

**Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

**Issue 132 Weeks ending 04/12/2022**

**SWT Council’s priority strategic themes and outcomes**

Somerset West and Taunton Council’s four strategic themes are as follows:

* Our Environment and Economy
* A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
* Homes and Communities
* An Enterprising Council

[Click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/corporate-strategy/) to view SWT’s expected outcomes.

**Key Messages this week**

1. **SWT highlights learning disability crisis**

The Leader of SWT has written to local MPs and counterparts across the county following a declaration of a districtwide Learning Disability Emergency.

A motion to declare an emergency was agreed at SWT’s Full Council meeting in September following distressing data published in an NHS-backed report aimed at improving care, reducing health inequalities and preventing early deaths for people with learning disabilities and autism.

The [*Learning from Lives and Deaths - people with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR) Annual Report 2021*](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/assets/fans-dept/leder-main-report-hyperlinked.pdf), shows few improvements in social, health and life expectancy outcomes and significant areas of stagnation and regression. Figures relating to the Covid pandemic are particularly bleak.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-highlights-learning-disability-crisis/) to read the full press release.

1. **Democracy and Governance**

**Committee Meetings**

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all SWT [Committee meetings](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/council-meetings/). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

* **SWT Full Council – Tuesday 6 December** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public statements or questions is 4pm on Friday 2 December 2022. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website.](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=325&MId=3039)
* **SWT Corporate Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 7 December** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Monday 5 December 2022. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=454&MId=3071).
* **SWT Planning Committee – Thursday 8 December** at 1.00pm in the JMR. Deadline for public questions or statements is 4pm on Tuesday 6 December 2022. The agenda and report packs are available to view on the [website](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=330&MId=3119).
* **SWT Audit and Governance Committee – Monday 12 December** at 6.15pm in the JMR. Deadline for public statements or questions is 4pm on Thursday 8 December.

Meetings in the JMR will 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](https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Please see the dateslisted above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements. Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT [website](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/speaking-at-a-council-meeting/).

1. **Town and Parish Precept changes**

As from 1 April due to the formation of the new Somerset Council replacing the existing four district councils and the county council the process of council tax collection and distribution will change. For this year there will be interim arrangements for the collection of the parish precept information for the 2023/24 financial year.

As one of the county’s precepting bodies, parishes are still required to issue a precept demand. Therefore, parishes will be required to complete a Precept Demand Form including their council’s bank account details. The form has been amended to be in a consistent format across the county so clerks will notice some changes. The form will be issued by 9 December and will be required to be returned by **Friday 20 January 2023.**

The precept demand form will be sent out from SWT and will be coordinated centrally for the New Somerset Council. If parishes have any queries or difficulties in submitting the form by the due date, please contact SWT on parishprecepts@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk at your earliest opportunity.

1. **Spotlight on Food and Drink**

Food and drink is a huge sector of vital importance to our local economy and one that the Council wishes to help support. Following detailed research into the sector a package of support has been created to support businesses operating in the sector.

In collaboration with Sedgemoor District Council and other partners SWT has produced a support sheet, held events, hosted a webinar and are now able to announce that they are opening a new grant scheme aiming to help small and micro businesses in the sector.

The Council will provide a small grant (up to £2,500) towards supporting food and drink businesses implement improvements or changes that can demonstrate a clear impact on business’ future growth and/or viability.

Small and micro businesses within the SWT area can apply providing they can evidence they fall within the food and drink sector - though those businesses based in the former West Somerset area will have priority.

The application process will initially open on 9 December 2022 and close on **6 January 2023**. The Council reserves the right to close the scheme earlier if demand outstrips available funding.

Please [click here](The%20application%20process%20will%20initially%20open%20on%209%20December%202022%20and%20close%20on%206%20January%202023.%20The%20Council%20reserves%20the%20right%20to%20close%20the%20scheme%20earlier%20if%20demand%20outstrips%20available%20funding.) to visit the website and find out more information.

1. **Carols around the Bandstand**

Join the Mayor of Taunton for Carols around the Bandstand in Vivary Park on **Monday 12 December** at 6.30pm, and support Cancer Research UK.

1. **Free Car Parking in run up to Christmas**

SWT is offering free [parking](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/parking/car-parks/) for Christmas shoppers after 3pm in its Taunton car parks (excluding Kilkenny), and all-day parking at its car parks in Wellington and West Somerset on the Saturdays of 10, 17 and 24 December.

1. **Reminder - Small business grants to save energy**

Carbon cutting grants worth up to £2,500 are now available to businesses with up to nine employees to help fund energy reduction and net-zero transition projects.

Businesses will need to undertake eligible projects to claim back what they have spent, capped at £2,500.

As the scheme is being made available through the Hinkley Point C developer contributions for business support funding, applications from businesses within the West Somerset locality of Somerset West and Taunton will be prioritised.

**Deadline for applications is Thursday 8 December.**

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/small-business-grants-to-save-energy/) to read the full press release

1. **Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)**

**Plastic Beasts and where to find them..**

Two stunning school sculptures are getting used to their new surroundings after being rehomed by Somerset’s waste collectors.

The eye-catching angler fish and octopus are made entirely from plastic milk bottle tops, created by pupils at Lyngford Park Primary School in Taunton as part of recycling project.

The fantastic plastic beasts earned the school a runners-up prize in a national recycling promotion competition and have now been rehomed by SUEZ, the SWP waste collection contractor.

After a stint together in Priorswood library, the pair were looking for long-term homes and SUEZ has been happy to oblige.

The angler fish is now in the SUEZ depot office in Bridgwater, while the octopus has travelled across the border to a new home in the East Devon depot.

The handover was also a chance for pupils to get a closer look at one of the fleet of 200 waste vehicles which every week complete around 350,000 collections across the county.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/plastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them/) to read the full press release.

**Upcoming Fixy events in SWT**

Recycling is good - and Somerset's 56.2% recycle rate is great - but repair-reuse is even better so Fixy is supporting the county’s network of repair cafés and groups, with a focus on breathing new life into electricals and electronics.

Working electricals and electronics should always be passed on to others or donated to charity if they are no longer needed.

* **Saturday 3 December** 10:00am - 12:00pm – **Porlock Vale Repair Café,** Porlock Village Hall, Toll Road, Porlock TA24 8QD. Fixy will support the Repair Café, collect smart tech and signpost future events.
* **Saturday 17 December** 10:00am - 12:00pm – **Wivey Repair Café**, Community Centre, West Street, Wiveliscombe, Taunton TA4 2JP.
* **Saturday 7 January** 10:00am -12:00pm – Fixy reuse van will be in front of the Old Post Office, High Street, Wellington TA21 8QT, to support the nearby **Wellington Repair Café**, collect smart tech and signpost future events.
* **Sunday 15 January** 11:00am - 2:00pm – **Otterford Repair Café,** Parish Hall, Bishopswood TA20 3RS. Fixy will support Repair Café, collect smart tech, signpost future events, promote reuse and encourage volunteers.

For more information on the repair cafés and Fixy reuse van, see: [somersetwaste.gov.uk/share-and-repair](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fsomersetwaste.gov.uk%2Fshare-and-repair%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR2dCaq9h4OkMHVGCgw7xajk6aZHquyajj8mO5oF1wdxDVi_YOGL6Co5Z8w&h=AT1xKgFoQdEG0X026XnzWUhz5vk1OODvGWet1-kq0L-NOn6ZvmA2DMMkKZ7wdPjIgCBt9KTj9iIIFdyjR-Wn0rlzO-38TzwbauWTaI42fsO0yBEEpiYCXI7KbFttayWJFw&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT3zScXuyg6TPHK5hxzYzBRVNwGVK3mOTBgmErhTS0eQpnH68zXrEbuVMH4QAM9vru1uBkeHG3eC_7vB1cMEm-Rsvmy5kRzxFQ9mYCHzYVTHMwF1bJZA9rDQ4gK6Hk7oswYVCI2uYZHv4BWAkz24QJ5APkTsBBGy_lXBy4fi6GjstxeQJx1ksFwz-RTUGKAYlRUoDoOS_M8HNg).

**New Somerset Council**

**Latest news**

**Volunteers needed for Independent Remuneration Panel**

Somerset County Council needs volunteers to join an independent panel, which sets the allowances payable to its elected members.

