

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 51. Week ending 28/03/2021

#StayAtHome #ProtectTheNHS #SaveLives

It is also important to remember the Coronavirus basics

- **Hands** – Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- **Face** – Cover your face in enclosed spaces
- **Space** – Keep 2m apart where possible

SWT Council priorities

Somerset West and Taunton Council's updated priorities during the Coronavirus pandemic 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](#).

[Click here](#) to read up to date information on how SWT continues to respond to Coronavirus.

Key Messages this week

1. How the rules will change on 29 March

Some of the rules on what you can and cannot do will change on **29 March**. You can read the [‘COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021’](#) for more information on the roadmap out of lockdown in England.

From 29 March:

- you will be able to meet outdoors either in a group of 6 (from any number of households), or in a group of any size from up to 2 households (each household can include existing support bubbles, if eligible)
- you will be able to take part in formally organised outdoor sports with any number of people (outdoor sports venues and facilities will be able to reopen)
- childcare and supervised activities will be allowed outdoors for all children
- formally organised parent and child groups will be able to take place outdoors for up to 15 attendees. Children under 5 will not be counted in this number

From 1 April, if you have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable you will no longer be advised to shield. However, you should continue to take extra precautions to protect yourself. It is important that you continue to keep the number of social interactions that you have low and try to limit the amount of time you spend in settings where you are unable to maintain social distancing. If you are in this group, you will previously have received a letter from the NHS or from your GP telling you this.

To read a summary of the changes please [click here](#).

2. Democracy and 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.

A number of Committee meetings are scheduled to take place over the next couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- Tuesday 30 March – **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 25 March)
- Wednesday 7 April – **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 31 March – due to two Bank Holidays)
- Thursday 8 April – **Planning Committee, CANCELLED**

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.**

3. Virtual Meetings – 7 May update

The Government have now written to all Local Councils to confirm that they are not extending the section of the Coronavirus Legislation that relates to virtual meetings (letter attached). So, as things stand, we will no longer be able to hold virtual Committee meetings from 7 May 2021. This is currently being challenged in the Courts by the Association of Democratic Services Officers and Lawyers in Local Government with the aim of allowing Councils to continue holding remote meetings beyond the 6 May 2021. The outcome of the Court case will not be known until mid to late April. We will keep you updated.

Consultation

The Government are now calling for Local Councils to respond to a call for evidence so that they can consider whether to amend the legislation to make permanent provision, in whole or part, to enable Councils to hold remote meetings. This consultation ends on 17 June 2021 and then primary legislation would need to be amended.

4. Notice of Election published

SWT has published notices for the elections on **Thursday 6 May.**

There are three by-election notices on the Council's [website](#) –

- Somerset West and Taunton Council - Trull, Pitminster and Corfe Ward by-election
- Minehead Town Council - Alcombe South Ward, Central Ward and Periton & Woodcombe Ward by-elections
- Watchet Town Council by-election

The Notice of Election for the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner Election can also be found on the SWT [website](#)

Residents should soon be receiving their polling card and are advised to check their card to make sure that they know which polling station they need to go to. Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on **Thursday 6 May.**

If you don't receive a polling card, you may not be registered to vote. You need to register to vote by midnight on Monday 19 April to make sure that you have your say at the ballot box. The easiest way to register is by visiting www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

To read the full press release and find out more information please [click here](#).

5. Purdah – Pre-Election Period

The Pre-Election Period commenced on Monday 22 March and runs until the elections on 6 May.

From the start of the pre-election period, the council must comply with restrictions outlined in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986. In addition a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity published in 2011 makes clear that particular care should be taken in periods of heightened sensitivity, such as in the run up to an election. The Act defines publicity as “**any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public.**”

Generally, the Act says that we should “**not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.**” The Code of Practice recommends that authorities should generally not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters and that publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute.

Decision making - In relation to decision making within the council, the position remains that it is ‘business as usual’ unless there are very good reasons why this should not be the case. In the vast majority of cases, the pre-election period will have no impact on normal council business, including the approval of planning decisions.

