

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 91 Week ending 23/01/2022

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. England to return to Plan A on Thursday 27 January

The Government has announced that England will fully return to Plan A on Thursday 27 January thanks to the success of the booster programme, with ministers urging anyone who has still not had a top-up jab to come forward and Get Boosted Now.

People will no longer be advised to work from home, face coverings will no longer be mandatory in indoor venues, and organisations will be able to choose whether to require NHS Covid Passes.

The government will set out a long-term strategy for living with COVID-19 in due course.

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:

- **Monday 24 January** – SWT Tenants Strategic Group at 6pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs for this meeting can be viewed on the [website](#).
- **Wednesday 26 January** – SWT Special Corporate Scrutiny Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR, to consider the General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Estimates 2022/23. The agenda and report packs can be viewed on the [website](#).
- **Thursday 27 January** – SWT Community Scrutiny Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs can be viewed on the [website](#). Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 24 January.
- **Wednesday 2 February** – SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 27 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.

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

3. Notice of Election – Alcombe Ward

A notice of poll has been published for the election of a district councillor for the Alcombe Ward at SWT. The poll will take place on **Thursday 10 February 2022**.

A statement of Persons Nominated has now been published and can be viewed [here](#). The candidates are Craig Coleman(Cons), Nicole Hawkins (LibDem), Richard Lillis (Indep) and Roos Shanti (Lab).

Applications to register to vote must reach the Electoral Registration Officer by 12 midnight on **Tuesday 25 January 2022**. Applications can be made online: <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

4. Election dates confirmed

Elections for the new Somerset Council will take place on **Thursday 5 May 2022**. Those elected in May 2022 will be county councillors for the first year of their 5-year terms. On 1 April 2023 – vesting day - they become unitary councillors for the new Somerset Council for the remaining 4 years.

Present district councillors will remain at their 'sovereign' council until the end of March 2023.

The date for town and parish council elections has also been confirmed as **Thursday 5 May 2022**. These are being brought forward so that, in future, they will align with Somerset Council elections.

5. SWT sets out budget proposals

SWT is setting its budget for the coming financial year - the last ahead of the creation of a new unitary authority in April 2023.

The proposed budget for 2022/23 aims to protect services and minimise disruption for customers, communities and businesses during the transition to the new Somerset Council, while allowing SWT to allocate resources to priorities identified in its Corporate Strategy.

The draft budget is balanced despite a further reduction of £1.5m in Government grant funding and a fall in funding through business rates.

Despite these challenges SWT has fully funded spending plans for the year, prioritising services and supporting spending on key projects such as the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Action Plan for which SWT will have allocated £1.5m in over three years.

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

6. SWT Green Flag Parks – Survey

Do you spend time visiting SWT Green Flag Award Parks? How would you rate them and what could be improved to meet your needs?

Have your say by completing SWT's online survey to help towards developing a 2022 management plan. The survey closes on **Tuesday 8 February 2022** and can be accessed [here](#).

7. Iconic benches starting conversations in SWT parks

SWT has received two of the iconic benches being placed around the country in a campaign encouraging people to talk about grief.

The benches have been gifted to the Council by the [Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) and [Netflix](#) to mark the launch of the third and final series of the hit show [After Life](#).

They have been installed by the open spaces team at SWT's green flag award winning parks in [Blenheim Gardens](#), Minehead, and [Vivary Park](#), Taunton.

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

8. Climate Resilient Somerset focuses on E-Scooters

E-scooters in Taunton, Minehead and other parts of Somerset are helping to provide a greener alternative to car travel.

Watch this [video](#) to find out how taking small steps, like swapping your car journey for an e-scooter can make a big difference in reducing carbon emissions.

You can also read more at [Climate Resilient Somerset](#).

9. Reminder - Recycling-on-the-go poster competition extended

SWT Council's 'Recycling-on-the-go' poster competition has been extended until **31 January** to allow more opportunity for schools to compete.

The competition was launched last month to help promote the introduction of 130 new public litter bins, which are currently being installed across the district and scheduled to complete later this year.

The competition is being supported by Somerset County Council's [Support Services for Education \(SSE\)](#) and is open to pupils aged 11 to 16 attending schools within the SWT area.

