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## [BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS](#)

[JANUARY 2022](#)

**Coronavirus infection rates:** As of 31<sup>st</sup> December the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 83,300 (22% up from 68,307 on 30<sup>th</sup> September) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 977. The rate per 100,000 stands at 766.6 (435.2) for Somerset with Mendip at 892.0 (564.1), Sedgemoor at 756.6 (418.1), South Somerset 684.3 (505.5) and SW&T at 770.4 (276.6). The number of total deaths across the County is currently level with the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.9 and 1.1

***Infection rates in Somerset continue to be extremely high. With the new Omicron variant it is important, even for those who have had both jabs, to remember to follow Government guidance on wearing masks, to continue to observe Social Distancing and to always ventilate indoor areas.***

**Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline:** A single phone number continues to be available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

**Vaccination programmes roll-out:** Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 95.8% of the 18+ population having had one dose of vaccine and 93.2% having had both doses. IN total 50.9% of the adult population have also received their booster.

**Local Government Reorganisation:** Following the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset it is expected that statutory orders will shortly be laid before Parliament with an agreed vesting date of April 2023. The first elections to the new authority together with Somerset Town and Parish elections will be held on 5th May 2022.

**Pay boost for Somerset Carers:** Somerset County Council and the NHS have announced a £4.8m investment to increase pay and recognise the vital contribution of carers in Somerset. The Council are proposing a 9% uplift to domiciliary care providers who agree to pay all their staff a minimum of £10.50 per hour; a retention bonus of £250 for those who have been working in registered care for the last 6 months; and a £250 payment for new starters in domiciliary care. The funding for these changes has been jointly agreed and funded by Somerset County Council and the NHS, as social care is crucial in supporting people leaving hospital and in the community. There are currently a number of vacant social care roles and to find out more visit [www.proudtocaresomerset.org.uk/jobs](http://www.proudtocaresomerset.org.uk/jobs)

**Appeal for return of healthcare equipment:** Healthcare equipment is loaned on behalf of the NHS and social care teams when people leave hospital or after a period of illness, to help them stay safe at home and retain their independence. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased demand for this equipment and created shortages in supply. To book a free collection so that equipment can be reused to help others call Millbrook Healthcare on 0333 003 2407.

**Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans:** SCC has unveiled plans for major new safe cycling and walking routes in the county to help create greener, healthier and more active streets. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Yeovil and Taunton are the first to be published – they'll be followed by plans for Bridgwater and Frome and funding has been netted to draw up plans for three other towns. Having a plan in place is key to unlocking Government funding to build the infrastructure and enable people in Somerset to choose to walk or cycle to work, school, the shops or for other short trips for the benefit of people's health and the environment.

**Reporting faults on the Highway:** Utilising a new upgraded online system with an improved interactive map, members of the public can report a highways problem 24/7. From potholes, blocked drains and broken manhole covers, to mud on the road, overgrown vegetation, damaged pavements or cycle paths, faulty traffic lights or missing markings – they can all be reported in just minutes from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

The full range is available via [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/)

**Reaching Carbon Zero:** As part of Somerset County Council's commitment to decarbonise its buildings Yeovil Library has undergone a transformation to make the building greener and more energy efficient. The project has seen a new air source heat pump installed to heat the building in a more sustainable way, lamps changed to LEDs, new thermally efficient windows, improved ventilation with carbon dioxide monitors, and significant additional insulation. The measures will save approximately 27 tonnes of carbon each year. The investment is part of a wider SCC scheme to decarbonise and make the Council's buildings more environmentally friendly and will cover 12 projects including Taunton Library, Frome Library, Glastonbury Hub, and County Hall. Early estimates indicate that the delivery of the various schemes could reduce SCC's carbon output by around 27% – around 400 tonnes of carbon per annum. All the remaining projects aside from County Hall are due to be complete by March 2022.

**Applications for school places 2022:** All children starting school for the first time in September 2022, as well as those moving between infant and junior or first and middle school applications must be submitted by Saturday 15 January 2022. [www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions)