

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 136 Weeks ending 15/01/2023

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. Temporary disruption to council services

Advance notice of significant disruption to Somerset West and Taunton Council's services between **Thursday 19 January and Monday 23 January**.

We will be carrying out major changes to our Information Technology systems in preparation for the transition into Somerset Council in April 2023.

This will affect all customer services between Thursday 19 January and Monday 23 January.

Some of our services will be unavailable:

- Our normal Customer Services will be unavailable.
- On Friday 20 January, Customer Reception at Deane House (Belvedere Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1HE) will be open as usual from 8:30am – 5:00pm for enquiries but support will be limited by what we can do without computer systems.
- On Friday 20 January, Customer Reception at West Somerset House (Killick Way, Williton, Somerset, TA4 4QA) will be open as usual from 8:30am – 4:30pm for enquiries but support will be limited by what we can do without computer systems.

- Services may also be temporarily impacted during the week commencing 23 January.
- Our online services will be disrupted including online forms and systems.

If you have an emergency, we have put in place temporary arrangements to take emergency calls only relating to Homelessness, urgent Environmental Health issues and dangerous structures, which should be reported to [0300 304 8000](tel:03003048000) where your call will be diverted to a third party.

All other non-urgent requests should be submitted by email to enquiries@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and we will respond to your enquiry as soon as we are able, once services are back online.

If you are unable to use our website and your call is not urgent over this time, please call back in a few days.

Please accept our apologies during this period. We will return to business as usual as soon as possible.

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.

- **SCC Executive Board – Wednesday 18 January 2023**, at 10.00am in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton. This meeting will make recommendations on the LCN areas and their roles and responsibilities. The agenda and report packs are now available to view on the SCC [website](#). Members of the public can attend either in person or via the [online meeting link](#).
- **SWT Executive Committee – Wednesday 18 January 2023**, at 6.15pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 16 January.
- **SWT Planning Committee – Thursday 19 January 2023**, at 10:00am in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on 17 January.
- **SWT Community Scrutiny Meeting – Wednesday 25 January 2023**, at 6.15pm in the JMR. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](#). Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 23 January.

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. Climate Change Newsletter Issue 9

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.

Please [click here](#) to view the latest issue and subscribe to Climate News.

4. Cultural Strategy lends boost to creative economy

Progress of SWT's [Cultural Strategy](#) has been revealed with the completion of a 12-month impact report.

SWT's Cultural Strategy was adopted in late 2021 with the aim of growing a vibrant, creative and culturally rich environment for Taunton Garden Town and the district at large. It supports the Council's strategic commitment to enhance the district's art and culture provision in line with its [Corporate Strategy 2020-2024](#).

With a £200,000 budget dedicated to arts and culture, the Cultural Strategy has made a significant impact to the creative economy.

For more details about the achievements made, the 12-month impact report has been summarised in a presentation video available at youtu.be/wgMLItZEaak.

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

5. Town/Parish Councillors and Clerks Training

Three free sessions have been scheduled for Town/Parish Councillors and Clerks to attend for training on:

- Standards Regime including Code of Conduct & Interests
- Somerset Code of Conduct
- Social Media and pitfalls to avoid
- Recording of Council meetings
- Confidentiality
- Being a Councillor versus being an individual
- Disrespect versus freedom of speech
- Public perception and risk

The sessions will take place online and the dates are

Thursday 26 January at 6pm
Thursday 9 February at 6pm
Wednesday 8 March at 6pm

Please circulate this information to all of your Parish Councillors.

To book a place, and to be sent the link to the session please email monitoringofficer@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

6. Reminder - Historic England funding secures next phase of repairs at Tone Works

SWT has secured further grant funding for the next phase of repairs at Tone Works in Wellington.

The grant of £185,596 from Historic England will go towards Phase 3 of works at the nationally significant site which is home to a complex of Grade II* listed buildings and was purchased by the council in 2020.

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

7. Reminder - Eat fresh in 2023 with Somerset West Lottery

The Somerset West Lottery New Year Bolt-on Prize is now open, offering players a chance to win year's supply of fresh food recipe boxes to eat healthier and save money in 2023.

