

# Somerset West and Taunton

## Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

### Issue 21. Week ending 16/08/20

#### **#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. Somerset Unitary Bid**

You may have all heard by now that the Secretary of State has given permission for Somerset County Council's Unitary bid to proceed. Under the plan branded 'One Somerset', Somerset County Council, SWT, Sedgemoor, Mendip and South Somerset District Councils would be replaced by one single unitary authority.

The Secretary of State has also invited District Councils to come up with an alternative proposal by mid-September and then allow an 8 week consultation period. The Government will make a decision later this year with an announcement early 2021.

A press release was issued by in conjunction with Mendip, Sedgemoor and South Somerset District Councils as follows:

“The district councils have been consistent in their view that real change is needed in local government in Somerset to deliver better outcomes for our communities. We are also agreed that a single unitary is the wrong solution for Somerset.

“Our joint work has always been about reform, not simple reorganisation, that will enable a stronger economy, stronger communities, stronger care and stronger, sustainable services. This will include a two unitary council solution.

“We have never been opposed to the creation of unitary authorities and the districts’ case will be a stronger and more ambitious alternative to the One Somerset proposal.

“As such, we are disappointed that Somerset County Council decided to issue a press statement about our proposals which contains confusing information and describes an announcement which has not yet happened.

“It is our full intention for the districts’ proposal to be democratically debated and shaped by our residents in the coming weeks, recognising that it needs to meet the different needs of our diverse communities while also delivering reform.”

For the latest press release from Somerset County Council click on:

<https://somersetnewsroom.com/2020/08/11/district-council-u-turn-paves-way-for-unitary-discussions/>

## **2. Marking VJ Day Together**

Taunton’s 40 Commando Royal Marines and the Mayor of Taunton are hosting a COVID-secure service to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VJ Day. The event, to recognise Victory over Japan, marking the end of the Second World War, will take place on **Saturday 15 August**, at the 40 Commando base in Norton Manor Camp.

Attendees will include The High Sheriff of Somerset, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, and Civic leaders from SWT and Somerset County Council alongside serving Armed Forces personnel and veterans. Whilst VE Day (Victory in Europe) marked the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, many thousands of Armed Forces personnel were still engaged in bitter fighting in the Far East.

Traditionally VJ commemorations are held in Vivary Park but COVID-19 restrictions have meant changes to the format of many Civic events this year. Although the service will be private this year there are many ways that

members of the public can get involved with VJ Day while following social distancing guidelines. More information can be found [here](#).

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

### **3. Electoral Registration Annual Canvass**

Following the press release (included as an attachment to the newsletter) on 30 July 2020, a number of queries have been received from Councillors.

The annual canvass this year is different to the ones that have taken place in the past. All of our data was matched through the Cabinet Office against the data held at the Department of Work and Pensions, and 73% of households matched and were sent a letter (route 1) advising of the details we currently hold and no response was required unless there was a change.

The remaining 27% of households received a letter (route 2) advising of the details we currently hold and requesting they respond to confirm the details are correct or amend the details.

For the route 2 letters, there was an option to change details via the internet or by writing amendments on the form and sending back using the pre-paid envelope enclosed with the letter. If there were no changes, confirmation could be done via the internet, by Freephone, by SMS text or by post.

For the route 1 letters, there was an option to amend details using the internet or in writing, but no option for Freephone or SMS as we only required a response if there were changes.

At the top of all of our forms we include our team email address and telephone number and we make reference in the letter about our contact information should they need or want to contact us.

Forms began going out at the middle of last week and, to date, we have received 891 forms in the post, 493 automated telephone responses and 3619 automated internet responses.

The Elections team have been available on the phones answering queries and amending details from 8.30am until 5pm every working day and have not encountered any hostile interactions, in fact everyone has seemed happy.

Unfortunately, the forms this year are different to the forms used in previous years (the format and wording of the forms are set and we are not permitted to change them) so I understand that some residents will find them a little confusing.

