

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 11. Week ending 7/06/20

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #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 updated priorities during the coronavirus outbreak are as follows:

- Preserve critical services;
- Safeguard the public;
- Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported; and
- Planning economic resilience and recovery

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. Canonsgrove Homeless Accommodation

SWT continues to accommodate rough sleepers at the Canonsgrove Halls of Residence and the Beach Hotel, Minehead. Both sites are being managed on our behalf by the YMCA Dulverton Group. The wrap-around support for these tenants from partners includes mental health services, drug and alcohol services, primary care and others. Alongside this excellent support from the YMCA Dulverton Group and some of our own staff, we are making a big difference to the wellbeing of tenants staying there. Many seem to be thriving on having outdoor space with trees and wildlife around and they have started working on their own vegetable patch.

Last weekend some of the residents developed a display which they left for staff, to show their appreciation for the support they are receiving.

A sample of three of the testimonials they wrote include:

- “This is the best place I have ever stayed during the whole of my adult life.”
- “I’d just like to say that my life is getting back on track as a direct result of staying here.”
- “I’ve been in and out of Lindley House for 15 years or more and not got myself clean off drugs. I’ve been here 3 months and I am clean. This place is good, the staff care. Keep this open.”

SWT is now working closely with Arc, the YMCA Dulverton Group, SCC, Somerset Partnership, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and others to design and agree what we will deliver locally once the threat of Covid-19 reduces. There is a real commitment, both within this Council, and amongst partners that we should take this opportunity to build a better future service offer for rough sleepers, taking some of the learning from the past 3 months.

Please [click here](#) to read the Somerset County Gazette’s press release containing further details.

2. DEMOCRATIC/GOVERNANCE

For the 2020/21 Municipal Year:

The Chair of the Planning Committee is Cllr Simon Coles

The Vice Chair of the Planning Committee is Cllr Marcia Hill.

Planning Committee Meeting

The next virtual Planning Committee meeting takes place on Thursday 11 June at 1pm.

Two applications are being considered relating to the areas of Stoke St Gregory and Wellington.

Public Participation:

The meetings will all be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences please visit the SWT website

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx>

If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

The deadline for public questions or statements for the Planning Committee meeting is 4pm on Monday 8 June

Members of the public are still able to participate in the meeting by submitting their questions or statement to the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and these will be read out by an officer at the meeting. Please see above for deadline dates

3. NEW Discretionary Grant launched on 1 June

The Discretionary Business Grant scheme went live on Monday 1 June at 9am. SWT had a good response with 116 applications received on this first day. As of Thursday 4 June this number increased to 162 applications. This was a higher response than in neighbouring Districts indicating that our communications over the past week have been effective.

The Government has asked Councils to prioritise four business types. Therefore, the scheme initially applies to the following types of businesses **only**;

- **Small businesses in shared spaces** that are not responsible for the payment of business rates (excludes working from home)
- **Regular market traders** with fixed property costs, such as rent/licence fees, who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- **Bed & Breakfasts** which pay Council Tax instead of business rates.
- **Charity** properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for [Small Business Rate Relief](#) or [Rural Rate Relief](#).

Taking out the applications that have been refused, and assuming remaining applications are all eligible, the potential total spend currently stands at £958,500 of the £2.1m available. The actual amount approved for payment as at Thursday 4 June stands at £87,500. These are due to be paid out within the next 7 days.

The intention is to suspend the scheme once it appears that the applications are likely to use up all of the available funds. Processing of the applications started at the beginning of the week. Whilst the number of approved applications is not particularly high, given the nature of the scheme and the more complicated circumstances of the businesses concerned, administration in terms of eligibility checking is proving more time consuming than the previous Small Business Grants scheme.

If it appears that SWT is unlikely to receive sufficient applications to utilise the available funding at any time during the initial two weeks, then the scheme may be reviewed and eligibility criteria widened, to incorporate additional business types.

For more information, or to submit a grant request, please [click here](#).

4. SWT Free Parking Set to Continue

Somerset West and Taunton owned car parks will stay free “for the foreseeable future”. The move is part of the Council’s wider plan to support the re-opening of High Streets to help rejuvenate the local economy. Drivers are being reminded that this only applies to SWT owned car parks and does not extend to on-street parking across Somerset where enforcement patrols were due to restart on Monday 1 June following the easing of coronavirus restrictions. To read the full press release please [click here](#).

