running. Grants for up to £1,000 are available from this programme.

[Training and Employment Support Grants](#)

Training and Employment Support Grants could help a young person aged 16-30 with the cost of essential items for training or apprenticeships, or to start a new job. This could include the cost of a course, a laptop, tools or clothing, or transport costs. Grants for up to £500 are available from this programme.

Both programmes are open to young people who live in Somerset.

The deadline for applications is **Friday 19 November, 2021**. For more information visit: www.somersetcf.org.uk/grants-individuals or if you have any questions, please contact Kirsty Campbell by emailing info@somersetcf.org.uk or by calling 01749 344949.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS) End date looms for Somerset Diverse Survey

Diverse Young Somerset (DYS) a recently established research group created by young people for young people. DYS is inviting all young people aged between 13 – 20 years old from Somerset's ethnic diverse communities to take part in an online survey to investigate the challenges of accessing mental health services and experiences within the education system. The aim is to research the correlation between mental health, education and discrimination.

The dynamic young group are leading the way with a quick 10 question online survey to hear Somerset's young ethnic voices from the community. It is an important piece of work as young people from ethnic minority groups in Somerset have never been asked about their experience of discrimination related to education and mental health.

If you are aged between 13 - 20 and from Somerset's ethnic diverse community – **please complete the quick survey.**

VISIT: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/dys-somerset>

The online survey closes 19 November 2021.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about Diverse Young Somerset.

Somerset Activities Sports Partnership (SASP) Consultation launched on draft strategy, Somerset Moves

Being active is so important for physical and mental fitness, never more so than during a pandemic. In Somerset nearly a quarter of the adult population are inactive and activity levels for children and young people have also dropped significantly over the past year. Lack of confidence, time pressures, ill health plus a thousand other things can make the decision to be active harder for some than others.

Somerset Moves is a system wide, multi-agency draft strategy for the development of physical activity and sport across Somerset.

Everyone has a role to play in Somerset Moves; people, communities, and organisations, from every sector and place across the county, pulling together with a shared goal to help move more and improve their lives in the process.

The draft strategy has been shaped by people's ideas from online conversations, virtual workshops, and evidence of what helps people to be active.

SASP have set up a dedicated form to capture comments and responses to this consultation.

Please [click here](#) to add your views on the draft strategy using the Consultation Response Form. The consultation will run until **Monday 6 December 2021**.

The National Lottery Community Fund Together for our Planet

Grants from £1,000 to £10,000 of National Lottery funding are being offered to support communities across the UK to take action on climate change. At the beginning of this month, the UK hosted the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow. The UK Government's Together for Our Planet initiative has been created to engage people with COP26 and inspire positive climate action.

The deadline for applications is **5pm on 18 November 2021**.

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

Western Power Distribution Community Matters Fund

Western Power Distribution has teamed up with Localgiving to deliver its Community Matters Fund. In this fund, Western Power Distribution is providing £500,000 to support charitable organisations and councils in their response to fuel poverty this winter.

The programme is now live and accepting applications until **Monday 22 November 2021**. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application by 14 December 2021. Projects must be delivered and funding spent by 31 March 2022.

Organisations can apply for up to £10,000 depending on the type of organisation they are. The funding limits are:

- Registered charities and local government organisations can apply for a maximum of £10,000
- Registered companies and constituted charitable organisations without a charity number can apply for a maximum of £2,000

Please [click here](#) to find out more about the fund and how to apply.

Life Cycle UK

Get Somerset Cycling

National Charity, [Life Cycle UK](#), has recently launched a new campaign to get people in Somerset cycling.

Through the [Get Somerset Cycling Campaign](#), free tuition and bike vouchers are available to eligible people in Somerset and voluntary sector organisations can apply for up to four bicycle parking stands for their premises free of charge, including delivery and installation.

You can find out more and apply [here](#).

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

COVID-19

Somerset COVID Cases

In the week up to 30 October approximately 84,412 tests were carried out across the county with 3,207 new confirmed cases. The rates have decreased in the last reporting week to 570.4 per 100,000. This is above the South-West and national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset has increased with around 90 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals.

Clinton's COVID catch up

Keep warm and healthy this winter

In this week's [Covid Catch Up](#), Clinton discusses the need to ensure keep people warm and healthy this winter and offers some useful contacts and advice.

