

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 98 Week ending 13/03/2022

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. Set up Council Tax direct debit to receive energy rebate quickly

SWT is urging bill-payers to set up a direct debit to pay their council tax, to ensure they get their £150 energy rebate payment as quickly as possible.

To set up a council tax direct debit please call SWT on [0300 304 8000](tel:03003048000). For new direct debits the Government require SWT to have successfully collected a first payment of council tax by direct debit before the energy rebate can be paid.

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 14 March** – SWT Audit and Governance Committee in the JMR at 6.15pm. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).

- **Wednesday 16 March** – SWT Executive 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 14 March).
- **Thursday 17 March** – SWT Planning Committee in the JMR at 1.00pm. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Tuesday 15 March).
- **Monday 21 March** – SWT Licensing 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 Thursday 17 March).
- **Tuesday 22 March** – Special Meeting, SWT Audit and Governance Committee at 6.15pm in the JMR. (Deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 18 March).

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](#).

Contact the Governance Team governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

3. Blue and yellow umbrellas to be displayed in support of Ukraine

SWT has worked with empty retail and event branding specialists, City Dressing, and installed blue and yellow umbrellas to symbolise support for the people of Ukraine.

16 umbrellas were suspended above Castle Bow in Taunton on Monday 7 March, using the overhead catenary wires which were already in place.

The initiative is being led by City Dressing free of charge, which is reaching out to towns and cities across the UK for suitable locations to display their umbrellas and generate support for those suffering because of the war.

In a further show of support, SWT has flown the Ukrainian flag at its main office at Deane House in Taunton. A further flag was also raised at West Somerset House in Williton on Monday, 7 March.

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

4. Taunton retold through town centre display

A graphical timeline illustrating Taunton's history from the Anglo-Saxon period to the 20th Century is now being displayed on the front of the former Debenhams store in North Street.

SWT's Emergency High Street Recovery Group in Taunton, which consists of local businesses representatives and ward councillors, commissioned the timeline with funding from the Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund to improve the appearance of the town, attract visitors and boost the local economy.

The timeline has been collated and arranged by [the South West Heritage Trust](#) using early oil paintings, watercolours, engravings and vintage photographs within its own archives and that of the [Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society](#).

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

5. Grassland management Strategy supporting our local ecology

SWT has a new [Grassland Management Strategy](#) to ensure that mowing routines support the climate and our ecology.

The strategy has been developed by the Somerset Wildlife Trust in consultation with the Council's Open Spaces Team to identify appropriate areas to support nature recovery while ensuring good access for residents in well-used areas.

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

6. Museum of the Moon opens Friday 18 March

St Mary Magdalene Church, Church Square, Taunton plays host to the world-famous art installation by Luke Jerram.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about this touring artwork.

7. Upskilling and careers offered through SWT partners

Are you looking for work or to develop your skills for a new role? If so, don't miss out on the upcoming careers and jobs fairs taking place across the district this month.

The recruitment offer kicked off on Wednesday, 9 March with SWT's annual West Somerset Careers and Jobs Fair, arranged in partnership with [Minehead Jobcentre Plus](#) and SCC's NEETs Project, [SomersetWorks](#), which was hosted by holiday resort chain, Butlins.

On Thursday 10 March [UK Careers Fair](#) hosted [Taunton Careers Fair](#) at The Castle Hotel, Taunton, where a wide variety of organisations were present.

Candidates from all backgrounds, experience and education levels had the opportunity to speak to representatives directly, thereby skipping the online applications process for a wide variety of roles currently being advertised.

More events are being planned for later this month. Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

8. International Women's Day

SWT joined the world in recognising the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, as it marked International Women's Day on the 8 March.

Staff across the Council came together to celebrate the achievements of women in the SWT workplace, shared their inspirational stories and acknowledged the support and encouragement they receive.

The Council is proud of its diversity policy and female role models but realises there is a long way to go to accelerate gender parity and encourage more females to apply for senior positions in local government.

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

9. Reminder – Deadline looms for on offer to boost Somerset's tourism economy

The deadline for applications to the Visitor Economy Innovation Grant is **Monday, 14 March**. Visit [Somerset Visitor Economy Innovation Grant Scheme](#) for more information about applying.

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

10. Reminder - SWT approves draft arrangements for new Taunton council

SWT has approved draft arrangements for the creation of a new town council for Taunton. They will now be subject to further public consultation before the final recommendations are agreed.

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

11. Reminder - Somerset West Lottery spring bonus prize draw

Everyone who signs up to buy one or more tickets in the Somerset West Lottery between 1 March and 23 April 2022 will be in with the chance to win a £1,000 gift card to spend in store at B&Q.

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

12. Reminder - Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant

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

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](#).

13. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Recycle right with Recycle More – AKA “Why was my bag left behind?”

Good recycling means getting all the right materials in the right containers.

Good recycling is not the right materials going in the wrong containers, such as glass (goes in green box), cardboard (black box) or Tetra Paks (green box) ending up in your Bright Blue Bag. Crews will leave behind the bag if this happens. Why? See below.

Good recycling is not the wrong materials going into any container, such as soft-stretchy-crinkly-thin plastics or plastic-foil pouches - for pet food, crisps etc - ending up in your Bright Blue Bag. Crews will leave behind the bag if this happens. Why? See below.

Good recycling means no wish-cycling - adding stuff in hope without checking what is taken, such as medical blister packs (not taken) - or careless recycling - which can mean adding risky or unpleasant things, such as knives, broken glass, nappies, syringes, containers with food, and worse.

Bad recycling contaminates otherwise clear streams of high-quality materials, can put crew members at risk, may damage machinery, and could lead to loads being rejected.

Why was your bag left? Unlike the black and green recycle boxes, your Bright Blue Bag is not sorted kerbside, just given a quick visual inspection, and then upended into the truck compartment. Any contamination - materials that should not be there, such as glass, card, soft-stretchy-crinkly plastic film, cartons/Tetra Paks, nappies, knives, animal waste (all seen) - means the bag is left, usually with a "tag".

It helps everyone learn swiftly exactly what to do. Re-sort your recycling, excluding or moving the materials added in error, then re-present it next time.

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](#).

Local Government Review (LGR) Advisory Board Meetings

All PowerPoint slides presented at the fifth LGR Advisory Board on 4 February can be found [here](#).

The next meeting will be held in person on **Thursday 17 March 2022, 4.30pm** at Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory, Taunton TA3 6EU. The meeting will also be webcast and the link to join via webcasting will be available on the [SCC website](#) in due time. The agenda and report packs are available [here](#).

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Committee

The next meeting of the LGR will be held in person on **Friday, 18 March 2022, 2.00pm** at the John Meikle Room, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

The LGR Joint Committee is designed to steer the move to a new single council. Several democratic decisions and actions will need to be taken before the new unitary council is established in 2023. The LGR Joint Committee will oversee the implementation plan and development of the new unitary council's constitution and budget. It has nine members, the leaders of the district and county councils and four further members of the County Council cabinet.

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's work has concentrated on a further catch-up due to the recent Storms: The SCC Highway's gangs cleared the previously cut up SCC owned trees from the verges and have requested the relevant landowners to clear their own trees. The team thank the public again for their patience and forbearance whilst they continue the clear up.

SCC Highways have carried out a further 152 safety defect repairs in the SWT area this week and are coming to the end of the scheduled works for this financial year. There are a lot of planned improvements in the pipeline for the 2022/23 year and these will be conveyed to you in due course.

The current schemes in the area are:

Honiton Rd, Trull, Taunton, drainage works – commenced 7 March (temporary road closure).

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

Harvey's Court, Taunton, footway works – completed.

Bossington Lane, Porlock – completed.

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.

Temporary Road Closures

Honiton Road, Trull

SCC in exercise of its powers under Section 14 (1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, have made an Order prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along **Honiton Road - from the junction with Wayside, northwards for 130 metres.**

This Order will enable Somerset Highways to carry out drainage works. The Order becomes effective on 3 March 2022 and will remain in force for eighteen months. The works are expected to commence on **7 March and last until 25 March 2022 between the hours of 00:00 - 23:59 for a total of 19 days.**

Please visit <https://one.network> for further information on the alternative route.

Priory Avenue, Taunton

SCC in exercise of its powers under Section 14 (1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, have made an Order prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along Priory Avenue - from the junction with Winchester Street in a south westerly direction for 22 metres.

This Order will enable Jurassic Fibre to dig down and repair a double blockage.

The Order becomes effective on 10 March 2022 and will remain in force for eighteen months. The works are expected to commence on **14 March and last until 16 March 2022 between the hours of 6.30pm - 6:30am for a total of 2 nights.**

Please visit <https://one.network> for further information on the alternative route. The works promoter will contact residents and businesses directly to discuss access arrangements.

Somerset Youth Parliament Election Results are in!

Three newly elected Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) will now represent Somerset's young people on several key issues including climate change, mental health, LGBTQ+, equality and safety.

Youth Parliament's first task is to promote the national annual Make Your Mark Vote which enables all students 11-18 years to vote on a priority topic for UK Youth Parliament to run this year's campaign.

Voting took place throughout February and was open to all schools and colleges. The results for Somerset will inform our leaders, decision makers and partners about what young people are concerned about.

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](#).

Local Government Association (LGA)

Personal Safety Webinar for Councillors

Monday 21 March, 4.00pm – 5.30pm

The LGA is hosting a webinar about personal safety for councillors.

The webinar, funded by the government, will provide an overview of personal safety as it applies to a councillor's everyday activities, including risk assessment and practical strategies for safe working. The session is free to all councils.

Please [click here](#) to book your place.

Exmoor National Park (ENP)

Path News

The recent storms have really taken their toll on Exmoor's rights of way, with trees down on many routes.

ENP Rangers and Field Service teams are working as quickly as they can to get paths reopened, together with the National Trust, landowners, communities and others. A real team effort!

Please be aware the Southwest coast path is closed between Culbone and Foreland point due to multiple fallen trees and land slips.

Take care and ENP will post more updates on their [website](#) as soon as they can.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund

To support farmers and land managers protecting the special and unique places that are our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Defra have launched the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. The programme will provide funding to farmers and land managers for projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to engage with the landscape and cultural heritage and support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

The programme will run from 1 July 2021 and close on 31 March 2024 and applications can be for single year or across more than one year as long as all works will be completed by 31 March 2024. This funding is open to all farmers and land managers within the Exmoor National Park and projects outside the boundary if they can be shown to bring benefit to the area.

Please [click here](#) for more information, full application guidance and links to the application forms.

Quantock Hills AONB

Please keep dogs on leads

Just a reminder that it is a legal requirement to keep your dogs on a lead on open access land between 1 March and 31 July.

The Quantock Hills has an abundance of lovely dog walks, although you'll need to be mindful of wildlife and livestock. Please keep dogs on a short lead to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds and help to protect ewes and lambs.

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) Smoking, vaping and e-cigarettes

National No Smoking Day was on Wednesday 9 March. Smoking is the most common cause of fatal fires, resulting in **one in five deaths**.

Every six days, someone in the UK will die from a fire started by a cigarette. DSFRS attend about 40 smoking-related house fires every year and these fires are more likely to cause death and injury than any other house fire.

If you or a family member is not ready to quit, please read the DSFRS smoking safety information.

Please [click here](#) to read more safety advice from DSFRS,

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Sport England

Emergency Funding available for storm damaged facilities

Did you know that organisations affected by the recent storms can apply for up to £15K from Sport England's Storm Relief Fund?

Organisations with facilities – such as clubhouses, courts and pitches – affected by the recent storms can now apply for grants of up to £15,000 after Sport England added an emergency storm damage option to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Activity Fund.

Whilst the effects of the recent storms and the subsequent flood damage are still being assessed, they want to ensure community sports facilities aren't forgotten and are ready to reopen as soon as possible.

Please [click here](#) to visit the webpage and find out the eligibility criteria.

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.

Over the past year the Government's Holidays Activities and Food (HAF) programme has given young people aged 5-16 the chance to take part in inspirational physical activities, enjoy a nutritious meal, and learn about eating healthily.

SCC has teamed up with SASP to deliver the Happy Healthy Holidays Somerset (HHHS) initiative across the county, with bookings for this Easter's activities opening last week.

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.

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?

As Somerset Social Entrepreneurs Programme partners, Spark are delivering a series of FREE, online, and face to face events to help you start, run, finance, and grow your Social Enterprise.

Thursday 17 March, 11.00am – 1.00pm, Albermarle Centre, Taunton

Live networking exploring the fundamentals of Social Enterprise and sharing local success stories. Come along to share ideas and experiences, consider your future direction and find out how the Spark Somerset and Smart Communities teams can help you.

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.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, food security became a huge focus for communities across the nation and many communities reacted to their local needs. Supporting individuals, families, homeless people, anyone isolated, and anyone in need with easy access to food, through deliveries, collection points, and storage solutions. Often these needs were always there in our communities but not seen.

The funds can be used in many ways and there is no fixed list of things the CCS will fund but are here to support your local needs, ideas and solutions as every community is different. The grant aims to support organisations and groups to build resilience for the future.

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

Community Buildings Network Event

Norton Fitzwarren Village Hall

Thursday 17 March, 10.00am – 11.30am

A chance to meet up informally with other village hall trustees for a chat and a coffee. This is a great opportunity to share any questions, concerns or ideas that you have. The event will also include a tour of Norton Fitzwarren Village Hall and a short visual presentation in the cinema room.

You can book your place on this event [here](#).

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

Job and Career Opportunities in the NHS

Tuesday 22 March, 6.30pm – 7.30pm – Online Event

Would you enjoy a practical or administrative job or perhaps a supportive patient facing role? With more than 350 different careers in the NHS – there is bound to be one to suit you.

The Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) offers free training and guidance that can lead to flexible, fixed term or permanent employment in the NHS.

Please [click here](#) to register for this online event.

Construction Industry Job Fair

Thursday 24 March 3.30pm - 6.30pm

St Peters Church Hall on Eastwick Road, Taunton

In partnership with [Skill Up Somerset](#), SWT is also hosting a [Construction Careers Fair](#). The fair is intended for people looking to start a career or gain a qualification specifically within the construction industry, including carpentry, bricklaying, roofing, ground works, plumbing, labouring and more.

Employers within the construction sector who are interested in booking a stand free of charge, should email Angela Bolitho at A.Bolitho@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

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. Jobseekers 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.

Somerset Recovery Fund Reminder - Opportunity Boost Scheme Project

A new grant has been launched to help people in Somerset overcome financial barriers when seeking employment and returning to work.

The Opportunity Boost Scheme will provide grants worth up to £500 to help with the cost associated progressing into work, such as transport costs, childcare, work clothes, learning resources and training courses.

The funding for the scheme has been provided through the Somerset Recovery Fund, and the initiative is being delivered in partnership between Somerset County Council and Citizens Advice Somerset.

To qualify, applicants must live in Somerset, be aged 16 or over, not be entitled to any other financial assistance for job seeking and had a pre-COVID salary of less than £25,000.

Applications are now live and will close on Friday 25 March.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and make an application.

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)

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

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 6 March, approximately 111,127 tests were carried out across the county. There were 3,338 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of COVID-19 remain high and have increased in the last reporting week to 593.7 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 130 COVID-19 in patients in Somerset hospitals.

Hospitalisation for severe COVID-19 illness remains highest in older age groups and the unvaccinated.

Symptoms of COVID-19 or a Positive Test

Children and young people who test positive for COVID-19 are advised not to attend their education setting while they are likely to be infectious. They should take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to their educational setting if they normally attend one, if they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature. They should continue to follow the guidance for their educational setting.

COVID-19 Testing

Free testing will come to an end on 31 March, with most people having to pay for PCR and lateral flow tests from 1 April.

In the meantime, [free Lateral Flow Tests are still available to order online](#). You can order one pack online every 3 days. A pack contains 7 tests.

Clintons COVID Catch Up

Why is it so important for children to have their Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccinations? Figures have shown a decline since the beginning of the pandemic.

In this week's COVID Catch Up, Clinton discusses just that with Emma Kain, Immunisations Lead for NHS South-West, and Patsy Temple, SCC Public Health Consultant. You can catch up on the video [here](#).

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.

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

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

The Charity Commission

Regulators urge safe giving to support Ukraine

As the conflict and humanitarian situation in Ukraine continues to escalate, it's vital that charitable donations reach their intended causes. UK charities are pivotal to a collective response to this crisis.

The Charity Commission and Fundraising Regulator have urged the public to ‘give safely’ to registered charities as people make generous donations to causes helping to support and protect people affected by the invasion of Ukraine.

The [Disasters Emergency Committee](#), a coalition of 15 leading UK charities, has launched its collective appeal to provide emergency aid and rapid relief to civilians suffering during the conflict.

Many [registered charities](#) are also helping to provide vital life-saving services, like water, food and healthcare, to those caught up in the conflict, including those forced to flee to neighbouring countries.

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

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Phone users urged to beware of fake WhatsApp message scam

ASP are asking people to be wary and report an increasingly common scam where fraudsters use WhatsApp to dupe victims into transferring money by pretending to be their child.

Typically, the fraudster will send a message from a mobile phone number that the victim doesn't recognise and begin a conversation by saying something non-specific, such as ‘Hi Mum’ or ‘Hi Dad’. They then go on to claim they have lost their phone, or it has been damaged and are now using a different number.

The victim, concerned for their child's welfare, often responds by asking if the person at the other end is really their son or daughter and inadvertently tells the fraudster what their child's name is, who in turn texts back to confirm that it is them.

The fraudster will then claim there is a time-critical emergency and that they need funds – such as they have a problem with their bank account and urgently need to pay a bill – so they ask the victim to transfer money to a different account to the one they would normally use.

In the first two months of this year more than 75 people in Avon and Somerset reported financial losses totalling more than £80,000 through this scam to Action Fraud, but it is likely that the true cost is much higher.

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

Cannabis plants seized

Some residents in Minehead had an early wakeup call on Sunday 6 March when the West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing Team, supported by ASP drones, dogs and the Operational Support Unit carried out a drugs warrant at an address. 44 cannabis plants were seized, along with a quantity of cash. One arrest was made and enquires are ongoing.

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.