

# Somerset West and Taunton

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

### **Issue 89 Week ending 19/12/2021**

#### **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. Office Closure over Christmas**

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 13 December, SWT staff have reverted to working from home and are delivering services remotely. It is hoped that these measures will reduce transmission and slow the spread of the Omicron variant: to prevent the NHS "coming under unsustainable pressure".

Whilst all services can still be accessed online at [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk), the offices will be closed to the public for the Christmas break from **1pm on Friday 24 December** and will reopen on **Tuesday 4 January 8am**.

In the event of an emergency such as flooding, or urgent housing repairs, please call **0300 304 8000** and follow the options for the out of hours service.

If you would like to alert SWT to a rough sleeper in your community, please visit [Streetlink](#) to make a report. This is a service set up to help reduce rough sleeping by empowering members of the public to connect people sleeping rough, with local services that can support them.

## 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:

- **Monday 20 December** – SWT Licensing Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR. (Agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 15 December).
- **Wednesday 5 January** – SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee at 6:15pm in the JMR. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 22 December).
- **Thursday 6 January** - SWT Community Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 23 December).
- **Thursday 13 January** – SWT Planning Committee at 1.00pm in the JMR (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 10 January).
- **Wednesday 19 January** – SWT Executive Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 14 January).

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. High Streets refresh welcomes Christmas shoppers

SWT has completed an enhanced high street cleaning programme in partnership with cleansing contractor, Idverde, to attract shoppers and help businesses thrive over the festive period.

The operation lasted twelve weeks covering town centres and other high footfall areas in Minehead, Taunton, Watchet, Wellington and Wiveliscombe.

The work was undertaken using the same street cleaning vehicle used to prepare Taunton when co-hosting the 2019 Cricket World Cup.

This latest programme of works forms part of a series of projects undertaken by the Council to improve cleanliness across the district.

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

#### **4. May Elections 2022**

As well as elections for the new unitary Somerset Council, the government has proposed that elections to the town and parish councils across Somerset are brought forward from 2023, to also take place on 5 May 2022. It is expected that the notice of elections for this date will be issued on 21 March 2022.

The Government's intention is to ensure that all local elections in Somerset remain aligned. Therefore, the Government is proposing that in May 2022, town and parish councillors will be elected for a term of five years, instead of the current four-year term. This does mean that members elected in 2019 will have been in post for only three years at the next election. However, alignment should offer opportunities for councillors to work together on the issues that matter most to their communities

#### **5. SWT Housing Newsletter – Winter 2021**

SWT Housing has produced the latest tenants' newsletter which is due to hit doormats soon. Approximately 6000 publications have been 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, housing maintenance and how tenants can access available services.

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

#### **6. Consultation on Taunton Council closes on 12 January**

SWT is carrying out a review to decide on changes to existing local governance arrangements including whether a new town or parish council(s) should be set up in those parts of Taunton where they don't currently exist.

Full information about the review including the terms of reference and a timetable can be found [here](#). SWT wants to hear from local residents, business owners and organisations that are within the scope of the review.

You can complete the questionnaire [online](#) or obtain a paper version and return it to Governance Team, Somerset West and Taunton Council, PO Box 866, Taunton TA1 9GS.

Alternatively, you can tell SWT your views by emailing: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

This consultation will close on **Wednesday 12 January 2022**

## **7. Reminder - Town / Parish Council Precepts for 2022/23**

SWT emailed all parish councils enclosing Parish/Town Precept Forms for the 2022/23 Financial Year. The completed forms and any queries should be emailed to [parishprecepts@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:parishprecepts@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

If Parish Councils decide to return their precept demand forms using the post, then extra time should be allowed for processing in the digital mailroom. All submissions should be received by **Friday 7 January 2022**.

If you foresee any difficulties in returning the forms before the deadline, please inform SWT at the earliest opportunity.

