

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 100 Week ending 27/03/2022

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. Formal notice given for Somerset Elections

SWT has published notices for the elections to Somerset County Council, and the town and parish elections, being held on Thursday 5 May.

These are important elections for Somerset with the creation of a new, unitary council in April 2023 – the first major change to the way the county is governed in almost 50 years.

There are 110 seats available in 55 divisions across the county with electors able to cast two votes each in their division.

Further information and nomination packs are available on the [elections page](#) of the SWT website.

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 28 March** – Tenants Strategic Group in the JMR at 6.00pm. The agenda and report packs can be viewed on the SWT [website](#).
- **Tuesday 29 March** – SWT Full Council in the JMR at 6.15pm. The agenda and report packs can be viewed on the SWT [website](#).
- **Thursday 31 March** – SWT Community Scrutiny Meeting – **Cancelled**.

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.

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements. Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT [website](#).

3. Purdah – Pre-Election Period

During local government elections, there is a period described as a ‘period of heightened sensitivity’ (formerly referred to as purdah). For the forthcoming elections, this will be from Monday, 21 March 2022 until Thursday, 5 May 2022. During this time, the main focus is on the publicity that certain actions or decisions may create. It certainly does not mean that all council activity grinds to a halt, that committee decisions cannot be made, nor non-contentious consultations launched.

Communications from Somerset West and Taunton Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council - as a Local Returning Officer roles - are subject to The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (“the Publicity Code”).

The ‘election period of heightened sensitivity’ period is really directed at the Councils - the organisations and their staff. The main point is that the organisation or its officers should not be seen to be promoting an individual candidate for the election, especially if they are a current member of any authority, a dual- or triple- hatted member of any authority, with real or perceived links to that authority.

Elected Members, who are currently members and seeking election to Somerset Council can continue to express their own views to the press and are at liberty to organise any proactive publicity themselves, **but not** utilising any resources of the council; the auspices of the press offices, photographs that the authorities have paid for or taken.

It is wise for officers to be particularly mindful of any potential publicity before an election. While it is not true that each council can't issue any publicity just before an election, we need to be cautious because the law makes it clear that **the timing of publicity** is an important factor.

The important detail is that no publicity from any Council at this particularly sensitive time should appear to support a particular candidate or even to support a single specific viewpoint as advocated by a particular candidate.

Should there be individual publicity material produced for any of the candidates, then this would not be distributed by the press offices of the councils, as it could be seen as an endorsement of that candidate.

Any publicity should not be perceived as seeking to influence public opinion or promote the public image of a particular candidate or group of candidates.

Publicity is defined as 'any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public'.

Examples are:

- newspapers articles
- photographs in local press
- newsletters
- social media platforms, such as Facebook/Twitter etc
- web site
- posters
- leaflets
- booklets
- advertising
- campaigns
- exhibitions
- conferences
- committee reports
- and any other kind of public communication can be defined as publicity.

What can members do?

Members are, of course, free to comment on any issue that they get asked about directly (i.e., if the press contact members directly) but they should make it clear that it is their own personal or political view, and not the view of any authority.

Members should be reminded that any photographs taken by any authority should not be used in election materials.

The restrictions on political publicity are contained in section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986, as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988.

The main point to bear in mind is that a local authority shall not publish any material that, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect support for a candidate or political party.

If in doubt, please contact:

Amy Tregellas, Monitoring Officer
A.Tregellas@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Kevin Williams, Deputy Monitoring Officer
K.Williams@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

4. SWT Housing Newsletter – Spring 2022

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 view the Spring Newsletter online.

5. SWT backs the Great British Spring Clean 2022

SWT is proud to support once again the Great British Spring Clean, to help keep local communities clean, green and litter-free.

This year's campaign takes place between 25 March and 10 April, with SWT continuing its own spring-cleaning programme until the end of June.

The district's neighbourhoods, parks and public spaces have become very popular in recent years with more people opting to exercise outdoors.

Despite the best efforts of SWT's Street Cleansing team and those of countless volunteers, however, the increase in footfall has caused a spike in littering.

Consequently, and in addition the normal work carried out by the Council's street cleansing contractor, staff will be tackling litter in locations across the district, targeting problem areas such as residential streets, highway verges and open spaces.

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

6. Council partnership aims to crackdown on litter

A new Council partnership that aims to crack down on littering in SWT will commence from 1 April 2022.

Litter Enforcement Officers will be patrolling the district to reduce littering as part of a trial scheme adopted by SWT's Executive Councillors in January.

Anyone caught breaking the law by dropping litter will receive an on-the-spot fine of £100. Culprits that fail to pay and are summonsed to court could face a maximum littering penalty of £2,500.

Councillors at SWT have pledged to crack down on litter in response to an increase in incidents and concern from residents.

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

7. Reminder - New pay and display machines on the way

SWT is updating its parking machines in the West Somerset area. The Council is purchasing 25 new machines which will be installed in several car parks in West Somerset by the end of April 2022.

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

8. Reminder – Tackling Phosphates

Councils in Somerset are a step closer to minimising delay and uncertainty around planning applications which could contribute to unacceptable amounts of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors.

More information on Phosphates on the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site can be found on the SWT [website](#).

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

9. Reminder - Seaward Way Turf Cutting Ceremony

Work to build the first council homes in West Somerset for over 30 years is due to start at Seaward Way, Minehead.

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

10. Reminder - Taunton Moon at the Minster

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

For times and further details of the exhibition please visit visitsomerset.co.uk/Taunton/Whats-On/Exhibitions/Taunton-Moon-of-the-Minster.

11. Reminder - SWT is looking for a Sergeant-at-Mace

SWT is looking for an additional Sergeant-at-Mace to provide crucial support to the Mayor of Taunton.

It is a paid part time job that requires flexible working for about 24 days per year.

The ideal candidate would have a keen interest in history and civic events, be a confident public speaker and enjoy meeting people in social situations.

Please [click here](#) to view the job description on the SWT website.

12. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Clocks go forward 1 hour this weekend.

FYI: Clocks go forward one hour at 1am on **Sunday 27 March 2022**.

This is a good time to check clock batteries and small electricals (recycled kerbside), plus smoke detectors/alarms and unbroken bulbs (take to any recycle site with batteries, electricals, wiring, white goods, metals and more). Do stay safe.

Boxes, Bins and Bag Replacement experiencing delays

SWP apologises for the delay in the deliveries of new and replacement boxes, bins and blue bags. Please bear with them and don't put in a repeat order.

They are still playing catch-up after a big surge in orders that followed Storm Eunice and the launch of Recycle More in Sedgemoor and West Somerset. Some deliveries won't be within the usual ten days. If they are late, it shouldn't be by more than a couple of days, but it might be a little longer in some cases.

Your patience is much appreciated – and thanks for recycling.

Recycling is great, repairing is even better!

Porlock is staging its first Repair Café this Saturday (26 March) at the Village Hall (TA24 8QD) between 10am and 12pm.

This is the perfect chance to breathe new life into clothes, furniture, electricals, toys and more - drop in and see what they can do for you.

Don't forget, SWP will be bringing the new Fixy Van out later this year. In the first year it will be dedicated to electricals - if it has a plug or takes batteries, Fixy wants to help get it working again.

Providing practical help, useful tools and a PAT testing service, Fixy will support repair cafes and groups, encouraging people to get things mended and reused rather than throwing them away or recycling them.

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

Talking Café Live – Wednesday 30 March, 12.00pm – 1.00pm

Recycle More and your questions answered about the new service now operating in Sedgemoor and West Somerset.

SWP hope to see you there! Please [click here](#) to find out more about the Talking Café.

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](#).

The Local Government Reorganisation Advisory Board

The Advisory Board is a less formal public meeting and is designed to provide a way for councillors, public sector partners, the public and other interested groups to feed into the process and share ideas as the new council takes shape. The Board will develop links to Somerset Youth Parliament.

The Board's role is advisory, but its proposals, ideas and recommendations will feed into the unitary programme and the decision-making Joint Committee. Meetings will be held monthly in locations around the county.

The next meeting will be held on the **19 May 2022** – details to be confirmed.

The most recent meeting was held on **Thursday 17 March** at Williams Hall, Stoke St Gregory, Taunton. Slides from this meeting are available to view [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.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

SCC Highway Maintenance Update

The Honiton Rd, Trull, Taunton, drainage works are now completed. The SCC Highways team would like to thank the road going public for their patience whilst these essential repairs were undertaken.

The current schemes in the SWT area are:

Meare Green Lane, North Curry and West Hatch – commencing on the **28 March** and lasting for 3 days to enable SCC to carry out drainage works. There will be a road closure in operation with no access for emergency services on this occasion. Details about this road closure and diversion routes can be found [here](#).

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

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.

Road Safety Team advise against distracted driving

Drivers are being warned by SCC's Road Safety Team that tough new legislation kicks in this week to punish mobile phone use at the wheel.

As of Friday (25 March 2022), drivers caught using a phone while in charge of a vehicle can expect six points on their licence and a £200 fixed penalty notice. If you have only had your driving licence for less than two years, it will be revoked, and you will have to pass your test again.

The Highway Code will also be changed to say that handheld phone use in traffic jams or when stationary is also illegal.

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

Exmoor National Park (ENP)

Exmoor Rights of Way hard hit by storm damage

The storms of late February have left a trail of destruction across Exmoor's 1,300km network of public paths, with more than 330 trees cleared so far and longer-term damage to several major routes. Along with tree blockages some paths have been

torn out by lifting root balls. Damage has occurred across the whole National Park but the coast is worst hit.

Routes affected include the [South West Coast path](#) which has been closed between Culbone near Porlock and Desolate near Lynmouth, with a diversion in place. A temporary route change also affects the popular Two Moors Way and Tarka Trail. Further reports of blocked paths are still being received almost daily.

The clean-up operation is expected to run into tens of thousands of pounds. Donations to [CareMoor for Exmoor](#) are being sought towards offsetting the extra cost and can be made online at www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/caremoor or in person at Exmoor National Park Centres, with all funds raised supporting conservation and access work across the National Park.

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

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) Final call for Annual Photography Competition

The Photography Competition is still live, but time is running out to enter. The team welcomes entries under the following headings, in black and white or in colour.

There are 3 categories, all of which encourage participants to think differently about the hills and the wider Quantock area. Rather than the traditional landscape photos of views from and of the hills, they are looking deeper and differently at the communities present in the [Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) and Landscape Partnership Scheme Area.

The categories are: -

- **Village Life**– must be taken within a village or settlement in the Quantock Hills AONB and surrounding LPS area.
- **People of the Quantocks**– an image representing the people of the Quantock Hills AONB and surrounding LPS area
- **Quantock Working**– an image of working life within the Quantock Hills AONB and surrounding LPS area

The competition will run until the **31 March 2022**, with photographs judged in April and winners being announced in May 2022.

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

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) Banning of disposable BBQs by Aldi

The Fire Service has publicly approved the decision taken by Aldi to ban sales of disposable BBQs and hopes that other UK supermarkets will follow.

DSFRS see far too many fires that start from disposable BBQs every year. These wildfires can spread very quickly to a large area and take a long time to put out. This not only causes terrible - sometimes irreparable - damage to wildlife and ecosystems

but it also means that in dealing with these fires, firefighters are not available to respond to other emergencies.

HM Coastguard Watchet

Please be aware that adders are waking up!

Somerset is getting warmer, and the sunshine is waking up the early adders on the grassy areas and coastal paths. Adders are grey or reddish-brown, with a dark zig-zag shaped stripe down their back.

Most snake bites are not serious as the adder is the only venomous snake in the UK. You should however get all snake bites checked as soon as possible.

If you think you have been bitten by a snake out on the coast path and need medical assistance, call 999 and ask for immediate help.

Do

- stay calm, most snake bites in the UK are not serious and can be treated,
- keep the part of your body that was bitten as still as you can,
- lie in the recovery position if you can,
- take paracetamol for any pain,
- try to remember the colour and pattern of the snake to tell the doctor,
- take off any jewellery and loosen clothes near the bite, in case it swells

Don't

- go near the snake, or try to catch or kill it,
- try to suck or cut the poison (venom) out of the bite,
- tie anything tightly round the part of the body where the bite is,
- take aspirin or ibuprofen, as they can make bleeding worse.

Telling the doctors, the colour and pattern of the snake that bit you could help them treat it.

Dog Advice

Carry your dog rather than allow him or her to walk to reduce the spread of venom around the body.

Bathe the wound in cold water to help control the swelling and try to keep your dog quiet and warm as you travel to your nearest vet practice.

Never take risks near the coast or sea. If you are in danger or need emergency help call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

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

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP) Holiday Activities and Food Easter Programme

Thousands of children and young people eligible for free school meals in Somerset will be able to enjoy free fun activities during the upcoming Easter holidays.

There are a total of 12,000 places available, with more than 70 venues offering a wide range of activities from kayaking to music workshops, swimming, climbing and much more.

Parents will need to get a code from their school to book the activities. 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.

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

Lendology

Council-funded loans help homeowners towards net zero

With the current climate emergency, homeowners may be wondering what they can do to support a reduction in carbon emissions. The rising costs of energy also means many are wondering how to cut their utility bills.

Many homes in the UK struggle to retain heat because of their age and poor energy efficiency, as well as how they are heated. Whether looking to invest in renewable technologies such as solar or heat pumps, or to install energy-saving measures, homeowners may be eligible for an energy efficiency loan to help fund the upfront cost.

Working in partnership with Social Enterprise lender, [Lendology](#), SWT provides accessible finance in the form of low interest loans to homeowners wishing to increase their energy efficiency.

