

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

BRIEFING SHEET from the desk of MIKE LEWIS FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

AUGUST 2022

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, vesting day for the new Unitary Council remains as 1st April 2023.

Local Community Networks: At the July Full Council Somerset County Council voted to endorse supporting fully funded Local Community Networks as part of the transition to a Unitary authority. The geography of the proposed LCN's, which was due last month, is now expected over the summer with more details as to their constitution and responsibilities.

Council Tax consultation: A consultation on council tax support for the new unitary Somerset Council has been launched. This is the first major policy consultation for the new council and it proposes that the lowest income households across Somerset get 100% council tax relief. This is a substantial increase as Somerset's four district councils currently offer varying levels of council tax support. Maximum relief is set at 80% to 85% in most parts of the county, only in South Somerset is 100% relief available. The proposed changes would harmonise support for working-age people on low incomes across the county and come into effect on 1 April 2023, with the creation of the new Council. The consultation runs until 19 September and can be found at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SomersetCTRLIVE/

Trading Standards: Somerset and Devon Trading Standards recently seized illegal tobacco estimated to be worth more than £200,000 in raids in Devon and Somerset. The seizure is one of the largest of its kind by the service. The recent operations means that the service, has now seized illicit tobacco worth more than £310,000 across the service area during 2021 and 2022.

World Breastfeeding week: SCC's Public Health Team are encouraging people to nominate public places that are 'positive about breastfeeding.' As part of World Breastfeeding Awareness Week, 1 to 7 August, the Council is again promoting its 'Positive About Breastfeeding' scheme. The scheme aims to strengthen the support for breastfeeding in commercial, health and community settings, creating more positive environments for breastfeeding in

Somerset. World Breastfeeding Week seeks to inform, educate and empower workplaces and communities to strengthen their capacity to provide and sustain breast-feeding friendly environments for families.

https://cypsomersethealth.org/?ks=1&page=positive_about_breastfeeding

Wheelchair and community equipment: Somerset County Council and NHS Somerset are this month launching a new Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service to help people live more independently. Previously running as two separate services, (a Community Equipment Service and separate Wheelchair Service). The new service will provide a range of equipment to help people live independently, offering loans to people for as long they need them. The service will also include delivery and fitting, servicing, collection, and recycling. More information is available at www.somerset.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/equipment-to-help-you/

Tackling violence against women and girls: Somerset County and North Somerset Council's have jointly secured an additional £317,694 from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund to continue to make public spaces and streets safer for women and girls. This additional funding will allow the councils to focus on anti-social behaviour concerns that contribute to the fear of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) by targeting resources at four locations – Taunton, Bridgwater, Weston-super-Mare and Yeovil. The areas identified experience VAWG related crime, anti-social behaviour and low feelings of safety for people within those communities.

Ecological Emergency: SCC has voted to put additional focus into protecting Somerset's natural environment and biodiversity by declaring an Ecological Emergency. The Council previously declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and has since worked with Somerset's four District Councils and other partners to develop the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy "Towards a climate resilient Somerset". The Ecological Emergency work will complement the existing Climate Emergency 'Natural Environment' actions with a renewed focus on land management, biodiversity, and natural habitats.

Somerset Business Climate Summit: The Somerset Business Climate Summit 2022 will take place at Queens College in Taunton on Wednesday 21st September between 10am and 1pm. The Summit will highlight best practice and raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges for businesses as we shift toward a low carbon economy. Businesses will be encouraged examine their current business models and make pledges to reduce their carbon footprints. Details can be found at www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/climate-emergency-businesses/climate-summit/