

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 18. Week ending 26/07/20

#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. Local Leisure Centres Reopening

Local leisure centres across the district are set to reopen. Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa, Taunton Pool, Wellsprings Leisure Centre and Wellington Sports Centre, which are managed by sports and leisure operator [Everyone Active](#) in partnership with SWT will reopen their doors on 25 July for gym access and fitness classes.

The news comes after the facilities were forced to close for almost four months due to the coronavirus pandemic. Other facilities and activities across the leisure centres will follow in a phased approach and members will be updated as dates are confirmed.

The Government update on 9 July confirmed leisure centres were now safe to reopen facilities, with strict operational measures in place. Everyone

Active procedures will ensure social distancing is managed throughout the centres and regular cleaning is maintained. Full detail of the operator's measures can be found [here](#).

Whilst its 200 leisure centres across the country have been closed, Everyone Active launched a comprehensive package of online workouts for people to do whilst in lockdown, along with streaming live classes across its [social media pages](#).

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

2. BT phone box removal consultation

On 17 July SWT emailed District Councillors and Town and Parish Councils regarding BT's proposal to remove 23 payphones across the District. BT is continually reviewing the demand for their payphones and they have identified these public payphones that are not being used enough. BT is proposing to remove them under the 90 day consultation process. **For ease of reference, please see attached SWT Annex for the list of payphones.**

Overall use of payphones has declined by over 90 per cent in the last decade and the need to provide payphones for use in emergency situations is diminishing all the time, with at least 98 per cent of the UK having mobile coverage. This is important because as long as there is mobile network coverage, it's possible to call the emergency services, even when there is no coverage from your own mobile network provider.

To make sure that the local communities are fully informed, BT has placed consultation notices (including the posting date) on these payphones. **A sample notice is attached.**

SWT would welcome your feedback on whether the payphones are still needed and would appreciate your help. Should you discover a payphone in your area is on the list to be removed, it is important that you respond to the consultation, the first stage of which, ends on **Friday 28 August 2020 at 12 noon.**

Immediately following the closing date, the decision notice will be drafted and that will be sent to all relevant District Councillors and Town and Parish Councils by **31 August 2020.**

The final closing date for comments is **Wednesday 30 September at 12 noon.** This enables the decision to be finalised and then sent to BT and the Secretary of State by the closing date of Sunday 4 October 2020.

All responses are required whether you wish to accept or reject the closure of the payphone. Please email your responses to governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

How can a community keep a red phone box?

This is a great opportunity for local communities, councils and charities, to adopt their red phone box and make it an asset for everyone to enjoy. People across the country are using them for everything from defibrillators to foodbanks. It's really simple to do and costs just £1.

Please [click here](#) to explore the options available.

3. DEMOCRATIC/GOVERNANCE

Committee Meetings

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

Important

[Special Meeting, SWT Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Monday, 27th July, 2020 6.15 pm, POSTPONED](#) and will be rescheduled when an alternative date has been determined.

August Committee meetings

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

- Wednesday 5 August - **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 31 July)
- Thursday 6 August - **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 3 August)
- Wednesday 19 August - **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 14 August)
- Thursday 20 August - **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 17 August)

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 by [clicking here](#). 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.

4. The Discretionary Business Grant Scheme has now closed

SWT has had a tremendous response to the Discretionary Business Grant scheme. Officers are working their way through the applications received so far but it looks likely that once these have been processed all of the funds that have been made available by the Government will be used up.

The scheme has therefore been closed to new applications and information has been updated on the Council website to reflect this. SWT is processing applications in date order and closely monitoring the remaining claims against the funds available.

SWT is sorry that they cannot help every business but wish everyone every success going forward. Should the Government provide additional funds that will enable the scheme to re-open SWT will let people know via the [website](#).

5. Lettings and Homefinder Update

During the peak of coronavirus, SWT followed government ruling and stopped advertising new properties on Homefinder Somerset as only essential moves were allowed. However, preparation work undertaken by SWT officers continued so that tenants were ready for sign-up, to reduce delays when restrictions changed. Officers facilitated direct matches into SWT properties for those who did meet the 'essential moves' criteria, which minimised rent loss and freed up temporary accommodation.