The Independent Remuneration Panel, a legally required body, makes recommendations to the Council about the different financial allowances elected members can receive. Being a panel member will involve researching the amounts other authorities make available to their elected members and working towards producing the Scheme of Allowances for the new Somerset Council.

There are five places and applications are being accepted throughout December.

All panel members must be independent of the Council. If you have an interest in local government, would like to know more about Council processes or would like some satisfaction in using your existing skills to take part in this democratic process, this could be for you.

Find out more and apply by visiting: [Independent Person for Remuneration Panel](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdasjobs.co.uk%2Fjob%2Findependent-person-to-serve-on-the-new-independent-remuneration-panel-2%2F&data=05%7C01%7Crachel.limon%40somerset.gov.uk%7C60d419db159c4f3452ba08dad1f5313a%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C638053148276786438%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=AncCTRrVGtR20pFxvohsjUh1%2FP3INyhvELgCTfcVU%2F0%3D&reserved=0).

**Parish Precepts – Reminder**

These will no longer be paid to parishes by SWT. Instead, the new Somerset Council will pay precepts in one single instalment at the start of the financial year no later than the end of April 2023. Previously, parishes may have received this in two instalments (April and September).

**City, Town and Parish Council Working Group – You are welcome to attend!**

Did you know that the LCN Team hold fortnightly catchups exclusively for Clerks and Chairs from across Somerset?

Simply drop an email to LCN@somerset.gov.uk with your name and contact details, placing *‘C, T&PC Working Group’* in the subject title.

The team understand the timing won’t suit everyone all the time, so they will distribute the meeting minutes to you once you are signed-up.

**Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas**

**Boundary Commission for England**

**Have your say and help reshape constituency boundaries – before the December deadline**

Residents have one final opportunity to send in their views about the Boundary Commission for England’s new revised proposals for constituencies.

A third and final consultation will **close on 5 December**, giving the public just days left to send in their views. You can comment here: <https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/>.

The Commission has taken into consideration over 45,000 comments sent in by the public during the previous two stages of public consultation and has changed nearly half of its initial proposals based on this feedback.

The Commission is undertaking an independent review of all constituencies in England, as requested by Parliament.

The number of electors within each constituency currently varies widely due to population changes since the last boundary review. The 2023 Boundary Review will rebalance the number of electors each MP represents, resulting in significant change to the existing constituency map. As part of the review, the number of constituencies in England will increase from 533 to 543.

After this final consultation has closed on 5 December, the Commission will analyse the responses and form its final recommendations. These will be submitted to Parliament by 1 July 2023.

Please [click here](https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Boundary-Commission-for-England_Press-release_Final-consultation-on-new-constituencies.pdf) to read the full press release.

**Somerset County Council (SCC)**

**SCC Highways maintenance update**

Reported defects are still low recently which has enabled the gangs to push the planned works forward, however, if you spot any issues on the roads this week please don’t hesitate to report it to SCC on [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.somerset.gov.uk%2Froads-and-transport%2Freport-a-problem-on-the-road%2F&data=05%7C01%7CKBridgwater%40somerset.gov.uk%7Cd61da1cdb9a44cb9588d08da7c419bec%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C637958918474690610%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ZwOZVJjRrldn9GajUWJR5Po7rSJKXpEnNDks1voefYw%3D&reserved=0)or call **0300 123 2224.**

For information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) or follow [@TravelSomerset](https://twitter.com/search?q=%40TravelSomerset&src=recent_search_click) on Twitter.

**Reporting a problem on the road**

Alerting SCC to potholes or a host of other problems on the road is now easier and quicker – and you can track its progress after you’ve reported it.

Gone is the need to make phone calls or send emails - thanks to a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a problem 24/7 and the Highways team will get on the case. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings - they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range and how to report is available here  [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/)

The new development means that if you’re reporting a fault, you can now track its progress. If it’s safe to pull over, all you need to do is take a quick picture of the fault, then visit the Report It site on your phone, answer a few simple questions and upload your picture. You’ll be sent a link which enables you to track its progress.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2021/12/13/reporting-a-problem-on-the-road-is-now-a-hole-lot-easier/) to read the full press release.

**Temporary Road Closure**

**ttro251917TD - Albemarle Road, Taunton**

SCC in exercise of its powers under Section 14 (1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, have made an Order prohibiting all traffic from proceeding along **Albemarle Road - from the junction with the A3038 Station Road in a north westerly direction for a total distance of 30 metres**.

This Order will enable Milestone Infrastructure to complete structural maintenance works on the local drainage.

The works are expected to commence on 5 **December 2022 and last until 7 December 2022 between the hours of 12:00 midnight to 11:59pm for a total of 3 days.**

Please [click here](https://one.network/?tm=130705027) for further information on the alternative route.

The contractor has indicated that access for Emergency Services through the site **is not permitted** on this occasion.

**Christmas “Bus It” boost for Taunton**

There’s never been a better time to ‘Bus It’ in Taunton as a new £1 fare for any single bus journey in the town comes into effect from Monday (December 5).

The major fare cut arrives just in time for the festive season and is part of a radical shake-up of bus services under SCC’s Government-funded Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

The aim is to boost bus use while helping passengers to save money as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite, fuelled in part by high petrol and diesel prices.

The £1 single fare starts from Monday and applies to journeys in the Taunton ‘zone’. You can check the map here [https://www.somerset.gov.uk/busit](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.somerset.gov.uk%2Fbusit&data=05%7C01%7Cjacob.newbury%40somerset.gov.uk%7Cdde4dcf5a21e4df261c808dad2c3f331%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C638054036276389812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0GeeRUJ8gJRNcA83uRAeBfOBw8qTLnX0QBfU4Tn7zPE%3D&reserved=0) to see the area covered by the zone.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2022/12/01/christmas-bus-it-boost-for-taunton-as-new-1-fare-for-any-single-bus-journey-is-launched/) to read the full press release.

**Council unveils new proposals for evening bus services**

Evening bus services on some key routes are set to be introduced as part of a major shake-up aimed at increasing bus use.

SCC has revealed plans to subsidise evening services connecting Taunton with the towns of Minehead, Bridgwater, Wellington and Chard after 8:00pm and running to at least 10:30pm. Currently most of the services stop between 8-8:30pm.

The evening bus proposals are part of Somerset’s Government-funded Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which aims to increase bus patronage by radically improving the public transport offer for people in Somerset.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2022/12/02/council-unveils-new-proposals-for-evening-bus-services/) to read the full press release.

**Exmoor National Park Authority (ENP)**

**Planting continues at Bye Wood**

It's [#NationalTreeWeek](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/nationaltreeweek?__eep__=6&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZUVoIKUDExViZ7vlgLK1AhhCGoyjQINKaFSFN_QsuHLKgghPt936lmCP7701FyqgbK7N__8HvESDWRKSG79KA9WIVTvwegxdn6aUzaQmGb4DuEMVdA2vRk0Yeex0SJC0jny_MnYc6rPq5rX8KOW3tO7W14d_3PTalTNW1l2jM5pVm-W147_gtbm2sQIyfolukY&__tn__=*NK-R) and ENP would like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who got the Winter Planting off to a great start. Over 400 trees were planted at Bye Wood on [Exmoor](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/exmoor?__eep__=6&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZUVoIKUDExViZ7vlgLK1AhhCGoyjQINKaFSFN_QsuHLKgghPt936lmCP7701FyqgbK7N__8HvESDWRKSG79KA9WIVTvwegxdn6aUzaQmGb4DuEMVdA2vRk0Yeex0SJC0jny_MnYc6rPq5rX8KOW3tO7W14d_3PTalTNW1l2jM5pVm-W147_gtbm2sQIyfolukY&__tn__=*NK-R) on Saturday.

They will be back out again this **Saturday 3 December** to continue the good work. If you’d like to come and help they are meeting in Winsford car park TA24 7JE (opposite the garage) at 10:00am. It's a 30-minute stroll from there up to the site. The team will aim to finish around 1:00pm.

Please bring with you:

* A spade if you have one
* A packed lunch & drink
* Warm waterproof clothing & wear sturdy boots

Please [click here](https://www.facebook.com/ExmoorNP/videos/706663944135408) to watch a video of the work taking place.

