

SOMERSET COUNCIL

Frome Town Council

Cllr Dawn Denton

June 2024

Somerset Press Releases: You can view all the Somerset County Council press releases for the last month using this link: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>

Blackbird Way Park: This park is not looked after – the grass is seldom mowed, and it is not in a good condition to enjoy. After a resident reached out, I have been in touch with the council to ask for this park to be given the love it needs.

Selwood Academy: I have met twice with the school (and once with the FTC) in support of their application to include Key Stage 4 in their offering. I have also been liaising with the school in relation to the council cutting their funding for the school crossings. This is a concern for the schools going into the new academic year. I still await the final decision from the council.

Bath Road tarmacking: There is ringfenced money for this stretch of road, but there is an issue with the contracting. As soon as this is finalised, work should begin on fixing this road coming into and going out of town from the Bath side.

Business links in Frome: I met with Somerset Council Careers & Pathways, which includes the Somerset Careers Hub, Supported Employment, the Somerset Work Experience Partnership and SomersetWorks. There is a real shortage in Frome of business connections to support young people on their career journeys. I will be presenting briefly at the Frome Chamber of Commerce breakfast and will be working to meet with more small, medium-sized and large businesses in the area to support this work, but also in my voluntary role as an Enterprise Advisor.

Customer Service Access Point in the library: I will be meeting with the Customer Service team this month to discuss this transition to digital and ensure that the public are able to access these vital services after the in-person offer is not available.

Voluntary redundancies update: In total 201 applications for voluntary redundancy have been accepted by Somerset Council. Within this number are 49 voluntary redundancies, where costs to the council exceeded £100,000 each. The total cost of the voluntary redundancies is £12.8m with an expected ongoing wage bill reduction of £8.2m. The Council needs to save around £40m from the pay bill by reducing the number of staff and managers, including senior directors, approximately 25% of staff in total.

Compulsory redundancies update: The Council has launched a 45-day consultation on restructuring which could lead to a significant reduction in Executive and Service Directors. The consultation runs from mid-May to June with those being made redundant leaving the authority between November and March 2025. Consultation on restructuring and any consequent redundancies at lower tier levels will take place later in the summer.

General Election Voter Registration: For residents who have recently turned 18 or just moved home, it is important to act to ensure that they are registered to vote in the General Election. The deadline to register is midnight on Tuesday 18 June. Applications can be made online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm Wednesday 19 June. Those who are registered to vote at the polling station but do not have an accepted photo ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate before the deadline at 5pm on Wednesday 26 June via: www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate The deadline to apply for a proxy vote is 5pm on Wednesday 26 June.

Safe disposal of small gas canisters: Due to the increasing number of gas canisters being put out with recycling, crews have had to manually check recycling ahead of the automated sorting process to avoid fires. This year alone, more than 1,000 gas canisters fires have been avoided. The small canisters, mainly used for camping gas stoves, are often mistakenly put in the kerbside recycling 'Bright Blue Bag'. The bag can be used to recycle empty aerosol bottles but should never be used to dispose of gas canisters. Gas canisters must be taken a local household recycling site.

Call for sites to offset future developments: Somerset Council is seeking submissions of land for the potential delivery of phosphate mitigation schemes and Biodiversity Net Gain to support the delivery of new development in Somerset. The "call for sites" aims to gauge the level of interest from landowners, land promoters and land managers, with sites put forward to be assessed through a transparent process and criteria. Prioritised phosphate mitigation sites will go on to negotiate a legal agreement and where eligible, a price for the Council to purchase the arising P-Credits using some of the £9.6m secured from the Government's Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund. Biodiversity Net Gain schemes will go on to negotiate a legal agreement, which can then be logged on the national biodiversity gain sites register, and then sold on to developers. Further information can be found at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/environmental-call-for-sites/>

Road surface dressing: Somerset Council's new partner Kiely Bros are launching a programme of road repairs across the County's network this month. Kiely were awarded a four-year contract from 1 April to carry out a wide range of services, including surface dressing and will be introducing a new piece of machinery known as the Multipatcher, which is a vehicle that can carry out small scale surface dressing works, but also repair a range of other defects. Once preparation work is done, the surface treatments programme, which includes surface dressing, starts in July. Details of this year programme can be found at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/surface-dressing/>

***Bath Road coming in and out of Frome from the north, should be included in this programme as the money is ring-fenced for this work.*

Volunteer to help Home Library Service Users: Volunteers are needed across Somerset to help keep a vital library lifeline thriving. The Home Library Service (HLS) is looking for people who can

lead teams of volunteers in Bridgwater, Wellington, Yeovil, Frome, Chard and Crewkerne. The HLS is free and available to anyone who cannot visit a library in person – the housebound, carers, or people vulnerable because of their health. The Lead Volunteers liaise with Somerset Libraries, keep in touch with local volunteers and arrange cover for sickness, and use their local knowledge to support customers and the Home Library Service

Highways Fine for Nextfibre Networks: Broadband provider Nextfibre Networks Ltd has received fines and charges totalling more than £11k after pleading guilty to two offences in Somerset which magistrates said posed a danger to pedestrians. Somerset Council prosecuted the firm following works carried out in Bridgwater. Nextfibre Networks Ltd admitted failing to install proper traffic management to ensure the safety of pedestrians while working in two of the town's streets in breach of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. Along with the two charges in Somerset, Nextfibre Networks Ltd also pleaded guilty to nine similar charges in Devon and had to pay a total of £30k in fines and charges.

Best wishes,

Dawn