

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 4. Week ending 19/04/20

#StayAtHome #ProtectTheNHS #SaveLives

Up to date information on the Council's response can be found on the SWT website:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/>

SWT Council priorities

Somerset West and Taunton Council's continuing priorities during the Coronavirus outbreak are to:

- Preserve critical services;
- Safeguard the public; and
- Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported.

The situation is being reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the Council follows the [latest advice from Public Health England](#).

Key Messages this week

1. Community Resilience Cell

An update by James Barra, Housing Director

For the last three weeks I have been the Council's representative on the multi-agency Community Resilience Cell which meets daily with the purpose of supporting our residents with the inevitable challenges of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This group brings together all the Councils in Somerset including adult social care and children's services, a representative from Education, along with input from the Health sector too. The key priority for this group is to respond to the requests from Government to support the Shielded list i.e. those deemed to be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to medical reasons, and who have been told to self-isolate for a prolonged period. These people will be offered weekly food packs to support them in self-isolation, which will be delivered via a national system however, we have taken delivery

of some emergency Government supplies and set up a few distribution hubs across the County as a backstop to this system, We have also sourced our own supply chain for food packs so we have an emergency supply of these for other vulnerable people which are now being delivered where required. This is very much an emergency provision to support the main routes such as community groups and food banks and some examples from this Bank Holiday weekend are:

- A lady on the shielding list but had not received a centrally delivered box, had been referred to a Village Agent but “had half a quiche and a corned beef sandwich” to last the weekend
- An 18-year-old had been released from care into a YMCA property, with no contact from this case worker and no access to money or food

We have been working to establish sustainable support and response systems for as long as required across the County. A key role has been to provide mechanisms to support the amazing community and voluntary sector response, and to help provide clear access channels for people by setting up the **Somerset Coronavirus Advice line**, [0300 790 6275](tel:03007906275). This is a single number supported by all the Councils to respond to community needs when they arise.

The vulnerable

We have now have a Business Intelligence group which has been working really hard to bring together many data sets, to produce one definitive list of people who might be deemed to be vulnerable. From this we can ensure the support route for those who have existing relationships with one of the agencies, continues but crucially we are also looking for people who may not currently be supported to ensure we check on them and that no-one is forgotten. All agencies are maintaining contact with existing customers and are establishing a range of proactive routes based on risk to contact everyone deemed to be vulnerable.

Tenants

So far, a team of around 30 staff from Housing and other Directorates have made **over 2000** calls to our tenants, this work will continue. In the coming days it will start to move across to the non-tenants in our community who are more vulnerable and do not have an existing relationship or contact with another agency such as adult social care.

Homeless and Rough Sleeping

All Councils across the County have been sourcing a range of different accommodation the result being over 70 people who were rough sleeping or in unsuitable hostel accommodation have been placed in locations where they might better practice social distancing. Here in SWT, Simon Lewis has been leading an amazing team effort in particular to establish from scratch a new location of self-contained housing for many of this high risk group to move into, which has now been up and running for a couple of weeks.

Normal Homelessness case work continues with support for our customers in crisis. Whilst we are fortunate to have secured a range of new temporary accommodation solutions in recent weeks, we are monitoring the community

impact of the pressure of the current living situations have on household relationships and supporting people when situations breakdown.

2. Parish Data Sheets and Community Led Action

SWT is using the data sheets from the Parish Councils to identify how the vulnerable are being supported within their communities. We have had a good response from the parishes but some data sheets have yet to be returned.

Can all parish councils who are yet to submit their forms please do this as soon as possible and email to governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

SWT are using them to share knowledge, prevent duplication of services and identify where there are gaps in provision. We are working alongside the other public sector organisations, including village agents, charities and community groups to provide help and advice. This information is an invaluable tool now that the helpline is operational.

3. Somerset Activity Sports Partnership Launches Older People Active at Home Packs

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) has launched an Active at Home Pack for older people and those with long term health conditions who may be self-isolating, shielding or spending a lot of time at home. The packs which contain an elastic resistance band (latex), a helpful booklet with exercise instructions and a self-isolating sticker which can be stuck on a window or door to let people know where people are self-isolating.

200 packs were piloted in the Minehead area initially, where the packs could be collected from supermarkets during their priority shopping times for vulnerable and older people. The packs were also distributed through housing associations to the sheltered housing properties where older people live.

SASP are now working with the four local authorities in Somerset to distribute a further 1,500 packs through local COVID-19 support groups and through the wellbeing hubs which are supplying food parcels and other supplies to their residents in most urgent need. Further support is being provided by SPARK, who are a voluntary sector organisation providing support to communities to respond to COVID-19 and through their Corona Helpers website, have provided a network to distribute the packs.

For more information regarding the contents please visit:

<https://www.sasp.co.uk/staying-active-with-a-long-term?fbclid=IwAR266EN3ue95CpdHKkCFeN2NAnTHBHuxi-9dLRqFQtfnX0qx4PzFzQafACM>

If you know of any older people and/or anyone with a long term health condition who wishes to benefit from a free sports pack, please email governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk with their name and address and the Council will arrange a delivery.

4. Progress on processing and paying grants to business

More work was undertaken over the bank holiday weekend.

- 1,586 cases, amounting to £15.8m have been passed for payment. This figure will rise to include cases processed this week.
- There are still approx. 1,200-1,500 businesses that are potentially eligible for a grant but which have so far not come forward. All have been written to, however, in many cases SWT only hold the trading addresses, which may be closed at present and mail may not therefore be being opened. SWT intend to follow this up this week by using an external company to text, voice mail or email these ratepayers (in the name of SWT), where telephone or email details are held on our records. We are hopeful this will bring forth further applications.

5. Housing and Council Tax Benefit Changes

SWT has applied a bulk recalculation to **Housing Benefit** claims that qualify for extra help from 1st or 6th April following the Government's intention to temporarily increase the additional earnings disregard (AED) in Working Tax Credit (WTC) and temporarily increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. More detail of these changes can be found via the '*Extra help with Housing Benefit*' tab of the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Advice and Information](#) page of our website.

6. £150 extra award to all working age customers claiming Council Tax support

- The Government announced a £500 million hardship fund to provide additional Council Tax relief for vulnerable people and households in 2020/21. Somerset West and Taunton has received £1,382,002 on 3 April 2020 as its share of this fund. The £150 will be credited to the Council Tax accounts concerned and will NOT be sent as a payment to the customer. SWT anticipate around 6,000 households in the district will benefit from this change
- All of the above is in addition to the team's usual work which continues to come in.

7. SWP - Bank Holiday Collections

All recycling sites remain closed, while garden waste and bulky waste services are suspended.

Collections on the next 2020 bank holiday - VE Day on Friday 8 May - will see pick-ups one day later on Saturday 9 May.

Residents are being reminded that disruption due to COVID-19, including dozens of staff forced to self-isolate, means changes to waste services:

- All weekly recycling collections as usual but there are no returns for missed pick-ups. Boxes and food waste bins should be put out the following week, when those collections will be a priority.
- Rubbish and clinical waste pick-ups as usual. If either are missed, report via the My Waste Services menu at www.somersetwaste.gov.uk or through council customer services at www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/contact-us
- Garden waste collections are suspended but 2020-21 subscribers will get a one year extension from the date when collections restart
- Bulky waste collections are suspended.

- No new container requests can be accepted.
- All recycling sites remain closed. Materials should be stored and not added to rubbish, especially those that could be a fire risk, such as batteries, gas canisters and electrical items.

8. Mayor attends virtual opening of community shop

The Mayor of Taunton, Cllr Fran Smith, has made her first virtual appearance at the opening of the Wilton and Sherford Community Shop. The Mayor appeared by video link at the opening in the Churchill Meeting Hall, Middleway, on Easter Monday. The shop will provide a convenient local drop-in facility for residents to pick up basic provisions including groceries, household items and toiletries. For further information please follow the link to the SWT website. <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/mayor-attends-virtual-opening-of-community-shop>

9. Business as Usual - Where we can

Fly tipping

With recycling centres currently closed, everyone, including businesses, must be responsible for how they get rid of rubbish, even when it's left your home or premises. If you pay someone to remove your rubbish - man-with-a-van, builders, gardeners, carpet-layers or others - ask to see their waste carrier's licence, and make sure you know where your rubbish will go. If you don't you could be fined.

For more information check how we can all fight fly-tipping section on [Somerset Waste Partnership](#) website.

To report fly-tipping use our [report fly-tipping](#) online form or phone [0300 304 8000](#)

- make sure you give the exact spot
- if you don't know the address include a description of nearest landmark in your report
- take a photograph if you can and include it in your report. We will attend to reported fly-tipping incidents as soon as circumstances allow.

Abandoned Vehicles

Please visit the Somerset West & Taunton Council website to report an [abandoned vehicle](#).

You will need to provide some details about the car, such as:

- location
- make and model
- colour

Once the Council resumes normal services a SWT operative will inspect and assess the vehicle and in most cases, they will put up a 15 day notice of removal before the vehicle is taken away. We can only remove vehicles which do not have road tax. You can check if the vehicle has a [valid road tax](#) on the DVLA website.