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

10. Reminder - Somerset West Lottery Winter 2022 bolt-on prize

Following on from the success of previous national initiatives, the Somerset West Lottery is taking part in the Winter 2022 bolt-on prize draw.

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

11. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Recycle more coming to West Somerset at end of February

Please [click here](#) to find out what it's all about and how the new service will be rolled out.

All residents with kerbside collections have a new recycling container – a 'Bright Blue Bag' - delivered before the new service starts. A helpful [video](#) has been put together explaining how to separate your recycling and what waste goes in which container.

Recycle More works best if you are making full use of the weekly recycling collections. Making sure you have all the containers you need is a great way to prepare.

Everyone can have a green and a black recycling box, plus a food waste bin. New, replacement or extra containers can be ordered free from the SWP website somersetwaste.gov.uk using the My Waste Service feature or by calling SWT.

To help answer all your Recycle More queries, SWP is running Facebook Q&A Days from 7am to 7pm in the coming weeks. The next one is due to take place on **Wednesday 26 January**.

Just visit the [@somersetwaste](https://www.facebook.com/somersetwaste) page and post questions as comments once the session has started.

New Council for Somerset

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](#).

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.

LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee

The LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee (JSC) proposals have now been considered and agreed by all five councils. Sixteen members have been nominated to form the committee which will meet for the first time on **Monday 31 January 2022**. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the JSC will be elected then.

The JSC will provide the joint overview and scrutiny function for LGR. They will review policy development ahead of the decision making, by the LGR Joint Committee, and ensure that decision making processes are robust and transparent.

Upcoming dates

LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting: **Monday 31 January, 1.00pm – 4.00pm.**

LGR Advisory Board meeting: **Thursday 3 February, 3.00pm – 5.00pm.**

LGR Joint Committee meeting: **Friday 4 February, 2.00pm - 5.00pm.**

Survey on the role of the new Councillors

A short survey has been issued to gain further insight into views regarding the role description for new unitary councillors. This builds on discussion at the 16 December LGR Advisory Board meeting. Responses are welcome from all. The survey will remain open until **26 January** and is available [here](#)

LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2022

All Councillors should have received on 18 January a personal invitation and link to the 2022 LGA Councillor Census as featured in First Magazine last month. If you have already responded, thank you for your help and you need do nothing more.

If you haven't yet been able to respond, please could you do so as soon as possible and no later than **31 January**? The results will enable the LGA to continue to tailor its support to you and all elected members. Also included are issues relating to personal safety which are, given recent events, of great importance to elected members.

Completed surveys will be entered into a prize draw for a £250 donation to a local charity of your choice, with a guaranteed winner from each of the LGA's four political groups (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent).

You can complete the survey either using the personalised link you should have received from the LGA, or via this link:

https://research.local.gov.uk/jfe/form/SV_b8G6H4Fgmxs7wMe.

If you have any questions regarding the Census, please contact Stephen Richards at the LGA (stephen.richards_cllrcensus@local.gov.uk).

Your response will be treated in the strictest confidence and only used for aggregate analyses. A report of the national findings will be published in spring 2022. Response permitting, LGA will produce a confidential summary of results for each council.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

SCC Highway Maintenance Update

The cold weather has continued, and SCC Highways have carried out numerous precautionary salting runs in the evenings and early hours. The week ahead is looking cold and relatively dry therefore they expect to carry out further salting actions to keep the major routes open and safe.

The **B3358 Challacombe Road, Simonsbath**, **Sandrocks lane, Withycombe** and **Buckland Farm Road, West Buckland** works are all complete and closures are lifted.

Footway resurfacing at **Broomfield Close, Taunton** has been deferred to the 10 February.

The 17 January also saw the second week of carriageway repairs on the **C182 Hinkley Point Main Road**. The works between Combwich and the power station and are now complete

New works for the week commencing **24 January 2022** are:

Surface dressing preparation works at **Halse Rd in Halse** under a temporary road closure (5 days);

Surface dressing preparation works at **Greenway Road in Taunton** under a temporary road closure (5 days).

There are multiple sites in the SWT area where SCC Highways are currently carrying out drain jetting and gully emptying works. Most of these are using Stop & Go boards. SCC Highways thank the road using Public for their patience during these essential works

Urgent work to remove diseased trees from county roadsides

SCC's Highways team is continuing important work to remove diseased and dangerous ash trees along key routes.

Clearance work on the **B3227 through Norton Fitzwarren** has now been completed. Several extra diseased and dying trees were identified during these works and these have also been dealt with.

The operation saw the removal of several dead or diseased trees affected by ash die-back. The fungus, otherwise known as *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, is a national problem expected to kill or seriously damage over 95 per cent of the nation's ash trees.

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

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit 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/.

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.

Somerset Household Support Fund

£3.8m to help support Somerset households with food and bills this winter

SCC has been allocated £3.8m from the Government's Household Support Fund which will be used to ensure there is a wide range of support available to those who need it between now and the end of March 2022.

The Somerset Household Support Fund is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and administered by Somerset County Council. The fund is designed to provide short-term financial support to vulnerable households which are struggling to afford household essentials this winter.

These households will need help with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials. The fund is being distributed by the Citizens Advice organisations in Somerset which are assisting Somerset County Council

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

To find out more about how to apply and check eligibility criteria, please [click here](#).

Somerset Library Service

Have your say...

Don't miss out on your chance to have a say in how library services across Somerset are run as we emerge from the pandemic - you could even win some fabulous prizes!

Simply click this [link](#) to take part. The survey is running until the end of January and the Library Service would really love to hear your views - so, don't delay.

Minehead Library

The Minehead Library has been found a temporary new home, and re-opened at the Seahorse Centre on Stephenson Road, Minehead. There is also a car-park for users on-site.

More information about the service and upcoming events can be found at the [Minehead Library Facebook Page](#).

Centre for Sustainable Energy

Online Event – How to use your communities carbon footprint

Wednesday 26 January 2022 7.00pm – 8.30pm

Since its launch in early 2021, Impact - the parish-level carbon emission estimator - has been giving parishes and small communities usable data on their carbon emissions that is easy to interpret and easy to share.

In partnership with the Centre for Sustainable Energy, SWT are running a free event where we will share the new developments to the [Impact Community Carbon Calculator tool](#). The tool is a free resource designed for communities and local councils to get usable data on their carbon emissions that is easy to interpret and easy to share.

We'll focus on how to use the data from the tool, examples of how it has been used so far, and hear from the National Lottery Climate Action Fund talk about a funder's perspective on how this information can be used to attract support.

The event is online and free for all, please sign up if you are interested and share with your networks: <https://communitycarbon.eventbrite.com/>

Exmoor National Park (ENP)

Bye Wood Tree Planting

They say many hands make light work, and that was certainly the case at the ENP tree planting event on Saturday 15 January.

Around 40 volunteers turned up, who together helped add another 500 or so trees to the new 12-hectare woodland ENP are creating on land at Bye Wood. Huge thanks to all who helped! A short video showing the tree planting in progress can be viewed [here](#).

All the mulch mats and spirals that were used are fully biodegradable as part of ENPs commitment to plastic free tree planting. The project is being supported by the [#CareMoor](#) Woods & Trees Appeal, which you can read about here: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/caremoor.

SWLakes Trust

Habitat and Wildlife Days at Wistlandpound Reservoir

SWLakes Trust are running a series of three conservation days at Wistlandpound Reservoir, on the southern edge of Exmoor, and are looking for helpers.

These days are perfect for families, anyone looking to volunteer as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards or those wanting to simply enjoy some time outside helping wildlife. The rangers will provide all the necessary tools and training for you to become a conservation champion and support SWLakes Trust improve habitats for local wildlife.

Spaces for each event are limited so booking is essential. The first event is to be held on **Wednesday 26 January 2022**, and more details about this can be found [here](#).

Quantock Hill AONB

Free Training Opportunity – Land Management

Monday 31 January – Friday 11 February 2022 (9.30am – 4.30pm)

Venue Kilve Court, Kilve TA5 1EA

Are you aged between 16 – 18 and not in education, employment or training?

Do you live in Somerset West and Taunton and would like an active job?

There are many different jobs in the land-based industries from gardeners, foresters, rangers and woodland managers.

This free course will introduce you to some of the opportunities in the land-based sector and provide training the employers want. 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.

The course can provide transport and will provide all equipment and PPE. For more information or to book – Richard Lucas, Transition College Head **07823 537358** or contact somersetworks@somerset.gov.uk

NHS Somerset

Career Opportunities and Work Academies Virtual Workshop

Sedgemoor and SWT Employment and Skills teams in partnership with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust have organised an event:

NHS Somerset: Sector Based Work Academies & Career Opportunities Explained (SWAP) offering two timing slots on **Tuesday 25 January 2022:**

Event 1: 11.00am – 12:00pm, or Event 2: 7.00pm – 8.00pm

This is a free event for anyone to register, whether unemployed, facing redundancy or thinking about following or changing a career path.

Are you used to thinking that a career in the NHS is just for Doctors & Nurses?

- Would you enjoy a practical or admin-based role? If so, there are over 300 different non-medical job roles in the NHS waiting for you!
- Or would you prefer a supportive patient facing role? Then there are Health Care Assistant opportunities in the NHS vaccination service available now.
- Whatever type of role you are looking for, the Sector- based Work Academies Programme (SWAP) offers free training and guidance that can lead to fixed term or permanent employment in the NHS in a role that's right for you!

Join the event to find out more about the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust's SWAPs programme, created to prepare people for many different jobs in Health & Social Care.

To find out more please follow this [Eventbrite link](#).

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Multi Agency Event to promote Road Safety

Monday 31 January at Cutcombe Market: 7.00pm – 9.00pm

How do we look after ourselves and each other in a rural community?

Join Devon and Somerset Fire Brigade: Somerset Road Safety Partnership; Avon and Somerset Constabulary and the Exmoor Hill Farming and Community Network at a Road Safety Roadshow, for an interactive evening of activities. This includes advice on End of Evening Planning and Personal Safety.

This event is free and open to all within the Greater Exmoor rural community, but booking is essential for catering purposes. COVID-19 rules will apply.

Please contact admin@ehfn.org.uk or ring 01643 841455 to book your place and advise on any dietary requirements. Please [click here](#) for more information.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) Celebrating 200 years of saving lives at sea

Turn up the sound to watch this tribute and join the nation in saying a special thank you on HM Coastguard's 200th birthday year, to all the extraordinary lifesaving teams around our coast.

This [film](#) also gives an overview of all the important work that the MCA has been involved in, supporting innovation in maritime safety, and caring for our oceans, seas and coastlines

Thank you to all our lifesaving teams whose selfless work makes the world of difference to so many

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

Spark Somerset

Could you lead a board of Trustees?

Spark are recruiting a new Chair of Trustees to help lead the organisation as they work to support and champion the VCSE sector in Somerset.

Spark provides a range of services, training and advice to inspire, change lives, and help build healthy, resilient communities. You can read more about their work in the [2021/22 Impact Report](#).

Spark are looking for someone who shares their values, is a true leader, and loves to think ahead. If you have a background in charity governance or are a local VCSE leader looking for your next big challenge, then they would love to hear from you!

You can find out more about the role and other great Trustee opportunities in Somerset via this [link](#).

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) Search launched for new Chair of Trustees Board

An exciting opportunity has arisen at Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) to join and lead their board of trustees. This unique local philanthropic charity is seeking an ambitious person to provide inspiring leadership as their new Chair and help steer the Foundation into the future.

The deadline to apply is 5pm, Wednesday 26 January 2022. For more information, or to apply, visit: www.somersetcf.org.uk/vacancies.

Let's Create Jubilee Fund

SCF will be one of the network of community foundations distributing the Arts Council England Let's Create Jubilee Fund, a £5 million programme that will support community and voluntary organisations in England to develop creative and cultural activities as part of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022.

The programme is made possible with funding from the National Lottery, whose players raise £30 million for good causes every week. The fund's distribution will be managed by UK Community Foundations on behalf of their community foundation members across England.

Applicants will be able to apply for grants of up to £10,000, and are encouraged to partner with established artists, creatives and cultural organisations to develop their activities, ensuring that The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations give people throughout England the chance to experience the best of the country's culture while also celebrating an important milestone in our national history.

The application deadline is **28 February 2022** and must be made through the Somerset Community Foundation website [here](#).

Full guidance on the fund can be found on the UK Community Foundations website [here](#).

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Future proofing for Community Buildings

The CCS are thrilled to announce the Environmental Future Proofing for Community Buildings project is coming soon.

Join the CCS for the online launch on **Thursday January 27 at 10.30am** to hear more and find out how your hall can access the support available. Register for this free event and book your place [here](#).

This exciting new project will provide additional support for halls in Somerset looking to make environmental improvements; whether these are simple changes to reduce energy and waste, or through greater investment such as renewable technologies.

The CCS will have events and activities, including training, energy audits, and specialist one to one advice. This project is funded by [The Prince's Countryside Fund](#) and [Western Power Distribution](#). Celebrate [#VillageHallsWeek](#) by pledging to do one thing that will reduce the environmental impact of your hall.

Somerset Wildlife Trust

Somerset Nature Connections (SNC)

Somerset Nature Connections (SNC) project aims to tackle some of the barriers that prevent people experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits of Somerset's spectacular natural environment. SNC will help people to access these natural spaces, with a focus on supporting mental wellbeing and physical activity.

The SNC Project is a partnership project between Somerset Wildlife Trust and the three AONB's within the county. Somerset Wildlife Trust are offering free Nature and Wellbeing Courses in Somerset for adults with or at risk of developing mental health concerns.

Courses take place on the Blackdowns, Quantock Hills and Mendip AONB's, and spaces are available, as is free transport if required.

These courses are ongoing and take place over 6-week blocks, but participants may attend for 18 weeks. All activities have been fully COVID-19 risk assessed and group sizes will be limited.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information and book yourself onto the course.

Minehead Eye Kite Project Launch Event

The Kite project was successfully launched last week at the Minehead Eye, with a variety of providers networking and showcasing their work and signposting local families to help and support. The aim of the project is to raise aspirations in young people indicated in their motto, "Together we'll fly".

A short video has been put together by Maya Claydon and the co-ordinators of Kite which explains what the project is about and what it hopes to achieve. The video can be viewed [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 Somerset COVID Cases

COVID-19 case numbers in Somerset remain high with Omicron now clearly being the dominant strain in the South-West.

Whilst we are currently seeing a small decline in COVID-19 case numbers, the rates are still very high, meaning there is still transmission occurring in the community. Changes that have been made in the past few weeks to national guidance, particularly the removal of the need for confirmatory PCR testing and 'test to release' self-isolation guidance, mean we are cautious about drawing a direct link between falling cases and falling rates of infection in our community.

In the week up to 16 January approximately 115,968 tests were carried out across the county – this is reduced by around 20,000. There were 4,329 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of COVID-19 remain high but have decreased in the last reporting week to 7710 per 100,000. This is below both the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset is around 68 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals.

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

After a healthy flurry of bookings for boosters/vaccinations pre-Christmas, there has been a noticeable drop off after the festive period. There is lots of walk-in availability at a number of vaccination sites across Somerset in January. These slots are available for first, second and booster vaccinations for everyone aged 18 and for first and second vaccinations for those aged 12–15 and 16-17. Visit the [Grab a Jab](#) site for information about any walk-in clinics being held near you.

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 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.

In total, the provisional data shows over 1.3 million vaccinations have been given in Somerset, including just under 340,000 booster jabs. This means that approximately 80% of eligible people have received their booster jab meeting, the end of the year national target. However, there is still an estimated 90,000 eligible people in Somerset that have not yet received their booster jab (of these about 6,000 have only had their second dose in the last couple of weeks, so won't yet be eligible yet for their boosters).

Currently there is lot of spare capacity at vaccination sites and locations so there is plenty of choice and opportunity to get vaccinated. The overall aim to vaccinate 95% of the general eligible population still remains and particularly the younger age groups are being asked to consider vaccination if they have not already done so.

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](#).