**Community Support – What help is out there?**

**Voluntary and Community Sector Support**

**Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)**

**Fuel Poverty Awareness Day**

The cost-of-living crisis means that this winter will be one of the toughest we have faced for decades. Many older people are already extremely anxious about rising bills and around 11,000 Somerset pensioners will find themselves living in [#FuelPoverty](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/fuelpoverty?__eep__=6&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZUJzMhnTB69SNqWLx97ZWH4sFkuLQtqQnvo0u_S5xdGTewWyBe73zJ3E5B_2aAhdZgQMdA5jqeeoFC086ak-U3s1MBeMN4-zKIS67HEpH1X8DkS7_hxy-iFrnnpiA5oScA&__tn__=*NK-R) this year, double the number in the same situation last year.

SCF know, from many years’ experience of running the [#SurvivingWinter](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/survivingwinter?__eep__=6&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZUJzMhnTB69SNqWLx97ZWH4sFkuLQtqQnvo0u_S5xdGTewWyBe73zJ3E5B_2aAhdZgQMdA5jqeeoFC086ak-U3s1MBeMN4-zKIS67HEpH1X8DkS7_hxy-iFrnnpiA5oScA&__tn__=*NK-R) appeal, that many of the poorest pensioners may not turn their heating on at all, or will cut back on food to save money.

If you can afford to, please donate your [#WinterFuelPayment](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/winterfuelpayment?__eep__=6&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZUJzMhnTB69SNqWLx97ZWH4sFkuLQtqQnvo0u_S5xdGTewWyBe73zJ3E5B_2aAhdZgQMdA5jqeeoFC086ak-U3s1MBeMN4-zKIS67HEpH1X8DkS7_hxy-iFrnnpiA5oScA&__tn__=*NK-R) to the SCF appeal; no one should have to choose between heating and eating.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/special-projects/surviving-winter?fbclid=IwAR0NVUOM_XuzqkKTIFTg85DYT2ti0XvmWxifJSfYZ_3aX1nC8t85gSIyw_A) to read the full press release.

**Somerset Cost-of-Living Appeal**

Local charities, community groups and social enterprises can now apply to the Somerset Cost of Living Fund. Grants of up to £10k are available. The deadline for applications is the Wednesday 21 December.

Please [click here](https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/somerset-cost-of-living-crisis-fund?fbclid=IwAR1Dh4eXPkt14wwKBrB2o9gF4rohzX5Kk_fUUDm-qJua4A37-9bdolE1Y-k) to find out more.

**Lendology CIC**

**Calculate the monthly cost of energy efficient improvements**

If you are a homeowner worried about the rising cost of energy, Lendology’s innovative loan scheme may be a good solution to help you improve your home’s energy efficiency.

Working with [Councils](https://www.lendology.org.uk/partners/), Lendology provide eligible homeowners with flexible finance so you can complete home repairs, install renewable energy measures or improve your home’s energy efficiency.

Unlike other mainstream lenders, Lendology do not use credit scores or algorithms to make their lending decisions.  People make decisions for people, and everyone receives the same fixed interest rate, regardless of their circumstances, loan amount or loan term.

Lendology believes that everyone should have access to a home that is safe, warm, and suitable for their individual needs and works across the community to enable this, reduce fuel poverty and establish the link between health and homes.

Please [click here](https://www.lendology.org.uk/blog/calculate-the-monthly-cost-of-energy-efficiency-improvements/) to read the full press release.

**Community Council for Somerset (CCS)**

**December’s Talking Cafes Live**

Watch LIVE every Wednesday at 1pm and ask questions in the comments for instant answers!

