

COUNTY COUNCIL CONSERVATIVE GROUP

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

APRIL 2019

Enhanced role for Public Health: Somerset County Council welcome nearly 200 public health nursing staff into the fold from 1 April, committing to continuing to give children the best start in life. Staff made up of Health Visitors, School Nurses, Assistant Practitioners and Admin Support officially transferred from Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to SCC's Public Health team. They will continue to work with local communities and families in different settings such as homes, children's centres, GP surgeries and Early Year settings.

High Speed Broadband: Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) broadband programme has announced that it is now offering vouchers through the national BDUK Better Broadband Scheme. All homes and businesses in the County with broadband speeds of less than two Megabits per second (2Mbps) and without a published delivery date for superfast broadband within the next 12 months, are now eligible to apply for an interim solution under the voucher scheme. Vouchers worth up to £350 would contribute towards the cost of equipment and installation of a 4G, Fixed Wireless or Satellite solution. Applications need to be made through registered suppliers on the approved supplier list at <https://basicbroadbandchecker.culture.gov.uk/>

Increased library facilities: Students from Bishop Fox's and The Castle School in Taunton recently participated in an inspirational session that showcased the latest in both Virtual and Augmented Reality Technology as part of the Somerset Digital Skills Talent Academy programme. They were among the first to try out new Virtual Reality headsets that are now available at libraries across Somerset.

South Somerset Special Needs School: Damian Hinds, the Secretary of State for Education has approved SCC to work with a sponsor organisation to deliver a new special 'free' school in South Somerset to provide much needed high-quality local places for children with Special Needs. This will mean that Children will no longer have to travel 'out of county' for their education which will be better for them and their families whilst significantly reducing transport costs.

Equalities: Somerset County Council has been working with its public sector partners in Somerset through the Somerset Equality Officers Group to agree a joint set of equality objectives for the County. These objectives are part of the Councils commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires SCC to think proactively about improving the lives of those protected under the

Equality Act 2010. These objectives have been based on existing data and consultation with community groups to better understand the priorities in Somerset.

County wide parking review: The County-wide parking review is underway starting with Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge and Frome. The review will then move to other towns in Somerset that experience on-going parking issues.

Apprenticeship to Permanent: One of the challenges in Learning Disabilities is to get people into paid employment. SCC are very pleased therefore that EDF Hinkley Point C, who had taken six people on as apprentices, have now given them all full-time employment contracts. This is not only a great result for the individuals concerned but also a fine example of what can be achieved when working closely with major employers.

DofE Awards: Somerset has seen a 20% increase in young people taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh awards (DofE) in the last year. In 2018/19 more than 2,600 from over 60 schools and youth organisations took part in either the Bronze, Silver or Gold level awards which are not only shown to boost self-esteem but develop valuable leadership skills and impress employers. The SCC team provides support, advice and training for organisations who support young people with their award and also raise funds to provide bursaries for training and for vulnerable young people to take part in DofE.

In-House Bus Fleet: SCC currently operate an in-house fleet of 68 minibuses operating from seven sites around Somerset (Bridgwater, Frome, Glastonbury, Minehead, Taunton, West Huntspill and Yeovil). These vehicles are allowed to carry a maximum of 16 passengers. Work is now underway to look at replacing some of the vehicles with full-size 53 seat buses or coaches. A review of transport routes and a costing exercise on the in-house option has demonstrated viability. This would not only deliver resilience and cost savings but also introduce competition into the market, which has lost so many local operators over recent times

Children and Young Peoples Health: The Somerset Wellbeing Framework is a whole school approach to emotional health and wellbeing which now has over 50 Schools registered with the framework. As part of this work SCC's Public Health and Educational Psychology Teams have delivered a series of bite-size mental health training schemes for schools. To date 250 Teaching staff have attended the self harm training, 100 Staff have attended bereavement and loss training and 100 Staff have registered for the eating disorders training in the summer. Further wellbeing work is planned for this summer at Kilve Court for up to forty young people from across the County.