

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

SEPTEMBER 2020

Corona Virus Update: Whilst every death is undoubtedly an absolute tragedy, the situation in Somerset has been throughout the pandemic relatively quiet compared to the rest of the Country. As at 25th August, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 1,373 and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 203. There was one further Care Home death in late July and the current number of total deaths across the County is currently 4% below the 5-year average. The latest R value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1.

Return to School: Children of all ages are expected to return to school over the next two weeks with the clear message from Somerset's head teachers that they are ready and can't wait to welcome the pupils back. Measures being put in place vary from school to school but include: Year group or class group bubbles; one-way systems; regular hand sanitizing and cleaning of spaces; desks organised in rows all facing the front and spaced out; outside areas divided into 'zones', which are allocated to specific groups of children plus staggered start and finish times.

Return to School and College Transport: SCC is following current Government guidance in relation to school and college transport. Parents and students are being advised to walk, cycle or be driven to school or college where possible. For those that use school transport Students are advised to sit with their year group and are strongly advised to wear face coverings on the bus. For college transport, routes where additional capacity is needed, SCC are laying on approx. 20 additional buses at peak times. Details are at: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport>

Covid 19 Parish and Towns Forum: SPARK is hosting a Forum along with SALC on the 15th September aimed at Parish & Town Councils. It will be an opportunity to showcase some of the councils in Somerset who really engaged in the Covid-19 response in their communities, co-ordinating local efforts and experimenting with new ways of working. SPARK and SALC are hoping that this will initiate a conversation about how Parishes can work better with the communities they serve and capitalise on the volunteering legacy from Covid-19. To register go to https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvdu-qgz4tEtdXYBab_pbWDMGESkyf5Y7I

One Somerset: The business case to move to a Single Unitary authority across Somerset is available on www.onesomerset.org.uk and details the reasons for the recommendations and the substantial benefits to the residents of Somerset. The

business case was approved by Full Council on the 29th July for submission to the Secretary of State. Engagement and consultation activities on One Somerset will continue through the later summer and autumn.

Public Health Nursing: SCC's Public Health Nursing service has been nationally acclaimed by the Institute for Health Visiting for the innovative online support developed during lockdown – a time when face-to-face appointments were no longer possible. Health Visitors, who as part of their role visit new parents after having a baby, had to adopt big changes to the way they work to enable them to deliver services to new parents to offer much needed support advice and guidance, weigh-ins for new babies, ante-natal, post-natal and infant feeding support and other essential contacts.

Somerset Youth Music Group: Thanks to a unique online project, Somerset's musical groups including students from 32 of the county's schools and colleges have put together a stunning a recording of Elbow's One Day Like This. 90 young people, with ages ranging from 8 to 21 took part. Organised by Somerset Music, the video features the Somerset County Youth Choir, Somerset County Youth Orchestra and Somerset County Youth Concert Band. The inspirational video can be found at https://secure1.somerset.gov.uk/forms/PortalShowForm.asp?fm_formalias=SMD

Armed Forces Covenant Recognition: SCC has been awarded the Silver Award in recognition of the Council's support for the Armed Forces community. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve or have served that we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. The Covenant seeks to ensure fair treatment for Regulars, Reservists, Veterans and their immediate families. Silver Award winners must actively demonstrate that servicemen and women, and their families, are not treated unfairly because they are serving in the Forces and must have an internally publicised positive Human Resources policy on employing Reservists. Further information can be found at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/forcescovenant>