What this means

- The primary restriction is on proactive publicity by the council which particularly relates to candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election.
- The council can still issue media releases on factual matters provided that these do not identify individual councillors or groups of councillors.
- Councillors are still free to respond to enquiries received from the media in a personal capacity.
- Individual councillors can issue their own statements, write letters to the local newspaper(s) for publication, contact the media directly or say what they like in a personal capacity, but must not use council resources to do so.

It is still possible for the council to issue statements on behalf of a councillor holding a key political or civic position provided it relates to important events which are outside the council’s control and can be shown to justify a member response. These occasions are likely to be rare and to be the exception, rather than the rule.

6. Local Pantry launches in Rowbarton

SWT is working in partnership with SCC, [Rowbarton Methodist Church](#) and surplus food charity, [FareShare](#), to pilot a county-wide Local Pantry project. Based at Rowbarton Methodist Church, The Local Pantry Rowbarton is the first of its kind piloted in the Somerset West and Taunton area.

The Local Pantry Rowbarton officially opened on **Tuesday 23 March**, operating as a membership scheme to enable households to budget for their food. Members will be able to join for up to six months, paying just £3.50 a week which is equivalent to an annual estimated saving of £1,144.

Once registered, residents can expect to receive ten to fifteen items to stock up their cupboard and fridge every Tuesday. In addition to shelf-stable food, fresh produce such as meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables will be offered that would otherwise go to waste.

Also on offer will be advice and information to help manage finances, alongside other future planned activities to reduce isolation, improve health and well-being.

To read the full press release, please [click here](#).

7. SWT supports national Day of Reflection

Somerset West and Taunton Council observed a minute's silence on Tuesday 23 March to remember all those who have lost their lives during the pandemic and to show support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Initiated by the Marie Curie charity on the anniversary of the first UK lockdown, the silence took place at noon when the flags at Deane House and West Somerset House were flown at half-mast.

In the evening SWT also lit the historic Market House in Taunton in blue and green to honour the emergency services as the nation came together from their doorsteps at 8pm to light up the night.

SWT is also supporting the Somerset ['Coronavirus reflection' page](#) that has been made available online for members of the public to share their own personal reflection messages – which will remain as a permanent reminder of the last year.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

8. Funding for energy efficiency

Over £1.3m will be coming into the districts of Sedgemoor, Mendip, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset to improve the energy efficiency of social housing and owner-occupied homes in Somerset.

The District Councils have successfully bid for the Government funding bid which will enable improvements to be made to 165 social and 45 owner-occupied of the least energy efficient and fuel-poor homes.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

9. SWT taking action on Litter

Our neighbourhoods, parks and public spaces have become ever more popular with people taking outdoor exercise in line with Government advice during the past year. Unfortunately, in some areas this has led to an increase in litter, so as restrictions ease and the nation prepares to come out of lockdown SWT will be making sure our streets and open spaces are clean and welcoming for residents and visitors.

The Council's Open Spaces team have already been working to remove litter, overgrown vegetation and dead and damaged trees at Hankridge Nature Reserve to improve the light which will help maintain the health of the existing tree stock.

SWT would also like to hear from you if you currently take part in or co-ordinate litter clearing efforts in your neighbourhood or if you would like to get involved. Please contact our customer services team at enquiries@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

10. COVID-wardens helping businesses to reopen safely

With the gradual easing of lockdown rules over the next few weeks, the four district councils in Somerset – Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset – have appointed an additional three COVID wardens, bringing the total number up to five that serve all districts.

They will be on hand across the area to help council staff make sure that residents and businesses are COVID-safe and to offer help and advice and to help businesses to re-open in a safe manner for shoppers, their staff and customers.

To read the full press release please [click here](#)

11. SWT acquires land at Cotford St Luke

SWT has secured land in excess of four acres in Cotford St Luke to support its environmental and ecological work. The land at Dene Road will be used to help deliver the Councils commitment to the climate and ecological emergencies through environmental protection.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

12. REMINDER - Business Support Grants – Don't miss out!

The Council is urging any remaining businesses, which have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and are yet to receive or register their interest for a business support grant, to do so urgently.