5. Guidance to help local authorities and partners to deliver activities supported through the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

The Reopening High Streets Safely Fund is providing £50 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to councils across England to support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas following the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The Government has granted SWT £138,000 and this money will allow the Council to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers. SWT will particularly focus on the high streets in Taunton, Wellington and Minehead and the smaller towns in the District.

A [Task Force](#) of SWT officers has been set up to prioritise and allocate our resources to the areas in the greatest need. The team is engaging with local businesses, Town and Parish Councils to shape the safe reopening of our high streets.

Please [click here](#) for further guidance and details of the activities that can be supported through the fund and an overview of how it will be administered, as well as key ERDF contractual requirements.

6. SWP Sites and Services

Recycling sites have reverted to their usual summer opening hours. Please [click here](#) to see the scheduled opening and closing times of individual sites. The odd/even number plate access system has ended but all other restrictions remain in place as sites move towards business as usual following coronavirus closures.

Somerset Waste Partnership is continuing its plea for people to only come if it is really necessary and to take full advantage of weekly kerbside recycling collections. Access to the normal recycling skips is not possible, so please do not bring cardboard, food and drink cans, paper, food waste, plastic bottles and jars to the recycling centres. These can be put out each week for collection.

Any items you would usually pay to have disposed of will **not** be accepted - including tyres, gas bottles, soil and hardcore, vehicle parts, commercial waste, plasterboard and asbestos.

Long queues are expected at sites, with unloading bays reduced to ensure social distancing.

Queue cams at Bridgwater, Chard, Taunton and Yeovil can be viewed [here](#). Expect queues and delays. If queuing, turn off engine, maintain social distance with those waiting, and then unload on site swiftly to let others take your place.

Urge others to follow @Somersetwaste on Facebook and Twitter. Sign up [here](#) to subscribe to e-news.

7. Council Issues Repairs Notices at Tonedale Mill

Somerset West and Taunton Council has served repairs notices on the owners of Wellington's historic Tonedale Mill. Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

Partner Engagement - Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

Highway Maintenance Update

The evening carriageway resurfacing work on the **A39 Minehead Road, Allerford**; between Selworthy and Porlock was successfully completed on Monday 1 and Tuesday 2 June and all restrictions are lifted. SCC were very lucky with perfect weather conditions contributing to a very successful completion of these essential works (including lining works) on two severe bends. The evening temporary road closures again took advantage of the lower than usual traffic flows at the moment.

The surfacing crew now moves on to the Taunton area to resurface the section of **A358 Staplegrove Road** through the **Manor Road** traffic lights near Staplegrove Post Office, another difficult location. Temporary road closures will be in operation in the evenings between 6:30pm and 11:30pm, Monday to Friday, for the two weeks commencing 8 and 15 June.

Church Street, Timberscombe is currently closed for drainage improvement work near Beasley Farm. Progress has been good and the work should be completed week ending 12 June.

The new footway at **A358 Cross Keys, Norton Fitzwarren** (a Small Improvement Scheme, SIS) is progressing well with the works being protected by temporary traffic signals.

The cutting of grass verges on the rural “A” and “B” Class network is now complete and cutting on our “C” and “D” roads starts week commencing 8 June for eight weeks.

Carriageway surface dressing (“tar & chip”) started in Somerset West and Taunton last week with what is known as the “Combi Unit” (a specially adapted lorry with a built-in bitumen tank and spray bar, used on country lanes and residential streets). This week SCC will also be joined by the “Main Train” (consisting of a tanker with spray bar applying a bitumen emulsion to the road surface, followed by a specialised chipping machine fed by tipper lorries).

For more details on roads scheduled for surface dressings, please refer to the attached document provided by SCC.

On Sunday 14 June there are two major road closures planned to cover the surface dressing of: **A3065 Silk Mills Road, Staplegrove/Bishops Hull**; and **B3187 Milverton Road/Burn Hill/Sand Street/Fore Street/Silver Street, Langford Budville/Milverton**.

Altogether, a very busy week!