## **8. Reminder - SWT Lottery Winter 2021/22 bolt-on prize draw**

The Somerset West Lottery is taking part in the Winter 2021/22 bolt-on prize draw.

Everyone who signs up to purchase one or more tickets between 1 November 2021 and **1 January 2022** will be in with the chance to win £1,000 to spend at DECATHLON, a retail store that provides equipment for over 70 outdoor and sporting activities as well as nutrition and body care products.

All tickets bought during this timeframe will automatically be entered into the bonus prize draw as well as being in with a chance to win up to £25,000 in the weekly lottery run by SWT.

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

## **9. Reminder - Free parking to support local shopping**

SWT is once again offering free parking to support festive trading in the run-up to Christmas.

Free all-day parking will be available in Council-owned [car parks](#) in Dulverton, Dunster, Minehead, Porlock, Watchet, Wellington and Williton on Saturday 18 of December.

Free parking will also be available after 3pm on the same Saturday in Council car parks in Taunton, except for Kilkenny car park, which is a long stay commuter car park.

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

## 10. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

### Reduce costly food waste this Christmas

As Christmas looms, plan and cut costly food waste.

To waste less and be fully prepared for Christmas cooking, audit your kitchen so you know what ingredients you already have - why buy stuffing twice? - then make a meal plan, and go shopping, but always with a list.

For help getting savvy with festive food, check out the great advice - like taking a "shelfie" on your phone to remember what's in the fridge. Please [click here](#) to find out more information from the experts at Love Food Hate Waste.

Find tasty leftover recipes, from turkey noodle soup to brussels sprout detox salad, at: [hubbub.org.uk/pages/category/christmas](http://hubbub.org.uk/pages/category/christmas).

### Collection arrangements over the festive period

To have all the containers you need for festive recycling, order via My Waste Services at [somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://somersetwaste.gov.uk) now.

Note that while all collections are as usual up to and including Friday 24 December, as well as from and including Monday 10 January, all collections change between those dates and there are no garden waste collections during the festive fortnight.

#### Usual collection day

Friday 24 December  
Monday 27 December  
Tuesday 28 December  
Wednesday 29 December  
Thursday 30 December  
Friday 31 December  
Monday 3 January  
Tuesday 4 January  
Wednesday 5 January  
Thursday 6 January  
Friday 7 January

#### Revised collection day

No change  
Tuesday 28 December  
Wednesday 29 December  
Thursday 30 December  
Friday 31 December  
Sunday 2 January  
Tuesday 4 January  
Wednesday 5 January  
Thursday 6 January  
Friday 7 January  
Saturday 8 January

In the event of any disruption to collections at this busy time of year, rubbish collections will be prioritised. The most up to date information will be available on the on the SWP website [somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://somersetwaste.gov.uk) via the home page.

Residents must park responsibly so crews and trucks have the access they need to make all their collections. This is always important over the festive period, but even more so with more people working from home.

Remember - if recycling crews cannot get through, fire engines will struggle and maybe other emergency services too.

Recycle sites stay on their standard schedules and hours - weekends 9am-4pm and, when open, weekdays 9am-5pm - over the festive season except that, as usual, all 16 sites close Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Two sites have one-off extra days open: **Dulverton on Monday 27 December** and Crewkerne on Tuesday 28 December.

### **Christmas Tree Disposal**

Plan now to recycle your real Christmas tree.

- Put out your decoration-free under six-foot tree with your paid-for garden waste in January.
- Drop off your decoration-free tree, maximum six inches diameter trunk, at any recycle site.
- Register now – with a donation – for a collection in January. This applies to Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington areas. St Margaret's Hospice Care and Children's Hospice South West will collect trees from TA1, TA2, and parts of TA3, TA4, TA5, TA6 and TA21. Register your tree here now: [just-helping.org.uk/register-tree/](https://just-helping.org.uk/register-tree/), before **23:59 on Monday 10 January**.
- Chip and compost your tree or use the chippings as a mulch, secure it in your garden's wild corner, use the branches to protect other plants from frost, strip the needles to make potpourri, use the bare tree as a frame for runner beans.
- Watch out for other charity collections, environmental schemes that need trees, or for zoos or farms that want Christmas trees as food or fun for animals.