The Government announced last week that the application window for the majority of the existing grant schemes will close on **Wednesday 31 March 2021**.

Businesses who believe they are eligible for support and wish to be considered for a grant should visit the Council's [Covid Business Support Grants](#) webpage to register their interest online.

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

13. REMINDER - Business Rates Relief Extension

Following the Chancellor's recent Budget statement, business rates holidays for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and childcare nurseries have now been extended to 30 June 2021.

From 1 July 2021 onwards, these awards will be reduced to 66% for the remainder of the financial year for qualifying businesses.

To find out more information about Business Rates Relief, please [click here](#).

Links to the full guidance for both the Expanded Retail Discount and Nursery Discount can be found [here](#).

14. REMINDER - Have your say on affordable housing on Exmoor

Residents on Exmoor are being urged to have their say on possible new locations for affordable housing in the National Park. The Parishes of **Cutcombe, Exford, Exton, Luccombe, Luxborough, Timberscombe, Winsford, and Wootton Courtenay** have been working together to stimulate provision of new affordable housing for local people.

A consultation is currently underway on the seven sites. Initially it was hoped the consultation could be through drop-in sessions at village halls within the parishes, however, COVID-19 restrictions have meant the consultation is being carried as an online questionnaire.

The online survey is hosted by the ENPA on their [website](#).

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

15. REMINDER- Stronger Somerset Public Consultation launched

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP launched the consultation on the evening of Monday 22 February. The consultation period will run for 8 weeks until **Monday 19 April**.

To respond to the Government's consultation, go to <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>. You can also respond by email or post.

Please [click here](#) for more information on the Stronger Somerset proposal.

The Government is also consulting on Somerset County Council's alternative proposal, One Somerset. [Click here](#) to find out more.

16. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

All change. Clocks go ahead one hour at 1am on Sunday 28 March. Great reminder to stay safe by checking batteries/back-up batteries of smoke and gas detectors, clocks, and light bulbs, and to recycle anything that needs replacing.

All SWP recycle sites take batteries and non-working but unbroken bulbs. If you have a broken bulb, then please wrap carefully and place in the general rubbish. Take non-working detectors to recycle site and check with staff.

Easter Waste Arrangements

Every household in Somerset will have Easter waste collection day changes but recycle sites will stay open, Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has announced.

With no pick-ups on Good Friday 2 April, these will take place a day later on Saturday 3 April.

No collections on Easter Monday 5 April mean that all the week's kerbside services will be one day later, including Friday pick-ups on **Saturday 10 April**.

Recycling Sites

All 16 recycle sites remain on their summer schedules, open for essential visits with required safety measures and government restrictions.

On Good Friday 2 April, open 9am to 6pm: Bridgwater, Minehead, Taunton, Wellington.

All sites will open 9am to 4pm on both Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday.

And open 9am to 6pm on Easter Monday: Bridgwater, Minehead, Street, Taunton and Williton

Full guidance on disposing of waste during the pandemic can be found [here](#). In a household without any COVID-19 cases or symptoms, if you need to throw away used face coverings or PPE, such as gloves, please put them in your 'black bag' waste (or a litter bin if you are outside). Do not put them into your recycling bin as they cannot be recycled through conventional recycling facilities. You do not need to put them in an extra bag or store them before throwing them away. Cloth face coverings should be washed and reused to prevent and reduce waste.

To keep up to date with recycling sites, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter at www.somersetwaste.gov.uk and follow @Somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) Highway Maintenance Report

The old saying that “March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb” seems to be holding this year and is of great assistance when it comes to highway maintenance; as the SCC Highways team catch up on issues arising from the winter.

The removal of dead and diseased trees suffering from ash dieback on **Exford Road, Winsford and A361 Burrow Wall, Burrowbridge** is now approaching a conclusion.