Please feel free to give our contact details to any residents who have questions or are unable to access the registration online can contact the

Electoral Services team at SWT by calling 01823 358692 or by emailing [elections@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:elections@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

For more detailed information visit:

[www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/annual-canvass/](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/annual-canvass/)

## 4. 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 meetings are scheduled to take place over the next three weeks, which are as follows:

- **Wednesday 19 August - Executive, 6.15pm - CANCELLED due to lack of business**
- **Thursday 20 August - Planning Committee, 1pm** (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 17 August). Applications are being considered relating to the areas of Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Lydeard St Lawrence, Old Cleeve and Minehead.
- **Tuesday 25 August - Special Full Council, 6.15pm** (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 20 August)
- **Thursday 27 August - Taunton Charter Trustees, 6pm** (deadline for public questions or statements is 10am on Tuesday 25 August)
- **Wednesday 2 September - Scrutiny Committee, 6.15pm** (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Thursday 27 August - due to the Bank Holiday)
- **Thursday 3 September - Planning Committee, 1pm** (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Friday 28 August)
- **Monday 7 September - Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, 6.15pm** (deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Wednesday 2 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.

## **5. Parking**

Parking can be difficult, especially at the moment with more people working from home, but SWT would like to remind you to park considerately on the roads. Cars are often legally parked, but in a way that makes it difficult for recycling and rubbish collections trucks to negotiate narrower streets.

Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has recently had difficulties in making collections in a timely manner and have highlighted to people that if their truck can't get down a road, the same will probably apply for a fire appliance or ambulance. Consequently, staff working for SWP have been putting polite notices from the fire service on the windscreens of any problem parkers.

In addition to this, SWT asks its tenants to avoid parking on the grass verges on SWT housing estates. We've recently enjoyed some lovely dry weather but the grass verges around the estates can get churned up and become very muddy due to cars parking on them. Furthermore, it prevents SWT Parks & Open Spaces team from being able to undertake the necessary grounds maintenance works.

SWT knows it's difficult, but more than ever we'd ask people to park considerately for everyone's benefit.

## **6. Free Parking in SWT Car Parks set to end shortly**

This is a polite reminder that free parking in SWT owned car parks is set to finish at the end of August. SWT hopes shoppers have taken advantage of the free parking and returned to our local High Streets, to shop safely and to support the local economy.

## **7. A Reminder to Councillors- Additional Support Available**

SWT will be bringing in some temporary additional support for the Councillor case management and corporate feedback function.

Officers will predominantly be handling Councillor Cases and helping with complaint resolutions.

NB to members: Please continue to follow the usual process when contacting SWT. You can reach the team on [membercm@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:membercm@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk) or feel free to contact your designated Engagement Lead.

## **8. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)**

## **'Grow more, waste less' great-value compost bin offer**

Somerset has a great new deal to help its gardens grow, from flourishing flower beds to that productive veg patch.

SWP has teamed up with experts [getcomposting.com](http://getcomposting.com) for an exclusive offer of compost bins. Home composting cuts CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and turns most kitchen and garden waste into a free supply of compost to keep gardens blooming year after year.

Helping Somerset gardeners waste less and grow more, SWP is offering 1,000 compost bins at a special discounted price. Residents can also buy one and get a second half price. Please [click here](#) to buy online.

For offer details and composting tips, please [click here](#).

## **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.

SCC Highways has just experienced a very warm week in Somerset. Wednesday 12 August was the hottest day of the summer so far, with a temperature of 34 degrees Celsius (93 degF) in the shade recorded in Taunton. Readers may not be aware that SCC Highways has a network of roadside weather stations across the county, feeding back information about the Road Surface Temperature (RST) at each location. They are primarily installed to assist with winter service, such as when roads are expected to freeze. However, they send back information all year round and the highest RST recorded was at 3pm on the 12 August with 52.1 degrees Celsius (126 degF) at Pen Hill station on the A39 climbing the Mendips above Wells.

