

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 131 Weeks ending 27/11/2022

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. Firepool Masterplan public consultation launched

Members of the public are being asked for their views on a new masterplan to future-proof delivery of the Firepool regeneration site.

SWT's Executive approved the [Draft Firepool Masterplan](#) for public consultation at their meeting on Wednesday, 16 November, giving residents a chance to have their say on the updated proposals.

The revised masterplan is for a mixed-use scheme comprising new homes and an ambitious leisure quarter capable of accommodating a multi-purpose venue, hotel, cinema, bowling alley, health hub and nursery focused on a high-quality boulevard and amphitheatre fronting the river Tone.

It also introduces an improved walking and cycling connection along National Cycle Network on the north bank of the river Tone, and sustainability features including a centralised cycle hub containing secure cycle storage, low traffic neighbourhood design and an energy centre for potential heat network delivery.

The consultation started on Monday, 21 November, and runs for six weeks until 2 January 2023.

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.

- **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. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **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. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Full Council – Tuesday 6 December** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public statements or questions is 4pm on Friday 2 December 2022. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 7 December** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 5 December 2022.
- **SWT Planning Committee – Thursday 8 December** at 1.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Tuesday 6 December 2022.

Meetings in the JMR will 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. Global recognition endures for SWT's climate action

SWT has been repeatedly recognised as a leader in responding to the climate emergency by the not-for-profit charity, [CDP](#).

The Council achieved a score of "A-" (Leadership) for its 2022 disclosure, an improvement on last year's score of "B" (Management).

Regarded as the 'gold standard of environmental reporting', CDP supports organisations in making their environmental impact transparent to stakeholders, better understanding to reduce their impact, and acting to become environmental leaders.

The disclosure identifies the ways in which SWT is working to mitigate and adapt to the projected impacts of climate change.

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

4. Royal Mail Industrial Action

SWT has been made aware that Royal Mail is taking further strike action on **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](#).

5. Free Car Parking in run up to Christmas

SWT is offering free [parking](#) for Christmas shoppers after 3pm in its Taunton car parks (excluding Kilkenny), and all-day parking at its car parks in Wellington and West Somerset on the Saturdays of 10, 17 and 24 December.

6. Reminder - 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.

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. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Less is More - Get ready for Reduce Week

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.

Visit the Fixy reuse van to learn more about the growing efforts to help everyone repair electrical gadgets, promote reuse, encourage volunteers, and take smart tech donations, though no repairers are available.

You can bring along to Fixy and donate any unwanted or broken smart tech, such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, smart watches, digital cameras, game consoles, routers, hard drives, external disk drives, and their leads and chargers.

Any donations will be data-wiped and repaired as necessary by Somerset specialists DonateIT, and passed onto schools, community groups and families who need them.

And take the Fixy survey for a chance to win a refurbished laptop or tablet in our monthly free prize draw.

If you are a repair enthusiast or just keen to help boost reuse, do ask about how to get involved with local groups or with Fixy.

If going to a repair café, best to be early to get your stuff checked over.

Refreshments usually available and fixing is free, but donations are welcome.

Recycling is good - and Somerset's 56.2% recycle rate is great - but repair-reuse is even better so Fixy is supporting the county's network of repair cafés and groups, with a focus on breathing new life into electricals and electronics. Working electricals and electronics should always be passed on to others or donated to charity if they are no longer needed.

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

Other upcoming Fixy events in SWT

- **Saturday 26 November** 10:00am -1:00pm – Repair Café in the **Blackdown Hills**, Hemyock Parish Hall, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3QW.
- **Monday 28 November** 10:00am – 12noon – Somerset Business Climate Summit, SWT, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE. Fixy will be in the car park to promote reuse and repair and signpost future events.
- **Saturday 3 December** 10:00am-12:00pm – **Porlock Vale Repair Café**, Porlock Village Hall, Toll Road, Porlock TA24 8QD. Fixy will support the Repair Café, collect smart tech and signpost future events.
- **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 and follow @somersetwaste on Facebook and Twitter.

New Somerset Council

Latest news

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?

Simply drop an email to 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.

Cash incentives for landlords who help house Ukrainian refugees

An appeal for private landlords to come forward with vacant, or soon-to-be vacant, properties for rent, has been launched.

Generous Somerset sponsors have been hosting refugee families under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. Accommodation is now needed as part of a planned pathway across all Councils for moving guests out of sponsor accommodation and into private accommodation.

Somerset Councils are offering a one-off cash incentive of £1,000 per bedroom, with up to a maximum of £4,000 for homes with four bedrooms and above. Landlords will be asked to sign up Ukrainian tenants for a minimum 12-month term on a self-

contained assured shorthold tenancy basis. They must also agree to a rent that sits within **Local Housing Allowance** (LHA) rates.

This housing initiative is only available to households who arrived in the UK via the Homes 4 Ukraine scheme and supports access to the private rented sector for Ukrainian households who may find it difficult to access accommodation without employment references or a guarantor.

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

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Boundary Commission for England

Have your say and help reshape constituency boundaries – before the December deadline

Residents have one final opportunity to send in their views about the Boundary Commission for England's new revised proposals for constituencies.

A third and final consultation will **close on 5 December**, giving the public just days left to send in their views. You can comment here: <https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/>.

The Commission has taken into consideration over 45,000 comments sent in by the public during the previous two stages of public consultation and has changed nearly half of its initial proposals based on this feedback.

The Commission is undertaking an independent review of all constituencies in England, as requested by Parliament.

The number of electors within each constituency currently varies widely due to population changes since the last boundary review. The 2023 Boundary Review will rebalance the number of electors each MP represents, resulting in significant change to the existing constituency map. As part of the review, the number of constituencies in England will increase from 533 to 543.

After this final consultation has closed on 5 December, the Commission will analyse the responses and form its final recommendations. These will be submitted to Parliament by 1 July 2023.

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

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

Heavy and continued rains have this week have taken their toll and SCC Highways were forced to close the flood gates along Cutts Road, Lyng (on the Levels) due to flooding.

The contractor's gangs have successfully completed works to repair 190 Safety Defects this week, with 136 in the Taunton Area and 54 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/ or call **0300 123 2224**.

For 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.

The following is a list of SCC works in the SWT area starting week commencing 28 November 2022:

Monday 28 November

- **Ash Priors Common, Ash Priors** – 3 days – Replace gully cover and reinforce bank behind gully.
- **The Square, Wiveliscombe** – 3 days – Reinstate finger posts and finger arms.
- **Ellicombe Lane, Minehead** – 1 day – Clear debris in front of trash screen.
- **Kingston Road, Kingston St Mary** – 1 day – Construct new manhole chamber.
- **New Road, Oare** - 1 day – Signing works.

Tuesday 29 November

- **Station Road, Stogumber** – 5 days – Replacement of roadside pedestrian handrail on behalf of SCC.
- **Fairfield Green, Churchinford** – 2 days – Replacement of street light unit (PL11)

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.

Green light for new junction access serving Firepool site and railway station

An important scheme to link Taunton's Firepool Development and new railway station car park to the town's road network with cycling provision is set to commence early next year.

SCC, SWT, Great Western Railway and Network Rail are working together to deliver a new junction access from Trenchard Way to the crucial development area of Firepool (which incorporates the new £11m Digital Innovation Centre), and the station's multi-storey car park which was opened as part of a multi-million- pound regeneration of the town's transport hub.

SCC has now agreed a contract to deliver the scheme which introduces a crossroads forming the main access to the rail station car park and enables buses to collect rail passengers directly from the station. It also provides the primary access route into the main Firepool site and importantly takes into account latest cycling infrastructure design standards.

Contractor Milestone is set to commence work on site at the end of January. It's anticipated the project will take about five months to complete, pending weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances.

The project is jointly funded by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Department for Transport, SCC and SWT Council.

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

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue (DSFRS)

Why you shouldn't use washing machines and tumble dryers at night

We've seen a lot in the news recently about energy prices, and now many energy suppliers are offering financial incentives for avoiding using energy at certain times of the day.

Here's what Crew Manager Carol Frances has to say about why you shouldn't use domestic appliances at night.

“As a crew manager in the prevention team this concerns me from a fire safety perspective. Whilst we all have a very close eye on our finances at the moment, for me there are still a few important safety considerations to be aware of.

The safest time to use electricals is when you are awake, and definitely in the house.

When I talk to people in my community I am always amazed by how many people don't realise it's not safe to use appliances at night or when out of the home. You should never leave appliances on when you're out.

Lots of people think it will never happen to them, but we attend around 115 fires each year caused by domestic appliances. That's about two every week. If your tumble dryer, washing machine or dishwasher starts a fire at night – the fire may have more time to develop before you're aware of it. And that's if you have working smoke alarms to wake you up. If a fire starts at night and you don't have working smoke alarms, this could be fatal”.

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

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 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.

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

Lendology CIC

Calculate the monthly cost of energy efficient improvements

If you are a homeowner worried about the rising cost of energy, Lendology's innovative loan scheme may be a good solution to help you improve your home's energy efficiency.

Working with [Councils](#), Lendology provide eligible homeowners with flexible finance so you can complete home repairs, install renewable energy measures or improve your home's energy efficiency.

Unlike other mainstream lenders, Lendology do not use credit scores or algorithms to make their lending decisions. People make decisions for people, and everyone receives the same fixed interest rate, regardless of their circumstances, loan amount or loan term.

Lendology believes that everyone should have access to a home that is safe, warm, and suitable for their individual needs and works across the community to enable this, reduce fuel poverty and establish the link between health and homes.

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

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Last chance to order heating oil before Christmas

Have you checked your Oil tank lately? Need a top up before Christmas?

Order through the CCS Oil Scheme partner [AF Affinity](#) by Wednesday 30 November to ensure delivery by Christmas!

Heating oil prices have dropped by 15% during November, the lowest since early September. The CCS have no indication if these lower prices will continue which makes now a good time to order.

If you would like to place a heating oil order, contact the CCS on 01603 881888 or those with a Direct Debit can place their orders by emailing somersetbuying@af-affinity.co.uk.

More about the scheme and how to join here: <https://ccslovesomerset.org/oil/>.

Talking Café Live

The final November Talking Cafe live-streamed session will take place on: -

- **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 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.

Clinton's Weekly Video Update

Cost of Living Support

In this week's [video](#), Clinton explores the support available to assist people who may be struggling with their financial wellbeing in light of the Cost of Living Crisis.

Find out more about the support available across Somerset at www.somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living.

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)

Last chance to apply for Extra Care and Sheltered Housing Funding

SASP is seeking to fund Extra Care Housing Schemes and Sheltered Housing in Somerset to support residents to increase their mobility, strength and confidence and move more again following restrictions from Covid-19.

The most vulnerable groups in society have been affected by deconditioning and declining mobility levels following the Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns. With this funding, Extra Care Housing Schemes and Sheltered Housing schemes will be able to strengthen their ability to support residents most at risk of deconditioning to improve mobility, functional fitness and confidence to go out again. This will help to minimise social isolation through a varied programme of supported activities.

Physical activity has been shown to increase physical and emotional wellbeing in people of all ages. Increased social isolation, increased health risks and a decrease in mental wellbeing have all been linked to Covid-19. Residents of Extra Care Housing Schemes and Sheltered Housing schemes require assistance in regaining their confidence and capacity to resume physical activity.

Applications should include the following:

- Funding must be used to facilitate physical activity reconditioning opportunities for residents. This may include costs towards training, equipment, physical activity instructors, partnership working or new activities.
- Funding must be spent by 31 March 2023.
- Evidence how your project will benefit the residents.
- Provide an understanding of how the project will be sustained after the funding is spent.

The Extra Care Housing fund will run until March 2023, but applications shut on 1 December 2022.

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

Health and Welfare

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 Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)

NCSC and law enforcement encourage vigilance when shopping online this Christmas

A campaign has been launched to help keep online shoppers more secure in the run up to Christmas. Especially with the costs of living biting, the NCSC want to protect everyone from being scammed this Christmas. Sadly, thousands of people were, last year, losing on average one thousand pounds each to fraud as they shopped online over the festive period.

Black Friday is this week – one of the biggest days in the shopping calendar. It's a great day to pick up Christmas presents. But it's also a day fraudsters target too.

Many of us are spending more time than ever shopping online. The National Cyber Security Centre [online shopping guidance](#) video can help you to avoid scam websites, and purchase items safely. Please [click here](#) to read the guidance.

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

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Operation Sceptre

Last week, ASP intensified efforts to reduce the harm and impact of knife crime, by taking part in Operation Sceptre, a national initiative they have been involved with since 2016.

Officers were out in communities removing weapons from the streets, arresting wanted offenders, ensuring retailers were complying with the law around the sale of knives to children and educating young people on the dangers and consequences of carrying knives.

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

Man who kidnapped teenager as she walked home from night out jailed after investigation

A man who admitted kidnapping a teenage girl has been jailed for more than five years.

Lee Shiers, 36, dragged a 16-year-old girl towards his car as she walked home from an evening with friends in Taunton.

The victim, who was punched repeatedly by Shiers, managed to fight him off and run away before two members of the public who'd witnessed the incident drove after her and offered her help.

The incident happened on Friday 18 March.

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

Fans urged to be responsible to safely enjoy World Cup 2022

ASP are encouraging football fans to make sure they behave responsibly during the World Cup.

England's quest for glory began on Monday 21 November, with Gareth Southgate's side hoping to be the first men's team to win a major international honour since 1966.

While the overwhelming majority of football fans will enjoy watching the games safely and sensibly at home or at public settings, such as pubs, ASP will be running policing operations throughout the tournament because figures show that several offence types increase when England play. Many of those crimes are linked to alcohol consumption.

Football-related disorder can see offenders receive football banning orders preventing them from attending fixtures.

One of the most notable increases in crime types seen nationally during football tournaments is the number of domestic abuse reports made. Nationally, the average number of domestic abuse calls to police rises significantly if England lose and even if they win there is a noticeable increase.

Drivers also need to remember that if they are out drinking overnight, there remains a real possibility they could be over the limit in the morning too and not safe to drive.

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

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).