If the vehicle is illegally parked, please contact the Police.

Pot Hole Repairs in Dulverton

Pot holes previously marked up and photographed in Kemps Way and Lions Stable Car Park in Dulverton will be repaired as soon as circumstances allow.

Void Properties

Work continues to some of our void properties, albeit that no new properties will be advertised on Homefinder at the current time, but we want to have plenty of properties available for emergency and temporary use as it arises. Much of our Capital Programme work and New Build work has ceased unfortunately, but some demolition preparations continue at North Taunton for now.

For further information or if you know of somebody who might become homeless and need help, please contact us on [0300 304 8000](tel:03003048000).

10. Business Support

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advice and Information page of our [website](#) also contains the latest links to wider advice, support and guidance for businesses. For more information and to sign up for the newsletter, please visit www.visitsomerset.co.uk/business

11. Voluntary Community Support

A new weekly newsletter aimed at supporting the Voluntary and Community sector is being launched this week. It is hoped to share good news stories and highlight the innovative ways that communities are coming together. Questions and contributions are welcome at any time. Please use our dedicated email; VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Partner Engagement - Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) - Highways

The current COVID-19 event has had a major impact on the delivery of highway services by Somerset County Council in Somerset West and Taunton. All planned works have been suspended for the moment and Highways are currently focusing on three safety critical areas of work. These are:-

- Safety defects, such as potholes.
- Winter service. This is the gritting of roads in anticipation of frost, ice and snow. This operation is nearing the end for the current winter season, although weather forecasts are still monitored daily should any action be required.
- Out-of-hours emergency response. Typically this will be the attendance at road traffic collisions to clear up debris and deal with oil etc. deposited on the road; dealing with trees, branches, landslips and other debris that has fallen on the road; flooding etc.

As we all know, this is very much an evolving situation and further updates will be supplied in future editions of this newsletter.

Advice from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

Sky or Chinese Lanterns

There has been a recent social media campaign promoting the use of a sky lantern launch in support of the NHS. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service do not recommend their use due to the fire hazards and risks they pose to property, crops, livestock and the environment.

The National Fire Chiefs Council has published a message warning that a campaign to light sky lanterns is 'misguided'.

http://orlo.uk/NFCC_hWMQR

#StayHomeSaveLives

<https://www.dsfire.gov.uk>

Community Support - What help is out there?

SWT is working with partner organisations across the county to identify and support the network of volunteers offering help to the elderly, people self-isolating, and those identified as at risk across our communities. The Council would like to thank all those that have come forward with offers of help and would remind everyone to only make essential outings and follow [advice on social distancing](#) to reduce the risk of transmission. Information on local community groups [you can volunteer with or get help from.](#)

Somerset West Lottery

The Somerset West Lottery offers registered good causes and local groups the opportunity to raise income for their organisation by selling tickets to members of the public. The Somerset West Lottery currently has 84 registered Good Causes and 525 players with each player buying two tickets on average per play. Since its launch in 2017 it has raised £171,884.00 with a predicted revenue for 2020 of £52,104.00.

If you know of a good cause wishing to raise funds or would like to buy a ticket contact the Somerset West Lottery on [0300 302 0666](tel:03003020666); support@somersetwestlottery.co.uk or visit the [Somerset West Lottery](#) website. Everyone who signs up to purchase one or more tickets for the Lottery between now and 27 June will be in with the chance to win one of five annual organic fruit and veg box subscriptions.

Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

Somerset Community Foundation has set up the **Somerset Coronavirus Appeal** to raise funds for local charitable groups that are supporting the most vulnerable people affected by the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) and, looking ahead, to ensure that when the time is right they can help our communities recover well.

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal has grown to over **£450,000** since its launch just a month ago on Thursday 19 March [*correct as at 16/04/2020*].

Justin Sargent, Chief Executive at SCF said: "Thanks to the incredible generosity of donors to our appeal and the national appeal, we've been able to rapidly make

grants worth over £200,000 to more than 80 groups across the county, including foodbanks and food delivery schemes, support services for older people, and virtual counselling, with more funding going out every day. We're indebted to the amazing volunteers and staff from local groups who are going above and beyond to keep people safe and well in these exceptional times."

Grants of up to £10,000 are available for local charities, community organisations and volunteer groups helping those in most urgent need during the coronavirus outbreak, and SCF pledges to award funding within three working days. Any groups wishing to apply should visit the SCF website, where they can complete a short, simple application form: www.somersetcf.org.uk/coronavirus

A full list of grants made from the Somerset Coronavirus Response and Recovery Fund can be found [here](#).

