

## COUNTY COUNCIL CONSERVATIVE GROUP

### BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

#### JANUARY 2020

**Last Reminder on School Places:** For those applying for their first school place, the deadline for applications is 15th January - further details can be found at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/apply-to-start-school/>

**Climate Emergency Strategy Events:** Rescheduled public events to discuss the creation of Somerset's first Climate Emergency Strategy have been confirmed and will be run by the Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN) on behalf of Somerset's four District Councils and the County Council. The strategy will identify ways for Somerset to work towards being carbon neutral by 2030 and adapt to predicted climate change impacts. The events will be held 10am – 4pm as follows:

- 18 January Taunton Library, TA1 3XZ.
- 8 February Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR.
- 15 February Mendip DC Offices, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT.
- 22 February Vicarage Street Methodist Church, Yeovil, BA20 1JB.

Open to residents, businesses, groups and anyone with an interest, the drop-ins will be a chance to discuss the initial thoughts of the five councils set out in a 'framework' document.

**National Award and Recognition:** The Somerset team that provides advice, support and training to governors, clerks and trustees in schools, colleges and other education providers has won a top award. SCC's Support Services for Education (SSE) triumphed over big-budget, multi-nationals to win the prestigious Chartered Governance Institute (ICSA) Service Provider of the Year Award. SSE Governance delivers training as well as providing a helpline to governance boards. Topics range from inductions for new head teachers to safeguarding responsibilities.

**Specialist Support for Dementia:** The list of grassroots projects for creative and imaginative grass roots dementia projects is growing with four new projects coming on stream thanks to grant support from SCC.

**Age UK** is launching the first charity-led Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) project with two qualified Somerset practitioners offering the therapy.

**Take Art** is setting up a two-year programme of creative day time activities that provide dance and wordplay sessions to support people with memory loss or dementia and their carers.

**Ark at Egwood**, based at Merriott, provides land-based activities as the therapeutic use of outside space and animals has been shown to help restore wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem with people of all ages.

The **Find Your Voice Momentum** projects will bring together people living with dementia and their carers and support them in music and movement group work across 39 ten-week-courses across Somerset.

SCC is looking to invest more than half a million pounds in total to kick-start and extend projects and groups that run day-time activities for people with dementia and provide respite for their unpaid carers. This is on top of its major spend on support for people with dementia which includes around £3.5m in special residential care, £4.5m in nursing care, plus a portion of the £14m it spends every year on homecare.

**Shepton Mallet Library:** Shepton Mallet library is set to keep its town centre location and be developed as a community hub as part of the regeneration of the Market Place. The decision includes an agreement which would allow the building to be open outside of library opening hours to help develop its community role, and to accept significant contributions from the Town and Council and Glastonbury Festival founder Michael Eavis.

**Volunteering in 2020:** Somerset residents looking for a New Year's resolution would be warmly welcomed to join the growing army of volunteers in the county. There are roles to suit almost everyone, from supporting the local library to driving people to appointments or supporting the Duke of Edinburgh Award. All you need is a little bit of spare time; lots of enthusiasm and a 2020 vision to give something back to your community. Opportunities can be found at [www.volunteering.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.volunteering.somerset.gov.uk)

**Robot Technology in the classroom:** Somerset County Council is taking a trail-blazing lead in the use of robot technology to help poorly children back into the classroom. In the biggest initiative of its kind in the country, the council has invested in 50 AV1 robots to support children who can't be in school – whether it's because they are sick or overcoming physical or mental health challenges. The AV1 robots take the place of the child in the classroom, letting them see, hear and contribute to lessons while they are out of school at home or in a hospital bed. Schools and colleges pay a rental fee that covers running costs with any 'profit' being reinvested in more of the robots.