

COUNTY COUNCIL CONSERVATIVE GROUP

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

JULY 2018

Somerset Libraries Consultation: The consultation on the future of the library service has now ended with just over 7000 responses having been received from individuals and stakeholder groups across the County. All the responses will now be carefully considered before recommendations are put before SCC's Cabinet in the early autumn.

Mendip Pupil Referral Unit: A £3 million education facility for vulnerable pupils has opened for pupils and staff at a purpose-built school in Somerset. The new Tor School is a Pupil Referral Unit and Medical Tuition Centre in Glastonbury, with state-of-the-art facilities. The 12-classroom facility at the former Beckery site provides support for 80 vulnerable children and young people from the Mendip area and brings together services previously delivered in three different locations.

Schools and Education: The last few weeks have seen the handover of two schools projects and as part of SCC's wider commitment to investing in education, the announcement of a £16 million investment in two further projects,.

The handovers were:

- Kingfisher Primary School in Lufton, Yeovil – handover of new school and community facilities
- Heathfield Community School in Taunton – handover of performance art and science facilities expansions.

The announcements for new schools and expansions to be handed over for September 2019 include a new school for Taunton at Nerrols farm and an expanded special education needs and disabilities (SEND) provision for Selworthy School.

School Wellbeing Framework: The recently launched School Wellbeing Framework provides training and support for teachers and schools in Somerset – the programme will support schools to identify their health and wellbeing needs and deliver a three pillared programme for students across Somerset.

The rural cost premium: A recent extensive study by the County Councils Network (CCN) has found that transport to school for Children in rural areas is over nine times greater than in more urban or suburban area. In fact in those areas it costs on average just £10 per pupil per year; for rural Counties this cost is £93. And for Somerset that represents a £12 million additional cost not faced by some of SCC's near neighbours.

Somerset Rivers Authority: The Private Members Bill, put before the House of Commons seeking to establish the Somerset Rivers Authority as a separate precepting authority failed due to the intervention of a single MP on a procedural matter. The Governing Board of the SRA have now written to the Environment Secretary Michael Gove to seek his support and personal intervention in order that the ongoing funding issue is resolved well before the next financial year.

Elderly care fees: With a recognised national shortage of care homes and carers it is important that SCC have access to a vibrant and sustainable care home sector. In fact under

the Care Act 2014, SCC have a duty to ensure a functioning local care market. To that end, and with consultation with our providers, SCC have agreed to an additional £8m over this financial year to increase fee levels. This is the additional £6.6m Adult Social Care precept with the addition of some central Government Better Care Fund monies. This represents a major investment spent in the Somerset care economy and will ensure long term sustainability and choice for elderly residents.

Make a difference poster competition: Congratulations went nine-year-old Grace Pear, from the 1st North Petherton Brownies, who won the recent County –wide competition to design a fostering poster. Gracie won outdoor clothing and equipment for herself and her North Petherton pack.

Schools Annual Dance Festival: Around 1,100 children representing 54 Somerset primary schools recently celebrated the annual Folk Dance Festival on Wells Cathedral Green. Now in its 44th year, the Somerset Schools' Folk Dance Festival encourages participation and physical activity in schools across the County.

Wells Children's Centre Building: The building which formerly housed the Children's Centre at Wells, has been revamped by volunteers and been re-launched as a place for children in care to meet their parents in a comfortable, relaxed but safe environment.

Somerset Direct recognition: SCC's Customer Service Centre team has won the South West Contact Centre of the Year Award. The team screens, acts as a triage, problem solves and provides advice and guidance to members of the public and other professionals, e.g. for Adults and Children's safeguarding, highways, parking services, blue badge, and general enquiries. Somerset Direct triumphed over some tough opposition (including NHS Blood and Transplant, DAS Legal, Holland America and Aster Housing) to pick up the award at this year's Contact Centre Awards held at Aston Gate Stadium in Bristol.

Childminders Recruitment: SCC are actively looking for more registered childminders right now. More information on childminding is available at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/register> and it's a good time to apply as new childminders may be eligible for a Childcare Business Grant worth £500. Check out <https://www.childcarebusinessgrants.com/> for more details

Somerset's Roads get busier!: At the end of 2017 there were 313,800 licensed cars in Somerset (an increase of 4,400 on the previous year). Numbers of motorcycles increased by approximately 400 to 16,700 over the same period, while numbers of Light Goods Vehicles increased by 1,200 to 46,200. South Somerset and Mendip saw the biggest increases (2,000 and 1,400 respectively). Car ownership now ranges from 67 per 100 adult population in Taunton Deane and West Somerset to 72 per 100 adult population in Mendip. Nationally there are 60 cars per 100 population.

Recent press releases:

County welcomes fresh thinking on social care funding
Road naming to honour founder of the RAF
Scams Awareness Month
Safer Homes for Somersets Children
Ready to make mischief?
Silhouettes in Somerset to mark WW1 centenary