

COUNTY COUNCIL Clare Paul

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

MAY 2019

Somerset Day: May 11th marks Somerset Day, the day in 878AD on which King Alfred the great called the great people of Somerset together to rise up and defeat the Danish invaders. This year Somerset day falls on a Saturday with a host of events and activities being held across the County. Details can be found at www.somersetday.com

Somerset Education Business Partnership awards: The first Somerset Education and Business Partnership awards were held recently. Businesses, education and careers support teams came together to celebrate some of the many amazing ways that our businesses are working with education across Somerset to create understanding, opportunities and enthusiasm for their future workforce and leaders. A project to involve young people with special needs was a finalist in the awards. Last year a shop run by young people with stock created by pupils from special schools across Somerset opened in Taunton and this spring it's running again in Yeovil. The project is a partnership between special schools and specialist provision within Somerset. Students are helped to set up the shop to sell their enterprise products, and they are managing it with support.

Young Carers: After several months of consultation and engagement with young people and with voluntary and charitable organisations, SCC has now developed firm proposals to improve and widen support for children who care for a family member - young carers. Under the proposals considerably more young carers will be identified and supported at an appropriate level, with specialist support from the County Council and the voluntary sector being widely involved.

Primary School places for Sept 2019: Nearly 98 per cent of Somerset children were offered a primary school place at one of their top three choices, the County Council's latest school admission figures show. Overall 97.7 per cent of the 5,664 applicants were offered a place at one of their top three primary school choices, and 92.17 per cent received their first choice.

Further Education: Two of Somerset's Further Education colleges have been part of successful bids to form 2 of the 12 new Institutes of Technology announced across the UK. Yeovil College are part of the successful Institute of Future Technologies (SWIFT) bid, with Bridwater and Taunton College joining forces with Exeter University and others to form the Institute of Technology in the South West.

Somerset Diverse Communities: In the last 18 months Somerset Diverse Communities Small Grants Fund has distributed £5,921 and a total of 22 grants

across Somerset. This has seen communities benefit from funding specifically to support black and minority ethnic (BME) community groups in Somerset. The Small Grants Scheme has a very simple application process, and can be used by community groups for a wide range of proposals, including activities and equipment. Grants are for a maximum of £500 and the funding has been provided by the Somerset Equalities Officer Group.

Libraries: Following an assessment of the state of the current building a temporary Community Library Partnership agreement has been signed with Street Parish Council which will enable a library to open in the Street Parish Rooms later in May. This is excellent news and will deliver continuity for Street's much valued library service.

Libraries 2: The Librarian Theatre is touring Somerset Libraries this Summer, presenting 'The Green Ship' by Quentin Blake. The theatre production of the book is their first ever stage adaptation; they are undertaking an epic 50-show tour of the play between 1st May and 30th June 2019, around UK public libraries including four in Somerset. Details at www.librariantheatre.com/thegreenship

Highways: BT have become the latest utility company to be taken to court and will have to pay a total of £36,237. Six of the counts dealt with at Taunton Magistrates' Courts related to incidents in July last year. BT executed street works without the approval and the works were also deemed to be in contravention of safety guidance.

Somerset Choices: the Adults Social Care content of the successful Somerset Choices is being revamped and updated- The Somerset Community Connect website is an online information and advice guide and directory of services for adult residents in Somerset to find information, advice and services to manage their own health and wellbeing. By the beginning of June it will also provide information on what help and support is available at home (micro providers) as well as an equipment self-assessment.

West Somerset Railway: Few Somerset residents are aware that the County Council are the owners of the trackbed of the West Somerset Railway but with that ownership comes responsibilities. Work is now ongoing to upgrade the Seaward Way level crossing in Minehead which has reached the end of its serviceable life and no longer fits the standards required. The work represents an investment of £1million to upgrade the facility to comply with modern rail regulations.

Dillington House: Over 1,000 people visited Dillington for the Easter Eggstravaganza over the bank holiday weekend. The house is open for local visitors and hotel guests alike, with afternoon tea and a Sunday carvery on offer, alongside beautiful wedding and conference settings and wide ranging adult education opportunities – visit www.dillington.com for more details of the latest courses and events on offer.