

Clare Paul County

BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

JUNE 2019

SCC Finance Update: Somerset County Council recently reported a substantially improved financial position in its end of year financial report. A combination of extra one-off funding, technical adjustments and savings mean the council has been able to increase its levels of general reserves by £4.2m to what is considered a prudent level for an authority this size – just over £16m. The Council’s Revenue Budget Outturn Report for 2018/19, describes the Council’s financial outlook as being “more positive than it has been for a number of years” with a 1.85 per cent underspend (£5.9m) on its net budget of £318m. But it also highlights the “significant level of uncertainty” due to a reliance on one-off grants, increasing demand and the unknown outcomes from the ongoing Government reviews of funding for local government. Some £58m of next year’s £328m net budget for next financial year can be described as ‘uncertain’ or ‘one-off’ including over £30m of funding for adult social care.

Dementia Support Group Grants: Adult social care is adding more and more to the community offer which is successfully helping people to get the support they want and need quicker and within their own communities. This year SCC have awarded over £200,000 in grants to help form local dementia groups offering respite services and support – the onus is on local and accessible provision and the authority would welcome further applications.

Talking Cafes: SCC are continuing to build on the success of the Talking Cafes and Carers services which have brought support to people in all kinds of different venues and in many different ways. There are now 14 regular Talking Cafes across Somerset and in the last 18 months they have helped 2,737 people. The newest café has opened up this month at Musgrove Park Hospital, helping those who need advice and support when in hospital. Further information on Talking Cafes and Carers services can be found at https://somersestrcc.org.uk/our_work/supporting-individuals/somerset-village-agents-project/

BBC Concert Orchestra in Somerset: More than 1,000 Somerset pupils experienced the sound of a live orchestra when the BBC Concert Orchestra gave to concerts organised jointly organised with the Octagon Theatre, Yeovil and Sound Foundation Somerset (SFS) – the Music Education Hub for Somerset which is supported by the County Council. They were the centrepiece of the BBC’s Ten Pieces project that aims to open-up the world of classical music to

children by using 10 pieces of music as a spring-board for creativity. The hundreds of children who attended thoroughly enjoyed it and were totally absorbed in what was going on.

Major Roadscheme Completed: The Yeovil Western Corridor scheme has been completed on-time and on-budget. The multi-million pound package of improvements to increase the capacity of several junctions aims to reduce congestion, accommodate projected increases in traffic and unlock more than 1,500 homes and 20 hectares of employment land nearby. The scheme also includes several pedestrian crossings and upgraded links for pedestrians and cyclists.

Public Health Recognition: The SCC Public Health Team recently landed the prestigious Sarah Stewart Brown Award from the Faculty of Public Health in recognition for the team's work promoting the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Historic Signpost Award: Exmoor's Historic Signpost Project's group of over 100 volunteers recently received the West Somerset Environment Volunteer Award 2019 in recognition of their efforts to preserve this iconic feature of Somerset's rural landscape. Exmoor's Historic Signpost Project is supported by Somerset County Council as part of the wider Somerset Fingerpost Restoration Project, which aims to restore and renovate fingerposts across the county.

Foster Carers: SCC recently launched a new scheme to encourage friends, family and communities to consider fostering? For anyone submitting a recommendation that leads to approval of new Foster Parents they will receive a payment of £150 as a 'thank you' for the introduction. In addition, SCC will put £100 into a fund that can pay or subsidise activities for children. To find out more contact the Fostering team on 0800 587 9900

Mental Health Training: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a two-day introductory course, aimed at people who want to feel more confident, competent and comfortable in dealing with mental health problems. The next course is running on Friday 9 and 16 August 2019. Anyone wishing to apply for a place should contact PublicHealthTraining@somerset.gov.uk by Monday 15 July 2019.

Special Educational Needs: A free day of fun activities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND) and their families takes place at Brookside Academy, Street on 6 July, organised by SCC's Short Break team. For more information call 01823 358117.