* **6 December** - Festive Cheer - How to make a Christmas wreath and a festive surprise!
* **14 December** - Fire Safety - Home safety checks & winter safety Advice with [Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](https://www.facebook.com/dsfireupdates/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWsOzRXeLi7j1CuOCJToqj7wsYtZdhie739AtVhCHe7jzpn-_B-tDUDiclef9npn39xjp6iC3cbF_HkAvnvXCQJT22jLc1ilUNOMclYFF7KvDCh_kbnx2LwsFSK12C4mH9lrolp7ZedzTlriDa6yg089jxibxGi1pumnqygr0EM6akh0QBL6p2m75hn6hzK4JWUkE8qtENA1uz9GlrgYg-I&__tn__=kK-y-R).
* **21 December** - [Citizens Advice](https://www.facebook.com/CitizensAdvice?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWsOzRXeLi7j1CuOCJToqj7wsYtZdhie739AtVhCHe7jzpn-_B-tDUDiclef9npn39xjp6iC3cbF_HkAvnvXCQJT22jLc1ilUNOMclYFF7KvDCh_kbnx2LwsFSK12C4mH9lrolp7ZedzTlriDa6yg089jxibxGi1pumnqygr0EM6akh0QBL6p2m75hn6hzK4JWUkE8qtENA1uz9GlrgYg-I&__tn__=-%5dK-y-R) Bureau - how they can help!
* **28 December** - [The Bluebirds](https://www.facebook.com/thebluebirdstheatre?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWsOzRXeLi7j1CuOCJToqj7wsYtZdhie739AtVhCHe7jzpn-_B-tDUDiclef9npn39xjp6iC3cbF_HkAvnvXCQJT22jLc1ilUNOMclYFF7KvDCh_kbnx2LwsFSK12C4mH9lrolp7ZedzTlriDa6yg089jxibxGi1pumnqygr0EM6akh0QBL6p2m75hn6hzK4JWUkE8qtENA1uz9GlrgYg-I&__tn__=-%5dK-y-R) Theatre Company - therapy through the arts.

Want to take part and shout about the organisation or community project you are passionate about? Contact christineb@somersetrcc.org.uk or message the Talking Cafe page! <https://somersetagents.org/talking-cafes-live>.

**Community Buildings - Become a warm space this winter!**

If your facility or group would like to host a warm space for anyone who will struggle to keep their heating on this Winter. Please [click here](https://ccslovesomerset.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Warm-Spaces-Funding-Directory-1.pdf) to view the new Warm Spaces funding list.

**Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)**

**Urgent Energy advice for village halls this winter**

The current energy crisis is having a profound impact on many individuals and organisations in society. Many people are unfortunately at risk of finding themselves in fuel poverty this winter. In this context, ACRE is committed to helping village halls stay open for the benefit of their local community as they are often the only place in rural areas where people can socialise and stay warm.

Please [click here](https://acre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Urgent-energy-advice-for-village-halls-October-2022-1.pdf) to read the Utility Aid Briefing.

**Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE)**

**Safe and Warm Somerset**

Everyone deserves a home which is warm, comfortable and affordable to heat. Safe and Warm Somerset supports anyone in Somerset who may need help with energy bills or keeping warm at home.

If you live in Somerset and any of the following apply to you, the CSE can help with free, impartial advice and support:

* Struggling with energy bills.
* A cold home.
* Broken heating system or boiler.
* Damp and mould in the home.
* Unsure about how to use your heating system.
* No gas central heating and high electricity bills.

Please [click here](https://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1367#:~:text=Call%20us%20on%200800%20082,org.uk%2Fcontact%2Dus) to find out more information.

**Spark**

**Somerset warm welcome spaces opened across County**

SCC together with district colleagues are supporting the rollout of “Warm Welcome” spaces across the county. As temperatures fall this winter and energy bills skyrocket, these venues will provide places where people can find warmth, company, and support.

Over 70 spaces are now open to anyone who wants somewhere warm and welcoming to go, with many more planning to open their doors in the coming weeks.

The venues include SCC libraries, village halls, churches and café’s, and will provide a warm and friendly environment where people can socialise, stay warm and access information and support for their wellbeing.

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2022/12/01/somerset-warm-welcome-spaces-opened-across-county/) to read the full SCC press release.

**Register your warm welcome space**

Spark is working with community partners to develop a network and online directory of Warm Welcome spaces where people can find warmth, company and support amid the cost-of-living crisis.

Spark’s experienced team can support community groups and venues in Somerset to provide a Warm Welcome to everyone who might need it over the coming months. This could include help with your policies and procedures, finding funding, recruiting volunteers or connecting you with other providers to share learning and ideas.

Please [click here](https://sparksomerset.org.uk/warm-welcome?mc_cid=77bff9c183&mc_eid=4aa6243a6d) to visit the website and find out more information.

**Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP)**

**Happy Healthy Holidays Somerset (HHHS)**

More free, fun activities are on offer this December for Somerset children eligible for free school meals.

The Happy Healthy Holidays Somerset (HHHS) project is once again being delivered by SCC and SASP as part of a Government initiative to help tackle inequalities in holiday hunger, physical inactivity and social isolation for children who are eligible for free school meals. The winter programme features football skills workshops, Christmas craft sessions, nerf games and much more, and every child receives healthy food and some nutrition advice.

Please [click here](https://www.sasp.co.uk/happy-healthy-holidays) to visit the website and find out more.

**Health and Welfare**

**‘Claim your status’ on World AIDS Day**

Thursday 1 December marked World AIDS Day. Over 105,000 people are living with HIV in the UK. Globally, there are an estimated 38 million people who have the virus.

To support the UK ambition of ending new infections of HIV by 2030, Somerset County Council is working together with [The Eddystone Trust](https://www.bing.com/search?q=the+eddystone+trust&cvid=93d2ed9f9b3041fc945a6fa9f36c8fbd&aqs=edge.0.0l9j69i11004.2879j0j4&FORM=GEOTRI&PC=U531&isRef=1&showTw=1&isAutoP=1) and the [Somerset Wide Integrated Sexual Health Service](https://www.swishservices.co.uk/) (SWISH) to encourage people to ‘claim their status‘ by having an HIV test.

HIV treatment has made huge advances and enables those living with the HIV to lead stable and healthy lives without worrying about passing the virus to others. Testing for HIV puts you in control and can be done in person at any of the SWISH clinics or by ordering a home test [through their website](http://www.swishservices.co.uk/) or [The Eddystone Trust website.](http://www.eddystone.org.uk/)

Please [click here](https://somersetnewsroom.com/2022/12/01/claim-your-status-this-world-aids-day/) to read the full press release.

**Make sure you get your winter vaccinations**

With winter upon us, Somerset residents are being reminded to protect their health and the health of people around them by getting their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Covid and flu vaccinations are safe and effective ways to prevent serious illness.

If you're 50 and over, a frontline health or social care worker, pregnant, have a long-term health condition, or are a paid or unpaid carer, you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, and you can likely get the COVID-19 seasonal booster. Children aged 2-15 years old are also eligible for free flu vaccination, which is delivered through either their GP for pre-school and school for school age children – parents need to sign a consent form.

**Vaccinations**

**COVID-19**

If you are eligible, you can book your seasonal COVID-19 vaccine using the [online booking service](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/) by calling 119 or finding a [local vaccination walk-in site](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site?fbclid=IwAR07orCoa6T-JY6pEaPwFZqxiz3LV3qAJ1by_63c3nzAynPwRAhc30-ijg8).

If you have not yet had your earlier doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, it’s not too late to come forward and you can get these at any time.

Getting both vaccines is important because more people are likely to get the flu this winter, and you're more likely to be seriously ill if you get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

A number of clinics across Somerset are also open for walk-ins. More details can be found at [COVID-19 and Flu vaccinations in Somerset - NHS Somerset](https://nhssomerset.nhs.uk/covid-and-flu-vaccines/).

[The vaccination page](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-vaccinations/) now provides more overall strategic vision of how the vaccination programme has been implemented and provides an indication of the effective level of immunity provided to our community by boosters and third doses.

The current version of the dashboard can be accessed at any time[here](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/).

**Influenza**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have widened the offer of the [free flu vaccine](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI1MjEiLCIxbWRhbWxvZnRhbjRnb2d3ODRrZ2s0azhzOHdzd3c0YyIsIjE2MDciLCJhZTM5MDUxYTRjYzUiLGZhbHNlXQ) to more eligible groups.

These additional groups will only be eligible once the most vulnerable, including previously announced pre-school and primary school children, those aged 65 years and over and those in clinical risk groups, have been offered the jab.

The additional groups set to be offered the free flu vaccine in England will be:

* all adults aged 50 to 64 years (including those who turn 50 by 31 March 2023)
* secondary school children in years 7, 8 and 9, who will be offered the vaccine in order of school year (starting with the youngest first)

[If you're eligible for a free flu vaccine](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI1MjEiLCIxbWRhbWxvZnRhbjRnb2d3ODRrZ2s0azhzOHdzd3c0YyIsIjE2MDciLCJhZTM5MDUxYTRjYzUiLGZhbHNlXQ), you can book an appointment at your GP surgery or a pharmacy that offers it on the NHS. You may also get an invitation to get the vaccine, but you do not have to wait for this before booking an appointment.

