

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 96 Week ending 27/02/2022

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. Prime Minister sets out plan for living with COVID-19

Vaccines will remain the first line of defence against COVID-19 as the Prime Minister set out the [Government's plans](#) to live with and manage the virus.

Over 31 million boosters have been administered across England and almost 38 million UK wide helping break the link between infections and hospitalisations. In England, the number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths continue to decline and are far below the levels of previous waves, with boosters offering strong protection against severe illness and hospitalisation.

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

2. Democracy and Governance Committee Meetings

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

A number of Committee meetings are scheduled to take place over the next couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- **Wednesday 2 March** – SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee in the JMR at 6.15pm. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 25 February).
- **Thursday 3 March** – SWT Special Full Council in the JMR at 6.15pm. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 28 February).

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. SWT agrees a budget with a heart

SWT approved its final budget with a focus on protecting services, supporting communities, and delivering on key priorities.

Members approved the balanced budget for 2022/23 at a Full Council meeting last night (Thursday 24 February).

The budget for the next financial year will be the last ahead of the creation of a new unitary authority in April 2023 and will allow the Council to continue to invest in the district, while allocating resources to priorities identified in the Corporate Strategy.

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

4. Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant – deadline looms

Businesses only have until **18 March** to apply for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant.

Businesses offering in-person services and occupying business-rated premises in hospitality, leisure and accommodation may qualify.

Grants of £2,667, £4,000 or £6,000 are available depending on the rateable value of the business premises concerned.

If you have not previously claimed and believe you may qualify, please complete a Register of Interest form which can be found on the SWT website [here](#).

5. SWT intervenes to commence urgent works at Tonedale Mill

Failure by the owners to start urgent work to protect Wellington's Grade II* listed Tonedale Mill, has impelled SWT to undertake the repairs directly with the aid of a grant from Historic England.

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

6. Museum of the Moon comes to Taunton

SWT has teamed up with UK artist Luke Jerram and St Mary Magdalene Church to bring the Museum of the Moon to Taunton.

[Museum of the Moon](#) is a touring artwork which has been seen by over three million people at venues across the world.

Measuring six metres in diameter, the moon features detailed NASA imagery of the lunar surface. At an approximate scale of 1:500,000, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5km of the moon's surface.

The installation is a fusion of lunar imagery, moonlight and surround sound composition created by BAFTA and Ivor Novello award winning composer Dan Jones.

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

7. Free Project Ideas and Funding Workshop

Creative Innovation Centre CIC, Taunton

Tuesday 1 March, 10.00am – 3.00pm

This workshop, supported and funded by SWT is ideal for new and established creatives who are keen on researching grants and funding opportunities for creative projects, and learning more about the funding landscape. From theatre to music to community projects and more.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and register for a place.

8. Reminder - SWT play areas undergo £100k+ makeover

SWT Council has invested close to £112,000 upgrading its play areas across Taunton and Wellington.

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

9. Reminder - SWT secures funding to deliver social housing upgrades

SWT has secured a share of Government funding to improve the energy efficiency of its social housing, lowering bills and making homes warmer.

SWT has been allocated £385,000 of the £4.8 million awarded to the [West of England Combined Authority](#) (WECA) through the Government's [Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund](#) (SHDF).

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

10. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Recycle More nearly here – have you got a collect this Saturday?

Live in West Somerset? It's time to make a final check to see if you've got a one-off rubbish collection this Saturday.

Around 7,000 households in the area will have an extra rubbish collection on **26 February** ahead of the launch of SWP's new Recycle More service next week.

Where this applies it will be made clear on the front of the recently delivered orange and blue "Coming soon!" leaflet, as well as the collection day calendar inside.

These additional pick-ups will make sure no-one goes more than three weeks between rubbish collections as they move to the new service.

They will take place across Sedgemoor and West Somerset, including some (not all) households in Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Middlezoy, Othery, Westonzoyland, **Brompton Regis, Brushford, Dulverton and Watchet**.

This is not a definitive list of locations so please check the leaflet.

Recycle More starts across the area from Monday 28 February adding extra materials to weekly collections.

With more being recycled, rubbish is collected every three weeks instead of every two.

This is the fourth and final phase of the roll-out of the new service which protects the environment and helps tackle climate change while saving around £2m a year across the partnership.

All Bright Blue Bags – the new recycling container that makes Recycle More possible - should now have been delivered.

Collection days are changing for around two-thirds of homes and residents are urged to check their "Coming soon" leaflet.

