

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 134 Weeks ending 18/12/2022

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. Office Closure over Christmas

Whilst all services can still be accessed online at www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk, the offices will be closed to the public for the Christmas break from **5.00pm on Friday 23 December** and will reopen on **Tuesday 3 January 2023 at 8.30am**.

In the event of an emergency such as flooding, or urgent housing repairs, please call **0300 304 8000** and follow the options for the out of hours service.

For emergency homeless enquiries please call [0300 123 2327](tel:03001232327).

Mind in Somerset are manning their Mindline emotional support and mental health helpline 24 hours a day, seven days a week – visit the [Mind in Somerset](#) website or call [01823 276 892](tel:01823276892).

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.

- **LCN City, Town and Parish Working Group Virtual Meeting – Wednesday 21 December**, 10:30am – 11:00am via MS Teams. An agenda and link to join the meeting will be sent out in advance. 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.
- **SWT Executive Committee – Wednesday 21 December** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public statements or questions is 4pm on Monday 19 December. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 4 January 2023**, at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public statements or questions is 4pm on Friday 23 December. The agenda will be published on the 20 December and will be available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Planning Committee – Thursday 5 January 2023**, at 1,00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public statements or questions is 4pm on Tuesday 3 January. The agenda will be published on the 21 December and will be available to view on the [website](#).
- **SWT Exmoor Area Panel – Thursday 12 January 2023**, at 7pm in the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe.

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. **SWT Housing Newsletter – Winter 2022**

SWT Housing has produced the latest tenants’ newsletter which is due to hit doormats soon. Approximately 6000 publications have been printed and will be distributed to all SWT tenants and leaseholders. There has been a particular emphasis on the Cost-of-Living Crisis and how tenants can access help and support.

Please [click here](#) to read the latest issue.

4. **Add your message to the Memory Tree**

SWT is giving visitors to Taunton town centre the chance to hang their own decorations on a Memory Tree in Castle Green.

The 12ft Norman Fir has been put up and festooned with lights ready for members of the public to hang their decorations in memory of a loved one or with a simple personal message.

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

5. Crescent car park set for major refurbishment

The Crescent car park in Taunton is set for a major refurbishment in the new year.

The town centre car park which is popular with shoppers and people attending social events will be upgraded to create 150 car parking spaces all with more room between each bay enabling easier entry and exit to cars.

The refurbishment will increase the number of accessible parking spaces to 12 and there will be dedicated motorcycle parking areas.

The car park will benefit from the provision of 19 electric vehicle charging points to encourage uptake of electric vehicles in line with SWT's commitment towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

It will also provide a secure cycle shelter to promote cycling as a sustainable means of transport, supporting healthy lifestyles and environmental improvements with trees being introduced.

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

6. More play area upgrades for Taunton and Wellington

SWT has installed new playground equipment at play areas in Taunton and Wellington as part of its replacement programme to invest in community facilities.

The outdated apparatus at Walkers Gate Play Area in Wellington has now been replaced with a multi-play unit featuring a swing, slide, fireman's pole, climbing wall and counting panel; a four-way spring seesaw; talking tubes; and new shock-absorbing safety surfacing.

Work to provide additional play equipment has also just been completed at Compton Close Play Area in Taunton, which is scheduled to reopen in the week commencing 19 December.

The new equipment includes a toddlers' multi-play unit; sensory totem pole, spiral shifter, and hourglass panels; a bridge and balance walks; spring-mounted seesaws; variations of roundabouts and swings; as well as new safety surfacing.

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

7. Royal Mail Industrial Action – further dates added

Royal Mail has received notification that there will be further national strikes on **Friday 23 December and Saturday 24 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.](#)

8. Reminder - Taunton Town Council accommodation agreed

Taunton Town Council will be based in office space at Deane House, Taunton, when it is created in April 2023.

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

9. Reminder - Town and Parish Precept Forms 2023/24

SWT emailed all parish councils enclosing Parish/Town Precept Forms for the 2022/23 Financial Year. The form has been amended to be in a consistent format across the county so clerks will notice some changes. The completed forms and any queries should be emailed to parishprecepts@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

If Parish Councils decide to return their precept demand forms using the post, then extra time should be allowed for processing in the digital mailroom. All submissions should be received by **Friday 20 January 2022**.