Everyone who is eligible for the free flu vaccine will be able to get it. If you have an appointment for a Covid-19 booster vaccine at a GP surgery or pharmacy, you may also be offered a flu vaccine at the same time.

Do not delay booking your flu vaccine appointment so that you can get both vaccines together. Only some people will be offered both vaccines at the same time.

Please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-who-should-have-it-this-winter-and-why) for more information about the Flu vaccination.

**Living safely with respiratory infections including COVID-19**

The [Government has published important advice](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io/?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI2NjM2IiwidHRzeGVycTFtamtrY29nMGtvOGcwZ2trODRvZ2t3YzAiLCIxNDE5IiwiMTA5MGQ5NzhlMTg5IixmYWxzZV0) for people with symptoms of respiratory infections, such as COVID-19; people with a positive COVID-19 test result and their contacts; and advice on safer behaviours for everyone.

There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, such as flu and protect those at highest risk.

Things you can choose to do are:

* Get vaccinated.
* Wear a face covering or a face mask.
* Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
* Stay at home if you have [symptoms](https://newsletters.onyx-sites.io?mailpoet_router&endpoint=track&action=click&data=WyI1MjEiLCIxbWRhbWxvZnRhbjRnb2d3ODRrZ2s0azhzOHdzd3c0YyIsIjE0MTciLCI3MDMyNWYxYzNmODEiLGZhbHNlXQ)
* Cover your coughs and sneezes
* Practise good hygiene:

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

Please [click here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#what-to-do-if-you-have-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19-and-have-not-taken-a-covid-19-test) to read the guidance on what to do if you have symptoms but have not taken a test.

**Need to seek help?**

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:

* Samaritans - 116 123
* CALM - 0800 58 58 58
* ChildLine - 0800 1111
* Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
* Mindline Somerset – 01823 276892
* Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

**Crime / Safeguarding**

**Action Fraud**

**Protect yourself from phishing emails**

Phishing is a cybercrime in which scammers try to lure sensitive information or data from you, by disguising themselves as a trustworthy source. Phishers use multiple platforms, which include text messages, emails and phone calls. The ultimate goal no matter what method is used is to obtain your personal information in order to access bank accounts, credit cards or perpetuate further fraud such as identity theft.

Some phishing emails or texts might look unprofessional to you, using poor grammar or asking you to click on links with odd-looking URLs. But phishers don’t have to be sophisticated. These cybercriminals work in volume, and only need to trick a small number of victims to consider their work a success.

* Be aware and pro-active: When responding to emails or phone calls, never give your login or personal details. If you receive an email from a company that claims to be legitimate but is requesting these details, or a contact number tell them you will call them back. Use a contact number for the organisation that you have sourced reputably. Speak to them directly to confirm that the message is genuine.
* Use your spam filter: If you detect a phishing email, mark the message as spam and delete it. This ensures that the message cannot reach your inbox in future.
* Know your source: Never respond to a message from an unknown source. Take care not to click any embedded links. Phishing emails are sent to a vast number of randomly generated addresses. However, clicking embedded links can provide verification of your active e-mail address. Once this occurs it may facilitate the targeting of further malicious emails. Even “unsubscribe” links can be malicious. Ensure that the e-mail is from a trusted source and you are, in fact, subscribed to the service.
* Remember that the email address that appears in the ‘from’ field of an email is not a guarantee that the email came from the person or organisation that it claims to have originated from.
* Fraudsters are unlikely to know your real name, so the email may address you in vague terms, for example ‘Dear Valued Customer'.
* Phishing emails will probably contain odd ‘spe11ings’ or ‘cApitALs in the ‘subject’ box and contain spelling or grammatical errors in the email – this is an attempt to get around spam filters and into your inbox.

Suspicious emails can be forwarded to report@phishing.gov.uk.

**Avon and Somerset Police (ASP)**

**For Neighbourhood Policing Updates…**

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

* [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/aspmineheadwestsomerset)
* [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/aspwellington)
* [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/ASPTaunton)
* [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point Neighbourhood Policing](https://www.facebook.com/aspsedgemoor)
* [Rural Affairs Unit – Avon and Somerset Police.](https://www.facebook.com/aspruralaffairsunit)

**Finally**

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.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter @swtcouncil.

***Attachments***

*Carols around the bandstand poster*