Anyone buying one or more tickets between now and Saturday, 25 February, could win 12 monthly deliveries of fresh ingredients to plan and cook up to 20 delicious meals from scratch from food recipe box provider, [HelloFresh](#), courtesy of external lottery management company [Gatherwell](#).

HelloFresh is a food recipe box delivery service, developed to help customers plan for their weekly food delivery without the need for a meal planner.

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

8. Reminder - Meet the Team building Rainbow Way, Minehead

SWT and Classic Builders are hosting a drop-in open event for members of the public to come and learn more about this important zero carbon development.

The event is open to anyone wanting to know more about the project and to meet the team delivering the works. **Doors open at 3pm on Friday 20 January 2023 at Minehead Cricket Club (Luttrell Way, Minehead, TA24 6DF)**, and the team will be there until 6pm.

This ambitious project will provide much needed homes for local people together with high performing properties that are cost efficient to maintain. Demand is expected to be high for these properties so applications should be

made via [Homefinder Somerset](#) – with priority being given to people with a local connection or association to the area.

9. Reminder - Blue Anchor coastal defence work to begin in the spring

Work on the permanent Blue Anchor coastal defence scheme will begin in spring 2023.

SWT carried out emergency works to stabilise the wall and reduce the risk of collapse in 2020.

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

10. 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.

11. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

The urgent road closure on A361 due to flooding impacted recycling and garden collections on Thursday 12 January in and around East Lyng, Athelney, West Lyng, Burrowbridge and Muchelney.

Collections will be attempted using alternative routes. If any properties are not accessible collections will be made as soon as the flood gates reopen.

Residents are advised to store their waste until collections can be made.

You can 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.

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 14 January** 10:30am-12:30pm – **Taunton Repair Café**, Moose Hall, Tower Lane, Taunton TA1 4AR.
- **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: somersetwaste.gov.uk/share-and-repair.

New Somerset Council

Latest news

Consultation opens into the new single Somerset Council budget.

The proposed budget for the new unitary Somerset Council was published on Tuesday 10 January.

The proposals, set to be discussed by the Council's Executive on Wednesday 18 January, will be the first time the services and costs from all four District Councils and the County Council have been brought together. Consultation into the proposed budget runs until 10 February.

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

Council seeks Independent Persons for Ethical Standards role

Are you able to act objectively, impartially and in confidence, making reasoned judgements based on evidence?

Do you have a demonstrable passion for local democracy and local government, and an enthusiasm to develop a sound understanding of the ethical and regulatory framework relating to member standards? Then this role could be for you.

As required under the Localism Act 2011, the new Somerset Council will operate with an adopted Elected Members' Code of Conduct, which reflects the seven Nolan

Principles of Public Life. These are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The Council will promote and maintain these high standards of conduct through its Monitoring Officer and its Standards Committee. It will have arrangements in place for dealing with any allegations that the code has been broken by its elected members, or co-opted members.

The Council will also be responsible for dealing with complaints that City, Town, or Parish councillors in Somerset have breached their particular council's Code of Conduct.

The Act requires that before a decision is taken on an allegation, the Council's Monitoring Officer seeks (and the member complained about can seek), the views of a duly appointed Independent Person.

Independent Persons have a further role, in that they must be consulted if the Council is considering disciplining or dismissing one of its statutory officers, such as its Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer.

The new Somerset Council is seeking to appoint three Independent Persons.

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

Work underway to review office and customer access buildings for new Somerset Council

With fewer than 100 days to go until the launch of the new unitary Somerset Council on 1 April 2023, work is underway to understand where offices and customer service delivery points might be situated.

Somerset Council is committed to putting the customer at the heart of its services and will have customer hubs all over the county, including face to face access points. At the same time, many services will be available online offering 24/7 access.

A review of the property estate is underway to ensure that customer service delivery points and accommodation for staff and services are in the right place. This review will seek to ensure best value for taxpayers and support Somerset's pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The possible disposal of some buildings by sale or lease is being considered as part of the process. There are a number of activities and reviews to be completed before any decisions can be made, and no decisions are expected until Spring/Summer 2023.