The extraction of the broken-off tree stump on **Eastwick Road, Taunton**, at the junction of **Cheddon Road** that was talked about last week has now been successfully completed and the footway is now in the process of being reinstated. This was a great example of team working between highways, the public utilities and the local users of, and suppliers to, the electricity network. SCC Highways would also like to thank the residents for their patience whilst this deceptively complex job was set up and delivered.

The drainage improvement scheme at **Honiton Road, Churchinford**, just to the south of the village, on the approach to the Devon boundary has, unfortunately, had to be deferred for few weeks and SCC will let you know the new dates when they have them

Subsidence of the carriageway at **Northgate, Wiveliscombe**, has been detected. Temporary traffic signals have been installed there to control traffic whilst emergency repairs are carried out. On 6 April the team will be commencing drainage improvement works at **Lodes Lane, Kingston St Mary**. A temporary road closure will be in place for this scheme.

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

Useful links to report faults

Throughout winter, there are more queries about overgrown trees, verges or hedges, blocked drains and street lights that don't work. To report faults in the following areas, please click on the relevant link:-

[Dangerous/Overgrown Tree alongside the public highway](#)

[Report an overgrown verge or hedge on the road](#)

[Street light not working](#)

[Blocked surface water drain on the highway.](#)

REMINDER- Temporary Road Closure: Princes Street, Taunton

There will be a temporary road closure on Princes Street, Taunton for approximately 75 metres. The works will commence on **31 March 2021** between the hours of 12am (midnight) – 11.59pm.

These works are for Paragon TM Ltd to access telecom equipment for general maintenance on behalf of T-Mobile (UK) Ltd, their works reference is Unknown (reference).

The link to view the new Notice can be found [here](#).

For any further information about this closure please contact Paragon TM Ltd on **0113 3470 074** quoting the above works reference number.

A map of the affected area (in red), together with the recommended diversion route (in purple) can be found [here](#).

Exmoor National Park

Work underway at Minehead's College Farm

Exmoor National Park has volunteered staff to help prepare the West Somerset College farm at Minehead ready for government-funded holiday activities.

The College Farm, an agriculture and horticultural educational facility on the outskirts of the town, has animal grazing, barns, industrial greenhouses and a large classroom which have lain dormant for the past two years.

The site is being brought back into use with the help of the [West Somerset Opportunity Area](#), which plans to run holiday activities with food there, to support families and children in the community. The West Somerset Opportunity Area will be involved with the site until September this year. It will be running holiday activities with support from local charities and the government's Holiday Activities and Food Programme, part of a COVID-19 response package which has been extended into 2021.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Do you exercise in your local countryside? Lambing and bird-nesting season has begun, so there could be new lambs or delicate bird nests, eggs and chicks hidden in grass.

It's important to know how to keep them safe if you're exercising or walking your dog in the countryside. Watch the [video](#) to find out more.

Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (D&SFRS)

D&SFRS has been looking at the yearly statistics, and in the past 12 months, there has been a considerable drop in fires in the home, as well as road traffic collisions.

Interestingly, the past five months, have seen a big drop (nearly a third less than expected) in fires caused by large appliances such as washing machines, tumble dryers and dishwashers. The Fire Service think this is down to you choosing to put these on when you're at home, meaning that you're spotting a problem before it escalates into a fire.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Stay safe when visiting the coast

Please remember to take extra care during these extraordinary times if you visit your local coastline for daily exercise. Follow the [national lockdown guidance](#) at all times.

Volunteer coastguards are always on call, but please help them to help you. [#BeCoastSafe](#) and don't take unnecessary risks: tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back, check tide times and weather before setting out and always take a phone.

Please remember, we're in difficult times; but if you're in trouble at the coast, the Coastguard is always there for you. In an emergency at sea or at the coast, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

For more guidance please [click here](#).

Community Support – What help is out there? Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Somerset Community Foundation

Charities in SWT benefit from almost £60,000 grants funding

The Somerset West and Taunton Small Grants Fund, managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) on behalf of the Somerset West and Taunton Council, awarded £18,000 of grants in the area to help support charities during the early days of lockdown last year.

