

ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT DEC. 2021

COVID VACCINE WALK-IN CENTRES

Anyone aged 12 or older is now eligible for a Covid 19 vaccination.

You can obtain a dose of the Covid 19 vaccine from a walk-in site without an appointment and you do not need to be registered with a GP to use them.

Visit the [NHS website here](#) , enter your postcode to find your nearest walk-in site.

[Somerset CCG](#) also provide up to date walk-in availability across Somerset.

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOMERSET

As well as elections for the new unitary Somerset Council, the government has proposed that elections to town and parish councils across Somerset are brought forward from 2023, to take place on 5 May 2022. The notice of elections should be issued on 21 March 2022. The Government's intention is to ensure that all local elections in Somerset remain aligned. Therefore, in May 2022 City, town and parish councillors will be elected for a term of five years, instead of the current four-year term.

Alignment should offer opportunities for councillors to work together on the issues that matter most to their communities.

At county level, the number of members elected will double from 55 to 110, enabling them to assume responsibility for all local government functions by April 2023.

Two candidates will be elected for each existing electoral division, and it is anticipated that there will be a full boundary review after the May 2022 elections.

Until the unitary council is vested in April 2023, the 110 new members will have responsibility for the county council's functions and the transition to the new council. District councils and their members will continue to fulfil their functions until 31 March 2023.

SALC are being consulted to ensure advice and guidance is available to local councils.

Further details relating to the administration, costs and timetable of the elections will be provided by the districts. A further conference and details of this will be provided shortly.

LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORKS (LCNs)

LCNs will be an important part of the new Somerset Council.

What are LCNs?

They will give communities power to influence decisions about their local area, making sure that local areas will have an ongoing voice to shape the new council to suit I needs.

LCNs will include town and parish councils, voluntary groups, NHS, schools, police, and other interested parties and residents. They will meet locally across the County to discuss what is most important for their area, working together, to agree how best to achieve it.

Pilot LCNs are already testing this new approach across the county; it is thought that 15-20 will be needed to connect and empower communities across the county.

Why do we need LCNs?

Reducing layers of local government is intended to free up time and money for such services as education, jobs, the environment, social care, health and wellbeing etc. This will be the new way to think local, enabling communities to have a say about what is important, ensuring that they are at the heart of decision making, joined by community services that can work together, backed by the new authority to drive the change that people want.

How will LCNs work?

LCNs will have formal power as 'committees of the council' to guarantee the new council's commitment to local communities for the future.

Elected Somerset Councillors will sit on the LCN in their area, alongside partner groups, which will be supported by dedicated staff, employed by the new council, to act as community champions, bringing communities together to make things happen.

It is expected that LCNs will meet six to eight times a year, with locally led groups pursuing their individual goals between meetings. It is important at this stage to be flexible in approach so that LCNs can decide exactly what they do and how they do it.

What will LCNs do?

Recognising that Somerset is a county of contrasts, each LCN will develop its own goals and work together to find local solutions, based on local context, evidence and ambitions. They may choose to focus on a range of things including, but not limited to:

- Investing in education and support for young people.
- Caring for older people and supporting those with learning disabilities.
- Supporting families and addressing local issues and concerns.
- Working to improve local health and wellbeing.
- Repairing roads and identifying transport needs.
- Preparing for events like flooding or lockdowns.
- Addressing environmental issues and climate change initiatives.
- Building skills, training and business opportunities.
- Plus, any number of different challenges that communities across the county face.

In deciding what matters most for their area, LCNs can consider any and all of the service areas that the council will provide. However, formal Planning and Licensing decisions will be made through separate area-based arrangements.

Each LCN will have access to a small budget to help get projects off the ground and will help to set local priorities for the new council by influencing services and investment in their areas. The detail of how this will work is being tested as part of the LCN pilot programme.

Where are we now?

This is a new approach for Somerset and a big change for local government, but it has worked well in other parts of the country. There has been a really good response to the LCN pilot scheme; people are keen to get involved and make a difference,

As at end of November 2021, two pilots are up and running:

- Exmoor area with a focus on Highway service delivery, improved communication, opportunities for local communities to influence service delivery and trial proposals including an LCN Highway Steward. It is hoped this model can be replicated across the county.
 - Frome and surrounding area, focusing on Children, Families and Young People. The Town Council, surrounding Parish Councils and partners are currently gathering views and evidence to decide on key priorities and how they will work together to address them.
- There is another pilot starting in the Wincanton, Bruton and Castle Cary area and likely to be a fourth pilot starting early in 2022. The new Somerset Council team is in ongoing dialogue with town and parish councils to understand their aspirations and opportunities, and to make sure the pilots deliver results ready for the new council in March 2023.

Next steps

- Develop and consult on potential LCN geographies
- Learn more from similar networks in other Unitary areas
- Draw up LCN governance arrangements
- Work with LCN pilots to assess what works, creating toolkits to help LCNs develop.

SWP Covid contingency planning

Summary

- Disruption to collection services is likely over the festive period as the situation develops.
- If there are problems, SWP will prioritise rubbish and clinical collections providing up to date information through its website.
- Communal/shared collections element of Phase 4 of Recycle More will take place later in 2022, ensuring the new service can be launched to the majority of homes at the end of Feb.
- SWP will continue to monitor the situation, reviewing the Recycle More launch if needed.

Background

SWP is monitoring the developing Covid situation. The impact on collection crews has been minimal and not affected services so far. Over the holiday season waste almost doubles, exacerbated by more people working from home. Bank holidays mean there is little scope for catch-up collections, with crews already working on Sat. 8 Jan.

Plans are in place to manage the situation if collections are affected in the coming weeks.

Disruption to collections

If there are any staffing issues, rubbish & clinical collections will be prioritised. If collections are missed, SWP will do everything possible to return for these within two working days. If recycling collections are missed, residents should leave boxes and bags out for two days. If SWP cannot return during that time, residents can bring their recycling back inside until the next scheduled collection day.

SWP will monitor missed collections to ensure no-one is missed for 2 consecutive weeks.

Communications

The latest information will be posted on the SWP webpage, updated regularly. SWP will also post info. on their Facebook page and, where possible, post to individual groups.

At a local level, timely information may not be available. The overriding message is that

How you can help

- Highlight Somerset's 16 recycling sites – open on their usual winter schedules (except for and can be used to recycle everything collected at the kerbside. Check online for details of your nearest site's opening schedule: somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycling-site-opening-hours
- SWP online – the quickest and simplest way to resolve issues somersetwaste.gov.uk
- Encourage considerate parking –working from home means more cars parked in residential streets. Poor parking can slow crews or make collections impossible.

Recycle More Phase 4

This will affect properties with any element of communal/shared collection, for example flats and houses of multiple occupancy, which total around 5,000 in the Phase 4 area.

The timetable for introducing Recycle More is reviewed regularly, taking account of Covid impacts to make sure SWP can launch the new service successfully.

SSDC - Hospitality business grant support

A new Hospitality Support Grant is available, funded by the Additional Restriction Grant Fund supplied by Government. SSDC has limited funding available and will prioritise sectors likely to be most adversely impacted by the latest guidance and ongoing Covid-19 situation. Grants of up to £5,000 are available to certain sectors in the hospitality industry. Emails will be sent to businesses meeting the eligibility criteria based upon existing records and previous grant funding received. Visit: www.southsomerset.gov.uk/hospitalitygrant
Applications will open on 6th Jan. at 10.00am for 14 days until 20th Jan. 2022.

If you have any queries regarding the scheme, please contact restart@southsomerset.gov.uk and someone will respond as soon as possible.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible to apply, applicants must:

- Be the current ratepayer and occupying business rated premises in South Somerset.
- Offer in-person food and drink services to the general public.
- Provide food and/or drink to be consumed on the premises, including outdoors.
- Operate within the following hospitality-based sectors: Food courts; Restaurants; Public houses/pub restaurants; Roadside restaurants; Wine bars; Cafes; Night Clubs
- 50% or more of the business's income must come from in-person services
- Must be trading on 1st Nov. 2021 and intend to remain open unless Covid-19 guidance does not permit this.

A358 UPDATE

National Highways have been gathering feedback on people's experience of the consultation process, including the events that took place, and would like residents to complete a short survey to help them improve the way they run their consultations. The survey will close on Tues. 4 Jan. 2022 and will take around 2 mins. to complete.

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-work/south-west/a358-taunton-to-southfields/>

Their teams have been out and about and carrying out work along the route recently, and archaeological trial trenching has begun. Any archaeological remains found will be excavated and recorded.

SSDC Phosphates Strategy update

An updated Position Statement has been prepared and published on SSDC's website setting out the timetable for the delivery of the Phosphates Strategy. The timetable has slipped and the strategy, including the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), will not be delivered in the autumn as anticipated. The draft SPD will be the final element of the overall strategy to be delivered, now scheduled for the end of Jan. 2022.

The delay is due to a number of factors, including obtaining the necessary endorsement for a number of elements from Natural England and obtaining info. from organisations including the Internal Drainage Board. Natural England is due to publish further guidance in Jan. 2022 (expected in Mar. 2021) which will assist with updates to the Phosphates Calculator.

Rural Designation of Parishes in South Somerset under The Housing Act 1985.

On the 1st April the SSDC's District Exec. resolved that to apply to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to formally designate our parishes with a population of less than 3,000 as 'rural' under section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

Following the application, the SSDC recently received notification from the Right to Buy Team at the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that the legislation for our requested parishes to be designated as rural had been laid in Parliament. The Statutory Instrument came into force on 29th Nov. 2021. This designation is an important policy tool, and the reasons for seeking it are outlined in the attached briefing paper.

ENVIRONMENT**Queens Green Canopy - Plant a Tree for the Jubilee**

Are you planning a tree planting project to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022? Free trees are available from the Woodland Trust to mark the occasion and can be applied for [here](#). If you have the space (and landowner permission) to participate in the tree planting initiative visit [The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Somerset website](#) for more information and to register your tree plantings.

SWP - £500 Eco Grants for Schools

Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) are offering Eco-School grants, as part of its commitment to encourage waste reduction, re-use and recycling. Up to 50 schools will be helped to participate in the Eco Schools Programme. The grants can be used for all kinds of projects, the only proviso being that schools choose "waste" as one of its topics on the way through their seven steps to eco-school's green flag status.

SWP's Eco-School grants are available to any school receiving its waste services from the partnership (both primary and secondary). An application form can be downloaded [here](#).

Talk and Tackle Climate Change

Keep in touch between coffee meet ups, don't forget the forum on the **South Somerset Environment Website**, a space to interact, share knowledge, ideas, case studies, or ask questions.

Community Carbon Calculator tool

Impact, the parish-level carbon emission estimator, gives parishes and small communities usable data on their carbon emissions, easy to interpret and easy to share. It tells you how people in the parish travel and heat their homes, and other activities in the area that contribute to the local carbon emissions total. Visit the website for more info. [here](#).

Lendology

SSDC has a long-standing partnership with Lendology lending a total of £1,224,543 to householders to make improvements to their homes including energy efficiency and has recycled £661,175 to fund home repairs and improvements across South Somerset.

By saving energy, the average household could reduce emissions by 0.6 tonnes of CO₂ per year, which could save the average gas-heated home £184 per year.

For help with funding your home energy improvements visit [Lendology](#). You can also read the latest SSDC/ Lendology Q2 report [here](#).

Great Wildflower Seed Parish Giveaway!