Festive waste management guidance is available on the Somerset Waste Partnership website [somersetwaste.gov.uk/festive](https://somersetwaste.gov.uk/festive).

## **New Council for Somerset**

The website <https://newsomersetcouncil.org.uk> contains a link to the One Somerset Business Case, recent press releases and details of Local Government Reorganisation Governance meetings. It will also signpost queries from the public to the mailbox at [newsomerset@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:newsomerset@somerset.gov.uk).

On 1 April 2023, [Somerset will become a unitary authority](#), replacing the current County Council and four District Councils with a single council governing the whole area. Find out more [here](#).

## **Local Elections 2022**

At county level, the number of members elected will double from 55 to 110, enabling them to assume responsibility for all local government functions for Somerset, including those of the current four district councils, in April 2023.

Two candidates will be elected for each existing electoral division of the county council, as well as a proposed new Glastonbury division and a new Street division with each of these electing two members for each division. It is anticipated that there will be a full boundary review after the May 2022 elections and ahead of the subsequent elections in May 2027.

Until the unitary council is vested in April 2023, the 110 new members will have responsibility for the county council's functions and the transition to the new council. District councils and their members will continue to fulfil their functions until 31 March 2023.

Somerset County Council (SCC) are working with the Somerset Association of Local Councils and partner district councils to ensure advice and guidance is available to city, town and parish councils. Further details will be provided by the four district councils in early 2022 regarding the administration of the elections, the timetable and details of costs for administering town and parish council elections.

SCC are also organising a further city, town and parish council conference and details of this will be provided shortly.

### **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Advisory Board Meeting**

Due to guidance put in place to prevent the spread of the emerging Omicron COVID-19 variant this month's LGR Advisory board was hosted virtually. Despite the last-minute change, a meeting took place with over ninety people taking part. As always, the board dived into 3 subjects, this month's being LCN Boundaries, the job description of Unitary Councillors and Taunton Town Council. Slides presented during the meeting will be uploaded to the [website](#).

### **Local Community Networks**

Local Community Networks (LCNs) will give communities power to influence decisions about their local area. They will be an important part of how the new Somerset Council works when it replaces the current county and district councils in 2023 – making sure that local areas will have an ongoing voice to shape their new council to suit their local needs.

LCNs will include City, town and parish councils, voluntary groups, NHS, schools, police, and other interested parties and residents. They will meet in local areas, in every part of the County. They'll discuss what is most important for their area and work together, to agree how best to achieve it.

Pilot LCNs are already testing this new approach across Exmoor and in the Frome area, and there is another pilot starting in the Wincanton, Bruton and Castle Cary area. When the new council opens, it's thought that between 15 and 20 will be needed to connect and empower communities across the county.

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

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

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

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

As we approach Christmas, programmed highway maintenance works are being completed and closed. However, the more reactive side of highways will continue

throughout the holiday period. This will include the repair of high priority safety defects, such as potholes, on main roads; out-of-hours emergency response, such as supporting the police in clearing up after road traffic accidents; and, of course, winter service.

It is too far out to accurately predict the weather over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. However, experience tells us that it is usually a mix of wind, rain, frost, ice and, occasionally, some snow. Stand-by arrangements are in place so that SCC Highways can respond to whatever the weather brings.

On the subject of winter, SCC Highways have just taken delivery of four new, high-power snow blowers. These are used following blizzard conditions when deep drifts of snow can block roads. The roads that are most prone to this are high-level, exposed routes. In Somerset these are mainly found on Exmoor and the Brendon Hills, in the west, and the Mendip Hills, in the east. To cover this, two of the new blowers were delivered to Minehead Depot and two to Glastonbury Depot

SCC Highways would like to thank all the residents and road users of Somerset West and Taunton for their support throughout 2021 in our mission of keeping the roads of Somerset safe. Merry Christmas!

