

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 14. Week ending 28/06/20

#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. Easing of Lockdown Restrictions from Saturday 4 July 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Tuesday 23 June further changes to lockdown measures in England to enable people to see more of their friends and family, help businesses get back on their feet and get people back in their jobs.

From Saturday 4 July, pubs, restaurants and hairdressers will be able to reopen, providing they adhere to COVID Secure guidelines. From the same date, two households will be able to meet up in any setting with social distancing measures, and people can now enjoy staycations in England with the reopening of accommodation sites.

In order to begin restoring the arts and cultural sector, some leisure facilities and tourist attractions may also reopen, if they can do so safely - this includes outdoor gyms and playgrounds, cinemas, museums, galleries, theme parks and arcades, as well as libraries, social clubs, places of worship and community centres.

As high streets begin to reopen, it's important that the risk of transmission is not increased which is why "close proximity" venues such as nightclubs, soft-play areas, indoor gyms, swimming pools, water parks, bowling alleys and spas will remain closed for now.

For more information, please [click here](#).

2. DEMOCRATIC/GOVERNANCE

Scrutiny Committee

The next virtual meeting of the Scrutiny Committee takes place on Wednesday 1 July.

Items on the agenda include:

- The Signing of a Charter for Compassion
- Hinkley Point C Housing Fund Strategy (Phase 3)
- SWT Corporate Performance Report 2019/20

July Committee meetings

A number of other meetings have been scheduled for July 2020, which are as follows:

- Tuesday 7 July - **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 2 July)
- Thursday 9 July - **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 6 July)
- Wednesday 15 July - **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 10 July)
- Thursday 23 July - **Planning Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 20 July)
- Monday 27 July - **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Wednesday 22 July)

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.

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 the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

SWT Councillors are reminded that if they do not wish to receive paper copies of agendas to please let the Governance Team know.

3. SWT takes authorised encampment action

SWT is taking action to deter unauthorised encampments on the open space at the Blackbrook Leisure Centre, Taunton.

The Council has devised a temporary scheme to stop vehicles gaining access to the land which sees regular illegal encampments. Large concrete boulders have been placed across access points to the car parks while the leisure centre is closed due to coronavirus restrictions.

It will be followed with permanent measures to stop future unauthorised encampments when the facility is fully open again. SWT hopes the initiative will help to ease concerns for the local community and reduce the cost of frequent eviction and clean-up operations.

Please [click here](#) to read the SWT news article.

4. Update on Laxton Road, Taunton, Social Housing Project

Work has resumed on a scheme to develop new social housing in Taunton. SWT is providing eight new housing units for social rent on a disused garage site in Laxton Road.

The flats will see future residents benefit from high quality, energy efficient housing and will help to address the need in the town.

Work began in November 2019 but was halted due to the Covid-19 lockdown. The contractors have now restarted with appropriate social distancing and safe working practices in place.

The programme was due to be completed in September, and the contractors are now doing everything they can to make up for lost time, aiming for completion around November.

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

5. SWT Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy is the first for the new Council and provides a strategic framework for future economic development. This strategy was approved by Full Council in February 2020 and will address and improve some of the issues and challenges identified during its development over the last year.

One of the issues such as social mobility is a longer term systemic challenge that needs to be constantly re-visited. Recognising new business opportunities in emerging sectors, and new ways of doing business, such as increasing digitalisation need to coincide with the need to respond to corporate objectives relating to sustainable living and climate change.

This strategy has been developed through wide consultation and stakeholder engagement. The annual work plan will be prioritised and reviewed to take into account what has been achieved and what more there is to do, as well as identifying opportunities to leverage national and regional funding streams in support of taking forward some of the proposals.

Please [click here](#) to view the Economic Development Strategy 2020-2024.

SWT would like to thank all those businesses and stakeholders who participated in developing the strategy. We want to continue to work with you to improve the economy for us all post coronavirus.

6. Armed Forces Week

Monday marked the start of [#ArmedForcesWeek](#), and this has been a chance for us to show our support for the men and women who make up the [#ArmedForces](#) community by virtual means. The first in our series of videos is a message from the Chair of [@SWTCouncil](#) Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey. Please [click here](#) to watch Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey's video.

A series of daily bulletins from this week can be found [@SWTCouncil twitter](#) page.

7. Seaward Way, Minehead Update

SWT has been working with Contractors to construct two units at Seaward Way, Minehead. Unfortunately like many of our developments, the Contractors had to close the site for five weeks during lockdown. The site was re-opened on 4 May 2020 and excellent progress has been made with much activity on both units.