Restrictions have now been relaxed and SWT is advertising properties again and starting to enable moves for those who have been waiting for their property. Officers are in the process of allocating the 17 new properties at Pyrland Fields, Taunton that have now started to be occupied.

As restrictions have lifted the Homefinder team has experienced a growing number of new applications and an increase in the number of phone calls returning to 'business as usual' levels. SWT has started running Homefinder renewals which will be a significant piece of work to ensure all applications are up to date and relevant.

6. Demolition Works North Taunton

Demolition of properties in Phase A of the North Taunton Woolaway Project has now started. The demolition begins with six properties in Cambridge Terrace and will move on to other areas in Phase A over the next few weeks.

Time-lapse cameras are being installed to capture most of the demolition and all of the construction. SWT will also be regularly capturing shots from the air using a drone.

SWT is aiming for demolition to be completed by early October and for the main build contractor Engie to commence work in November. The new homes in Phase A will range from one and two bedroom flats and bungalows, to two, three and four bedroom homes, as well as two and three bedroom chalets. Future phases will follow over the coming years.

Please [click here](#) for more information on the scheme and you can read the full SWT press release [here](#).

7. Customer Service Compliments on the Up

Since 1 April 2020 SWT has received 57 formal compliments for staff and/or SWT services. During the same period last year SWT had received 24 which is still great, but 2020 has seen a significant improvement.

The compliments received mostly relate to SWT staff and the delivery of the services provided, including a proactive response of support during coronavirus pandemic. In particular, Customer Services, Revenues and those conducting welfare calls, visits and delivering food parcels have received some wonderful feedback over the past few months. There are many more who have also received thanks.

If you would like to pass on a compliment about the service you have received or about a member of staff, please feel free to email cmc@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

8. SWP Sites and Services

Somerset Waste Partnership is encouraging everybody to stay safe and protect others when disposing of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

From Friday 24 July wearing a face mask in shops and on public transport becomes mandatory. Please [click here](#) to watch a video showing the safest way to dispose of your face masks and gloves.

Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms themselves or in their family should double bag tissues, masks, gloves, and cleaning cloths, store them for 72 hours separately in their home and then put in their rubbish. Do not put tissues, masks, gloves or cleaning cloths in your recycling box.

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

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

SCC Highways is currently focusing on the routine tasks of gully emptying, safety defect repairs and patching. You may well also see the carriageway surface

dressing team out and about, carrying out aftercare tasks on the dressings that were laid in June. As traffic volumes have returned to almost normal, it is now sometimes difficult to visualise how different road conditions were during the early stages of the pandemic.

During the first couple of weeks of lockdown SCC took the opportunity to drive most of the A and busier B roads to carry out a road marking and sign inventory. Once they had analysed the data, works orders were submitted to refresh the road centrelines and clean any signs in need along main routes. This enabled contractors to carry out these works whilst the roads were quiet with reduced traffic. Also, this was during the summer weather when the roads were dry and free from de-icing salt which always produces a more durable result.

Rural verge cutting continues along the “C” and “D” road networks and more information on this can be found on the [Travel Somerset website](#).

Following on from the noxious weeds (including ragwort) article in last week’s newsletter, should you spot any ragwort out on the highway verges then please [click here](#) to report it to SCC.

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

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue (D&SFR) Summer Safety Advice

As part of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service’s summer safety campaign, there are some little things that can make a big difference in keeping everyone safe this summer.

The fire service sees an increase in fires at this time of year caused by outdoor activities, such as campfires, BBQs and bonfires. In May, crews from across the Service attended various wild fires caused by disposable BBQs. One incident took crews over 70 hours to put out, using more than 60 fire engines (around half the fleet).

In a bid to reduce your chances of requiring the services of the fire brigade, you can take the following precautions:

- Check your car - before heading out on the road
- Remember the dangers of fire outdoors - both at home and on holiday
- Protect our countryside - a small spark can start a big fire

Please [click here](#) to read more details about summer safety tips.

D&SFR want everyone to have a happy and healthy summer, but if you do find yourself dealing with a fire, remember to get out, stay out, and call 999.

Community Support - What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support Fortnightly Newsletter- Next Issue due 31 July

SWT continues to produce a fortnightly e-newsletter to support the work of the voluntary and community sector across the district.

SWT would welcome your feedback on the frequency, or even need, for such a newsletter as we move into August. It would be great to hear your thoughts - please email: VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk Thank you.

Guidance on Reopening Village Halls

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) has produced guidance looking at how village halls can prepare risk assessments, ensure social distancing once open, and introduce effective cleaning regimes. There are some practical resources too including checklists, notices for display in halls, and sample terms of hire. Please [click here](#) to view the latest guidance.

The latest Government advice - COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities can be [downloaded here](#).

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal, which was first launched by the Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) on Thursday 19 March, now stands at **£850,000** [amount correct as at 09/07/2020]. The charity aims to raise a total of £1.5m through the appeal.

Please [click here](#) to view a map which allows you to explore the grants awarded in Somerset so far. Each blue dot represents a grant. Larger dots are larger grants and smaller dots are smaller grants. You can click on a dot to find out who was awarded the grant, how much they received, and what it's being used for. Remember that some groups are based in a particular location but work over a larger area.

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

Any groups wishing to apply should visit the SCF website where they can find guidance on how [to make an application](#).

Health and Welfare

Exemptions to wearing a face covering where they are mandated

There are some circumstances, for health, age or equality reasons, whereby people are not expected to wear face coverings. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings.

You do not need to wear a face covering if you have a legitimate reason not to. This includes:

- young children under the age of 11
- not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
- to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others
- to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you
- to eat or drink, but only if you need to
- to take medication
- if a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering.

There are also scenarios when you are permitted to remove a face covering when asked:

- If asked to do so by shop staff for the purpose of age identification
- If speaking with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound. Some may ask you, either verbally or in writing, to remove a covering to help with communication

Please [click here](#) to keep up to date with COVID-19 guidelines.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP)

Throughout July, SASP and some of the UK's major health charities are promoting the national "[We Are Undefeatable](#)" campaign. You may see the adverts on the TV, bringing inspiring stories of people who find ways to keep active to help them manage their long term conditions.

Research shows that being active is good for physical and mental wellbeing. It helps us stay strong and more able to manage daily life. SASP would encourage you to read their booklet (PDF attached) and to try out some or all of the simple exercises that feel comfortable for you. There is also the opportunity to get in touch with [SASP](#) who are able to offer advice on activity and exercise that could help you. They are also able to connect you with what is happening in your area, or to help you try something new. Their telephone number is **01823 653995** or email Josh Culverhouse at enquiries@sasp.co.uk.

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 Covid-19 guidance can be found here

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

[Public Health England](#)

[NHS - Help and Advice](#)

FAQS

Q. Can I send my teenagers to their youth club?

A. Yes, you can. However, you should advise your children to maintain social distancing, wash their hands regularly and limit social interaction outside of these formal activities with anyone you do not live with.

The club should also follow [COVID-19 Secure guidance](#).

Q. Can I travel abroad now? Book a holiday?

A. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office currently advises British nationals against all but essential international travel. [Travel to some countries and territories is currently exempted](#).

This advice is being kept under constant review. Travel disruption is still possible and national control measures may be brought in with little notice, so check our [travel guidance](#).

Crime / Safeguarding Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Chief Constable Andy Marsh has outlined the rising demand on police as lockdown eases

Between 5pm on Friday 17 July to 8am on Monday 20 July, A&SP received 1,017 calls to 999 requiring an immediate emergency response and a further 914 which needed a priority response. This is in addition to calls to the non-emergency 101 number and reports submitted online through the A&SP website.

The incidents the police attended resulted in 178 people being taken into custody between Friday and Sunday - a 20 per cent increase on the last weekend of June and higher than the levels seen before lockdown began.

Please [click here](#) to read the full statement provided by Chief Constable Andy Marsh.

Facebook Live Tuesday 21 July 2020

In this week's Facebook Live Police Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens put your questions about policing to Chief Constable Andy Marsh. Although the interview is no longer live, you can watch it [here](#).

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.

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives

Attachments:

BT Street Payphone listing

SASP PHE Active at Home Booklet