Phase one of the property review will focus on three projects:

- A review of properties in the West Somerset area
- A feasibility study to inform a potential disposal of Petters House in Yeovil
- A strategy for C Block at County Hall in Taunton

The review in West Somerset will look at a specific group of nine operational sites currently occupied by either Somerset County Council or Somerset West and Taunton Council in Minehead and Williton. The new council will in addition own a variety of other leased assets/landholdings which are not being considered at this time.

All potentially affected staff have been contacted and will be kept informed of the progress of the reviews.

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)

Cliff-top B3191 Cleeve Hill closed

The B3191 Cleeve Hill, near Watchet, has been closed to all road users with immediate effect in the interests of public safety.

SCC's Highways Team has taken the decision to close the road following a geotechnical survey, combined with expert advice, that suggests significant movement within the coastal slope adjacent to the road.

Improvements were made to the road to improve safety measures last August. The geotechnical challenges affecting the cliff face are complex and require a high degree of monitoring.

The team were able to act quickly, and the road will be closed until further notice while detailed inspections are carried out.

SCC has instructed their contractors to implement the closure using the new road closure gates.

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

A361 near East Lyng closed due to flood risk

SCC has taken action to close the A361 across the Somerset Levels this morning, Friday 13 January, following warnings from the Environment Agency (EA) and rising water levels.

Road users are being urged to plan ahead and use an alternative route this morning. The emergency road closure gates at Burrowbridge and East Lyng are now closed.

Last night the EA confirmed Currymoor, one of the largest flood storage reservoirs on the Somerset Levels and Moor was full. Overnight inspections confirmed a further significant increase in floodwaters at Currymoor and the rest area on the A361 became flooded.

Further flooding is expected. The flood gates have been closed to keep people safe.

It is the second time the A361 has been closed this week and follows the latest information from the EA. Excess water continuing to flow down a spillway into the next storage reservoirs at Northmoor and Saltmoor, which are currently empty. However, this creates a flood risk to the A361, with a high chance of water getting onto the road.

A flood warning remains in place for Currymoor and Haymoor.

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

Check your flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk>, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgencySW on Twitter for the latest flood updates. You can see if emergency road closure gates are open or closed at <https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/roadclosuregates> .

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

SCC Highways maintenance update

This week SCC's contractor's gangs have successfully repaired 247 safety defects with 108 in West Somerset and 139 in the Taunton Area

Reported defects have increased dramatically since the cold snap of a few weeks ago that damaged road surfaces across the County, 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 current planned SCC Highways works programmed for the week commencing **16 January 2023** (subject to change due to weather) are as follows:

16 January 2023

- **Toneway, Taunton** – 3 days – Replacing delinator bollards in central reservation.
- **Princess Road, Taunton** – 3 days – Replace 13m of drainage in grass verge
- **Mendip Road, Stoke St Michael** – 2 days – Replacement of street lighting unit (PL4).
- **Minehead Road, Kingston St Mary** – 1 day – Clear silt trap.
- **Chestnut Drive, Taunton** – 1 day – Jetting works.

17 January 2023

- **Orchard Close, Wellington** – 3 days – Installation of new column in footpath with trenching and joint pit.
- **Dellers Wharf, Taunton** – 1 day - Traffic signals to be retrofitted as part of the Somerset Retrofit programme across site 453S Dellers Wharf. Pole replacement of severely rusted pole (pole 3) whilst TM is available and in situ.

18 January 2023

- **Hamilton Road, Taunton** – 1 day - Traffic signals to be retrofitted as part of the Somerset Retrofit programme across site 470S Halcon Corner.

19 January 2023

- **Wiveliscombe Road, Norton Fitzwarren** – 2 days – Gully emptying.

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

ttro377919TD - Wrangcombe Road, Wellington Without

Please [click here](#) to view the above road closure; and the link for the **Notice 2** is here.

