

# Somerset West and Taunton

## Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

### Issue 26. Week ending 20/09/20

#### **Government Announcement: - Hands Face Space**

The Government has announced new measures to suppress the virus and keep the number of infections down.

There are three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other:

1. **Wash hands** - keep washing your hands regularly for more than 20 seconds each time
2. **Cover face** - wear a face covering in enclosed spaces
3. **Make space** - stay at least two metres apart, or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions.

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

#### **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. Stronger Somerset proposal approved by all District Councils**

A fresh start for Somerset moved a step closer last week as every Somerset district council overwhelmingly backed a bold new plan - **Stronger Somerset** - which promises real change in the way that services are provided for residents and businesses.

At Full Council meetings in Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset District Councils, 84% of councillors voted to support the proposal. All political parties and the majority of independent councillors have expressed approval for the Stronger Somerset plan which is also receiving the backing of residents across the county

The district authorities worked together on the Stronger Somerset plan which focuses on extensive reform of the way councils work and an end to the current two-tier system of local government with county and district councils.

To read the full joint press statement from all the District Councils please [click here](#).

To see all the details of the ambitious and exciting plan for reform and provide your feedback, please visit [www.strongersomerset.co.uk](http://www.strongersomerset.co.uk).

## 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:

- Wednesday 23 September - **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 18 September). The agenda includes items on Community Chest, Shared Legal Service, National Living Wage and Unitary Programme Delivery Funds.
- Tuesday 29 September - **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions of statements is 4pm on Thursday 24 September)
- Wednesday 30 September - **Special Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 25 September)

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](mailto: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. Firepool phase two work begins**

SWT is pressing ahead with work on the regeneration of its flagship Firepool site, kick starting its economic recovery plans. Enabling works started this week on the old cattle market site to break up the concrete for infrastructure and utility work. Work to refurbish the GWR building and bring it back into use, initially as the site office, is due to begin shortly.

Proposals for the regeneration of Firepool were approved by the Council in June 2019 outlining a framework for delivering the site in blocks for specific uses. Part of the site has already been brought back in to temporary use with a grassed area and footpath.

Work will also begin shortly to create the boulevard link from the railway station, which is currently being redeveloped with the entrance re-orientated to face into Taunton, allowing direct access through Firepool to the town centre. This cycle way and footpath will be a permanent key feature of the final scheme.

For the full SWT press release please [click here](#).

### **4. Coal Orchard regeneration Progressing**

Work on the regeneration of Coal Orchard is progressing at pace with the fabric of commercial and retail units, and residential apartments now clearly visible.

The detailed plans to regenerate one of Taunton's prime riverside quarters include a mix of apartments, retail, workspace, and restaurants; and incorporate a riverfront plaza with a stepped terrace to make the most of its position on the River Tone.

Midas Construction started work on the development in August 2019 with a schedule of completion in two phases - September 2020 and February 2021. However, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions the project will now be completed in May 2021 with works handed across in a single phase.

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

### **5. SWT supports the Great British September Clean**

SWT is calling on everyone to get behind the Great British September Clean and help keep the district tidy. The national event was due to take place from 20 March - 13 April but was postponed due to COVID-19 and is now taking place from **11 to 27 September**.

The Council is giving its support to local groups and individuals taking part in or co-ordinating litter clearing efforts by providing litter grabbers and

tabards where possible. It has also arranged to pick up and take away any rubbish bags that are collected through litter picks.

The event was organised by the Taunton Neighbourhood Policing Team and followed COVID guidelines with volunteers two metres apart, wearing masks and gloves. It was supported by the Friends of Longrun and staff from Coach with donations of water, fruit and snacks from the local Tesco supermarket.

You can get involved and show support for the Great British September Clean using these resources; [Organise a private clean-up](#) with up to five other family and friends. [Pledge to do your own individual clean-up](#), you can give as little as 15 minutes to the campaign.

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

## **6. Only one more week left on East Street Consultation**

SWT is encouraging members of the public to have their say on the effect of temporary changes to traffic flow in Taunton. The current temporary closure of East Street to all vehicles except cycles was initiated as a joint response from SWT and Somerset County Council (SCC) working with the police and other partners, to enable social distancing and encourage walking and cycling in line with the first round of Active Travel funding to support the re-opening of high streets.

The consultation also asks what changes people would you like to see if the scheme is extended and whether they would like to see activities on the street, for instance market stalls and entertainment.

The consultation can be found [here](#).