If parishes have any queries or difficulties in submitting the form by the due date, please contact SWT on parishprecepts@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk at your earliest opportunity.

10. Reminder - Small grants to boost food and drinks sector

SWT is offering small grants to local food and drink producers in collaboration with Sedgemoor District Council and other partners.

Grants of up to £2,500 are available to small and micro-sized businesses with up to 49 employees, to help support improvements or changes that demonstrate a clear impact on future growth and/or viability.

Any SWT business wishing to apply should check the eligibility criteria and complete the online application form via SWT's [Spotlight on food and drink](#) webpage, which will remain open until **6 January 2023**.

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

11. Reminder - Free cigarette stub pouches to help fight littering

Environmental enforcement officers patrolling the district as part of the Council's litter enforcement trial are giving away pouches to encourage people to dispose of their cigarette butts responsibly.

SWT and EHCS have 500 'stub store' pouches to give away to allow smokers to dispose of cigarette butts on the go and help reduce the amount of cigarette litter in our streets and open spaces.

The pouches are small, lightweight and reusable with a fireproof lining to extinguish cigarettes which can then be disposed of at home or in waste bins.

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

12. 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 17 and 24 December.

13. SWT Climate News - Issue 8 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.

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 December issue is available to read now

14. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

SWP is asking residents to plan and be ready for changes to collections this festive fortnight.

Public holidays always mean a change to collection days over Christmas and New Year.

Heavy festive loads and three-weekly rubbish collections make it extra important not to miss yours.

And, with winter on its way, everyone is encouraged think about 'clearing the decks' before Christmas in case bad weather disrupts collections.

All collections remain unchanged up to and including Friday 23 December.

There are no collections on Monday 26 December or Monday 2 January. Both weeks' collections will be a day later than usual. This includes Saturday collections on 31 December and 7 January of waste usually picked-up on the Friday.

The revised schedule for recycling and refuse is below. As usual, garden waste collections are suspended for the festive fortnight.

Usual Day		Revised Day
Friday 23 December	-	No change
Monday 26 December	-	Tuesday 27 December
Tuesday 27 December	-	Wednesday 28 December
Wednesday 28 December	-	Thursday 29 December
Thursday 29 December	-	Friday 30 December
Friday 30 December	-	Saturday 31 December
Monday 2 January	-	Tuesday 3 January
Tuesday 3 January	-	Wednesday 4 January
Wednesday 4 January	-	Thursday 5 January
Thursday 5 January	-	Friday 6 January
Friday 6 January	-	Saturday 7 January

Normal service resumes from Monday 9 January.

You can also check collection days for now and the rest of the year using the online My Collection Day feature somersetwaste.gov.uk.

Download a calendar for printing or, better still, download it into the calendar on your device and get automatic reminders of your collection days.

Snow, ice and freezing temperatures can disrupt collections so please bear with us in the event of severe weather.

Crews will return as soon as possible for any missed collections. If conditions are bad we may not be able to meet our usual 'return in two days' target.

Check somersetwaste.gov.uk for updates if we are experiencing disruption.

If severe weather is forecast, residents may wish to 'clear the decks' before the festive period so you have room in your recycling boxes and refuse bin.

Recycle everything you can in your next collection. If you are able, you may want to take black bag refuse to a recycling site so your bin is empty when the festive season starts.

All 16 recycling sites are open on their usual winter hours over Christmas and New Year, except all close on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

The sites are a great way to dispose of large amount of recycling, such as cardboard, and will have special drop-off points for paper gift wrap.

Upcoming Fixy events in SWT

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.

- **Saturday 17 December** 10:00am - 12:00pm – **Wivey Repair Café**, Community Centre, West Street, Wiveliscombe, Taunton TA4 2JP.
- **Saturday 7 January** 10:00am -12:00pm – Fixy reuse van will be in front of the Old Post Office, High Street, Wellington TA21 8QT, to support the nearby **Wellington Repair Café**, collect smart tech and signpost future events.
- **Sunday 15 January** 11:00am - 2:00pm – **Otterford Repair Café**, Parish Hall, Bishopswood TA20 3RS. Fixy will support Repair Café, collect smart tech, signpost future events, promote reuse and encourage volunteers.