The works are expected to commence on **16 January 2023** and last for **5 days (07:30am -6:00pm)** to enable **Milestone to carry out patching works..**

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 **Milestone** on **0300 123 2224**, quoting reference: **ttro377919TD**.

ttro136158TD - Priory Bridge Road, Taunton

Please [click here](#) to view the above road closure; the link for the **Notice 2** can be found [here](#).

The works are expected to commence on **17 January 2023** and last for **2 days (6.30pm - 6:30am)** to enable **Jurassic Fibre access to dig down to remove a double blockage..**

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 **07881 834 485**, quoting reference: **ttro136158TD**

ttro513279TD - Castle Street, Taunton

Please [click here](#) to view the above road closure; and the link for the **Notice 2** can be found [here](#).

The works are expected to commence on **22 January 2023** and last for **2 days** to enable **Wessex Water to conduct critical maintenance to the foul sewer using CCTV and Jetvac tanker units..**

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 **Wessex Water** on **0345 600 4600**, quoting reference: **ttro513279TD**.

“Bus It” for £2 on single bus journeys across Somerset

Don't forget that from now until 31 March bus users in Somerset can travel on most routes in the county for just £2.

The major fare cut is part of an initiative funded by the Government aimed at boosting bus use while helping passengers to save money as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite, fuelled in part by high petrol and diesel prices.

The £2 single fare is available from all participating operators from 1 January to 31 March. The initiative will apply to the majority of routes in Somerset. You can check here <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/busit> to see find out more about the scheme.

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

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) Communities for Nature Days – North Hill, Minehead

Calling all volunteers who love the outdoors and want to help make a difference with ENPA conservation projects.

Join the team on the last Tuesday of every month for their 'Communities for nature days' on North Hill, Minehead. North Hill is a great place to explore all year round, with woodlands, fantastic coastal views and amazing wildlife. The activity days offer an ideal way to help with a few light practical conservation tasks (and some heavier ones, if you like), whilst meeting new people, helping the environment and going for a walk.

Meet at 10:00am on North Hill (free parking). Transport is also available from Minehead for those without access to a car. Please text the day before if you require a lift - 07973 727469.

All tools provided. Please bring warm, waterproof clothing and wear sturdy footwear. Please bring a packed lunch too.

Please [click here](#) for more information.

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) Alfoxton Park – Amazing ecology

2022 was a year of exciting ecological work going on at [Alfoxton Park](#) in Holford. Many volunteers and partners of the QLPS will know this beautiful parkland in the [Quantock Hills](#) and QLPS are excited to share what they have found following professional surveys throughout last year. Alfoxton Park is both locally and nationally important for a range of wildlife. There is a healthy diversity of interesting lichen and high numbers of moths have been recorded including several important conservation species. Most notably, Alfoxton has been recognised as nationally important for Saproxylic Invertebrates (invertebrates dependent on dead or decaying wood). All research helps direct conservation activities towards better conditions for this important ecosystem.

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

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) Chimneys, open fires and log burners

Log burners and open fires are a great way to stay warm and create a cosy atmosphere at home. But if you don't know how to enjoy them safely, they can quickly get out of control. Please [click here](#) to read DSFRS advice to make sure you avoid having a chimney fire.

Safety in severe weather conditions

Stay safe by following DSFRS advice where there are floods or power cuts in your area. Please [click here](#) to visit the website and learn how to prepare for stormy weather.

Dulverton Fire Station

On Thursday morning [Dulverton Fire Station](#) were called to a rescue from water near Exford with colleagues from [South Molton Fire Station](#) and the specialist rescue team from [Barnstaple Fire Station](#).

With the ongoing weather warnings in place, please do not drive through floodwater regardless of the perceived depth as there is a risk of debris underwater.

Don't make unnecessary trips in bad weather conditions. You could harm yourself and others too.

Vehicles can become stuck and even swept away in just 30cm of flowing water.

If the fire service attend incidents where vehicles are trapped in floodwater, they are unavailable to help others who may be in greater danger

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

It's not Dry, it's a Wet January! Safety tips...