The funding helped 21 groups to set up virtual services, urgently deliver food where it was needed the most, purchase PPE, and support people's mental health. It was matched by SCF with an additional £39,650 of funding which was raised by a national coronavirus appeal run by the National Emergencies Trust (NET).

Grants of up to £1,000 are also available for local charities, voluntary or community groups, sports clubs, or social enterprises based within Somerset West and Taunton from Wednesday 7 April and the deadline to apply is **Friday 7 May**.

To see who benefitted and read the full press release please [click here](#).

National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF)

Communities Can Conference

The National Lottery Communities Can Conference, organised to mark one year since the UK went into lockdown, had over 1,000 participants register from across the UK to hear from key 'thinkers and do-ers' to explore how communities can build back better and stronger post-pandemic. The event, held on 24 March 2021, saw a range of speakers discuss ideas on how best to harness and extend the renewed sense of community spirit across the UK and enable communities to thrive going forward.

Themes explored included; 'how young people hope to build their future post COVID-19', 'how communities are taking control of the environmental crisis', 'the unequal impact of COVID-19 on communities' and 'how communities plan to recover and rebuild'. The final session saw a range of funders come together with the

conference delegates to consider their role in building a better future with and for communities.

To access more information about this event and view the highlights please [click here](#).

Somerset Skills and Learning (SS&L) Courses for April 2021

As the days are getting longer and our natural energy and enthusiasm improves, spring is the perfect time to refocus, plan and refresh.

SS&L are excited to showcase their brand new Level 3 qualifications, with more to follow in the next few months including Management, Counselling, Mental Health, Advanced Digital Skills, Supporting Teaching & Learning in Schools, Childcare and Principles of SEND.

For more information and Featured Courses and Workshops: [Click Here](#)

Somerset Business Education Partnership

Somerset Education Business Partnership connects employers with education providers so that young people are aware of local career opportunities and develop the skills needed to thrive at work.

Research has shown that young people who have contact with employers whilst at school are significantly less likely to become NEET - not in education, employment or training - and can expect to earn more money once they are in full-time employment.

To read the latest online newsletter please [click here](#).

To find out more please visit the [Somerset Business Education Partnership website](#).

Skill Up Somerset

Business Apprenticeship Scheme

Government Incentive - £3,000 for Businesses offering Apprenticeship Opportunities

The UK Government announced in the recent budget that they are extending and increasing the payments made to employers who hire new apprentices.

Employers in England who hire a new apprentice between 1 April 2021 and 30 September 2021 will receive £3,000 per new hire, compared with £1,500 per new apprentice hire (or £2,000 for those aged 24 and under) under the previous scheme. This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment the government provides for all new 16 to 18 year old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan, where that applies.

To find out more about Apprenticeships and the incentives available please contact Marie at Skill Up West Somerset for free, impartial advice, and guidance. Contact is via the website: www.skillupws.org.uk

REMINDER - Advice for people struggling to pay essential bills

The Government has updated the advice for those in difficulty with utility bills, or repayment commitments on credit cards, loans and mortgages, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

The guidance sets out what people should do if they are struggling to pay bills and sets out the action the Government has taken with different utility providers, as well as loan, credit card, insurance and mortgage providers.

The Government has extended the deadline for applying for a mortgage payment holiday to **31 March 2021**. Please [click here](#) for more information and further advice.

Health and Welfare

Shielding advice for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to stop from April

More than 3.79 million clinically extremely vulnerable people in England will be informed they are no longer advised to shield from Thursday 1 April 2021.

- Advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable to shield ceases from Thursday 1 April, as virus infection rates continue to fall

People on shielded patient list will receive letters with updated guidance on steps people can take to reduce their risk

More than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people have been vaccinated with a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

In line with the government's [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#) roadmap published in February, those on the shielded patient list can begin to follow the national restrictions alongside the rest of the population, but are still advised to take extra precautions to keep themselves safe from COVID-19.

Letters to patients with updated guidance have been sent out with effect from 18 March and over successive weeks. These set out practical steps people can follow to reduce their risk of catching the virus, including continuing to maintain strict social distancing and to keep their overall social contacts at low levels, such as working from home where possible. The move follows the steady decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations across the country for the last couple of weeks.