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

New Somerset Council

Latest news

New branding for Somerset confirmed

The new branding for many of Somerset's public services was confirmed at a meeting of Somerset County Council's Executive on 14 December, with the approval of a brand for the new Somerset Council. The new brand will begin to appear on council services from April next year when the new unitary Council comes into existence.

The new brand, featuring a version of the Somerset Dragon from the county's coat of arms, has been designed by an in-house team at the council and was developed after testing with staff and residents. Council services will be badged by a white dragon's head placed in a teal five-sided shape, representing the five councils that will be replaced by the new council.

As well as keeping costs down by designing the branding with an in-house team made up of designers from Sedgemoor and South Somerset District Councils, working with colleagues from Somerset County Council, the paper approved by Executive also proposes that the new council should avoid a branding "Big Bang", rolling out the new brand over time and accepting that branding from the existing councils will continue to be seen around the county for some years to come.

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?

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.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas.

Somerset County Council (SCC)

SCC Highways maintenance update

After another week of very cold temperatures especially on Exmoor (where it has hardly risen above freezing for a week) SCC contractors' gangs have been very busy salting the precautionary routes on our major roads. This has been usually twice a day (4am and lunchtime) to reduce the potential risks to highway users at the main travel to/from work times so this has been a heavy workload week. They have, however, also successfully carried out 150 Safety Defect repairs (84 in Taunton Area and 66 in West Somerset Area).

SCC Highways will continue to monitor, risk assess and repair any reported defects over the Christmas and New Year period to keep the travelling public safe and they would like to take this opportunity to pass on Seasons Greetings and wish a Happy New Year to all in Somerset from the Area Highways Teams.

SCC would normally expect the number of pothole reports to rise as the road surfaces recover from the freeze/thaw actions of the recent cold weather and will have maintenance gangs available to quickly react to any reports of potential danger.

Reported defects are still relatively 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.

Planned SCC road works in the SWT area for the week commencing 19 December 2022 are as follows: -

Monday 19 December

Halse Road, Halse	3 days	Excavate collapsed pipe and replace
Liddymore Road, Watchet	3 days	Carriageway works
Castle Hill, Skilgate	2 days	Reform new gully and chamber
Heavitree Way, Taunton	2 days	Replacement of street lighting unit
Orchard Way, Taunton	2 days	Repairs to bollards CE and CD
Priorswood Road, Taunton	2 days	Replacement of traffic bollard GC
Cheats Road, Ruishton	1 day	Sign replacement

Tuesday 20 December

Minehead to Williton Road, Carhampton 1 day Gully Emptying

Wednesday 21 December

Gatchell Green, Trull	1 day	Jetting works
Mountfields Avenue, Taunton	1 day	Jetting works
Mountfields Road, Taunton	1 day	Jetting works

Thursday 22 December

Hyde Lane, Creech St Michael	1 day	Replace sign post/ refix school sign
Minehead Road, Norton Fitzwarren	1 day	Jetting works.

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

Albemarle Road, Taunton - ttro712521TD

Somerset County Council 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 **Albemarle Road - from 50 metres north-west from the junction with Station Road, for a further distance of 45 metres.**

This Order will enable Jurassic Fibre to carry out cabling works.

The works are expected to commence on 11 January 2023 and last until 13 January 2023 between the hours of 8:00am - 5:00pm for a total of 3 days.

Please visit <https://one.network/?tm=131301579> for further information on the alternative route.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site **is not permitted** on this occasion.

For any further information about this closure please contact **Jurassic Fibre** on **0778 0060 809**, quoting reference: **ttro712521TD**

South Road, Taunton - ttro031902TD

Somerset County Council 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 **South Road - from 63 metres north west of the junction with Greenlands, north westwards for a total distance of 123 metres.**

This Order will enable Utility Services Ltd to replace poles on behalf of Openreach.

The works are expected to commence on **15 January 2023 between the hours of 9:30am - 3:30pm for a total of 6 hours.** Please visit <https://one.network/?tm=131292939> for further information on the alternative route.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site is **permitted** on this occasion.

For any further information about this closure please contact **Utility Services Ltd** on **01884 763100**, quoting reference: **ttro031902TD**

Great Western Railway (GWR)

Updates on Industrial Action

Trades unions have announced industrial action, including strike action and action short of strike, over December and January that will affect rail services from 13 December to 18 December 2022, and from 24 December 2022 to 8 January 2023. For most of the period, a reduced, revised timetable will operate across several train operators, including GWR.