In Somerset West and Taunton, RSTs were almost as high with 51.0 degrees Celsius at A358 Obridge Viaduct, Taunton, and 50.7 degrees Celsius at Combeshead Cross, Brompton Regis. Surprisingly, only a few miles away at Copleham Cross, Bridgetown, the maximum RST was only 42.0 degrees Celsius, perhaps due to the more sheltered conditions on the valley floor of the River Exe.

The road resurfacing team is not working in Somerset West and Taunton at the moment, but rather further across the county at Glastonbury and Frome. Laying a hot material in such hot conditions can be quite a challenge!

Rural verge cutting on our “A” and “B” road network continues. More information on this can be found on the [Travel Somerset website](#).

Following on from SCC's item in Edition No.16, if you should spot any ragwort out on the highway verges then please [click here](#) to report it.

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.

## **M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme**

### **Toneway**

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

### **J25 Gyratory**

Works have continued within all areas, including excavations, subbase, kerbing works along with installation of the new traffic signal ducting and streetlighting/signage. Near the new Blackbrook Bridge the cycle/pedestrian walkway has been re-routed which will allow the contractor to progress with the construction of the new lanes. Final surfacing to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the gyratory will be carried out during night-time closures in September.

### **Ruishton Junction**

Works are ongoing at the junction/park and ride entrance with the attenuation pond completed this month. The new drainage and utility installations are progressing well. The contractor's site team is also focusing on the construction of the new roadways with a significant amount of surfacing work already completed.

**Ruishton Lane will be temporally closed in August for 5 weeks to allow works to underground services to be carried out.**

Please [click here](#) for further information and an update on the works being undertaken to the new Blackbrook Bridge and the 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.

## **Exam results - what happens next?**

A-level exam results day was on Thursday 13 August and GCSE exam results are due out on Thursday 20 August. The exams and assessments were cancelled this year due to COVID-19 but most students will still receive grades in time to progress to further study or employment.

Please [click here](#) to find out how the results will be calculated, plus information about options available if students don't get the grades they wanted.

## **Somerset's Local Outbreak Management Plan**

Somerset's Local Outbreak Management Plan, setting out how the County Council and partners, will prevent and react to local coronavirus outbreaks, has been formally endorsed.

The COVID-19 Engagement Board held its first virtual meeting on Friday 31 July and was attended by members including Somerset's NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, district councils and the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner. Members considered and backed the plan and its approach. The Board heard that Somerset cases continue to remain low compared to other parts of the country, but coronavirus is proving to be a disease around clusters and outbreaks, demonstrating the importance of local leadership in preventing and managing the spread.

Please [click here](#) for further news and information on this subject.

## **Somerset Equalities Officer Group Reminder of Somerset Equality Innovation Grant**

As reported in full detail in last week's newsletter, Somerset Equalities Officer Group is offering a funding opportunity for not-for-profit organisations, voluntary organisations or third sector organisations, including community groups, faith and equalities groups, charities, social enterprises, community Interest Companies, and/or co-operatives that work to promote equality and diversity in the community.

This is a one-time grant and there will be two evaluation panels for this process. The first will be on **1 September 2020** and the second will be on **30 September 2020**.

If you would like to discuss your proposal or submit an application form then please contact the Somerset Equalities Officer Group on [Equalities@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Equalities@somerset.gov.uk) or 01823 359221.

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

### **Voluntary and Community Sector Support Fortnightly Newsletter - Next Edition 15 Out Now!**

SWT continues to produce a fortnightly e-newsletter to support the work of the voluntary and community sector across the district. SWT is now seeking feedback on the VCS newsletter and would be grateful if you could please [complete a short survey](#). It should only take 3-4 minutes. Thank you.

### **#ShopLocalWeek**

This week marked the start of [#ShopLocal](#) week! This is a Government initiative that forms part of their [#EnjoySummerSafely](#) campaign. [#ShopLocalWeek](#) is seven



days of concentrated activity to encourage shoppers to return to the local High Streets, to shop safely and to support local small businesses in the community.

Across the towns and villages within the SWT district, we're lucky to have a wonderful range of local shops. Whether it be a local greengrocer, bakery or florist, it's important that we support them during this difficult time. [#WeAreSWT](#)

### **Social Distancing Cards and Badges**

The Cabinet Office has produced optional cards and badges which can be carried by someone to show they may have difficulties or concerns in maintaining social distancing. They can be used to signal to others around them that they need to pay attention and be given space. There are versions to print and one that can be used on your mobile phone.

Please [click here](#) to find all 'please give me space' assets.

### **'Walking and talking groups' for young people from MIND**

Mind in Somerset's Youth Matters walking and talking groups for ages 11 to 18 years, are a relaxed way for young people to meet up socially and to offer peer support to each other (whilst socially distancing).

You will get the chance to meet with others who may be experiencing similar issues in a safe, friendly and non-judgemental environment: however you will never be made to talk about your issues in the group if you don't want to.

The walk routes will provide a gentle form of exercise and there will also be activities, which we encourage you to take part in as they aim to improve your wellbeing. MIND currently has walking and talking groups in the following areas: Taunton, Minehead, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Langport, Chard and Bridport.

To join the Youth Matters Walking and Talking groups, please [click here](#) to complete the self-referral form and choose the Youth Matters option.

## **Health and Welfare**

### **Help Control the Virus**

To protect yourself and others, when you leave home you must:

- wash hands - carry hand sanitiser and keep washing your hands regularly
- cover face - wear a face covering over your nose and mouth in enclosed spaces
- make space - stay at least a metre away from people not in your household and observe social distancing advice.

If you are feeling unwell, get a test and do not leave home for at least 10 days.

### **What is a Face Covering?**

Face coverings are now compulsory in many indoor spaces like shops and supermarkets and on public transport. A face covering is a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering and they should:

- cover your nose & mouth at all times
- fit securely

Unless you have a legitimate reason not to, you must wear a face covering to protect others from the spread of infection.

Please [click here](#) for further advice about face coverings.

### **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. The litter bins in my parish are overflowing again. How do I report it?**

SWT aims to keep the district clean and clear of litter. Litter bins are emptied regularly. Town centre bins are emptied daily. Most bins in villages are emptied once a week, except in some smaller rural areas where the bins are emptied once a month.

You can report an issue with a litter bin, by using the [bin report form](#).

**Q. I've lost my job due to coronavirus. Where can I get some help and advice?**

**A.** The Government has provided some guidance for those people who were employed and have lost their job due to coronavirus. Please [click here](#) to read more about the financial support and advice on looking for other work. In addition, if you are self-employed and getting less work or no work due to coronavirus, guidance on what you can do can be found by [clicking here](#).

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

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

#### **A Summary of PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen's Latest Update**

Over the last few months, Avon & Somerset Police have been really busy as lockdown restrictions have eased. Officers have worked hard to support local businesses re-opening, including the re-opening of the licensed premises across Taunton. In addition, they provided resources from Taunton to the many major events that have taken place across the constabulary. This included sending staff to Bristol to assist with protests, illegal raves taking place in different locations across the force and also with policing the many car enthusiast meets that have taken place either in Taunton or at Cheddar Gorge.

On top of those major events, Officers have been dealing with a rise in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) reports in parks and beauty spots. If ASB is taking place, please report it to the Police by calling 101 and not via a Facebook page. Furthermore, Police have been made aware of vehicles driving anti-socially. If this is witnessed, it is really important that this is reported by calling 101 or via the [police website](#).

Please [click here](#) to read PCSO Supervisor Sam Bushen's update dated 5 August in full and to find out more about the next Live Beat Surgery.

### **Community SpeedWatch Campaign**

Police have started to re-introduce their volunteers from the Community SpeedWatch team. These are volunteers that give up their free time to monitor the speed issues within your communities. Community SpeedWatch gives local people the ability to actively be involved in road safety.

If you would like to be part of a Community SpeedWatch team, please [click here](#) for more information.

## **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.

**#StayAlert**

**#Controlthevirus**

**#SaveLives**