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

## **7. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP) Keep up the good work this Recycle Week**

Somerset is being urged to keep up the good work after recycling an extra 3,500 tonnes of key materials during the COVID lockdown. Ahead of Recycle Week 2020 (21-27 September) SWP is thanking residents for their commitment to do the right thing - and asking them to keep up their recycling habits.

Weekly kerbside collections of recycling continued in Somerset throughout the lockdown period. April, May and June 2020 saw a big jump in the amount of cardboard, plastic bottles, glass bottles, food waste and aluminium cans collected in the weekly kerbside collections, compared to 2019 figures.

- Aluminium cans: up 69%, an extra 92 tonnes
- Glass bottles: up 37%, an extra 1,360 tonnes
- Food waste: up 27%, an extra 1,182 tonnes
- Cardboard: up 24%, an extra 650 tonnes

- Plastic bottles up 23%, an extra 172 tonnes

The figures show that Somerset householders continued to recycle throughout the height of lockdown, helping build on the county's already impressive recycling reputation. Thousands more people requested extra recycling containers, either getting into the recycling habit for the first time or taking the opportunity to do even more.

Recycle Week is the annual campaign encouraging everyone to recycle more of the right things and is now in its 17th year.

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

For information about how to reduce and reuse your waste, visit [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk) and follow @somersetwaste on Twitter and Facebook.

## **Partner Engagement - Key messages from other Public Service Areas**

### **Somerset County Council (SCC)**

#### **Highway Maintenance Update**

SCC Highways are currently focusing on the routine tasks of gully emptying, safety defect repairs and patching. In last week's newsletter they spoke about the carriageway surface dressing programme for next summer and how they are already starting to prepare for it by commencing the necessary patching work.

One of the other advance tasks that SCC Highways carries out is the design process for the dressing itself. This has to start early as one of the key factors is how hard the road surface already is. This is done by using a special probe which has been devised to have standard dimensions and can be subject to a standard vertical load. The amount of penetration into the road surface is then measured. The hardness of the road varies throughout the year with the ambient temperature: softer in summer, harder in winter. The standard test has to be carried out within a certain range of temperatures and this makes testing in the late summer or early autumn ideal.

Once the hardness' of all the anticipated roads in the following year's programme has been determined, the design of individual dressings for each site can commence. This is why you may see members of the Highways team out on the road now, doing something that may look a little odd!

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

### **IMPORTANT: Toneway Road Closures Next Week**

**Monday 21. Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23** - Full closure of Toneway out - M5 North off slip CLOSED - lane closure A358 P&R - Lane closure south off slip - Full closure J25 Inner Ring

**Thursday 24** -Full closure of Toneway out & Toneway Inbound - M5 North off slip CLOSED- lane closure A358 P&R - Lane closure south off slip - Full closure J25 Outer Ring

## **Magna Housing**

### **Update from Housing Director, Tony Murray**

Magna are now starting to remobilise the remainder of their services that were previously suspended due to the pandemic. They realise it hasn't been an easy time for customers but they needed to make sure that it was safe for them and their teams. Magna are now confident that they have everything in place to restart their services through a phased approach over the coming weeks.

In September, Magna will mainly be catching up on outstanding repairs, mutual exchanges, and will start the preparations for installing new bathrooms, kitchens, doors and windows. As they move into October, most of the services will be up and running. Magna offices will remain closed and they won't be running any community events or using community rooms in sheltered housing. However, other than this Magna are confident that all services will be available. Information about which services are coming back on-line can be found [here](#) and through updates on social media.

There have been some exciting developments over the past few months as Magna continue to implement their new corporate strategy which puts customers at the heart of everything they do. In October, they will be going live with a new customer relationship system. Magna has already heard that their customers want the right services, at the right time, first time and this new system will start to help them to achieve this. It will join up many of their internal processes so they can provide a much better customer experience.

Magna know that any new system is only as good as the people who run it and that's why they are also investing in their teams so they are clear about good customer service and what is expected of them. Magna is really excited about the next few months and the changes that they are making.

For more information, please visit [Magna Housing](#) online.

## **Community Support - What help is out there?**

### **Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

## Grants from The Somerset Fund to help local charities thanks to generous local businesses

If you are a grassroots community group based in Somerset, grants are available up to the value of £2,500 from **The Somerset Fund**. Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) manages the Fund and is encouraging applications from smaller charities and community groups that run on less than £100,000 per year.

The grants will be ‘unrestricted’, which means they can be used to pay for ongoing running costs, also known as ‘core costs’. Applications to the Fund through SCF’s website can be made from **Monday 14 September, 2020 and the deadline to apply is Friday 16 October 2020**.

To find out more about the fund and how to apply please [click here](#).

## Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) launched the Coronavirus Appeal in late March 2020 to raise vital funds to help our communities through this difficult time. So far, thanks to donations and support from the [National Emergencies Trust](#), **£1 million** has been raised. This funding has provided more than [180 grants](#) to local charitable groups to help them respond to urgent need. Donations have provided food, medicine, counselling, emotional support and housing to name but a few.

Any group wishing to apply for funding from the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal should visit the Somerset Community Foundation website where they can find guidance on how to make an application: [www.somersetcf.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/coronavirus)

SCF is passionate about doing as much as possible to support our communities, and is encouraging local people, businesses, charitable trusts and organisations who feel able to donate to the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal to visit the SCF website: [www.somersetcf.org.uk/appeal](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/appeal) or, if that isn’t possible, call **01749 344949**.

## Stepping Up Employment Support

A co-ordinated network of employment and skills support for individuals, employers and businesses seeking support and information in relation to employment, skills, careers and apprenticeships is being rolled out across Somerset under the **Step Up Somerset** brand to boost existing provision in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

This includes a new one-stop-shop website [www.stepupsomerset.org.uk](http://www.stepupsomerset.org.uk) which will provide support for individuals who are job hunting, seeking training in new industries or working to strengthen their skills by providing details of employment and skills services and resources. Those who find themselves at risk of or being made redundant can find a full range of support including help with reskilling, financial assistance and wellbeing information.

Employers will be able to gather information on redundancy support for their workforce, staff development and offering apprenticeships or industry placements to young people. The website will also provide a platform for promoting any recruitment or development events available to attend.

For anyone without internet access further one-to-one help can also be provided via a single phone helpline: **0300 790 6275**.

## **VCS Newsletter - Break From Publication**

SWT has taken a break from publication during September and will consider the options for autumn 2020.

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Know what to do if your child starts to display coronavirus symptoms**

A new 'Somerset Covid Checker' launches this week to support parents in knowing what actions to take if their child starts to display coronavirus symptoms.

Somerset's Coronavirus Engagement Board launched the new 'Covid Checker' to help parents know what to do if their child starts to display coronavirus symptoms, tests positive, someone in their household displays symptoms or a household member tests positive.

This comes after Somerset has seen an increase in coronavirus cases over the last fortnight (69 new cases), including four children testing positive at two schools and one early years setting.

The schools and nursery involved are following Public Health England guidance, have deep cleaned all areas and have asked children and staff who came into close contact with the positive cases to self-isolate at home for 14 days.

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

For convenience the Covid-checker for schools PDF is attached.

### **Returning to University and College**

Young people are returning to university and college at a time when more in their age group are testing positive for coronavirus. The latest analysis shows that more people in their 20s in the south-west are testing positive for COVID-19 than any other age group in the region.

Keep yourselves, friends and families safe by following the golden rules: wear a face covering when required; wash hands thoroughly and frequently and stick to the 2m social distancing.

If in doubt, check out the latest guidance by clicking [here](#).

### **Remain vigilant after Somerset coronavirus cases increase**

Somerset's Director of Public Health urges everyone to remain vigilant and continue following government guidance after Somerset sees an increase in Coronavirus cases.



This comes after the Government announced the new rules around the number of people meeting in England as cases rise nationally. From Monday 14 September, there is a ban on meeting socially in groups of more than six, which will apply to any setting - indoors or outdoors.

The new rule replaces the existing ban on gatherings of more than 30 people and the current guidance on allowing two households to meet indoors. Anyone breaking the rules can receive a fine, enforceable by law.

If you do start to show symptoms, however mild, please self-isolate immediately and book a test online at <http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus> or phone 119.  
**Please don't book a test unless you are showing symptoms.**

Please [click here](#) for further information and to find out more about the new rules around meeting with others.

### **Travel restrictions**

The guidance for travelling abroad is constantly being updated by Government. Please [click here](#) to read the latest information relating to the travel corridors.

### **Booking a test**

You should only book a coronavirus test if you are showing symptoms including: high temperatures, new and continuous cough, loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

The only way of getting a test is by booking a slot through the national portal online at [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or by phoning 119.

**Please do not phone 111, turn up at a local test site without a booking, contact your GP surgery or visit A&E who will not be able to help. Just keep trying the national portal.**

There's a high demand for tests so if you are unable to book one, or are offered a location or time which is not convenient, please wait a few hours and then try again. You should also continue to self-isolate. [Click here](#) to find out more information.