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

Spark Somerset

Events for Social Enterprises

Do you run an established Social Enterprise, or are you an aspiring social entrepreneur with a great idea that will benefit your local community?

Tuesday 29 March, 10.00am – 11.30am, via zoom

Write your business plan in an hour.

Patrick is Managing Director at [Enterprise Values](#) and has spent the last 20 years working with charities to create successful, profitable Social Enterprises. He will guide you through how to write a simple, tangible plan that will outline your objectives and bring your idea to life!

You can find out more and reserve your place on any of these events by visiting the website: <https://sparksomerset.org.uk/free-workshops-and-networking-events-social-enterprises>.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

New Somerset Food Resilience Grant is available

Smart Communities Ltd has a Grant Fund to enable communities that support or directly work to develop food resilience in communities across Somerset. Any Somerset community group, charity, organisation, and agency can apply for a maximum of £2,000. **The deadline for applications is 31 March 2022** and funded by Somerset County Council.

Please [click here](#) for application details.

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.

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

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

Somerset Wildlife Trust

Reminder - Annual Frog and Toad Spawn Count

Frogs and toads typically spawn from Jan to March and their spawning can be a good indication of where good quality water bodies such as ponds are, and the quality of surrounding habitats. So, until the **31 March**, Somerset Wildlife Trust are running a spawn count to collect important data on the location of breeding frogs and toads across the county. They want you to record both toad and frog spawn in your garden ponds, local community ponds, and any ponds you come across in your adventures in the countryside.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and download an information pack.

Community Employment Hubs

Way to Work

Way to Work is a new partnership between government and employers to get 500,000 jobseekers into work by the end of June 2022.

This partnership will help fill record numbers of vacancies, supporting job-ready people into the labour market and helping them progress into a career.

Whether you're a jobseeker finding your way back into work, or an employer who's looking for a way to get the right person to help their business, Jobcentre Plus and Way to Work can help.

Please [click here](#) to visit the website and find out more.

Somerset Jobs Fair – Taunton

Tuesday 29 March, 12.00pm – 6.00pm

Somerset County Cricket Club, St James Street, Taunton

Are you looking for work in or around the area? Perhaps a new job or career change might be on the cards? Either way don't miss the first ever Somerset Jobs Fair being held at Somerset County Cricket Club.

Sectors attending include emergency services, insurance, retail, care, groundworks, labouring, driving school, apprenticeships, education, catering, hospitality, construction, early years, leisure and tourism, volunteering and many more, as well as support from the [National Careers Service](#) and SWT's [Community Employment Hubs](#). Tone FM will also be joining the event, chatting to employers. Job-seekers can attend for free!

Job seekers will also be able to speak to employers directly and ask questions about income, flexible working, remote opportunities and work-life balance. For more details please contact 01823 777000 or email info@somersetjobs.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

Age 40-74? Get your free NHS Health Check

Somerset Public Health is urging everyone who is eligible to get a free [NHS Health Check](#) to lower their risk of developing serious health conditions.

The [NHS Health Check](#) is available for anyone between the age of 40 and 74 years, every five years, who does not have a pre-existing long-term condition.

The [NHS Health Check](#) is an important step for many people towards improving their health and becoming more aware of what they can do to lead a healthier life. It can help lower people's risk of developing heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of dementia.

Attending a free NHS Health Check helps people be better prepared for their future. It identifies risks early on, giving people the opportunity to take steps to reduce them and improving their chance of staying healthy as they age.

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Since 24 February, the legal requirement to self-isolate has been removed in England and replaced with [guidance for living safely with the virus](#).

Case numbers remain very high and have increased again this week so we should all continue to do all we can to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19, especially to the most vulnerable in our communities. This week marked the second anniversary of the first National lock-down and Somerset Public Health thank you all for everything you have done to protect Somerset from the spread of COVID-19. However, with the case numbers so high, it is still with us.

Very soon we will be at stage in the pandemic when there are no legal restrictions so it will be up to us all to make the right decisions to keep ourselves and those around us safe. The SCC Public Health team still advise basic infection control measures should be followed, as these will help slow the transmission of many seasonal illnesses and have a positive impact on reducing sickness levels and improving business continuity. These include regularly washing your hands, maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes and keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.

Somerset COVID Cases

In the week ending 20 March, approximately 111,533 tests were carried out across the county. There were 7,608 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of COVID-19 remain very high and have almost doubled in the last reporting week to 1,353.28 per 100,000. This is above both the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset has **increased by a significant amount** over the last week to around 180 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals. Most of these patients are not ill with COVID-19 but have been detected through routine screening. Hospitalisation for severe COVID-19 illness remains highest in older age groups and the unvaccinated.