On strike days (13-14 and 16-17 December; 3-4 and 6-7 January) only an extremely reduced service will operate on a limited number of routes. Some parts of the GWR network will have no service at all. Services will start later 7:30am and all journeys must be completed by 6:30pm. On the days between the strikes (15 December and 5 January), a reduced timetable will be operating, and trains will start later. The days after the strikes (18 December and 8 January) will also be affected and trains will start later and there could be short-notice cancellations and alterations.

From Monday 19 December to Saturday 24 December a full timetable will be in operation. However, trains will finish earlier than usual on Christmas Eve, and customers should check their journey before travelling.

After Christmas and throughout the new-year period, a reduced timetable will be in operation on all routes, and there will be some late-night cancellations.

On the days affected, passengers are advised to find an alternative way to travel.

Where services are running, customers should only travel by train if necessary, and it is highly recommended that a seat reservation is made. Other train operators are also affected by this action, so onward travel could also be affected.

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

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Top 3 causes of fire in December – and how to avoid them

December is the busiest month of the year for house fires. Find out the top recommendations to have a fire-safe Christmas [here](#).

The Facts about Chimney Fires

DSFRS attend on average between 150-200 chimney fires a year. Colder winters lead to more. Chimney fires are caused by the build-up of deposits within the chimney which then ignite.

As you might expect this means that chimney fires are very much a winter incident. Most of the chimney fires DSFRS attend happen in the colder months when fireplaces and stoves are in use.

This year, for example, they attended 40 chimney fires in January but just 20 of them from May to September. The busiest time of year for chimney fires is over the winter from November to March.

Most chimney fires happen in the early evening when the highest number of fireplaces are being used. As a cause of fire it is simple - the more often you use your fireplace/stove the more likely you are to have a chimney fire. You can reduce this risk if you have it swept regularly by a reputable chimney sweep.

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

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 next drop ins will take place on **Tuesday 20 December and Tuesday 17 January**, between 10:00am and 12:00pm, at CHARIS, 16-17 Hammet Street, Taunton TA1 1RZ

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)

SCF raises £500k to support local charities

The Somerset Cost-of-Living Fund, supported by the funds raised by the Somerset Cost-of-Living Crisis Appeal, has now been launched to help community groups and local charities that are experiencing financial challenges. Grants (money that does

not need to be paid back) from £1,000 to £10,000 are now available to help reduce the additional financial impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

Groups can apply to the Somerset Cost-of-Living Fund for a grant from now until **Wednesday 21 December**.

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

Somerset's Surviving Winter Appeal raises incredible £100k

As the temperatures plummeted this week, SCF is pleased to announce that, following the launch in November 2022, the 2022/23 Surviving Winter appeal has already raised a phenomenal £100,000 – thanks to the incredible generosity of local donors.

Demand for the Surviving Winter grants this year is stronger than ever, and donations are being rapidly disbursed across the county in grants of up to £500 to help ensure our vulnerable older neighbours can stay warm, safe and well in the face of soaring energy bills.

The annual appeal encourages pensioners to donate some or all of their Winter Fuel Payment, if they don't need it themselves. These donations provide funding and support to older people across Somerset who are struggling to heat their homes.

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

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

December's Talking Cafes Live

Watch LIVE every Wednesday at 1pm and ask questions in the comments for instant answers!

- **21 December** - [Citizens Advice](#) Bureau - how they can help!
- **28 December** - [The Bluebirds](#) Theatre Company - therapy through the arts.

Want to take part and shout about the organisation or community project you are passionate about? Contact christineb@somersetccc.org.uk or message the Talking Cafe page! <https://somersetagents.org/talking-cafes-live>.

Somerset Good Neighbours

A Good Neighbours scheme is simply a local group of volunteers providing practical help and support within their community. CCS ran a pilot project to develop and support new schemes across Somerset. This was really successful, and these groups have been part of the huge community effort of the last few months. CCS has been successful in obtaining further funding to continue to support the creation of new schemes.

If you are part of a community group, would like to start a Good Neighbours scheme, or need help expanding the work you're already doing, [please visit the website for more information](#).

Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE)

How to save energy in your community building

If you run, lease or own a community building like a scout hut, village hall, community association building, or even a local church, you're probably thinking about the rising cost of energy bills and how this is going to impact how your building is used.

At the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), we're already hearing of communities forced to make [difficult decisions to close buildings or limit activities](#) because they can't afford energy bills. These community hubs are important places where local people come together to socialise, learn, access key services, stay warm and access affordable food.

We're facing a tough winter across the UK with the rising cost of living and spiralling cost of energy. And [even with new financial support from central government](#), this isn't enough to keep some community buildings warm.

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

Spark

The Warm Welcome Somerset Map is now live!

As many of you will know, Spark Somerset has been working with community partners to develop a network and online map of Warm Welcome spaces for those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Spark are delighted to announce that the Warm Welcome map is now live and you can view it at

http://warmwelcomesomerset.org.uk?mc_cid=1293684b4e&mc_eid=UNIQID.

You can use the map to locate a Warm Welcome space, find out when it's open and what facilities are on offer. Please share it far and wide so that even more people can find the warmth, company and support they need this winter, and beyond.

If you would like to add your group or venue to the map, please visit https://sparksomerset.org.uk/warm-welcome?mc_cid=1293684b4e&mc_eid=UNIQID where you will find the registration form and a whole host of information to help you set up, run or fund your Warm Welcome space. Spark are continuously updating this page so please return regularly to see what's new!

Finally, Spark would like to say like to say a big thank you to everyone who has signed up to offer a Warm Welcome so far - over 70 spaces and counting!

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.

Lendology

Council-funded loans help homeowners towards net zero

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

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

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

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

The Tree Council

Branching Out Fund – deadline extended to 15 January 2023

Grants of between £200 and £2,000 are available to a range of not-for-profit organisations, including town and parish councils, for tree planting projects across the UK. Project proposals should assist schools and community groups with tree and hedge planting initiatives that involve and educate children and young people aged 21 and under. The deadline for Branching Out has been extended from Sunday 4 December 2022.

The new deadline is Sunday 15 January 2023.

More information on this fund can be found on the [website](#).

Health and Welfare

SCC Public Health

Make sure you get your winter vaccinations

With winter upon us, Somerset residents are being reminded to protect their health and the health of people around them by getting their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Covid and flu vaccinations are safe and effective ways to prevent serious illness. If you're 50 and over, a frontline health or social care worker, pregnant, have a long-term health condition, or are a paid or unpaid carer, you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, and you can likely get the COVID-19 seasonal booster. Children aged 2-15 years old are also eligible for free flu vaccination, which is delivered through either their GP for pre-school and school for school age children – parents need to sign a consent form.

Vaccinations

COVID-19

If you are eligible, you can book your seasonal COVID-19 vaccine using the [online booking service](#) by calling 119 or finding a [local vaccination walk-in site](#).

If you have not yet had your earlier doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, it's not too late to come forward and you can get these at any time.

Getting both vaccines is important because more people are likely to get the flu this winter, and you're more likely to be seriously ill if you get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

A number of clinics across Somerset are also open for walk-ins. More details can be found at [COVID-19 and Flu vaccinations in Somerset - NHS Somerset](#).

[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

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.

Healthy Start Vouchers

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk.

Check if you're eligible by applying today. If you're eligible, you'll be sent a Healthy Start card with money on it that you can use in some UK shops. Pre-payment will be uploaded onto this card every 4 weeks. You can use your card to buy:

- plain liquid cow's milk
- fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables
- fresh, dried, and tinned pulses
- infant formula milk based on cow's milk

You can also use your card to collect:

- Healthy Start vitamins – these support you during pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Vitamin drops for babies and young children – these are suitable from birth to 4 years old

Information on how to apply for the scheme and for anyone who wants to check if they're eligible to apply can be found at www.healthystart.nhs.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
- Mindline Somerset – 01823 276892
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

Crime / Safeguarding

Stop Scams UK Ltd / Global Cyber Alliance

The 159-telephone service

Consumers wanting to avoid financial fraud now have a secure and easy-to-remember phone number to contact their banks on to avoid painful scams. It could prove to be the safest way for many to contact their provider if they have suspicions and concerns about their accounts, or even if they're struggling to find a customer services number.

Stop Scams UK and Global Cyber Alliance have launched, the UK-wide 159 call service, which is designed to guarantee consumers a safe route to contacting their banks.

