

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

DECEMBER 2021

COUNCILLOR GEMMA VERDON – CHARD SOUTH DIVISION

Coronavirus infection rates: As of 29th November, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 68,307 (18% up from 57,072 on 30th September) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 927. The rate per 100,000 stands at 435.2 (709.7) for Somerset with Mendip at 564.1 (853.9), Sedgemoor at 418.1 (653.5), South Somerset 505.5 (668.3) and SW&T at 276.6 (713.0). The number of total deaths across the County is currently 8% above the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.0.

Infection rates in Somerset continue to be very high. With the new Omicron variant it is important, even for those who have had both jabs, to remember to follow Government guidance on wearing masks, to continue to observe Social Distancing and to always ventilate indoor areas.

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

Vaccination programmes roll-out: Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 91.3% of the 18+ population having had one dose of vaccine and 88.3% having had both doses. To date 83% of over 80-year olds have had the booster with 56% of all over 50. Work is focusing on Children aged 12-15 years old where the current vaccination level is 49.7%. In total, in Somerset 126,000 doses (including boosters) are being delivered a week.

Local Government Reorganisation: Following the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (now renamed Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities DLUHC) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset the transition programme, lead teams and governance structure have been agreed by all Councils. A LGR Joint Committee to oversee the transition sat for the first time on 5th November 2021 and will meet again on December 17th. A Joint Scrutiny Board is now being formed by approval through the five Councils. The Advisory Board met for the third time in Donyatt on 25th November. It is expected that statutory orders will be laid before Parliament in January 2022 with an agreed vesting date for the new authority as April 2023.

The Queens Platinum Jubilee: In 2022, Her Majesty The Queen will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking seventy years on the throne. To help Somerset play its part in celebrating The Queen's legacy, a new website has been launched: <https://platinumjubileesomerset.org.uk/>. There are already various plans for celebrations across the County to mark the Jubilee, including a four-day national Bank Holiday weekend from Thursday 2 June through to Sunday 5 June. The Platinum Jubilee Somerset website features information about how individuals and communities can get involved either through the Queen's Green Canopy scheme, by registering a beacon, or by organising a street party.

Community renewal funds: Eight projects in Somerset are to benefit by more than £3.6m thanks to successful bids to the Government's UK Community Renewal Fund. The County Council invited applications from a wide range of businesses and organisations across the county for submission to Government in June this year. The successful projects include 'Unlocking Somerset Prosperity (£726,000) which provides innovative support for 210 businesses across the County; Bridgwater Carnival Workshops Design and Feasibility (£270,300) and Social Enterprise Support Programme for Somerset (£601,399) which helps community and voluntary Groups to build greater resilience.

Reaching Carbon Zero (1): Somerset County Council has commissioned Climate Guide to run a series of free, accredited Carbon Literacy training days for City, Town, and Parish Councils. The training is designed to help local authorities understand the actions they can take to help combat climate change effectively. SCC has also launched its new Climate Emergency webpage <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/> which will provide a hub for anyone wanting information about Somerset's work towards tackling climate change including the latest environmental news for Somerset, information and tips for individuals and organisations on how they can reduce their carbon footprints.

Reaching Carbon Zero (2): A new £7.3 million primary school is set to become Somerset's first net zero carbon school, and only the third 'passivhaus' school in the south west. The new 420-place primary school, which includes a 60-place nursery, will serve the Orchard Grove housing development in Comeytrowe has been designed by architect firm Stride Treglown to minimise any environmental impact in line with Somerset's commitment to achieve carbon zero by 2030.

The England coastal path: SCC's Rights of Way team have completed work on a major new section of the English Coastal Path around the Doniford section. The decision to create the footway was part of the original establishment works for the England Coast Path and marks the completion of one of the last pieces of major work on the England Coast Path in Somerset

Applications for school places 2022: All children starting school for the first time in September 2022, as well as those moving between infant and junior or first and middle school applications must be submitted by Saturday 15 January 2022. www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions