

County Councillor's Update – February 2019

Winter Gritting: SCC continues to grit around 720 miles of highway on a precautionary basis for when the temperature is expected to drop below freezing. Secondary gritting routes are then deployed as and when the weather worsens. Following concerns being raised by some Conservative Councillors a detailed review of the impact of changes to gritting routes this winter will be carried out in May ahead of the policy being agreed for the 2019/20 winter period.

Schools funding: As part of the annual budget setting process for Somerset's schools, all will receive an increase in their funding in 2019. However, Somerset remains in the lowest 40 funded local authorities for education in England; SCC will continue to lobby the Department for Education and the Treasury to recognise and re-balance this in the 2019 funding reviews.

Ofsted visit: Ofsted, recently visited SCC to undertake a Focused Visit (Inspection) of the front door Children's Social Care services, including aspects of early help. The Inspectors visited the Early Help hub, First Response and Assessment teams in Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil. Whilst not as detailed as a full inspection, the Focused Visit was important in giving guidance on the journey to 'Good'. Whilst the official report is awaited immediate feedback was both positive and encouraging.

Time to Talk: Mental health problems are more common than most realise, affecting one in four people. This February, SCC Public Health are encouraging people to talk about their mental health problems in a way that is comfortable for them. Either with a friend or in a group of folk who are all challenging the stigma of mental health. Having conversations about mental health helps break down stereotypes, improve relationships, aids recovery and takes the stigma out of something that could affect any one of us. For more information contact:

Rethink mental illness advice hotline 0300 5000 927 or Mind infoline 0300 123 3393

How to get involved: Volunteering can open up career opportunities, provide valuable experience, help adjustment from work to retirement and bring a great sense of personal achievement and self-worth by contributing to the community. The new SCC volunteer web address is <https://volunteering.somerset.gov.uk/> where people can find opportunities that suits themselves and allow them to make a difference.

SEND provision: Whilst work on the new Hazelbrook campus of Selworthy special school is well on track, and students will take up their places in September, two further investments into Special Educational Needs in Somerset have been announced by SCC. The first scheme will see the £400,000 expansion of a centre to support pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder conditions (ASC) at Preston School in Yeovil. The facility will be able to cater for an extra eight pupils, in addition to the 12 it can currently support. The second scheme is for a £200,000 remodelling at Oaklands Autism Base in Yeovil, to provide enhanced facilities for up to 14 pupils. This investment programme is to make sure that SCC have the right places in the right parts of the County that will meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs.

One stop shop: An online one-stop-shop for education, health and social care information for children with Special Education Needs is being promoted at road shows across Somerset. The

events in Frome, Bridgwater, Compton Dundon and Wincanton are highlighting, for anyone looking for advice guidance, services available through the website

www.choices.somerset.gov.uk/025/local-offer/

Adult Social Care: 'Somerset Direct' continues to improve its performance in the resolution of Adult Social Care issues where over 90% of all contacts are resolved satisfactorily at the first contact. In addition, the Adult Social Care team have achieved an 89% reduction in the number of people waiting for a social care assessment down from 2,857 in June 2016 to 316 in December 2018.

Economic Boost: A £293m contract to provide support for the British Army's 50-strong fleet of Apache helicopters has been awarded to Leonardo Helicopters (UK) in Yeovil. The news follows the award of a further £388m contract securing 175 skilled jobs in Yeovil and a further 500 across the Somerset supply chain.

Major road investment: Following the announcement late last year of an additional £9.9 million pounds to maintain roads in Somerset the following resurfacing and improvement schemes have now been announced and will be implemented by the end of March.

- A38 Huntworth Roundabout (Junction 24)
- A358 between Thornfalcon and Southfields Roundabout, Ilminster
- A367 Bath Road, Ashwick
- Chilkwell Street, Glastonbury
- A361 Frome Bypass Berkley Roundabout
- A361 Frome Cemetery Roundabout
- A39 East Quantoxhead
- Admiralty Way and Creechbarrow Way, Taunton
- A358 Hankridge Roundabout, Taunton
- A358 Sampford Brett
- A30 Snowdon Hill, Chard