With the success of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme, more than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people are now vaccinated with their first dose, but it's still important people continue to follow the national rules and take the additional precautions set out in the guidance to keep themselves as protected as possible.

Local councils and supermarkets will continue to provide support for those shielding until 31 March. If people have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, they will continue to be able to access these until 21 June 2021

People are still advised to continue working from home where possible, but if people are unable to do so, employers are required by law to take steps to make workplaces COVID-19 secure and should discuss this with their employees.

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

SPARK Somerset Vaccine Myth buster Training

Are you in a position to chat to people about how they're feeling about the COVID-19 vaccine? Would you like to help them to make informed decisions about whether to have the COVID-19 vaccine?

Most people who have been offered the vaccine in Somerset have been happy to have it. However, some people quite rightly have concerns and questions. With so much misinformation out there, SPARK would like to make sure that people can access the information they need to make the right choices for them.

Spark Somerset has been working with Public Health to help local people access information about COVID-19 in a way that makes sense to them through the [Covid Community Champion](#) Network.

The training will take place online **Wednesday 31 March at 7pm – 8.30pm**
To find out more, and to book your place click [here](#).

REMINDER - Latest Vaccination data for Somerset

You can check Somerset's vaccination data on the Coronavirus dashboard. The information provided by the NHS will be added every Friday. Please [click here](#) to view the latest figures relating to doses that have been administered in Somerset. The dashboard provides an overview of Coronavirus cases, a map, the R number and more detailed district-level information.

More groups urged to get COVID-19 tested

Free Coronavirus community testing is now available for even more groups of Somerset residents to help break chains of transmission and keep communities safe. Around one in three people with Coronavirus do not have symptoms. Community testing, using lateral flow devices, is a fast and simple way to test people who do not have symptoms, but who may still be spreading the virus.

Free, rapid lateral flow COVID-19 tests are now being offered to:

- anyone whose job or volunteering work requires them to leave the house and be in contact with others
- anyone who cares for others, either paid or voluntary

Everyone in these groups – even if they are vaccinated – is encouraged to test themselves twice a week from now on to help identify positive cases and prevent COVID-19 being passed onto others. This helps keep the community safe.

You can [find out how to book a lateral flow test if you do not have symptoms here](#).

REMINDER- All businesses can sign up for free COVID-19 testing

All businesses in England are now able to sign up to the government's free COVID-19 workplace testing programme, including those with fewer than 50 employees (previously restricted to those with more than 50 employees).

Businesses can register to order tests if:

- the business is registered in England
- employees cannot work from home

Businesses must register on or before **31 March** and can get the forms they will need to order free lateral flow tests to test employees in the workplace. Please [click here](#) to register and find out more information.

Please do not use this service if you or your employees have symptoms. Anyone with symptoms should [order an individual test](#) and stay at home.

REMINDER- Coronavirus home testing kits easier to order

The Government has announced that it has introduced improvements to the home testing programme to make it easier to get tested.

They include:

- People who do not have access to the internet can now order home testing kits over the phone by calling 119, without needing an email address or any other digital requirement.
- A new NHS Test and Trace partnership with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) to improve the home testing service for people with visual impairments.
- A new video-call support service with specially trained NHS Test and Trace staff that will help people with vision impairments to test at home.

[Read more on GOV.UK](#)

REMINDER - Please don't drop your guard once vaccinated

While there are many things that we are still discovering about COVID-19, one thing that we know for certain is that it can be destroyed with simple soap and hot water. That's the reason that the 'hands' part of the 'Hands, Face, Space' message is such an important part of our 'toolkit' for tackling the virus and preventing its spread. The golden rules are: wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water; wear a face covering when required and keeping a social distance of at least two metres.

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

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

In Somerset, the Councils have responded to over 12,200 phone calls on the Coronavirus Support Helpline and have emailed or written to over 22,000 residents shielding to advise them of the helpline and to make contact if they need support.