8. SWP Sites and Services

Visitors to Somerset Waste Partnership's recycling sites will find 'shop-style' social distancing arrangements in place over the next week.

Floor markings and other extra signs are being introduced to all 16 sites in the coming days. The set-up will be similar to that seen in supermarkets and other shops, with visitors expected to take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe.

Sites were closed in March and reopened in May, with extra staff and barriers on hand to make sure social distancing was followed and to control access to waste skips. This extra staffing has been gradually phased out and, on Saturday 20 June, barriers at the sites were removed.

Other safety and access restrictions remain in place:

- Gloves to be worn when outside the vehicle
- Maximum of two people per household
- Trailers and 3.5 tonne vans only allowed between 4pm and 6pm on weekdays
- Lifting assistance not available.

There will be a further update when all sites can take the last few materials currently not being accepted, including glass and cardboard which can be recycled at the kerbside. At the present time, textiles are still not being collected due to the fact that there is no guarantee they will be recycled. Householders are asked to retain their textile/clothing/shoes etc until kerbside recycling is resumed.

Sites have experienced long queues at times, especially in the morning, and the public is still advised to only make trips to the tip if really necessary.

All SWP sites are now open for their usual summer hours. Queue cams at Bridgwater, Chard, Taunton and Yeovil can be viewed [here](#).

Please [click here](#) for up to date notifications from SWP Somerset.

Urge others to follow [@Somersetwaste](#) on Facebook and Twitter.

Sign up [here](#) to subscribe to e-news.

Partner Engagement - Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

Highway Maintenance Update

Another busy week. The thunderstorms of the previous week had precipitated a landslip at Preston Bowyer, near Milverton, which fell onto and blocked the B3227. SCC had to close the road as an emergency and set up traffic diversions.

Clearance work and stabilisation of the cutting slope then proceeded. One of the particular problems was a very unstable area, (what rock climbers and skiers would call a cornice), at the top of the slope, where it met the field. An excavator with a longer reach had to be brought in to get to this and remove the soil and stones from a safe distance. After a good power wash and clean of the road surface, the **B3227** was reopened to all traffic on the afternoon of Wednesday 24 June.

The return to dry conditions also allowed the completion of the 2020 carriageway surface dressing (“tar and chip”) programme. Overall, this has generally gone well

and Somerset Highways would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents and road users of Somerset West and Taunton for their support whilst we carried out this important programme of highway maintenance works.

The fine weather did cause some problems though, and Thursday 27 June (recorded as the hottest day of the year so far) resulted in the road surface at A39 Minehead Road, Bilbrook, Old Cleeve melting. Emergency dusting down was undertaken in the late afternoon, when temperatures were at their hottest, and an inspection on the following (much cooler) day did seem to indicate that SCC had managed to stabilise the situation and save the road surface.

As regards the carriageway resurfacing programme, Canon Street, Taunton was successfully completed and work is ongoing at **A39 Bridgwater Road, Holford, near the Castle of Comfort**. This is evening working, with the **A39 closed between 6.30pm and 11.30pm**. Given good weather, the last road closure and the completion of the scheme should be on Wednesday 1 July.

On to more routine tasks and rural verge cutting continues along our “C” and “D” road network.

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

Idverde Bird Box Donation

Local street cleansing company Idverde has donated bird boxes to various community groups in the West Somerset area. One area recently was Blenheim Gardens in Minehead. This week the working partnership between SWT and Idverde successfully located three bird boxes among the trees. It is hoped that this attracts different species of birds to the gardens, which also has a new wild flower area, for the members of the public to enjoy.

M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme

Toneway

The current traffic management layout, which resembles the pre-construction layout, will be in place until early autumn. Work will continue with construction of the additional lane on the M5 gyratory along with the new pedestrian cycle route within the inner gyratory. The final surfacing on Toneway will be installed during overnight road closures early autumn this year to coincide with the final surfacing of the gyratory.

Blackbrook Bridge

The final concrete has been poured on the new bridge and backfilling of the abutments is also completed. The installation of a surcharge layer is underway this week, which on completion will start the clock ticking on the settlement period of the area surrounding the bridge.

J25 Gyratory

Installation of the concrete vehicle containment barrier to the inner gyratory was carried out last month. Works will continue within all areas which will include

excavations, subbase, installation, kerbing works along with installation of the new traffic signal ducting.