The scheme is urging people to "stop, hang up and call 159" to check calls are for real. The idea is to help those who believe they have been contacted by scammers claiming to be their bank, or by fraudsters who encourage them to transfer money. 159 works in the same way as 101 for the police or 111 for the NHS. It's the number you can trust to get you through to your bank, every time

Please [click here](#) to find out more about "159".

Counter Terrorism Policing

Urging Vigilance this Christmas

People are being urged to trust their instincts and report anything suspicious to Counter Terrorism Policing this Christmas.

In the last year, Counter Terrorism Policing received around 10,000 reports from members of the public. A fifth of these reports were turned into intelligence used to disrupt terrorist activity in the UK.

As people head into town and city centres for the festivities, it is vital that people remain alert and aware of their surroundings.

Some examples of suspicious activity or behaviour could include:

- Taking notes or photos about security arrangements in city centres, or at events.

- Hiring large vehicles for no clear reason.
- Buying or storing large amounts of chemicals, fertilisers or gas cylinders for no obvious reasons; and
- Suspicious or unusual bank transactions.

You can find more information and make a report [here](#). In an emergency always dial 999.

Find out more information on the [Counter Terrorism Police](#) website.

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Seven tips to keep fraudster away this season

ASP want everyone to have a safe and jolly time this festive season. They have created some top tips to help protect you from fraud or cybercrime:

- Keep your children safe online;
- Protect your identity;
- Paws for thought when buying a pet online;
- Buy safely online this year;
- Think you might have missed a parcel?
- Think about what you are sharing online,
- Make sure scammers don't hook you in using WhatsApp.

Remember fraud doesn't only happen at this time of year. These tips will help you all year round. Please [click here](#) to read the full press release and find out how to prevent these frauds.

StreetSafe tool

Local people are being encouraged to use the StreetSafe Tool to anonymously tell ASP and partners about public places where they feel or have felt unsafe.

[StreetSafe](#) has been introduced as part of the Government's response to tackling violence against women and girls but all local people are being encouraged to use the tool to help identify areas where there are fears caused by anti-social behaviour and environment issues including lack of street lighting, abandoned buildings and vandalism.

The online tool enables residents to anonymously pinpoint on a map the location where they felt unsafe.

The information provided will be considered alongside the extensive evidence base already gathered by police forces and used to inform the community safety activities of police and partner agencies such as local authorities.

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

Reminder - Be sure to take care on the roads

Frosty and icy conditions mean that car windscreens, windows and mirrors are likely to be iced over by morning.

Learn from [this driver](#) who didn't take the time to defrost their windows before setting off, and whose view of the road was hampered by ice, and a poorly placed SatNav. They were reported for driving without due care and attention.

It's an offence to not maintain a clear unobstructed windscreen so please take an extra 5 minutes to fully defrost your windows in the morning.

Operation Tonic Underway

ASP have arrested 169 people for driving under the influence of drink or drugs since 21 November, as part of Operation Tonic.

This year's winter anti-drink/drug drive operation started earlier than usual to coincide with the World Cup. Officers have been warning drivers across Avon and Somerset there is no safe way to drink and drive and are targeting those who get behind the wheel when it is not safe to do so.

The operation is aimed at reducing fatal and serious injury Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and protecting other road users. In 2021, a third of RTCs in Avon and Somerset had a drink and/or drug drive factor. They involved the deaths of 12 people, all of whom had families, friends and loved ones whose lives will be forever impacted.

Last year's Op Tonic operation, which ran throughout December resulted in 246 arrests.

Responding to reports from communities, acting on gathered intelligence, stop checks and engagement events in the community to explain the consequences of drink/drug driving, are some of the tactics being used in this year's operation.

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

Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEV)s – E-Scooters

Privately owned e-skateboards, like e-scooters, are classed as Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs). While they can legally be sold by retailers, they currently cannot be taxed or insured for use on public roads, so their use is limited to private land with the landowner's permission.

ASP urge anyone considering buying an e-skateboard or e-scooter as a Christmas gift to ensure they understand the law first.

For more information, please visit A&SP e-scooter frequently asked questions page [here](#).

For 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

This is the last newsletter of 2022. After a brief hiatus the first issue of 2023 (Issue 135) will be sent out in the week ending 15 January 2023.

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).