Anyone who hasn't had their bag or leaflet can request replacements using the form on somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more or by calling SWT.

Collection day information is also available online using the "My Collection Day" feature on the somersetwaste.gov.uk website. Calendars can be downloaded for printing or directly into your laptop or mobile device's calendar - creating helpful automatic reminders.

You can find lots more information about Recycle More online at somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more Extra guidance and support can be requested using a form on this page, or by calling SWT.

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](#).

Advice on offer for election candidates

Candidates planning to stand for local elections election in May this year can tap into expert advice and guidance thanks to a special evening event being hosted by Somerset County Council.

A virtual drop-in for candidates will be held on **2 March between 5.15pm and 6.15pm**, Joining instructions will be supplied to those wishing to attend.

This year's elections will be the biggest local elections in Somerset for many years and will set the course of local government in our county for a generation to come. A total of 110 councillors will be elected – two for each of the current Somerset County Council divisions, the area that councillors represent.

Candidates planning to attend the virtual drop-in session should contact democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk.

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

Somerset Youth Parliament explains the importance of voting

Young people from Somerset's Youth Parliament are passionate about where they live and explain why it's important to register to vote, to use your vote and to stand as a councillor in Somerset on 5 May.

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

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.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

SCC Highway Maintenance Update

This week has been very eventful in the aftermath of Storm Eunice which arrived with us on Friday 18 Feb. This was the first Met Office "Red" weather warning

(meaning danger to life) in Somerset since the “Beast from the East/Storm Emma” snow event of March 2018, but the first ever “Red” warning for wind.

Last weekend, across the County SCC Highways logged and attended **281** weather related incidents, of which **258** were directly related to fallen or dangerous trees affecting the roads. Of these SCC’s contractors managed to address any related issues and clear fallen trees/re- open the road at **242** locations by Monday morning.

The total number of trees removed from the roads in the SWT area in the last **7** days is **142** (of which **72** were in the Taunton area and **70** in the West Somerset area).

Safety defect repairs were all triaged and prioritised during this emergency period and the team have completed **141** repairs.

The scheduled works programme has, as a consequence of Storm Eunice, encountered some small delays but SCC Highways are now back to full capacity and the works continue:

Works are now complete at **Broughton Close and Parkfield in Taunton** and **A39 Bratton Straight, between Minehead and Selworthy**,

The current schemes in the area are:

The Parks, Minehead, footway works - commenced on 22 February (temporary traffic signals)

Harvey’s Court, Taunton, footway works - commencing on 7 March (temporary closure of the path).

New drainage schemes are at **Greenway, North Curry** (commencing on 28 February, temporary traffic signals).

Farm View, Taunton (commencing on 28 February, temporary road closure); and **Alexandra Road, Wellington** (commencing on 28 February, temporary road closure).

A programme of drainage grip (small channels cut across verges for highway drainage purposes) cleansing is also underway on our network of rural lanes.

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.

Western Power Distribution (WPD) Storms Eunice and Franklin

Between them, Storms Eunice and Franklin caused 2,787 incidents across the network, meaning WPD engineers had to restore supplies to 528,724 customers.

To put it another way, they would usually expect to deal with that number of incidents in two months rather than four days.

By Saturday afternoon WPD knew that Storm Eunice was the worst storm ever to be seen in the South-West region and that was before Storm Franklin provided her with back-up.

Please [click here](#) to view the storm summary and WPD's response.

Exmoor National Park (ENP) Award for Exmoor's Dunster National Park Centre

Exmoor National Park Centre in Dunster has been named one of the top Visitor Information Services in the region, having scooped a silver award in [the Bath, Bristol and Somerset Tourism Awards](#) on Thursday 17 February.

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

Quantock Hill AONB Reminder - Swaling taking place

Over the next month and a half, you may see some flames on the hills as part of the controlled burns, or 'Swales'. This is a management technique of keeping the heathland at different stages of growth to provide a variety of habitats available for different bird species and allowing some of the heath plants to grow. It also ensures there are fire breaks at various points in case of summer fires.

If concerned please ring the Fire Service as they are aware of any swales being undertaken by the Quantock Management Team and can respond accordingly.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

HM Coastguard Watchet

This week, following the stormy conditions of last weekend, the team were out in the dark undertaking a search/rescue of a casualty dummy.

With an approximate grid reference passing for a fictional 999 call, the team commenced a search of West Street Beach, Watchet where they encountered the changed shoreline following Storm Eunice.

