

Councillor report – Blackdown and Tatworth June 2019

Jenny Kenton and Martin Wale

You may be aware of the “transformation” of South Somerset District Council over the last 8 months or so. This has meant a re structure of officers and roles as well as a shift towards online working for both members of the public and Councillors dealing with the Council through the internet.

The team at the Council have been working hard to ensure a wide range of services have been tested and are now available online in an easier to use format. We now have what is known as “landing pages” which are based around an event in peoples lives, such as moving house or having a child. Under each heading there would then be a range of services tailored to that event, for example, if you had just had a baby the website now would prompt you to get help on registering the birth or applying for child benefit. You are also able to register online and create an account where you can access your details such as Council tax and any housing benefit you might be claiming and the state of play of such events. As Councillors we now are all issued with an IT device and are now all digital, so no paper agendas are issued to us unless requested. The reason in particular for us to have a Council owned device is that we do not store any details of constituents on personal devices, this equipment would be handed back to the Council if a member is not re-elected or resigns for any reason, this deals with the new regulations on GDPR.

Planning documents as I am sure you know are also available on the site as well as a “report it” page where you can send in a report about a street light problem or fly tipping. All of these services online are saving officer time on the phone and as a result saving money for the Council taxpayer, there still is the telephone service but for quite a lot of people nowadays reporting online is an easier option. By giving your name and details you are then kept informed of the problem and when it has been resolved.

You may know about the South Somerset Careline service which provides support for elderly and vulnerable people in our area and is run by the District Council. There is a one off fee of £34.85 with a weekly charge of £4.07 both charges are plus VAT. We also install a keysafe for a once off charge of £40 plus VAT.

What you may not be aware of is that we can also provide a comfort call where people in receipt of the careline service receive a regular call providing extra reassurance that customers are safe and well – this is provided at a charge of .85p per call. There is also an opportunity for residents to receive careline free of charge for six weeks on discharge from hospital if referred by the hospital; the installation fee is waived if the resident is in receipt of various benefits.