Road Closures

A temporary closure of **Ruishton Lane** will be available from 30 July 2020 for eighteen months. (Ref ttro369085TD). The closure will be implemented several times throughout this period, to allow Wessex water access to upgrade their system along with construction of the new junction. Pedestrian access will be maintained and a diversion route for traffic will be clearly signed. The diversion route will be via **Cheats Road, Lipe Lane** and **A358**. The first closure will be in place during August when Wessex Water will upgrade their system.

Please [click here](#) for an update on the works being undertaken to the Ruishton Junction and New Nexus 25 Roundabout.

Drone Footage

Alun Griffiths' latest drone footage is available on their project pages at the Griffiths in the Community website. Please [click here](#) to view the drone footage.

If you would like to subscribe to receive future Newsletters and Bulletins from Alun Griffiths, please [click here](#) and complete the online form for Mail Chimp.

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

Home Library Service

Whilst libraries have remained closed during the lockdown, an alternative way of accessing books has been initiated by Somerset Libraries, who work with the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) to provide a Home Library Service. The service is available to anyone who is unable to visit their local library. This includes people who may be housebound, living in long term care, carers, or people who are vulnerable due to long term conditions or disabilities. The service is open to people of all ages.

Please [click here](#) to access the service and to view ebooks/audio ebooks, newspapers and magazines for free.

For more information about this service contact the RVS - email Kirsty.Jenssen@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk or phone 07920 250834

Please see the attached word document about how to join the library service online.

Health and Welfare

NHS Nightingale Bristol Hospital

The NHS Nightingale Bristol Hospital was built during the coronavirus outbreak to make sure there would be sufficient critical care capacity within our region for the most unwell patients suffering with Covid-19 and who might require ventilation.

The NHS mission remains to save lives, provide hope and enhance and support critical care capacity across the Severn region. The NHS is currently waiting for national agreement on a number of issues related to the future of the hospital, especially in light of the further easing of lockdown restrictions.

There is strong support for retaining the hospital to support the region over the winter 2020/21. As soon as NHS Nightingale Bristol Hospital is in a position to confirm arrangements we will share them with you.

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 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 shielding / self-isolating due to having an underlying medical condition. When can I stop shielding?

A. Due to falling infection rates, those individuals who have been self-isolating in England during the pandemic will no longer need to shield from 1 August and will be able to return to the workplace. From 6 July, up to six people will be able to meet up outdoors and form 'support bubbles' with other households. Support packages will remain in place until the end of July to help people transition.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information.

Q. Before I reopen my business on 4 July, what steps do I have to take to be 'COVID-ready'?

A. Employers that want to reopen their business in England, have a legal responsibility to protect their employees and other people on site. [Click here](#) to view the available guidance, including risk assessment and to make sensible adjustments to the site and workforce. If you do not carry out a risk assessment, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or your local council can issue an enforcement notice. Employees can use this guidance to check what their workplace needs to do to keep people safe.

Crime / Safeguarding Avon & Somerset Police

Fire Damage at Priorswood Community Centre, Taunton

An investigation is underway after Priorswood Community Centre in Taunton was damaged on Wednesday 17 June at about 11.15pm. A book stand, which was offering free books to members of the community during the lockdown, was damaged by a fire. The cause of the fire is believed to be suspicious.

Enquiries have identified a white man that A&SP wish to speak to in connection with their investigation. The building suffered a considerable amount of damage. Glass has been shattered and the frame of the building has also been damaged.

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

Increased police bike patrols following anti-social behaviour in Taunton parks

Since the reopening of the High Streets, Police on bicycles have stepped up patrols with particular emphases on Taunton's parks following reports of anti-social behaviour. Please visit [PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen's Facebook page](#) for photos and regular updates.

Road Safety - Past Facebook Live

PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen held a Taunton Facebook Live Beat Surgery on Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 8pm. On this occasion he was joined by Road Safety Officer PC Dan Cox. They went through the most common questions he is asked in his role, and he also explained the processes that Roads Policing Officers (Traffic Officers) have to deal with every shift. Although this is no longer Live, the Surgery can be viewed [here](#).

Facebook Live Surgery - UPCOMING

The Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens will put your policing questions to Chief Constable Andy Marsh during a Facebook Live Beat Surgery on **Tuesday June 30 at 1:30pm**. Please click [here](#) to set a reminder and access the link.

Facebook Live Surgery - UPCOMING

PCSO Katherine Williams and **Linda Brooks** are going to do another Facebook Live Beat Surgery. They are giving you plenty of notice, so get your questions and queries to them, to make for an interesting and worthwhile discussion. It will be held on **Wednesday 8 July at 11am**, so please private message either of the PCSOs on the Facebook links above.

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](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil)
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

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

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*Attachment:
How to join the library service*