The Fund is open to local charities, community organisations, social enterprises and parish or town councils in Somerset.

SCF is passionate about doing as much as possible to support our communities, and is encouraging local people, businesses, charitable trusts and organisations who feel able to **donate to the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal by clicking [here](#)**.

To support the national appeal, please visit:

www.nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk/coronavirus

To visit the Somerset Community Foundation website, please visit:

<https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/>

Health and Welfare

Nightingale Hospital Bristol

Coronavirus: Timelapse video shows Bristol Nightingale hospital being built in a few days

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-timelapse-video-shows-bristol-nightingale-hospital-being-built-11971053>

The hospital is being constructed at a conference centre at the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol during the **coronavirus** outbreak. It will treat up to 1,000 patients, and be staffed by NHS workers including medical students, former doctors and other key workers who have come out of retirement to help. Tim Bowles, mayor of the West of England, praised UWE for stepping forward in response to the "nation's time of crisis". He said: "While we all hope these bed spaces won't be needed, it is absolutely right that we should be prepared.

Please refer to the websites below for the latest advice, help and guidance:

Public Health England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

COVID-19: infection prevention and control (IPC)

Last weekend new guidance was published relating to [PPE required for different common clinical scenarios](#). Three new tables have been added - one for hospitals, one for primary care, outpatient and community and social care, and one for ambulance, paramedics and pharmacy staff. In addition there is now a fourth table that describes when to use PPE for all patient encounters (not just patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19) at a time when there is sustained community transmission of COVID-19, as is currently occurring in the UK, and the likelihood of any patient having coronavirus infection is raised.

Any concerns relating to safety whilst at work or PPE queries, please refer to pages found on the link highlighted above. Should anybody working within a Health and Social care function still have concerns, we would advise them to speak to the Care Quality Commission as they enforce Health and Safety in care settings. Failing this, SWT can contact the business to discuss the concerns with them directly.

[Help to protect yourself and your community - Public Health England](#)

NHS - Help and Advice

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS website](#)

[Advice about staying at home - NHS website](#)

Crime / Fraud / Safeguarding

Avon and Somerset Police were pleased to report a quiet Bank Holiday weekend as the public heeded the Government guidelines and stayed at home. Although 527 breaches were reported via the online form or 101, only 5 fixed penalty notices were served and this was not within the Somerset West and Taunton area.

Online Form

The creation of the online reporting form has been received well by the public and has been used 2,400 times. Reports made on this channel are being used to identify patterns or hotspots and inform local patrol plans.

Despite the good use of the reporting form to manage demand, Avon and Somerset Police are still getting a high volume of breach reports on the 101 and 999 phone lines- 3,660 to date, and the pressure and demand on their call centre staff has been immense. Attendance of breach reports coming in via the call centre has been over 45%.

The Police would like to make clear that their preference is that people report any past breaches through the online form, and not 101, as they need to ensure they

maximise resources and have call handlers available to respond to ongoing requests for policing services at this critical time.

COVID-19 breach of restrictions: If you have concerns that an individual or business has breached Government restrictions you can [report it using our online form](#), ring us on 101 (for non-emergencies) or 999 (for emergencies).

Officers and staff continue to work around the clock on the frontline out in our communities and we want to be sure that, should they face staffing issues because of illness, they have the structures in place to continue to provide the public with the service they expect.

Online Beat Surgeries

Usually depending on where they work, PCSO's and PC's hold Beat Surgeries weekly in different locations across their neighbourhoods. A Beat Surgery is effectively a time and place that an officer will be at a certain location, answering any questions or queries you may have, whilst providing an opportunity to meet and know your local beat officer.

Due to the current restrictions in place, these aren't currently happening. So because of this, last week PCSO Sam Bushen ran an online Beat Surgery through Facebook. This was so successful that the plan is to extend this platform further via social media. It is believed that it was potentially the first ever online Beat Surgery of its kind done by Policing in the UK. It has since been viewed by 7, 500 people and had 79 shares making it a very good way of highlighting ongoing police issues. The next one is due to take place this evening (Thursday 16th April) and others are being planned.

If you have any questions you would like answered around COVID-19 then message them in advance to his profile.

Locally the teams are focusing on hi-vis patrols and engaging and educating the public. Updates are on Sam's Facebook page and Twitter @ASPWestSom
The most recent video highlighting current scams is below.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/9llmntGvp84>

Finally

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
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

If you have concerns about your own health and coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.

#StayAtHome #ProtectTheNHS #SaveLives