With much of the beach material moved creating new holes on the beach, whilst piled up in other areas, the team had to negotiate new and unfamiliar hazards. The casualty was located on the rock armour.

With a simulated leg injury and serious trauma, the team worked their way through casualty care cards, giving immediate casualty intervention care, prior to extricating the casualty on an alpine light stretcher.

A great exercise which combined search, casualty care, evacuation and local knowledge with familiarisation following the recent storms.

Remember in a coastal emergency to dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Carbon Monoxide Warning

Unfortunately, The Fire Service has been seeing a worrying rise in carbon monoxide related incidents and increased fire risks due to residents without power using candles and gas canisters.

Please do not use BBQs indoors, and make sure if you are using gas heaters, that you have a carbon monoxide alarm in every room with a fuel-burning appliance.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information about the dangers of carbon monoxide.

The Fire Service has been working with local partners to help reach vulnerable groups who are cut off from power. Please [click here](#) to find out more about heater safety.

Exmoor Search and Rescue

Storm Eunice – Welfare Checks

On Thursday 17 February in anticipation of Storm Eunice, [Exmoor Search & Rescue Team](#) was tasked by both Avon and Somerset Police and Devon and Cornwall Police to form part of the multi-agency major incident response.

Team Members were proactively and strategically deployed alongside partner agencies from both respective Local Resilience Forums in South Molton and Taunton, Somerset. This was in preparation for the inclement weather forecast and they were available to support the statutory emergency services as required.

The team crewed four team vehicles with qualified Swift Water and Flood Rescue Technicians and Casualty Carers distributed to respond alongside colleagues from neighbouring Mountain Rescue Teams, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

On Monday 21 February following Storm Franklin, the team was deployed by Avon and Somerset Police to assist SWT and SCC in undertaking welfare checks on communities within Exmoor National Park who remained without core utilities.

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

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP)

‘In It Together Somerset’ – Charity launches new women’s project

SASP launched the ‘In It Together’ women’s project in January 2022 covering the whole of Somerset, offering exercise and sports activities for women. The project aims to increase activity levels in women of any age (16+), background or area in Somerset through community-based exercise and sports activities such as Pilates, fit steps, badminton, tennis, netball, running, cycling and more.

All the sessions are led by coaches and instructors who have the same goal; to help break down the barriers that women face, empower them to move in their own way, remove self-doubt, and most importantly, to enjoy it! The programmes motto is all about fun, friends and feeling good!

To launch this new programme and in line with International Women’s Day in March, SASP are holding an exciting event for local women to come and try new activities.

Saturday 5 March, 10am – 5pm

**Centre for Outdoor Education & Community Hub (C.O.A.C.H),
French Weir Park, Taunton, TA1 1AW**

The centre is adjacent to the River Tone and the beautiful Longrun Meadow Country Park. There will be taster sessions in an array of activities from Zumba to exercise classes in the Park Room, to different activities on the outdoor space opposite The Weir Cafe.

This is a free event, and no booking is required for the outdoor activities. The friendly instructors will put you at ease, so bring a friend and come along. SASP will also have local businesses showcasing what’s on offer and a special celebratory parkrun at 9am to celebrate International Women’s Day. Families and friends are welcome for support.

Please [click here](#) to register for this free event and book onto the indoor activities.

Spark Somerset

Reflect, Recover, Renew:

A Shared Vision for Somerset's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCSE)

Delivered by Spark Somerset, Reflect, Recover, Renew investigates the impact of COVID-19 and creates a shared vision for the future of the VCSE sector in Somerset.

It is hoped that the report will be a useful tool for charity leaders, community groups, stakeholders, statutory partners and anyone involved in supporting our communities.

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

Velocity Somerset – Free Online Workshop

Boost your Productivity with Microsoft 365

Monday 28 February 2022, 2pm – 4pm.

This workshop is delivered as part of Velocity Somerset - a programme of support for all voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Somerset funded by the Government's Community Renewal Fund.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information and register for this free online event.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NCLF)

Dynamic Collections Campaign

The latest campaign from the NCLF supports collecting organisations across the UK to become more inclusive and resilient, with a focus on engagement, re-interpretation and collections management.

At the Heritage Fund, they want to support museums, libraries and other organisations to make the most of their collections.

The Dynamic Collections campaign will support collecting organisations by bringing together project funding through their open programmes, digital resources and knowledge sharing.

It is designed to address long-term challenges in the sector, many of which have been made worse by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It will also help organisations build on innovative ideas and trends developed over the past few years, particularly in digital engagement.

