

County Councillors

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

FEBRUARY 2021

Current Covid-19 Restrictions in Somerset: Residents must stay at home, they must not leave, or be outside of their home except where necessary. They cannot leave to meet socially with anyone they do not live with or are not in a support bubble with. They may exercise on their own, with one other person, or with their household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, and residents should not travel outside their local area. People should stay 2 metres apart from anyone not in their household or support bubble. Colleges, primary and secondary schools will remain open only for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. All other children will continue to learn remotely until 8 March at the earliest. Early years settings remain open.

Coronavirus infection rates: As at 29th January the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 16,417 (up from 9,355 on 31st Dec) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 469 (335). The rate per 100,000 currently stands at 229.8 for Somerset with Mendip at 217.2, Sedgemoor at 208.6, South Somerset 209.1 and SW&T at 278.5. The current number of total deaths across the County is currently 19% above the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.9 and 1.2. ***It is vitally important to remember, even those who have had a job, to observe Hands-Face-Space at all times.***

Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline: A single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

Vaccination programme roll-out: In just seven weeks, teams across the wider Somerset health and care system have worked round the clock to design, develop and launch 13 GP-led community vaccination sites, two hospital hubs and two large vaccination centres at Taunton Racecourse and the Bath and West showground. A new Covid vaccination site has also opened at Morrison's in Yeovil, and is one of the first pharmacy sites in Somerset to offer the jab with pre-booked vaccination appointments between the hours of 8am and 8pm, seven days a week. All sites will continue to offer vaccinations to the priority groups as identified by the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation, including the over 80s and frontline health and care staff.

SCC Transport Support: Somerset County Council is working with bus operators and community transport providers to make it as easy as possible for residents to get to appointments including:

- providing a bus service every 30 minutes from Wells Bus Station via Shepton Mallet terminating at the showground – seven days a week, providing connections to/from other bus services at both Wells Bus Station and Shepton Mallet Cenotaph.

- Suspending current concessionary bus pass rules so these can be used on all public services before 9.30am.
- Working with Community Transport and Slinky Demand Responsive services across Somerset to allow free travel for bus pass holders when attending vaccination appointments.

National Highways Award: Bridgwater's Colley Lane Southern Access Road project, also known as Squibbers Way, has been awarded Most Innovative Highway Authority Scheme of the Year at the 2020 Highways Magazine Awards. The £18.4m project has now been recognised for six major awards since its opening in December 2019.

Older Age Domestic Abuse: Ten per cent of older people will experience some form of domestic abuse and in Somerset the number of people over sixty-five reporting abuse is on the increase. Social isolation during lockdown has been identified as one of the leading contributors. If you are experiencing domestic abuse, worried about someone you know, or are concerned about the impact of your behaviour towards others, then help is available: www.somerseturvivors.org.uk or by telephoning 0800 69 49 999.

Investing in communities:

a. Bruton Enterprise Centre: Business in Bruton is set for a boost with work beginning on a new £2.7m Enterprise Centre. The Bruton site will be Somerset County Council's eighth Enterprise Centre and will be home to new offices, meeting rooms and industrial units.

b. Shepton Mallet Library: Plans have been agreed for Shepton Mallet library to receive a substantial makeover and serve as a hub for the local community. Somerset County Council's Libraries Service team has been in discussions with Shepton Mallet Town Council and members of local community interest group, to agree a new model for the library. The County Council's agreement to enter into a partnership will see the building used as a venue for a wide range of community-based activities outside the library's regular opening hours.

c. Comeytrowe Primary School: Proposals for a new 420-place primary school primary school as well as a nursery with capacity for up to 60 children to serve a significant new housing development in Taunton have been approved. It is expected that the new school will open in September 2022.

Census 2021: Households across Somerset will soon be asked to take part in Census 2021. It will be the first run predominantly online, with households receiving a letter with a unique access code, allowing them to complete the questionnaire on their computers, phones or tablets. Census day will be on March 21 and results will be available within 12 months, although personal records will be locked away for 100 years.

One Somerset: It is expected the Government's eight week statutory consultation phase on the transition to a Unitary authority in Somerset will commence in mid to late February.