The Highways Team would like to say thank you for the help and tolerance of road users whilst they are trying to carry out as many difficult and sensitive schemes as possible, capitalising on the reduced impacts of traffic under Covid-19 restrictions. SCC appreciate the inconvenience this may have caused due to short notice but are trying to achieve the least damaging effects overall to the general public. SCC Highways will continue to keep you all in the loop with any further works.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit the SCC Highways’ website www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

Network Rail

Temporary Road Closure: Station Road, Taunton

The Order to close Station Road, Taunton will enable Network Rail to carry out detailed examination works of the undercarriage to the railway bridge.

The Order becomes effective on 18 June 2020 and will remain in force for Eighteen months. The works are expected to commence on **23 June 2020** and last for 3 days.

Please visit one.network for further information on the alternative route. For information about the works being carried out please contact Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd on (01132) 775360

Please [click here](#) to follow the link to view the above road closure.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

A plea is going out by the Fire Brigade for people visiting the countryside to act responsibly. This follows [Minehead Fire Station](#) being called twice to the same incident on consecutive days.

Whilst clearing the site which required two fire appliances and a water carrier, crews were dismayed to find a paraphernalia of bottles, glass, beer cans, food cans, rubbish and illegal substance items left littered around. Glass in direct sunlight can cause fires, unattended campfires spread easily and peat and tree roots can burn for days.

Crews did their best to clear as much rubbish from this scene before leaving, but with the current COVID risks, these are tasks they would sooner not have to do.

Incidents like these tie up valuable resources from multiple stations that cannot be used for life risk incidents such as road traffic collisions or property fires. At the present time it also means having to use valuable PPE items such as nitrile medical gloves in order to protect the crews whilst clearing the scene.

Please act responsibly when visiting the countryside. Don't pull over in your car onto grass verges and dry heathland. The car exhaust pipe can get really hot and could easily ignite areas of dry vegetation. Take all your litter home and prepare picnics with sandwiches rather than use a disposable barbecue. These are difficult to dispose of when hot and should not be left unattended.

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

HM Coastguard

Minehead and Watchet Coastguard teams have been out this week on patrol both morning and evenings, checking the various beaches, access points, car parks and harbours as part of the HM Coastguard response to the easing of lockdown. This has led to increased numbers visiting the coast and a dramatic rise in incidents

It is during this National Volunteers week that the Coastguard Teams continue to give up more time than normal from their full time jobs and families in order to help protect locals and visitors alike.

The Coastguard would remind anyone visiting the coast following the easing of lockdown restrictions to take care, abide by the social distancing advice, and to not take risks. Check the tide times, keep away from cliff edges and the base of cliffs, and definitely do not climb cliffs to tombstone.

Tombstoning is the act of jumping into water from a high platform, such as a cliff, bridge or harbour edge in a straight, upright vertical posture, resembling a tombstone. Whilst this may be fun it can be dangerous: People can't see what they are jumping into; have no idea how deep the water is and the West Somerset coastline has strong currents especially around its harbours.

Following the scenes last weekend at Durdle Door which involved a multi-agency response, the coastguard has been reiterating warnings about the dangers of tombstoning.

The coastguard team have been carrying out regular safety patrols, and have been advising children about the dangers. They are urging parents to educate their children and teach respect of the sea and inland water ways, and to advise against tombstoning.

To read more information please [click here](#).

Remember in a coastal emergency to dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.
HM Coastguard.

#ToSearchToRescueToSave

Community Support - What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

SWT is publishing an e-newsletter to support the phenomenal positive response and work of the voluntary and community sector across our district.

Please share this with all you contacts and encourage people to [subscribe](#).

If you know of a group in your ward who may benefit or have something to contribute then please send them our dedicated email;
VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

National Volunteers Week

National Volunteers Week is celebrated between 1 and 7 June every year. It is a week in which the UK celebrates volunteers and says thank you to them for the contribution that they make. The week also raises awareness about the benefits of becoming a volunteer and the diverse volunteering roles that are available.

Please [click here](#) to watch Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey thanking all volunteers across the SWT district who kindly gave their time to help others during the National Volunteers week.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by volunteer groups who benefit their local communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Recipients are announced each year on 2 June, the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation.

The Regal Theatre

The vast army of volunteers at The Regal Theatre, Minehead have been honoured by being awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

The theatre is entirely run by volunteers who work a total of 70,000 hours a year in pursuit of their ethos 'For the Community, By the Community'. Their work enables the Regal to present 150 events to audiences totalling some 25,000 a year and are vital to the continuing operation and success of the theatre.

Please [click here](#) to read the article on Facebook or see attached press release for further information.

Health and Welfare

Face Coverings

Wearing face coverings will be compulsory on public transport in England from 15 June 2020. Every precaution must be taken as passenger numbers are expected to increase when lockdown measures are eased further. Coverings must be worn on buses (including school transport), trams, trains, coaches, aircraft and ferries. Very young children, disabled people and those with breathing difficulties will be exempt. Please [click here](#) for further information.

Staying Safe Outside Your Home

As the lockdown restrictions previously imposed on us are now being slowly lifted, there is a set of principles we should follow to ensure that time spent outside of our homes is as safe as possible.

Whether we are customers, visitors, employees or employers we will need to make changes to lower the risk of transmission of the virus. The Government has consulted with its scientific advisers to establish the principles that will determine these changes.

- Keep your distance from people outside your household
- Keep your hands and face as clean as possible
- Avoid being face to face with anybody outside of your household
- Reduce the number of people you spend time with in a work setting
- Avoid crowds
- If you have to travel (for example, to work or school), think about how and when you travel
- Wash your clothes regularly
- Keep indoor places well ventilated
- Face coverings
- When at work, follow the advice given to you by your employer.

Please [click here](#) to read more about how to stay safe when outside of your home.

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

A single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs coronavirus-related support from their councils. The **0300 790 6275** number is available seven days per week 8am - 6pm.

Anyone who can't find help within their own local networks and volunteers, can use this number to get help and advice around:

- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Support for the homeless
- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Transport to medical appointments
- Waste collection and disposal
- Financial support

This number won't cover medical advice, for which people will need to continue to use the 111 NHS phone number if they cannot get help online.

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

Links to the most up to date Government guidance as of 29 May 2020 can be found here

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

Public Health England

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

[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](#)

FAQS

- Q. I have been contacted by an alleged 'NHS Track and Trace caller', who has requested payment details in order to send me the testing kit. I thought this was a free service?**
- A.** Unfortunately, this service has attracted the attention of a number of scammers who are targeting the vulnerable, preying on their fears about coronavirus. Legitimate contact tracing callers will only ask for basic information, so it is vital that people remain vigilant and report any unsolicited calls and texts requesting payment or sensitive information.

Do not share bank details, passwords or click on any links in unexpected emails or texts.

Crime / Safeguarding

Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP)

UK police stand with those appalled by George Floyd's death

UK police leaders have come together and published a statement about George Floyd's death. Please [click here](#) to read the full press release issued by UK police leaders.

NHS Test and Trace Scam Alert

Police have warned the public to be aware of potential scammers as the NHS Test and Trace system is rolled out across the country. The Government's contact tracing system was launched in England on Thursday, May 28. It means that anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and are required to share information about their recent interactions. People identified as having been in close contact with someone who has tested positive will then also be contacted, and will be told they must stay at home for 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms.

The UK's [National Cyber Security Centre](#) (NCSC) has previously confirmed that it has seen a number of scams appear since the Covid-19 outbreak which have attempted to capitalise on concerns around the pandemic.

If NHS Test and Trace calls you by phone, the service will be using a single phone number which is: 0300 0135 000. The only website the service will ask you to visit is: <https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk>.

Users will need to sign into the official NHS test and trace website and enter their full name and date of birth to confirm their identity.

Contact tracers **will never** ask you any of the following:

- To dial a premium rate number (for example, those starting 09 or 087)
- To make any form of payment
- For any details about your bank account
- For your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts
- For any passwords or PINs, or ask you to set up any passwords or PINs over the phone
- To purchase a product
- To download any software to your device or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet
- To access any website that does not belong to the Government or NHS.

Anyone who has been subject to a scam can contact action fraud on 0300 123 2040 or via the [website](#).

Victims can also call Avon & Somerset Police 101.

Please [click here](#) for further information about how the NHS Track and Trace system works.

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.

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives

Attachments:

QAVS Regal Theatre

SCC Highways Manager Update