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](https://twitter.com/TravelSomerset) on Twitter.

## **Reporting a problem on the road**

Alerting SCC to potholes or a host of other problems on the road is now easier and quicker – and you can track its progress after you've reported it.

Gone is the need to make phone calls or send emails - thanks to a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a problem 24/7 and the Highways team will get on the case. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings - they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range and how to report is available here [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/).

The new development means that if you're reporting a fault, you can now track its progress. If it's safe to pull over, all you need to do is take a quick picture of the fault, then visit the Report It site on your phone, answer a few simple questions and upload your picture. You'll be sent a link which enables you to track its progress.

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



## **Department of Education**

### **Training and more testing to help people become HGV drivers**

Free courses for adults to train to be HGV drivers are under way across the country – as part of a package of measures to ease driver shortages and support supply chains this Christmas and beyond.

Skills Bootcamps in HGV driving are free, flexible, intensive courses designed to train drivers to be road ready and gain their licence, offering people the chance to launch well-paid careers in the logistics sector. People that successfully complete the HGV courses are guaranteed a job interview with an employer, and the first drivers are expected to be on the road from March 2022.

The courses are available [now in locations across the country](#) and will also support existing drivers to refresh or upgrade their skills so they can get back on the road. The Department for Education has announced it has boosted capacity for even more people to just over 11,000 places – backed by £34 million. Courses are in high demand with more than 2,000 people having already expressed an interest in signing up with the [National Career Service](#) and hundreds more through Jobcentre and the DfE helpline.

More information about the range of opportunities on offer in the transport and logistics sector is available on the [JobHelp site](#).

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

## **Community Employment Hubs**

### **Volunteers needed**

The Community Employment Hubs are looking for volunteers. If you have a couple of hours a week to spare to help people in your local community access work and training whilst having a lovely cup of tea, then please get in touch. All training will be given, you just have to love chatting and meeting new people!

The hubs will be opening in Taunton, Watchet, Minehead, Williton, Dulverton, Wellington and Stogursey. They work with all ages from 16 until retirement and help people get into work, change careers, set up a new business or go for a promotion. The hubs help so many different people and are a brilliant place to meet and chat whilst supporting each other.

If you would like more information or to apply, please contact Georgie or Jolanda either ringing 01823 219578 or emailing [employmentsupport@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:employmentsupport@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

## **Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)**

### **Free fun activities return for eligible children this winter**

Children and young people eligible for free school meals in Somerset will once again be offered free fun activities over the school holidays this winter.

All details on what's on offer, the locations of holiday clubs and days operating can be found at [www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays](http://www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays).

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

## **Exmoor National Park (ENP) New economic vision for Exmoor**

A new shared vision for Exmoor's rural economy is described as 'forward-thinking' and 'progressive' by local businesses and entrepreneurs in [a new film about the initiative](#). The comments were captured at an energetic business networking session held to launch the vision last month (23 November), sponsored by Airband at Knowle Manor as part of the Rural Enterprise Exmoor partnership.

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

## **Christmas Shoppers urged to support ENP Young Rangers**

Anyone who is a member of their local Co-op can use their Christmas grocery shop this year to benefit the next generation of young rangers on Exmoor.

ENP have teamed up with the [Co-op Local Community Fund](#) to raise vital funds towards a four-day Young Rangers residential programme next year, offering the chance to gain new skills and confidence in the countryside and in turn promote wellbeing through time in nature.

Supporting the cause won't cost you a penny more. Co-op members can select a cause by downloading the Co-op App or signing into their membership account online at [coop.co.uk](http://coop.co.uk) and choosing Exmoor Young Rangers as their cause. Then every time you swipe or scan your membership card when shopping between now and October 2022, the Co-op will give local causes like this a helping hand.