Please note the Public Dashboard is being reviewed following changes to the national policy. In the week to the 13 March, the Office for National Statistics shows that around one in every 20 people have coronavirus, and in Somerset, we know are case rates are higher than this.

Symptoms of COVID-19 or a Positive Test

With case rates rising rapidly Public Health are concerned to see some national employers are requesting staff who have tested COVID-19 positive to go into workplaces, contrary to guidance. While it is no longer a legal requirement to isolate if you have COVID-19, there is a risk to worker health and business continuity, and

for customer-facing businesses to customer health and safety, from the spread of COVID-19 from infected persons.

The general duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act continue to apply, it being a legal requirement to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others, such as customers, as far as is reasonably practicable.

COVID-19 Testing

Free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing services for COVID-19 for the public will be ceasing at the end of March in line with Government Guidance and the move to Living with Covid.

Up until midnight on 31 March, you will still be able to order Home PCR tests if you have symptoms at [Get a free PCR test](#) to check if you have coronavirus (COVID-19). You may still be able to access LFT test kits online via <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>, however these are being prioritised for people at higher risk so you may have to try ordering the test kits at various times if you are not able to place an order initially.

Physical test sites for symptomatic COVID-19 testing in Somerset will also be closing on 30 March – this will include mobile testing units (MTUs), walk-through local testing sites (LTS) and drive-through regional testing sites (RTS).

Clintons COVID Catch Up

In this [COVID catch up](#) Clinton discusses what the change to free testing means.

From now on most things will be a choice and it's up to you to be cautious and follow certain health behaviours that can limit the spread of illness. However, remember that in healthcare settings, face coverings will still be a rule.

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.

There are plenty of walk-in appointments available across the County. Please check the local NHS website: [COVID-19 vaccinations in Somerset](#) to find clinics in your area or use the national portal to find a clinic: www.nhs.uk/grab-a-jab.

You can also pre-book an appointment. To do this, visit www.nhs.uk/Covid-Vaccination or call 119 for an appointment. The helpline has over 200 languages available if you or someone you know requires an interpreter.

NHS staff are ready to welcome you whether it's for your first, second, or third dose.

Coping with anxiety following the lifting of restrictions

There may be many people who are feeling anxious about the forthcoming lifting of all legal restrictions and the NHS are here to help. They very kindly have provided information and advice which can be found using this link:

[11 tips to cope with anxiety about getting “back to normal”](#).

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

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

Action Fraud

Payment Diversion Fraud

Payment Diversion Fraud (PDF), also known as Business Email Compromise (BEC) or Mandate Fraud, affects businesses and customers where electronic financial transactions are taking place.

Criminals will contact businesses or customers via email, usually claiming to be from a company that the business or customer has been dealing with. They will request a

payment to be made often or inform the recipient of a change of bank account details.

Criminals will often create fake e-mail addresses which are very similar to genuine business or customer addressees and send over fake invoices to make it more believable. All of this leads to payments from businesses and customers directly into bank accounts controlled by the criminals.

Criminals are experts at impersonating people, businesses and the police. They spend hours researching your business for their scams, hoping you will let your guard down for just a moment.

STOP: If you receive a request to make an urgent payment, change supplier bank details or provide financial information, take a moment to stop and think.

CHALLENGE: Could it be fake? Verify all payments and supplier details directly with the company on a known phone number or in person first.

PROTECT: Contact your business' bank **immediately** if you think you've been scammed and report it to [Action Fraud](#).

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Operation Scorpion

Earlier this month, ASP worked with colleagues across the South West to tackle cross border drugs supply activities.

'Operation Scorpion' involved Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Police, working collectively with Police and Crime Commissioners, British Transport Police and the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit. It was supported by the charity Crimestoppers.

Setting aside regional boundaries, just as criminals engaging in drugs activity do, the police harnessed their collective power and a range of tactics to disrupt the South West drugs market, dismantling drugs supply networks and arresting those who profit from them.

You can see footage of the activity in this [video](#).

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

Man arrested following suspicious incident in Taunton

A man has been arrested following a suspicious incident in Taunton last week.

A 16-year-old female was approached by an unknown male at about 11.58pm on Friday 18 March, who then attempted to drag her towards a car in South Road. She managed to find a place of safety.

A 35-year-old man arrested on suspicion of kidnap remains in police custody.

ASP are continuing to appeal for witnesses. Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

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](#)
- [Rural Affairs Unit – Avon and Somerset Police.](#)

Finally

British Summertime Begins: The clocks go forward by one hour at 1.00am on **Sunday 27 March 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/ or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil).

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