New rules on Testing

- The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has announced that confirmatory PCR tests will be temporarily suspended for positive lateral flow test results. With the removal of confirmatory PCR testing, it is vital that all LFD test results are reported, whether positive, negative or void.
- From 11 January in England, anyone who receives a positive LFD test result should [report their result on GOV.UK](#) and must self-isolate immediately but will not need to take a follow-up PCR test. This is a temporary measure while coronavirus (COVID-19) rates remain high across the UK. Whilst levels of COVID-19 are high, the vast majority of people with positive LFD results can be confident that they have COVID-19.
- Anyone who develops 1 of the 3 main COVID-19 symptoms should stay at home and self-isolate and take a PCR test. They must self-isolate if they get a positive test result, even if they have had a recent negative lateral flow test – these rules have not changed.
- From Monday 17 January people with COVID-19 in England can end their self-isolation after 5 full days as long as they test negative on day five and six. Full details can be found [here](#). It is essential that 2 negative rapid lateral flow tests are taken on consecutive days and reported before individuals return to their job or education, if leaving self-isolation earlier than the full 10 day period.

If you would 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 this Covid Catch Up, Clinton clarifies the new rules regarding testing following the recent surge in cases due to Omicron. 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.

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 self-isolating with COVID-19 for 6 days. According to the guidance I can now return to work, but I am still showing symptoms. What should I do?

A Individuals may only leave isolation once they have had 2 negative rapid lateral flow tests on 2 consecutive days; if they test positive on day 5, 6 or 7, they must continue testing until they have 2 negative tests.

If you test positive for COVID-19 you must self-isolate, it is the law. The law states that you must self-isolate for 10 days, however this change enables people who are not infectious, proven via 2 negative tests over 2 days, which can start from day 5, to leave isolation on day 6.

If individuals test positive during their isolation period it does not restart the clock for the 10-day isolation period. Day 0 of the isolation period is when you first show symptoms or, if asymptomatic, the day you took your test.

Q Am I eligible to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment?

A In some circumstances if you are required by law to self-isolate, you may be supported by a payment of £500. You are advised to take a confirmatory PCR test if you receive a positive LFD result to claim this payment.

The scheme opened on the 12 October 2020 and closes on **31 March 2022**.

You must apply within 42 days of the start of your self-isolation period. SWT will not accept any backdated claims.

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

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

Beware of Romance Fraud

Between November 2020 and October 2021, there were 8,863 reported cases of romance fraud nationally, with losses totalling £91.9 million.

Help protect your friends and family who are online dating by raising awareness of the signs of romance fraud. It could help protect them and their money.

Romance fraudsters will spend weeks gaining their victims' trust before asking for money for a variety of emotive reasons. Daters striking up online romances between Christmas and Valentine's Day tend to be more susceptible to romance fraud. Stop and think before parting with your money.

Please [click here](#) to read more on romance fraud and how to protect yourself online.

Avon and Somerset Police Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Visit to the Exmoor Panel

On Thursday 13 January PCC Mark Shelford - Avon & Somerset PCC and [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#) joined the Exmoor Panel to listen to residents' concerns around rural crime, drugs and road safety.

The PCC was impressed with how the local policing team are helping to prevent crime and reassure local people.

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Update on Operation Tonic

In December, ASP took part in the NPCC Drink/Drug Drive campaign. In the largest operation in recent years ASP:

- Made 245 arrests (221 drink-related, 39 drug-related, 15 drink and drug related)
- Made a further 12 arrests for drink/drug driving on New Year's Day.
- Stopped and educated over 2,000 drivers in 55 roadside stop checks.
- Dealt with 13 positive breath tests, four positive drug wipes and 69 other road related offences resulting from stop checks.
- Responded to drink/drug drive concerns from the public reported to us online and by phone. Each report received immediate response or informed our patrols.

Police work doesn't stop here. One in three fatal collisions on the roads of Avon and Somerset in the last year have involved drink or drugs as a contributory factor, so the police will continue to target drink/drug drivers every day of the year.

If you suspect someone of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, please dial 999 immediately with the vehicle information and direction of travel. Alternatively report anonymously via Crimestoppers.

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).

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