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

## **Quantock Hill AONB Kilve Court Landscape Management Course**

### **Aimed at participants 16-18yrs not in education, employment or training**

There are many different jobs in the land-based industries from gardeners, rangers, foresters and woodland managers. This free two-week course starting on **Monday 31 January** at Kilve Court (TA5 1EA) will provide the opportunity for young people to develop a range of both employability and practical land management skills as well as the chance to find out more about the wide range of opportunities within Land Management. Participants will have the opportunity to meet local employers, identify and plan their next steps into work and/ or further training and also gain the skills and qualifications employers want.

Qualifications on offer include First Aid and a LANTRA Brushcutter qualification. This course can provide transport and will provide all equipment and PPE.

To find out more or to book a place on the course, please contact Richard Lucas on 07823537358 or email [somersetworks@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:somersetworks@somerset.gov.uk).

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

### **Top 3 causes of fire in December – and how to avoid them**

December is the busiest month of the year for house fires. Find out the top recommendations to have a fire-safe Christmas [here](#).

## **HM Coastguard Watchet**

### **Stock up on safety this Christmas**

If you have a coastal-lover in your life, from paddleboarder, kayaker to coastal walker, [here](#) are some gift ideas with lifesaving potential to help with your Christmas shopping.

Some are free while others cost just a few pounds – whatever your budget, give a gift that will keep your loved one safe at the coast.

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

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

#### **Spark Somerset**

##### **COVID Community Champions needed**

Are you finding the COVID rules and guidance even more confusing now? Do you wish you could help your friends, family and work colleagues to make the best decisions to stay happy and healthy?

Why not become a COVID Community Champion? It doesn't take much of your time. All you need to do is come along to a short online Welcome Session, then you'll receive regular emails and invitations to online catch-up meetings. The optional meetings are informal: an opportunity to catch up with other champions and hear the latest direct from the experts.

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

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

##### **Surviving Winter Appeal**

The annual appeal encourages pensioners to donate some or all their Winter Fuel Payment if they don't need it themselves. These donations provide funding and support to our older neighbours across Somerset who are struggling to heat their homes.

To donate some or all of your Winter Fuel Payment, or to make a donation of any size to the Surviving Winter appeal, please visit: [www.somersetcf.org.uk/winter](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/winter).

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

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

##### **Christmas Events across the district**

Each year the CCS Village and Community Agents gather together all the events happening over the festive period in the parishes where they work.

Please [click here](#) to visit the website and find out what's happening where you live.

## **Wellsprings Community Church Christmas Day Dinner**

If you would rather not be on your own, or if Christmas Dinner will be a struggle for your family this year, then join the Wellsprings Community Church on Christmas Day for a traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings. There's no charge for the meal but if you can give a donation it will be gratefully received.

For more details, or to book a place then contact Tiff or Suzy on 07896677998 or email [revtiff@live.co.uk](mailto:revtiff@live.co.uk). A message can also be sent through the church website on [www.wellspringscommunitychurch.org.uk](http://www.wellspringscommunitychurch.org.uk).

## **Minehead Eye Kite Project Launch Event Thursday 13 January (10am-3pm)**

Minehead Eye are excited to announce the launch of the Kite Project, whose mission is to create a hub providing a one stop shop for families to access support services. Led by Minehead Eye and Home-start it will work collaboratively with local organisations to develop and improve children's well-being and achieve better outcomes for local families.

The morning (10am – 12pm) will consist of a presentation about Kite and what they hope to achieve for children and young people, through working alongside and creating partnerships with some of West Somerset's leading family providers.

The afternoon from 1pm will be aimed at families, who can get a taste at what is on offer whilst providing organisations the opportunity to network and highlight their work.

