

# Somerset West and Taunton

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

### **Issue 130 Weeks ending 20/11/2022**

#### **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. Help Somerset become a cultural destination**

The five Council's across Somerset are working together to create a Somerset Cultural Strategy which will help to raise the profile of Somerset as a cultural destination and embed arts and culture within the council's services.

As part of this work, a consultation is taking place which gives you the opportunity to have your say in what you would like to see happening in your local area.

Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council will be coming together in April 2023 to form the new Somerset Council. The Somerset Cultural Strategy is being created to present an exciting vision for the role of culture within our county and the communities the council serves.

You can have your say by visiting [consultation.southsomerset.gov.uk/arts-entertainment/somerset-cultural-strategy/](https://consultation.southsomerset.gov.uk/arts-entertainment/somerset-cultural-strategy/) and completing the survey which takes approximately five minutes to complete. **The survey will close on Sunday 20 November!**

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 SWT [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

- **Exmoor Area Panel – Thursday 24 November** at 7.00pm in the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Tenants Strategic Group – Monday 28 November** at 6.00pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Community Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 30 November** at 6.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 28 November 2022.
- **Taunton Shadow Town Council – Thursday 1 December** at 6.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Tuesday 29 November 2022.

Meetings in the JMR 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. SWT confirms Christmas offer in Taunton

SWT is once again making preparations to bring some festive cheer to residents visiting Taunton in the run-up to this year's Christmas.

Seasonal high-street lighting hired by SWT has now been installed along with a spectacular Christmas tree taking pride of place outside the iconic Market House in Fore Street, generously donated by [Langford Lakes Christmas Tree Farm](#).

The tree was transported and erected by [Wheelers of Bridgwater](#) on Monday (14 November), with help from the Council's Localities team and [Western Fabrications](#) who built the support clamp.

SWT has contributed a grant of £9,000 towards the celebrations this year, officially starting this Sunday, 20 November, with [Taunton WinterFest](#) and the lights switch-on.

Managed by [Ben De-Vey's Family Fun Fair](#), Winterfest 2022 will take place between 10am and 8pm and will be offering free family entertainment throughout the day, including meet and greets with Naughty Christmas Elves, a Snow Queen and Nutcracker on stilts, a free Santa's grotto, funfair rides and a large Christmas Market. The Christmas lights will be switched on at 6pm.

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

#### **4. Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey**

SWT have commissioned a company called Acuity to survey our tenants by telephone. The survey will help SWT understand your satisfaction with us as a landlord. Acuity will make calls between 9:30am and 8:00pm Monday to Friday and between the hours of 10:00am and 4:00pm on Saturday. If you receive a call from Acuity the number displayed will be [01273 093 939](#). If you do receive a call please co-operate and answer the questions honestly.

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

#### **5. Royal Mail Industrial Action – further dates added**

SWT has been made aware that Royal Mail is taking further strike action on **Thursday 24 November, Friday 25 November, Wednesday 30 November and Thursday 1 December.**

What this means for SWT and our customers:

- Incoming mail – there will be no deliveries during these dates.
- Outgoing mail – there will be no collections during these dates. The local Sorting Office will be closed. We are unable to dispatch our business mail via a Royal Mail post box. Therefore, **outgoing mail will be delayed.**
- Significant disruption should be expected, even once strike action has finished.

The advice from Royal Mail is to post your items as early as possible in advance of the strike dates. For more information regarding the Industrial Action please visit [Royal Mail strike updates | Royal Mail Group Ltd.](#)

#### **6. DfT approved e-scooter trials to be extended**

E-scooter trials in Minehead and Taunton are to be extended following public consultation and approval from the Department of Transport (DfT).

It was announced in June that participating Local Authorities could extend existing e-scooter trials until 31 May 2024, enabling the DfT to gather further evidence where gaps are identified and to build on the findings of the current evaluation.

In response to this announcement, SWT held a consultation to survey public opinion on safety preferences and potential future trial enhancements. The

consultation was aimed towards the Minehead trial and was launched at the end of August for a period of one month.

364 responses were received in total, of which 252 (69%) of respondents were local to Minehead and 192 (53%) had experience using the trial's e-scooters. In response to opinions on the trial being extended, with the exception of two abstentions, 199 (55%) were either satisfied, more than satisfied or very satisfied, compared with 163 (45%) being partly satisfied or not satisfied.

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

## **7. Reminder - Small business grants to save energy**

Carbon cutting grants worth up to £2,500 are now available to businesses with up to nine employees to help fund energy reduction and net-zero transition projects.

Businesses will need to undertake eligible projects to claim back what they have spent, capped at £2,500.

As the scheme is being made available through the Hinkley Point C developer contributions for business support funding, applications from businesses within the West Somerset locality of Somerset West and Taunton will be prioritised.

**Deadline for applications is Thursday 8 December.**

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

## **8. Reminder - SWT Climate News – Issue 7 now available**

The Climate Change Team has published its latest 'Climate News' which gets sent to SWT residents and businesses who sign up to receive a copy.

The newsletter aims to showcase all the great work that is happening across Somerset West and Taunton to achieve carbon-neutrality by 2030.

View all editions of the SWT Climate Newsletter [here](#). Each new edition is circulated to all subscribers at the beginning of every month, and the November issue is available to read now

## **9. Reminder - Somerset West Lottery Christmas 2022 bolt-on prize**

The Somerset West Lottery is now running the Christmas 2022 bolt-on prize draw.

Anyone purchasing one or more tickets between Monday, 1 November and Saturday, 17 December, could win a £1,000 voucher to spend at [John Lewis](#), courtesy of external lottery management company [Gatherwell](#).

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

## 10. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

### Less is More - Get ready for Reduce Week

SWP is about to run its first Somerset Reduce Week and is looking for *your* examples of how 'less is more'.

The awareness week starts on Monday (21 November) and highlights 'reducing' to help the environment and save money.

By reducing, we simply mean buying less or buying differently to waste less. Recycling is great, but reducing is even better, especially at a time when the cost of living is soaring. The awareness week coincides with the run up to the festive season which always sees waste surge.

SWP will use its social media presence, website and local media to share tips, information and good practice. Content will be themed around:

- Fighting food waste - meal plan, take stock before you shop, store and eat leftovers.
- Buying better – shop local, avoid packaging, charity shop, use waste free shops, try Freegle and other sharing/reusing apps.
- Going digital – buy vouchers, experiences, online subscriptions as festive gifts instead of 'stuff'.

SWP are asking residents to share their great ideas for reducing to inspire others. Anyone who does will also be entered into a prize draw to win a refurbished laptop or tablet.

Ideas can be posted – with a photo – on the @somersetwaste Facebook page or emailed to [recycle@somersetwaste.gov.uk](mailto:recycle@somersetwaste.gov.uk) Get involved and ask your friends and family to do the same.

SWP are sending out a special edition of the SORTED e-zine (which reaches more than 12,000 subscribers) and on Wednesday 23 November SWP will run a Facebook [Talking Café](#) Q&A about reducing, hosted by the Community Council for Somerset.

On Saturday 26 November the Fixy van will be at the Eat Taunton event (10am-4pm) promoting repair and reuse as a possible option for festive gifts.

For more information on the repair cafés and Fixy reuse van, see: [somersetwaste.gov.uk/share-and-repair](http://somersetwaste.gov.uk/share-and-repair).

### Upcoming Fixy events in SWT

- **Saturday 19 November** 10:00am -12:00pm – **Wivey Repair Café**, Wiveliscombe Community Centre, West Street, Wiveliscombe TA4 2JP.
- **Saturday 26 November** 10:00am -4:00pm – **Eat Taunton festival**. Fixy will be there to signpost future events, promote reuse, encourage volunteers, and take smart tech donations (no repairers available).

- **Saturday 26 November** 10:00am -1:00pm – Repair Café in the **Blackdown Hills**, Hemyock Parish Hall, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3QW.
- **Saturday 3 December** 10:00am-12:00pm – **Porlock Vale Repair Café**, Porlock Village Hall, Toll Road, Porlock TA24 8QD.
- **Saturday 17 December** 10:00am – 12:00pm – **Wivey Repair Café**, Community Centre, West Street, Wiveliscombe, Taunton TA4 2JP.

For more information and to get involved visit [somersetwaste.gov.uk/reduce-week](https://somersetwaste.gov.uk/reduce-week) and follow @somersetwaste on Facebook and Twitter.

## **New Somerset Council**

### **Latest news**

#### **Lowest income households set to pay no Council Tax under new Somerset Council proposals. Fifty percent discount for foster carers.**

A new, unified Council Tax Reduction Scheme targeting help at people on low incomes, care leavers and foster carers is planned for Somerset from 1 April 2023 when the new Somerset Council comes into being.

The Scheme was approved by Somerset County Council's Executive today, 16 November, and will go to Full Council on November 23 for final approval. The scheme will be simpler and fairer and means that the lowest income households will pay no Council Tax.

A single person with an income below £95 a week, or a couple with two children on a weekly income below £260, would be entitled to the full 100% council tax reduction. However, some families with an income below £500 a week could also be eligible for some support.

Care leavers up to the age of 25 will continue to be exempt from Council Tax and an entirely new measure, not currently offered by any of the district councils, will give Somerset County Council registered foster carers and qualifying Special Guardians a 50% reduction.

Certain benefits for people with disabilities, war pensioners, families in receipt of child benefit/maintenance and carers will not be considered when income is assessed. The scheme for pension age applicants is set by Government and will continue unchanged.

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

### **City, Town and Parish Council Working Group – You are welcome to attend!**

Did you know that the LCN Team hold fortnightly catchups exclusively for Clerks and Chairs from across Somerset?

The next online meeting will take place on **Wednesday 23 November** on MS Teams at 10.30am until 11am. The agenda and minutes of the last meeting are attached.

Simply drop an email to [LCN@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:LCN@somerset.gov.uk) with your name and contact details, placing 'C, T&PC Working Group' in the subject title.

The team understand the timing won't suit everyone all the time, so they will distribute the meeting minutes to you once you are signed-up.

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

### **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)**

#### **Civility and Respect Pledge**

Throughout the sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the Civility and Respect Project.

NALC, SLCC, and OVW believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

The Civility and Respect Pledge is being introduced because there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up for and it will enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about Civility and Respect Project.

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

#### **SCC Highways maintenance update**

Work has continued well on the major schemes this week such as the resurfacing of the A38 Wellington Rd at Compass Hill, in Taunton which is now complete. SCC Highways thank you for your patience and forbearance during these essential works.

The contractor's gangs have successfully completed works to repair 172 Safety Defects this week, with 116 in the Taunton Area and 56 in the West Somerset Area.

Reported defects are still low recently which has enabled the gangs to push the planned works forward, however, if you spot any issues on the roads this week please don't hesitate to report it to SCC on [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/) or call **0300 123 2224**.

For information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/TravelSomerset) on Twitter.

The following is a list of SCC works in the SWT area starting week commencing 21 November 2022:

### **Monday 21 November**

- **Hestercombe Road, Cheddon Fitzpaine** – 5 days - new drainage outside New Dawn.
- **Howtown Lane, Winsford** – 3 days – Removal of highway trees.
- **Whitmore Lane, Staplegrove** – 1 day - Clear 8.5 meters of ditch and construct new manhole chamber, 3.5m of 300mm pipe and new headwall.
- **Bishops Hull Road, Bishops Hull – Bishops Hull** – 3 days – Install new gully to existing drainage.
- **Exford to Wheddon Cross Road, Exford** – 3 days – Jetting works.
- **Wheddon Cross to Bridgetown Road, Exton** – 3 days – Jetting works.
- **High Street, Taunton** – 3 days – Jetting works.
- **Doniford Road, Williton** – 3 days – Replacement of x3 streetlights.
- **Nightcott Lane, Brushford** – 1 day – Clear existing grips.
- **Manor Road, Alcombe, Minehead** – 1 day – trash screen clearing.
- **Silver Street, Taunton** – 1 day – replace aco drain 500mm.
- **Burrow Road, Timberscombe** – 1 day – trash screen clearing.

### **Tuesday 22 November**

- **Simonsbath to Challacombe Road, Exmoor** – 4 days – Depot patching
- **High Street, Porlock** – 3 days – Jetting works.
- **Kebbys Farm Close, Williton** – 3 days – Replacement x3 streetlighting unites (PL1,2,3).
- **Dene Road, Norton Fitzwarren** – 1 day - Traffic signals to be retrofitted as part of the Somerset Retrofit programme across site 468S Dene Road, Bishops Lydeard.
- **Spires Cross to Comers Cross, Winsford** – 1 day – existing grip clearance.
- **Brockwell Lane, Wootton Courtenay** – 1 day – Clear area in front of trash screen.

### **Wednesday 23 November**

- **St Mary's Road, Meare** – 3 days – Patching.
- **Priorswood and Priory Roundabout, Taunton** – 3 days – Jetting works.
- **Willow Close, Williton** – 2 days – Replacement of street lighting unit (PL1).

### **Thursday 24 November**

- **Barns Meads Road & Penny Close, Wellington** – 2 days – Replacement of street lighting unit (PL12).
- **Hamilton Road, Taunton** – 1 day - Traffic signals to be retrofitted as part of the Somerset Retrofit programme across site 470S Halcon Corner, Taunton.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **The Buses of Somerset**

### **Further industrial action planned**

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) have taken the decision to continue with yet more industrial action on Friday 18 November and Monday 21 November. This will mean that there will be disruption to many of the Buses of Somerset and Cornwall by Kernow services.

Customers should go to the website and social media feeds for the latest information on which services will be running. Buses of Somerset would like to apologise for the disruption that customers may experience during the strikes.

In Somerset, it is expected that the Taunton Park & Ride will be the only registered bus services to operate a full timetable.

Unfortunately, no services are guaranteed, and the above is based on expected driver availability. Please check Twitter feeds: @by\_Kernow, @busesofsomerset and @adventuresbybus to make sure.

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

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

### **Road Safety Week**

This week is Road Safety Week, and the DSFRS road safety team is out and about focusing on the two highest-risk groups for road traffic collisions: motorcyclists and young drivers.

If you are a motorcyclist, come to the free Biker Down workshop this Saturday 9:30am -1:30pm in Exeter. Learn how to a save life. Please [click here](#) to book a place.

If your child is 17 and learning to drive, ask them if they have been to a Learn2Live event at their college or six form. What did they learn about driving safely? Please [click here](#) for practical tips for parents, carers, and teachers.

## **Exmoor National Park Authority (ENP) Help needed with Bye Wood Tree Planting**

Bye Wood is part of the biggest woodland creation project to have taken place in the National Park in the past 15 years and forms part of the commitment to increase tree cover on Exmoor from around 13.5% to at least 17% by 2050 - the amount recommended by the UK government's independent Climate Change Committee.

Bye Wood is the first step in the wider CareMoor Woods & Trees appeal. 100% of donations to this appeal will support tree planting and woodland creation schemes on Exmoor.

ENP are starting winter planting of saplings at Bye Wood, Winsford again this November. They would love your help on two dates:

### **Saturday 26 November and Saturday 3 December 2022**

Meet at Winsford car park TA24 7JE (opposite the garage) at 10am, from where it is a 30-minute stroll up to the site. The team aim to finish around 3pm.

Please bring with you:

- A spade if you have one
- A packed lunch and drink
- Warm waterproof clothing & wear sturdy boots.

Fun for all the family, groups welcome too. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

To sign up email [getinvolved@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:getinvolved@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk) with your name and contact number and we'll add you to the list

You can also join the team of volunteers helping collect and grow tree seeds on Exmoor or get involved with the new Tree Nursery. Sign up to the [woodlands newsletter](#) for details or email [getinvolved@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:getinvolved@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

## **Minehead RNLI Lifeboat Station Stranded walkers rescued near Hurlstone Point**

Minehead's volunteer lifeboat crew launched on Sunday 13 November at 1931hrs. Two casualties were cut off by the tide near Hurlstone Point. Having called the Coastguard on 999 their location was precisely established by the SARLOC system.

The D Class crew had a tricky time extracting the casualties due to their position several feet up a large rock, with an unpredictable large swell further complicating

matters. Both were swiftly recovered however and transported to Minehead's temporary boathouse to be medically checked and warmed up.

This rescue illustrates the vital importance of carrying a reliable means of communication and checking tide times for your walking route.

The Minehead RNLI's ongoing boathouse works will enhance the D-Class response times with a dedicated hall for each lifeboat.

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

### **Community Employment Hubs**

#### **Hinkley Point C (HPC) – Drop In Events**

Hinkley Point Drop ins are coming to the [Somerset West and Taunton Community Employment Hubs](#) in Wellington, Taunton, Stogursey and Minehead on various dates. If you would like to find out more information on the opportunities available at Hinkley Point C then drop in to one of these events.

The first drop in will take place on **Tuesday 22 November**, between 10:00am and 12:00pm, at The Hub, Hopcott Road, Alcombe, Minehead TA24 6DJ.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about Hinkley Point C current vacancies, training offers and how to register for job alerts.

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

#### **Donate your Winter Fuel Payment**

SCF has launched this year's Surviving Winter appeal, which encourages people who can afford it to donate some or all of their Winter Fuel Payment to help vulnerable older people in Somerset who are unable to afford to heat their homes to stay warm and well.

The cost-of-living crisis means that this winter will be one of the toughest we have faced for decades. Many older people are already extremely anxious about rising bills and around 11,000 Somerset pensioners will find themselves living in fuel poverty this year, double the number in the same situation last year. The team at SCF know, from many years' experience of running their Surviving Winter appeal, that many of the poorest pensioners may not turn their heating on at all or will cut back on food to save money as they are forced to choose between heating and eating. And with everyday costs like food and fuel rapidly increasing, this winter will see many of our most vulnerable older neighbours struggling to cope. Many will stay at home to save money and will find themselves cut off from family and friends.

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

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

### **Free magical festive train ride aboard the Talking Café Express for unpaid carers in Somerset**

CCS Village Agents (part of the Community Council for Somerset, or CCS) have organised a wonderful steam train festive treat on the West Somerset Railway, for unpaid Carers in the Taunton area.

Taking place on the 2 December in the early evening, unpaid carers (people who look after someone else, like their partner, parent or child) can apply for a ticket to ride along with the person they care for. Caring for another is very rewarding but can be lonely and isolating at times.

150 places are available on this magical adventure through the stunning Taunton and West Somerset landscape. There will be mince pies and hot drinks for all, and entertainment provided by a local choir, getting everyone into the holiday spirit. If you are a Carer in the Taunton district, book your seats on the train by the 22 November. Email Christine Brewer [christineb@somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:christineb@somersetccc.org.uk).

The Talking Café Christmas Express has been funded by Somerset County Council and supported by the West Somerset Railway.

### **Talking Cafés Live**

Coming up on November's Talking Cafe live-streamed sessions: -

- **23 November** - Reduce Week with [Somerset Waste Partnership](#).
- **30 November** - [NHS Somerset](#) Flu Vaccinations in Somerset - everything you need to know.

Please [click here](#) to watch LIVE every Wednesday at 1pm and ask questions in the comments for instant answers.

Want to take part and SHOUT about the organisation or community project you are passionate about? Contact [hannah@somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:hannah@somersetccc.org.uk) or message the Talking Cafe page.

Don't forget you can search for previous live recordings by subject here: <https://somersetagents.org/talking-cafe-live/> . Just select the topic that interests you from the drop-down menu.

### **Community Buildings - Become a warm space this winter!**

If your facility or group would like to host a warm space for anyone who will struggle to keep their heating on this Winter. Please [click here](#) to view the new Warm Spaces funding list.

## **Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)**

### **Urgent Energy advice for village halls this winter**

The current energy crisis is having a profound impact on many individuals and organisations in society. Many people are unfortunately at risk of finding themselves in fuel poverty this winter. In this context, ACRE is committed to helping village halls

stay open for the benefit of their local community as they are often the only place in rural areas where people can socialise and stay warm.

Please [click here](#) to read the Utility Aid Briefing.

## **Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE)**

### **Safe and Warm Somerset**

Everyone deserves a home which is warm, comfortable and affordable to heat. Safe and Warm Somerset supports anyone in Somerset who may need help with energy bills or keeping warm at home.

If you live in Somerset and any of the following apply to you, the CSE can help with free, impartial advice and support:

- Struggling with energy bills.
- A cold home.
- Broken heating system or boiler.
- Damp and mould in the home.
- Unsure about how to use your heating system.
- No gas central heating and high electricity bills.

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

## **Spark**

### **Community Food Forum**

**Online Event – Tuesday 29 November 7:00pm – 8:30pm**

The cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the importance of food provision and growing projects in local communities and it's vital that we keep talking to each other.

This forum, jointly hosted by Spark Somerset and Somerset Community Food (SCF), follows on from our last meeting held in July and the Sustaining Food Conference, hosted by SCF on 22 October. Spark is really keen to continue the conversation and strengthen the great work that's happening in Somerset.

Whether you're involved with a local allotment, community fridge or foodbank, therapeutic garden, cooking class or any other initiative which uses food, growing and gardening to support positive change, please come and join for the chance to network and share peer support, learning and best practice.

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

### **Register your warm welcome space**

Spark is working with community partners to develop a network and online directory of Warm Welcome spaces where people can find warmth, company and support amid the cost-of-living crisis.

Spark's experienced team can support community groups and venues in Somerset to provide a Warm Welcome to everyone who might need it over the coming months.

This could include help with your policies and procedures, finding funding, recruiting volunteers or connecting you with other providers to share learning and ideas.

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

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

### **Getting outside Photo Competition 2022 and Calendar 2023**

The Photo Competition that will eventually result in next year's Getting Outside in Somerset Calendar is now open! Entry is open to all, pictures taken on your walks with smartphones are perfect and photos taken earlier in the year are welcome. The only rules are:

- Photos must feature Somerset and its outdoor environment
- The photo must be yours
- Any person identifiable in the photo must have given permission for its entry and possible publication.

Happy snapping, and most importantly enjoy your walks and encourage others to come with you!

Deadline for entries: **Midnight Sunday 20 November.**

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

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Suicide Awareness**

#### **Orange Button – Community Awareness Scheme**

1 in 30 of us will have thoughts of suicide in a year. Help is out there through the [Orange Button Community Scheme.](#)

Suicide can affect anybody and there isn't a community in Somerset where people haven't been touched by suicide.

Whether a hospital staff member or owner of a local shop, we can all make a difference in reaching out and offering support to those in need. We know that if someone is having suicidal thoughts, receiving support from someone else can make a big difference.

Only a minority of people, who complete suicide, are known to mental health services.

We need to raise awareness. It's time to talk about suicide. It's time to say, let's talk. We need to spread the message that talking to someone in distress won't make the situation worse.

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

## Preparing for Winter

This Autumn and Winter we expect to see both flu and Covid viruses circulating. With the UK experiencing its first flu season since 2019, the population will have less immunity than previous flu seasons. Preparations for the potential impact of this on the population's health and well-being, centre on vaccination for both flu and COVID-19, targeted to at risk groups.

The best way to protect ourselves our friends and our families, is by taking up all the vaccinations that we are eligible for.

## Vaccinations

### COVID-19

People aged 50 and over are now able to book their autumn booster and flu vaccines, as the NHS Covid-19 and flu programmes continue to protect the country ahead of winter. Appointments are available to people aged 50 and over, pregnant women, clinically vulnerable / immunosuppressed individuals, health and social care workers and paid and unpaid carers.

Anyone who falls into these groups are able to book now [online](#) or by calling 119. Calls to 119 are **free** from mobiles and landlines. 119 provides support in 200 languages.

Please look out for older relatives, friends and neighbours who may need help and support to book their vaccination appointments.

[Bookings](#) can be made at a wide number of clinics across Somerset.

[Walk-in appointments](#) are additionally being offered at Tower Vaccination Centre in Taunton on specific days.

[The vaccination page](#) now provides more overall strategic vision of how the vaccination programme has been implemented and provides an indication of the effective level of immunity provided to our community by boosters and third doses. The current version of the dashboard can be accessed at any time [here](#).

### Influenza

Cases of flu have climbed quickly in the past week, indicating that the season has started earlier than normal.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have widened the offer of the [free flu vaccine](#) to more eligible groups.

These additional groups will only be eligible once the most vulnerable, including previously announced pre-school and primary school children, those aged 65 years and over and those in clinical risk groups, have been offered the jab.

The additional groups set to be offered the free flu vaccine in England will be:

- all adults aged 50 to 64 years (including those who turn 50 by 31 March 2023)

- secondary school children in years 7, 8 and 9, who will be offered the vaccine in order of school year (starting with the youngest first)

[If you're eligible for a free flu vaccine](#), you can book an appointment at your GP surgery or a pharmacy that offers it on the NHS. You may also get an invitation to get the vaccine, but you do not have to wait for this before booking an appointment. Everyone who is eligible for the free flu vaccine will be able to get it. If you have an appointment for a Covid-19 booster vaccine at a GP surgery or pharmacy, you may also be offered a flu vaccine at the same time.

Do not delay booking your flu vaccine appointment so that you can get both vaccines together. Only some people will be offered both vaccines at the same time.

Please [click here](#) for more information about the Flu vaccination.

### **Living safely with respiratory infections including COVID-19**

The [Government has published important advice](#) for people with symptoms of respiratory infections, such as COVID-19; people with a positive COVID-19 test result and their contacts; and advice on safer behaviours for everyone.

There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, such as flu and protect those at highest risk.

Things you can choose to do are:

- Get vaccinated.
- Wear a face covering or a face mask.
- Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
- Stay at home if you have [symptoms](#)
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Practise good hygiene:

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

Please [click here](#) to read the guidance on what to do if you have symptoms but have not taken a test.

### **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

- Mindline Somerset – 01823 276892
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

### **National Crime Agency**

#### **Don't be a money mule**

Fraud is now the most likely type of crime to affect all of us, after overtaking theft. Young people are increasingly the major victims of fraud. Fraudsters' tactics can be highly sophisticated and even the financially aware can easily be duped.

Victims don't only lose their money. They can lose their family's savings, their businesses, their trust in other people, and can impact on their mental health. One of the most important enablers of fraud are money mules. This is where you let someone else use your bank account to send criminal money.

Fraudsters and other criminals will use lots of mule accounts to make it harder for banks and police to track them down. Most mules enabling these crimes are young.

Around 6 in 10 mules are under the age of 30. They can be recruited online and in person. By using mules, criminals try to ensure that the consequences hit the mule, instead of them. This is financial exploitation – both of the mule and of the original victim.

But mules usually get recruited because they get a cut of the stolen money. This means they are involved in money laundering. This is a serious criminal offence, with a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison for the worst offenders.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about money laundering.

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

### **Road Safety Week**

For [#RoadSafetyWeek](#), ASP wanted to highlight the [Avon and Somerset Police Road Safety Fund](#). The fund helps community programmes prevent injuries caused by road traffic incidents and is open to the local community and voluntary organisations in the Avon and Somerset police force area.

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

### **Operation Sceptre**

This week ASP are taking part in [#OperationSceptre](#), a regular national initiative aimed at reducing the devastating impacts of knife crime.

The teams will be out in your communities every day this week, removing weapons from the streets, arresting wanted offenders, ensuring retailers are complying with the law around the sale of knives to children, and educating young people on the dangers and consequences of carrying knives. Follow your local neighbourhood policing pages for updates.

The [Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner](#) team have extended their knife crime survey for [#OpSceptre](#) week, to gather the views of local communities around knife crime. They would like to hear from parents and young people aged between 12 and 25 years old, to better understand how people feel about knife crime.

Please [click here](#) to read the full press release and take part in the survey.

### **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**

The below link may be useful to you, should there be a requirement to convert files to jpg format: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/online/pdf-to-jpg.html>

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the Government.](#)

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/](http://www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/) or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil).

### **Attachments**

*LGR City, Town & Parish Working Group Minutes 9 November*

*LGR City, Town & Parish Working Group Agenda 23 November.*

*Minehead Neighbourhood Policing Newsletter*