Parishes can benefit from free wildflower seeds this winter. Local communities and landowners are encouraged to get involved and identify sites that would suit an area for wildflowers, especially areas where the public can access the natural beauty of the flowers. Ideally, the wildflower areas should be located somewhere open and sunny! To find out more and get an application form click [here](#)

Environment Grants

You can find all information on grants and funding on the new SSDC Environment website. Click [here](#) for details; key ones are below:

- **Co-op Community Fridge Fund** - Grants of £4,000 are available to UK not-for-profit organisations to develop Community Fridges (a space where everyone can share surplus food) – details [here](#). Find out how to set up a community fridge see in this toolkit [here](#)
- **The Circular Future Fund** offer grants of up to £300,000 to charities, social enterprises, and not-for-profit, for “trail-blazing ideas” to accelerate the transition towards a more circular economy. Details of how to apply [here](#).
- **The Co-op Carbon Innovation Fund** - grants of up to £100,000 for projects which will reduce emissions in the food and farming sector, as well as projects that address the impact(s) of climate change on communities. Details [here](#).
- **The EA's natural environment investment fund**, offering grants up to £100,000 for projects which improve and safeguard the environment by helping projects become “investment ready”, such as the restoration of river catchments to encourage investment from water companies. Details [here](#).

CHARD MUSEUM

The museum was one of eight organisations selected for the Cash for Charities campaign, organised through the Chard and Ilminster News. £20k was available to the selected charities; the amount provided depended on reader votes. The Museum received 24.8% of the total vote, amounting to a grant of £4,819. The bid was for History in a Box (Resource Boxes) project and the original bid was for £3,000. The Museum has some exciting plans for 2022 looks forward to continuing to work with local residents to achieve these.

ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

30/11	Ilminster TC
1/12	Minster Christmas Tree Festival
3/12	Fiveways School governor meeting
3/12	Coffee morning for Alzheimer Society
3/12	Ashill Senior Citizens lunch
3/12	Whitelackington quiz
4/12	Chard museum volunteer workshop
4/12	Ashill Xmas Fayre
4/12	Donyatt Xmas Bazaar
6/12	Bullying and harassment training
6/12	Somerset Bus Partnership
7/12	Neroche School trip to The Octagon
7/12	Ilminster Literary Festival meeting
7/12	Donyatt Carols by Candlelight
8/12	SSDC Area West
10/12	Fire service management committee
10/12	Anti-Bribery training
10/12	Stress in the workplace training
10/12	Equality & Diversity training
10/12	Warehouse Theatre
11/12	Donyatt Craft Fair
11/12	Horton Xmas Fair
11/12	Whitelackington tabletop sale
11/12	Chard Museum Xmas tree festival
12/12	Gemini CC breakfast Donyatt VH
12/12	Horton nativity service
12/12	Dowlish Wake mines pies and wine
13/12	LGR Group Leaders meeting
14/12	Donyatt Despatch meeting
15/12	SSDC Area North
16/12	Fiveways School
16/12	Local Government Reform advisory board
16/12	SSDC full council
19/12	Horton Christingle service
19/12	Ashill carol service
19/12	Broadway carol service
20/12	Horton carol service
21/12	SSDC regulation committee
21/12	Ilminster TC
22/12	Donyatt Christingle
22/12	Cudworth open air service
23/12	SSDC Chief Exec meeting
25/12	Isle Valley Christmas service

My grateful thanks go to all of those who have been kind enough to contact me with words of thanks and encouragement, in addition to lots of lovely presents! In part due to Covid, I know that it has not been possible to get around to everyone to express my gratitude, so if you are free on Sun. 9th Jan. please do join me at Donyatt Village Hall for their monthly breakfast to raise funds for Gemini Carnival Club. I shall be there from 9am – 12pm. Your password for free grub is ‘Lovely Linda’! Feel free to pass this invitation on - I have taken out a second mortgage to cover the cost!