Please get in contact with the Kite Co-ordinator if you or your organisation would like to showcase or deliver at the public part of the event. If you have any questions about Kite or requirements on the day you can contact Maya Clayden at [maya@minehead-eye.co.uk](mailto:maya@minehead-eye.co.uk).

## **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

Health leaders in Somerset are urging everyone to continue taking sensible precautions and follow national guidance as the Government moves to 'Plan B' Covid restrictions.

As Omicron spreads through regions of the UK, concerns are being raised about the pressure on NHS services. The focus on vaccination as the primary way we can protect ourselves and the NHS remains clearer than ever, and SCC's Public Health leaders are reminding anyone who is yet to receive their first dose, second dose, or booster to step forward when invited. Please check your eligibility and [book online](#) before walking into a vaccination centre.

In addition to ramping up the booster programme to ensure access for all over 18s by the end of January, the Prime Minister announced the following new measures as part of 'Plan B':

- From Monday 13 December, those who can, are advised to work from home.
- From Friday 10 December, the legal requirement to wear a face mask was extended to most public indoor venues, including theatres and cinemas.
- From Wednesday 15 December, and subject to parliamentary approval, the NHS Covid Pass on the NHS App became mandatory for entry into nightclubs and settings where large crowds gather. People must be able to demonstrate proof of two vaccine doses via the app. A negative lateral flow test will also be accepted.
- At a date to be determined daily contact testing of Contacts will replace Self Isolation for Omicron contacts.

These new regulations will be reviewed on 5 January 2022.

### Somerset COVID Cases

COVID-19 case numbers in Somerset have increased this week and remain high. The expectation is cases will continue to rise due to the Omicron variant, as this variant is more transmissible. In the week up to 5 December approximately 90,807 tests were carried out across the county with 2,735 new confirmed cases. The rates have increased slightly in the last reporting week to 486.5 per 100,000. This is below the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset remains at just above 40 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals.

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

The Government has recently announced that all eligible adults in England aged 18 and over will be offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine by the end of January.

Following advice from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), everyone who is currently eligible – including those aged 40 and over, health and social care workers and those at increased risk from the virus due to health conditions – will be able to book their COVID-19 booster vaccine from three months after their second dose.

The Government and the NHS are urging younger people to wait until they are called forward by the NHS – with the more vulnerable continuing to be prioritised for their booster.

Younger age groups will be invited by the NHS in due course in order of age, grouped into five-year age bands.

The boosters are very important as they significantly reduce the likelihood of serious illness or hospitalisation should you catch COVID-19 so, if offered, please make a booking without delay.

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. Vaccination centres across Somerset remain busy, but with slots becoming available all the time, please remember to check the National Booking Service regularly.

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

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](#).

It has also been announced that 16/17-year-olds will be able to book their second jab, 12 weeks after their first.

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](#).

### **Asymptomatic testing**

The advice around asymptomatic testing has changed as there is now a focus on testing with a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) before a period of high risk - such as visiting a vulnerable person or attending a crowded event, but not routinely twice a week.

This will mean some people will test less frequently; however, it is expected, particularly in the run up to the festive period, many people will be testing more often. The testing guidance for children, parents and staff at schools remains unchanged

**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.

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:

- 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.

### **Clinton's COVID Catch Up**

In the latest COVID catch up, Clinton discusses the fact the NHS are ramping up the delivery of the booster vaccination following the discovery of the Omicron variant. You can watch the video [here](#).

### **COVID-19 – latest advice**

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](#)
- <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 I have been told I need to show my NHS COVID Pass – what is it and how do I get it?**

**A** The NHS COVID Pass lets you share your coronavirus (COVID-19) status records or test COVID-19 status in a secure way. It is needed to show others the details: -

- When travelling abroad to some countries or territories.
- As a condition of entry at those venues or events that use the service in England.



Please [click here](#) to find out how to receive your pass either digitally or through the post.

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

### **Action Fraud**

#### **Warning to shop safely online this Christmas**

New data from Action Fraud, [the national reporting centre for fraud and cyber crime](#), reveals that 28,049 shoppers were conned out of their money when shopping online over the Christmas period last year – an increase of almost two thirds (61 per cent) when compared to the same period in the previous year.

In the run up to Christmas, Action Fraud is warning the public to take extra care when shopping online as reports of online shopping fraud have continued to surge as shoppers continue to buy from web-based retailers considering the pandemic.

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

## **Counter Terrorism Policing**

### **Urging Vigilance this Christmas**

People are being urged to trust their instincts and report anything suspicious to Counter Terrorism Policing this Christmas.

In the last year, Counter Terrorism Policing received around 10,000 reports from members of the public. A fifth of these reports were turned into intelligence used to disrupt terrorist activity in the UK.

As people head into town and city centres for the festivities, it is vital that people remain alert and aware of their surroundings.

Some examples of suspicious activity or behaviour could include:

- Taking notes or photos about security arrangements in city centres, or at events.
- Hiring large vehicles for no clear reason.
- Buying or storing large amounts of chemicals, fertilisers or gas cylinders for no obvious reasons; and
- Suspicious or unusual bank transactions.

You can find more information and make a report [here](#). In an emergency always dial 999.

Find out more information on the [Counter Terrorism Police](#) website.

## **Avon and Somerset Police Crime Commissioner (PCC)**

### **Police Tax survey**

It's that time of year again where Police and Crime Commissioners up and down the country will need to decide whether to increase the precept – the policing part of the council tax - and the impact this will have on local people.

The Government has told PCCs – who are responsible for setting the amount of money local people contribute to policing through council tax – that they can raise the precept next year by **£10 for an average band D household**, which is approximately 83p per month.

Before making this decision, Avon and Somerset PCC Mark Shelford wants to hear the view from communities about this potential increase. He has launched a survey asking if residents would be willing to pay an increase in the policing part of the council tax.

As a local resident you are invited to complete the short survey, which will be running until **21 January 2022**. You could also share the survey with your colleagues, friends and family and encourage them to complete it.

To access the survey please use this [link](#) .

## **Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)**

### **Domestic Violence – You are not alone**

Domestic abuse may escalate at this time of year. This has been linked to several factors including stress, financial struggles and possibly an increase in alcohol levels.

We have community responsibility to look out for each other to make sure we can all enjoy a safe and caring Christmas.

Do you suspect someone you know to be in an abusive relationship? Listen, be curious. Ask and ask again. Your instincts are probably right.

Familiarise yourself with the signs of domestic abuse [here](#).

### **Operation Tonic - Don't Drink and Drive**

In just two weeks A&SP arrested 101 people for drink or drug driving. A&SP are working to keep our roads safe and prevent people from dying on them.

If you drink/use drugs and drive you could face:

- Up to six months' imprisonment
- An unlimited fine
- A substantial driving ban which could mean:
- Having a criminal record
- Job loss
- Loss of independence
- Trouble getting into countries like the USA
- Anyone who causes a death while drink or drug driving faces up to 14 years' imprisonment.

Please celebrate safely this year and let's all make it home for Christmas.

Report drink/drug drivers to the police by calling 101 or report to online. Alternatively, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

If someone is currently driving under the influence, call 999.

### **Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEV)s – E-Scooters**

Privately owned e-skateboards, like e-scooters, are classed as Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs). While they can legally be sold by retailers, they currently cannot be taxed or insured for use on public roads so their use is limited to private land with the landowner's permission.

A&SP urge anyone considering buying an e-skateboard or e-scooter as a Christmas gift to ensure they understand the law first.

For more information, please visit A&SP e-scooter frequently asked questions page [here](#).

### **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**

**This is the last newsletter of 2021. After a brief hiatus the first issue of 2022 (Issue 90) will be sent out in the week ending 16 January 2022.**

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).

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

### ***Attachment***

***Minehead Neighbourhood Police Newsletter***