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

The government have reported that over 8 million people in the UK have now received COVID-19 booster jabs and more than 820,000 boosters have been administered in the last week and they continue to urge people to get their booster as soon as possible. More info can be found [here](#).

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 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 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 Centres offer walk in clinics for 12–15-year-olds

COVID-19 vaccination centres in Somerset are now offering walk-in clinics for those aged 12 to 15. This is part of a local drive to make it as easy as possible for local people to get vaccinated.

Until recently, those in the 12- to 15-year-old age group were being vaccinated in schools or could book a jab at a number of vaccination centres across the county. Now families also have the option of getting their children vaccinated at a walk-in clinic.

You can find out which centres are offering walk in clinics, including those for 12 to 15 year olds on the [“grab-a-jab” website](#).

Children will also continue to be offered the COVID-19 jab through their schools

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.

Anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms, should book a PCR and not attend school or work. Do not take a LFD if symptomatic. PHE advise all parents, staff and

pupils to take the supervised PCR testing route where available. Ask for this when you arrive at the test centre and someone will take the swab for you to maximise the quality of the test.

From 1 November there will be a reduction in the opening hours at regional and local testing sites. Instead of opening from 8am until 8pm, they will operate from 8am until 6pm – 2 hours less per day.

Please continue to use LFD and PCR tests as you normally would, the SCC PH advice remains, if you are showing any symptoms of COVID-19 or have a positive LFD test get a PCR test and if this is positive stay at home and self-isolate for ten days to avoid infecting others.

SCC PH advice remains consistent with national guidance:

- Only use twice weekly LFD testing for asymptomatic cases
- Make sure you do an LFD according to the instructions and at least 30 minutes after eating or drinking
- If you get a positive LFD or have symptoms, self-isolate and get a PCR and **use the supervised PCR testing route at test centre to get the best quality test**

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.

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 I want to take part in the Remembrance Day parade. What guidance should I follow to ensure I minimise the risk of catching COVID-19?

A Somerset Public Health Leaders are urging caution. Please [click here](#) to read a press release about the guidance to follow to help stop the spread of Coronavirus during these services and events.

Q My child missed their scheduled vaccination at school due to absence. How can I book another appointment?

A 12–15-year-olds who have missed their school vaccination date (due to absence or illness) are advised to book their vaccination online.

[Book or manage your coronavirus \(Covid-19\) vaccination - NHS](#) (www.nhs.uk)

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Payment Diversion Fraud

The National Economic Crime Centre has launched a campaign aimed at raising awareness of Payment Diversion Fraud (PDF).

Working with partners in the National Crime Agency, City of London Police, UK Finance and Cifas, the multi-agency campaign aims to help small and medium sized businesses and home-buyers protect themselves.

PDF, also known as Business Email Compromise or Mandate Fraud, involves criminals impersonating others, creating or amending invoices and diverting payments to bank accounts under their own control. This can target both businesses and individuals.

Unlike some indiscriminate scams, PDF involves criminals deliberately targeting a specific individual. As a result, individual losses can be significantly higher than for many other types of fraud.

In the year to September 2021 there have been 4,600 cases reported to Action Fraud, with individual losses averaging around £30,000.

Businesses are particularly impacted with annual spikes in these frauds occurring in March and November, timed with financial year-ends.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about Payment Diversion Fraud.

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Drink Spiking – What you need to know

To spike a drink means to put alcohol or drugs into someone's drink without their knowledge or permission. The aim may be to incapacitate someone enough to rob or sexually assault them, although sometimes it is intended as a joke – a bad joke.

Drink spiking is illegal and carries a sentence of up to ten years in prison. If a robbery, sexual assault or other criminal behaviour has taken place, the sentence may be even longer.

ASP are working closely with night-time venues across the force to tackle drink spiking. The police want to ensure that those working in bars, pubs and clubs know how to correctly support a victim of drink spiking and the way to report it. They also want to be clear that ASP will not tolerate drink spiking. Individuals who are going out intending to behave in this way will be found and will be stopped.

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

Operation Bluestone

Earlier this year, ASP launched Operation Bluestone to improve how rape and sexual assaults are investigated and to make sure the best outcome for all victims is achieved.

ASP are increasing focus on suspect behaviour to improve conviction rates and prevent offending, making sure that victims are supported throughout the process and providing officers with the specialist training they need to deal with these complex crimes.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about Operation Bluestone from DCI Loretta Spierenburg.

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/ 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.