Finally, it's vitally important you continue to self-isolate whilst waiting for a test result. This also goes for everyone in your household who must also self-isolate, even if they don't have any symptoms. Only when you receive a negative result or you've completed your self-isolation period, if you tested positive, should you and your household return to school, the workplace etc.

For more information about the symptoms or Coronavirus restrictions, please visit [www.nhs.uk/Coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/Coronavirus) or visit [www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus). And if you need Coronavirus help or support, contact Somerset's helpline on 0300 790 6275.

### **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. Due to the implementation of the 'Rule of 6', is it now unlawful to hold face-to-face council meetings, even if we comply with social distancing measures?**

**A.** The National Association of Local Council's (NALC) view is that although the Principal Regulations continue to permit Local Councils to hold meetings (as an exemption to the six-person gatherings limit) in COVID-19 secure premises, it recommends that councils continue to meet remotely. Furthermore, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has reissued its [guidance](#) last week and deals with meetings at section 3d. MHCLG continues to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally without the need for face-to-face contact, they should continue to do so. Ultimately it is a matter for the Local Council to decide.

**Q. I have tested positive for coronavirus. How can I treat my symptoms at home?**

**A.** There is currently no specific treatment for coronavirus (COVID-19), but you can often ease the symptoms at home until you recover.

If you have a high temperature, it can help to:

- get lots of rest
- drink plenty of fluids (water is best) to avoid dehydration - drink enough so your pee is light yellow and clear
- take [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) if you feel uncomfortable

[Click here](#) for more advice on what to do if you have a cough or feel breathless,

**If you or someone you live with has coronavirus symptoms, you must all stay at home.**

Get help while you're staying at home

[NHS Volunteer Responders](#) can help you while you have to stay at home (self-isolate).

They can help with things like collecting shopping and medicines.

Call **0808 196 3646** (8am to 8pm, everyday) to arrange help from a volunteer.

## Crime / Safeguarding

### Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

#### **New laws came into force on Monday 14 September banning social gatherings of more than six people across England**

The new rules will apply to all ages, to gatherings indoors and outdoors, in private homes, public outdoor spaces and venues such as pubs and restaurants.

Legal exemptions to the six person rule apply. These will permit certain gatherings in any number, for example where your household or support bubble is larger than six, where gatherings are for work or education purposes, or where parenting is being shared across multiple households.

Further exemptions also apply, such as for weddings, funerals, and organised team sports in a COVID secure way. The full list of exemptions have been published on [Gov.uk](#)

To read the full press release including statements from PCC Sue Mountstevens and Chief Constable Andy Marsh, please [click here](#).

#### **Give your opinion on Local Policing and Crime Services**

Police Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens wants to hear your views about police and crime services in your community. Across Avon and Somerset, the Office of the PCC (OPCC) lead improvement in policing, victim support and criminal justice services on behalf of local people to ensure all residents and members of

diverse communities feel safe. Each community has different needs and priorities, and coronavirus has caused great disruption to the way we all live and work.

As we all begin the journey of recovery from the impact of the global health pandemic, A&SP want to make positive changes to their services to make sure they focus money, police officers and resources in the right places.

Last year, the Government announced [Operation Uplift](#), the plan to recruit 20,000 new police officers across the country. As a result, A&SP will be able to recruit additional officers over the next few years.

A&SP are asking local people to help them understand what matters most to our communities and where they think the extra officers should be by answering this [short survey](#).

## **Police Open Day Goes Virtual**

Officers and staff are set to take to the small screen, when the Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP) Open Day goes virtual. On **Sunday 20 September**, A&SP are looking to become the first force to host a live virtual Open Day. The annual Open Day is normally held at the joint HQ of Avon & Somerset Police and Avon Fire & Rescue Service in Portishead. It's an opportunity to showcase the work of the emergency services and community organisations. It has always been a popular event, with tickets selling out way in advance.

Live displays from the Mounted Section, Roads Policing, Dog Section and Firearms Unit will be streamed via the [Avon & Somerset Police website](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts, allowing people to watch the action in the comfort of their own home.

Viewers will be encouraged to submit questions throughout the displays via [opendaymailbox@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:opendaymailbox@avonandsomerset.police.uk).

To read the full press release and find out timings of the displays, please [click 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/](http://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.

**#Hands #Face #Space**

**Attachment:**

*Covid-checker for schools PDF*