The campaign also acts on the demand for collections to evolve to meet the changing needs of the communities around them, and to reflect more people's history and experiences.

There are no specific deadlines – but applications can be made as part of the campaign until **Friday 31 March 2023**.

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

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Re-Home a Phone!

By donating an unused phone to the CCS, you can help reduce loneliness and isolation for people in West Somerset, as well as help in their everyday lives such as doing their shopping online and staying connected to friends and family. Could you REHOME your old phone?

The CCS will:

- refurbish the phone
- remove any personal data
- provide the new owner with a SIM card
- support them to use the phone with video tutorials and install apps that will help them to keep in touch with their loved ones

To donate, please contact Village Agent Wayne Stokes on:

Email: waynes@somersettrcc.org.uk Please [click here](#) to find out more.

Community Employment Hubs

Recruit West Somerset Careers and Jobs Fair

Wednesday 9 March from 3.00pm-5.00pm at Butlins, Minehead.

Are you looking for your next job or to develop your skills for your next role? If so, don't miss out on the Recruit West Somerset Careers and Jobs Fair.

The event, which is being hosted by Butlins, is expecting more employers to attend this year, who are keen to raise awareness of employment opportunities within their businesses and organisations in West Somerset.

Many employers attending will have current vacancies and apprenticeships on offer and will be keen to seek out local talent. Therefore, attendees are advised to bring along an up-to-date copy of their CV.

If you would like any further information or you are an employer who has current vacancies and would like to book a stand at no cost: please contact Minehead Job Centre on telephone 01643 435822.

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Prime Minister confirmed this week that domestic legal restrictions ended on 24 February as COVID-19 will be treated in the same way as other infectious diseases such as flu. This means:

- The remaining domestic restrictions in England will be removed. The legal requirement to self-isolate ends. Until 1 April, Public Health still advise people who test positive to stay at home. Adults and children who test positive are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least five full days and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received two negative test results on consecutive days.
- From April, the Government will update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to be careful and considerate of others, similar to advice on other infectious diseases. This will align with testing changes.
- Self-isolation support payments, national funding for practical support and the medicine delivery service will no longer be available.
- Routine contact tracing ends, including venue check-ins on the NHS COVID-19 app.
- Fully vaccinated adults and those aged under 18 who are close contacts are no longer advised to test daily for seven days and the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate will be removed.

You can find full coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance and support on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk)

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

Over 80% of eligible residents have received two doses of the vaccination. The Vaccination Programme is working with health and community partners to identify locations for mobile vaccination pop-up clinics. By localising the offer, the programme aims to reduce the barriers to access and better understand community needs.

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.

Over 60% of Somerset's young people aged 12 to 15 have had their first COVID-19 vaccine since rollout began in September. The second vaccination for 12–15-year-olds is now available to [book via the national booking service](#) and is also available at many [walk-in local](#) vaccination centres [COVID-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#). Please continue to ensure that all eligible groups are aware of the vaccination offer available to them, including those that may be contacted by their GP as part of the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable cohort.

The in-school offer for the second COVID-19 vaccination for 12-15 years olds has also begun, alongside the HPV vaccination. Parents and carers may find their local vaccination centre is able to administer the second COVID-19 jab to 12-15 year olds sooner than the school appointments.

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.

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

SWT has been working with Somerset County Council, the police, fire, NHS and voluntary organisations to support those who have been affected by the recent storms.

Please help us by checking on your neighbours and get in touch if you're worried about someone. We're working with town and parish councils with their local knowledge to identify any vulnerable people and support their communities.

This single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs 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

Crime / Safeguarding Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Response to Storm Eunice

The Neighbourhood Policing teams across Somerset visited the most vulnerable people in properties without power over last weekend, organising support with other agencies and liaising with Western Power to identify those most in need.

This response was continued over the early part of the week due to the effect of [#StormEunice](#) and then the follow on from [#StormFranklin](#).

Rural Crime Engagement and Tack Marking Event

Taunton Neighbourhood Policing Team will be attending Hatch Beauchamp on **Saturday 26 February** and holding a rural crime engagement event. This will take place at **The Unicorn Saddlery between 10am – 12pm**.

They will be offering crime prevention advice on rural matters and marking tack and saddles for free.

There will also be an opportunity to sign up for [Farmwatch](#) and [Horsewatch](#). This is a free crime prevention scheme which works in the same way as [Neighbourhood Watch](#).

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.