Dry January may be the buzz word for a lot of us at the start of this year, but not for HM Coastguard, who are used to responding to calls for help in the worst of weather conditions – with the start of the year bringing rainy, cold and windy conditions.

The temperature has been unseasonably warm, and while that has been great in luring so many of us to our wonderful coasts, it has also brought a lot of rain. Rain can cause serious safety concerns along the coast.

So we all need to be extra careful if we're planning a trip to explore the coastal areas around the UK by making sure we know what to do if something goes wrong.

So far in 2023, HM Coastguard has been called out to a number of incidents involving walkers who have found themselves in difficulty at the coast. In particular, there has been concern over the number of people getting stuck in tidal flood plains (better known as 'stuck in the mud') after teams rescued nine people across two days around the UK, including five on Crosby beach.

There have been further concerns for people cut off by the tide and pet owners needing help themselves after attempting to rescue their pet.

If you plan to take a walk this winter, please remember to be careful out there and have a look at the [safety advice](#) before setting out.

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 in will take place on **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.

Taunton Chamber of Commerce

Young Business Group Launches for 2023

Wednesday 1 February 6:30 – 8:30pm at CICCIC

Do you work at a Taunton business, run your own local business or study in Taunton? Are you under 30? Then this relaxed launch event for a brand-new local business group for young people is for you!

Come along and meet other young people who work locally, make new connections and have the opportunity to shape what format the group takes going forward - all over drinks at the Creative Innovation Centre, home to some of Taunton's best loved arts, music and comedy events.

Bring along work colleagues, classmates and friends and have an influence on what activities and events the group holds in the future, as well as the chance to feedback what your generation wants to see in the Taunton of the future.

This is a FREE event, including your first drink at the bar, but everyone is asked to book a ticket so the organisers have an understanding of numbers. The event is open to all and you don't need to have any association with Taunton Chamber.

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

Heart of the South West Growth Hub

Meet the Expert Food and Drink Event

Thursday 9 February 2023, 10:00am – 1:00pm drop in

The Holiday Inn, Junction 25, Taunton

An event bringing together food and drink suppliers and local buyers. A number of free training sessions and webinars will take place on the day. Book your place now:

- Expert and Industry specialist workshops – Photography, Intellectual Property, Allergens and Food Labelling * booking in advance required- [Meet the Experts event | Eventbrite](#)

- Technical and legal advice- Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers
- Networking - come and meet other businesses and create your own new supply chains and markets! Please bring literature and marketing materials.

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Village Halls to see major revamp as Platinum Jubilee fund opens

Village halls across England can now apply for grants to improve and modernise their facilities, as the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund is now open for applications.

Launched to mark the occasion of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022, the fund recognises the important role that village halls play in supporting rural communities.

Village halls are key cornerstones in the fabric of rural life, providing essential services and bringing people together through social and recreational activities.

The fund is managed by the charity Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). It is anticipated that the fund will support around 125 village halls over a three-year period creating bigger, better and brighter village halls for communities to enjoy.

The application window will close on **20 January 2023**, with successful applicants being able to draw on the funding from April 2023.

For further information, including how to apply for the fund visit: <https://acre.org.uk/platinum-jubilee-village-halls-fund/>.

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

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.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP)

The Together Fund

Funding for inequalities in communities affected by COVID-19

The Together Fund is a continuation of the Tackling Inequalities Fund (TIF) that was set up in April 2020 as part of Sport England's support package to help the sport and physical activity sector through the coronavirus crisis.

Phase 4 of the fund has seen another £20 million of National Lottery funding committed to help the groups that, from [Sport England's insight](#), were being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, significantly impacting their ability to be physically active.

Money from the Together Fund will be prioritised for the following four key audiences:

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Culturally diverse communities
- Disabled people
- People with long term health conditions

Since its launch, the TIF has enabled community groups to continue to exist and engage with their communities, supporting people to be engaged and active.

Together Fund investment will run until August 2023 and is intended to help further growth and recovery of community organisations working with the four key target audiences.

