



Somerset Liberal Democrats Tatworth & Forton November 2022

Support to mitigate impact of Cost of Living crisis this winter

Somerset County Council's Executive have approved a wide-ranging package of support to help local people deal with the impacts of the Cost of Living crisis this winter.

Support includes financial assistance with food and energy bills through the Household Support Fund, a 'Warm Welcome' network of venues where people can find warmth and company, as well as targeted support for clinically vulnerable people in cold homes.

Somerset residents struggling to pay the bills this winter could be eligible for support through the Household Support Fund.

The County Council has been allocated £3.8m to distribute before March 31st 2023 as part of the third round of funding provided through the Government's Household Support Fund.

This funding will be used to provide food vouchers worth £10 a week to children eligible for Free School Meals during the school holidays, and enable people to apply for support with a range of urgent essentials including fuel, food, and white goods.

To make an application to the Household Support Fund, please visit: bit.ly/SupportFund22. If you need help to apply, please phone Somerset County Council on 0300 123 2224. People who applied to previous rounds of the Household Support Fund are welcome to apply again in this round of funding.

Hundreds sign up to help shape council services

More than 300 people have signed up to help shape the future of council services in Somerset. From April 2023, Somerset's five councils will be replaced by the new unitary Somerset Council which will deliver all council services to all communities – from waste collection and adult social care to housing, benefits and parks. A new Customer Panel has been established to ensure residents are at the heart of those services.

Since launching in August, more than 300 people have stepped forward – with members already providing valuable feedback on important work like the development of a new council brand.

You can get involved in a number of different ways. Please find out more via our website (<https://playbook.somerset.gov.uk/our-customer-panel/>), or you can register by calling 0300 123 2224.

Have your say on Somerset's SEND strategy

Members of the public in Somerset are invited to have their say on a new draft strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

The Somerset SEND Partnership, which includes Somerset County Council, NHS Somerset, Somerset Parent Carer Forum and local education providers, have launched a consultation for the public to feedback on their updated SEND Strategy.

The strategy was shaped by extensive engagement with children, young people and families and sets out how services will be delivered and led over the next three years (2023-26).

The consultation is open and will close on Friday 23 December. To read the strategy and provide feedback visit: <https://somerset.inconsult.uk/SENDstrategy/consultationHome>

After the consultation closes, the Somerset SEND Partnership will review all feedback and use this to update the strategy. The final strategy will be published in Spring 2023.

Learn a language for free with Somerset Libraries

Somerset Libraries have launched a new Translation Service, giving free access to an online language learning service.

The service, which is available to all library members, will work in a similar way to other online resources, giving Somerset library members (including those with full or digital memberships) access to the free service. which can be found at: www.somersetlibraries.co.uk/languagelearning

The service is delivered by Transparent language Online. Library staff have had access to training materials to help them understand what it offers so they can be on hand help members of the public sign up for membership and then access the service.

The service includes 120 languages so guests from many other countries will also have free access, simply by having a Somerset Libraries membership. It also enables anyone in Somerset to learn languages such as Ukrainian and Russian which could be especially useful for sponsors and people supporting displaced people in the county.

Somerset hosts trailblazing conference to tackle child exploitation

Somerset County Council has hosted a trailblazing multi-agency conference in Taunton, sharing best practice on combating Child Exploitation. Guests included the NHS, police, social workers and Representatives from the voluntary sector.

Somerset's specialist exploitation Social Workers opened the conference, sharing their experiences of working as part of a multi-agency team to help young people recognise when they are being used or exploited and how to find and use the support that is available to them. They also outlined examples of good practice highlighted by Ofsted during its recent inspection, which rated the County's Children's Social Care as providing "good" services for children and families across the board.

The St Giles Trust – a charity which helps vulnerable young people who are exploited through gangs, serious violence and offending turn their lives around – ran interactive sessions with delegates, about empowering people to get the help they need.