This 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 including vaccinations
- 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.

If you would like to find out more about the Corona helpers, offer assistance, or need support please visit www.corona-helpers.co.uk

Need to seek help during these tough times?

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 in these tough times:

- Samaritans - 116 123
- CALM - 0800 58 58 58
- ChildLine - 0800 1111
- Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- National Domestic Abuse helpline - 0808 2000 247

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

[Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard](#)

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

[Public Health England](#)

[NHS – Help and Advice](#)

Crime / Safeguarding

Action Fraud

National Insurance Scam leads in surge in calls to Action Fraud

Victims have reported receiving an automated telephone call telling them their “National Insurance number has been compromised” and in order to fix this and get a new number, the victim needs to “press 1 on their handset to be connected to the caller”.

Once connected to the “caller”, victims are pressured into giving over their personal details in order to receive a new National Insurance number. In reality, they’ve been connected to a criminal who can now use their personal details to commit fraud.

How to protect yourself

if you receive an unexpected phone call, text message or email that asks for your personal or financial details, remember to:

STOP

Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

CHALLENGE

Could it be fake? It’s ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

PROTECT

If you have provided personal details to someone over the phone and you now believe this to be a scam, contact your bank, building society and credit card company immediately and report it to Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling **0300 123 2040**.

You can also contact [CIFAS](#) to apply for protective registration. This means extra checks will be carried out when a financial service, such as a loan, is applied for using your address and personal details, to verify it’s you and not a fraudster.

To find out more please [click here](#)

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP) PCC and Chief Constable issue Statement following Disorder in Bristol

Following a protest on the afternoon of Sunday 21 March, several hundred people gathered outside Bridewell Police Station in Bridewell Street. Some of those gathered engaged in violent disorder, causing damage to police vehicles and the outside of the police station.

Over that night seven arrests were made – six for violent disorder and one for possession of an offensive weapon – and a full investigation is now underway. A total of **20 officers were assaulted or injured** and two of them were taken to hospital after suffering broken bones. One of them also suffered a punctured lung.

A&SP has launched a huge police investigation in which they will be gathering evidence from CCTV, Body Worn Video, social media content and images/video sent in by the public. They are appealing for people to send in footage so all those responsible can be identified. They have set up an [online gallery](#) and are asking members of the public to help identify persons of interest.

To read more about the incident please [click here](#).

Tyre Safety Tragedy

Megan was just weeks away from her 23rd birthday when she lost control of her vehicle and crashed into a large family car whilst driving in high winds, sleet and rain. Tragically, the impact of the crash was so severe that Megan died at the scene.

It was confirmed that Megan was driving within the speed limit and wearing a seatbelt. However two of the tyres on her car were underinflated, which contributed to the crash. Watch Megan's story [here](#).

A&SP Roads policing team are reminding motorists to put a regular day in the diary to ACT by checking your tyres

- Air pressure,
- Condition and
- Tread depth at least once a month and before longer journeys.

Stay safe and take care on the roads.

Police Crime Commissioner Facebook Live

PCC Sue Mountstevens put your questions to Chief Constable Andy Marsh in a Facebook Live recorded on 18 March. You can view this [here](#).

Taunton Neighbourhood Policing

Part of the rural team's commitments are [Farmwatch](#) and [Horsewatch](#) which are free crime prevention initiatives. If you are a landowner with a farm or small holding, no matter how big or small, or are part of the Equine Community please visit the A&SP website and find out how you can join these schemes. The service also includes free tack marking, property marking and when signed up to the scheme there are signs for your gates, outbuildings and stables.

#StayHomeSaveLives

Is your trip out really necessary? Bending the rules costs lives. Your local neighbourhood teams have been out spreading this very important message.

"Stay at home and play your part. Protect the NHS. Save lives".

[#COVID-19](#) [#stayhomesavelives](#) [#yourcommunity](#)

Finally

All change. Clocks go ahead one hour at 1am on Sunday 28 March.

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)
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

Attachments:

Easter Collections Poster

Letter re remote meetings