

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

Report for Mendip South

SEPTEMBER 2022

Local Community Networks (LCNs) Update

LCN consultation will be launched on September 1st and run to mid-October, and will seek the views of parish, town & city councils, partner organisations and individuals on the function, form and name for LCNs. A comprehensive communications strategy is currently being drawn up ready for the launch of the online consultation. The responses will form an important part of the recommendations for the Somerset County Council Executive and Full Council.

Finance Update

Somerset County Council, like many councils, is experiencing significant financial challenges in the current year. Inflationary factors, as we are all experiencing in our home lives, affect a large Council on a large scale. Energy costs, travel costs, increases in construction materials have all added to our costs and in turn that has affected the pay award for this year. SCC is part of a national negotiation and the latest employers' offer, equivalent to 5.5% increase, has not been accepted.

Other factors are having an adverse effect on Adults and Children's services, with increases in external placements post-Covid and the same inflationary factors impacting on the companies and organisations that provide residential placements. They are also seeing greater challenges in providing the right level of staffing, with a very competitive labour market throughout the country.

The Council's Senior Leadership Team is already working on plans to reduce the projected overspend, and some areas of the Council are now projecting underspends.

Of course, this financial year's projections have an impact on the first-year budget of the new Somerset Council. Savings will be made when the five councils come together as one Unitary Council but those savings won't be in place on day one, so it is essential that different ways of working and other plans are put in place early in the autumn. The Executive will continue to receive monthly budget monitoring reports as well as the ongoing reporting on Local Government Reorganisation.

Somerset County Council backs new Cost-of-Living Crisis Appeal

The Council has contributed an initial £50,000 donation to support the launch of Somerset Community Foundation's Somerset Cost-of-Living Crisis Appeal.

The Cost-of-Living Crisis Appeal is an urgent call for donations which will be used to help fund local charities supporting local people living in poverty through the cost-of-living crisis.

When the fund is open, any community group or charitable organisation wishing to apply for a grant should visit the SCF website where they can find guidance on how to make an application. For more information visit: <https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/somerset-cost-of-living-crisis-appeal-launched>.

Launch of Somerset County Council's new 'Orange Button' scheme: a community-based suicide awareness scheme.

Suicide Prevention Day is on September 10th and Somerset County Council's new 'Orange Button' scheme: a community-based suicide awareness scheme is being launched. The Orange Button will be worn by people in Somerset who have undergone quality assured Mental Health or Suicide Prevention training: whilst they are not able to counsel people, they can help signpost to relevant local services.

For Suicide Prevention Day, on September 10th, various activities will be taking place, including shared reading and crafts, and students from [Somerset Recovery College](#) will be displaying their artwork in an exhibition.

In preparation for the event, Somerset County Council's Public Health team are asking members of the public to share quotes, lyrics or poems that have helped them to get through difficult times in their lives.

Please send your contributions to bookofhope@somerset.gov.uk using the subject "Book of Hope", or tag us in your posts on social media using the hashtag #somersetbookofhope

A 'Walk For A Life' event starting at Stragglers Coffee House, Somerset County Cricket Ground on Saturday 10 September at 10am will also be taking place.

New electric minibuses hit the roads in Somerset

Somerset County Council now has two fully electric, specially adapted wheelchair accessible minibuses available for use.

These vehicles are Maxus EV80 minibuses and are the first of their kind in the county. They have a capacity of ten passengers, and the seats within can be adapted so that three wheelchairs can be safely included.

On one charge, the buses can travel approximately 114 miles currently. They are currently being used in the Bridgwater area, but their use may well be expanded across the county in the future.

Nominations Open for Somerset's Community Resilience Award

Nominations are invited from Somerset residents, for groups or individuals that have made a difference in helping their community: for example, local flood groups, parish or town councillors who can be counted on to think ahead, or someone who has helped to make sure vulnerable people can get help in an emergency.

The event is being organised by the Somerset Prepared partnership, which includes the Somerset Local Authorities' Civil Contingencies Unit, Environment Agency, Avon and Somerset Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, Somerset Rivers Authority, Somerset Rotary, SWAST, Spark, Red Cross and Safe South West.

More information can be found here: <https://southsomerset.gov.uk/news/2022/8/nominations-open-for-somerset-s-community-resilience-award>

Help shape the future of council services in Somerset

People in Somerset are encouraged to join a new Customer Panel and help shape the future of council services.

From April 2023, the new unitary Somerset Council will deliver all council services to all communities – from waste collection and adult social care to housing, benefits and parks.

The Customer Panel is being established to ensure residents are at the heart of those services. No special skills are required, all you need is a willingness to take part in three research topics each year and provide honest and constructive feedback. Panel members will have the chance to take part in online surveys, one-to-one interviews, usability tests and discussion groups.

For more information: <https://playbook.somerset.gov.uk/our-customer-panel/>

Bus it – campaign to promote bus use in Somerset

SCC campaign: Bus-It – you know it makes sense has been launched.

Earlier this year Somerset County Council bid for £163m to improve rural bus services, however the Government has only offered just £11.9m, just over seven per cent of what Somerset County Council estimated would be needed.

Patronage on local bus services across the county fell dramatically during the pandemic. This has not recovered with passenger numbers currently at 70% of pre-covid levels.

Making this a perfect storm for bus operators, they are also experiencing a severe shortage of bus drivers.

For more information about Bus-it campaign, see: [Bus it – You know it makes sense – Travel Somerset](#)

Reporting to highways

Here is a reminder of the different areas of highways, where issues can be reported.

Problems on the Road e.g. Potholes, Overhanging Vegetation, Flooding, Blocked Drains and Gullies should all be reported online as you will receive a faster response as they are directly linked to our Highways Team

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/#problems-on-the-road>

Report a problem with a street light

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-with-a-street-light/>

Road signs, bollards and road markings

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-signs-and-markings/>

Speed limits

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/speed-limits/>

Enquiries regarding the following issues have standard information to help guide your enquiry and exploration of the issue

Traffic lights

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-faulty-traffic-lights/>

Weight limits and abnormal loads

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/weight-limits-and-abnormal-loads/>

Live travel information

<https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/>

On-street parking restrictions

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-badly-parked-vehicle/>

Disabled parking bays

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/disabled-parking-bays/>

Public and community transport

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/#public-and-community-transport>

Rights of way

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/#rights-of-way>

Report a problem with a public right of way

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-with-a-public-right-of-way/>

Road works and road closures

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/#road-works-and-road-closures>

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