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

Community Sport Warm Spaces Fund

This funding has been made available by Somerset County Council to enable local community organisations providing physical activity and sport, grant support to open up warm spaces to children and young people in Somerset.

Funding is available from January - March 2023 to support with the increasing energy costs for indoor facilities.

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

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Talking Cafes Live – every Wednesday at 1pm

COMING UP on January's [Talking Cafe](#) Live Streaming Sessions, available on: [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

- **18 January** - Challenging Assumptions about world Faith's and beliefs. Q & A with members of Somerset's Buddhist and Muslim community with [Somerset Diverse Communities](#)
- **25 January** - [Street Baptist Church](#) - find out about the facilities / courses available at the church, and the fantastic work they do in the community

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 debis@somersetccc.org.uk or message the Talking Cafe page.

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.

Health and Welfare

SCC Public Health

Somerset: get talking to beat the January blues

January can be a difficult month for many people, with cold weather and shorter days bringing feelings of anxiety, sadness and depression, especially after the festive period which can be challenging for some. It is no wonder that the term 'January blues' exists.

At this time of year, it's more important than ever to talk more with family and friends and share how you're feeling.

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

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.

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

Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)

Stay safe and secure when selling online

Having a New Year clear out? If you plan to sell online, here are some handy tips to help you stay safe and secure:

- Restrict your profile privacy settings to minimise personal information people can see. Your photos may give away more than you realise.
- Think about what you're posting, e.g., advertising a valuable item for sale and then posting your travel plans is a gift to criminals.
- Photograph items away from your property, so you don't identify your location. Even your garden may look familiar to those who know the area.
- If you are in contact via social media, look at the individual's profile. Do they look like a real person? A genuine buyer won't be offended if you query anything.
- Only give the initial part of your postcode and ask the buyer to call you when nearby to avoid giving your full address. Alternatively, arrange to meet in a public place and sell away from your home.
- Selling electronics? Make sure all your personal data is wiped from it beforehand.
- Ensure motorbikes, bikes and other vehicles are securely stored and locked away.
- Payment - opt for cash payment or use PayPal. If doing a bank transfer, make sure the funds have cleared before parting with the item.

Trust your instincts - if something feels off, it probably is.

You can find more home and property security advice here: <https://orlo.uk/bSpiN>. Alert the police if you are concerned or worried by reporting online or via 101. If you believe a crime is taking place, call 999.

Police Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Precept survey online

The Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is responsible for setting the amount of money you contribute to local policing through your council tax bill (known as the 'precept').

The precept accounts for 41% of police funding and the rest is from central Government grants. The Government also determines the maximum amount by which PCCs can increase the precept each year.

For next year, the Government has allowed PCCs to increase the precept by £15 for a band D household (equivalent to 6%). The Government assume that PCCs will ask for the maximum allowed and use this assumption in their budget setting.

[Complete this survey](#) to let the PCC know your thoughts on increasing the amount of money which goes towards policing through your council tax.

Volunteer Recruitment deadline extended to 31 January

The role of a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is to scrutinise, review and improve policing practices. To help do this, the team work with local people as volunteers to get independent views and feedback on a range of policing issues.

The PCC is looking for people of all backgrounds, ages, and experience across the Avon and Somerset area to volunteer and act as independent advisors..

Please note, the application deadline has been extended to 31 January.

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

PCC's Councillor Forum – Somerset West and Taunton

Tuesday 24 January 2023, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

Trull Village Memorial Hall, 21 Church Road, Trull TA3 7JZ

ASP PCC Mark Shelford invites you to a Councillor Forum in Somerset West and Taunton, part of a series of forums happening around Avon and Somerset.

Relevant to all local councillors in the Somerset West and Taunton constituency, this session is designed to offer an overview into the PCC's Police and Crime Plan priorities, a chance to ask questions and discuss local issues affecting your communities.

The PCC will also outline his focus areas of tackling crime, anti-social behaviour as well as reduction and prevention strategies for violence against women and girls. This is your chance to hear from the PCC directly, raise local issues and offer feedback.

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

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

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).

Attachments:

Somerset Levels and Moors Flooding Update.