

# County Councillor's Brief for Town & Parish Councils



South Petherton and Islemoor  
Division

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## Headlines:

- **Broadband Rollout. Facts not Myths.** Recently, there has been some more, ill-informed speculation concerning the rollout of Broadband. Everyone needs to know that the phase 1 programme remains in place, funded and to programme. This will deliver the 90% coverage by December 2016. By the end of June BT had achieved their target. This means that nearly 172,000 and business are now connected with 762 cabinets activated, well over the halfway mark. A separate contract for the National Parks (Exmoor and Dartmoor) has been let to Airband. The National Parks represent some of the most challenging terrain for connecting remote rural communities to superfast broadband. Together with an additional 20 business parks gaining approval (around an additional 1000 businesses) we estimate that by the end of the financial year 2016/17 coverage of around 96% may have been achieved. The contract for Phase 2, with BT, has not been agreed. BT were unable to guarantee that 95% coverage by the end of 2017 would be achieved. Since this was not value for money we are returning to the market for a contract that will.
- **Listening, Learning Changing Roadshows.** Later this month County Team will be running the Council's Listening, Learning, Changing roadshows. This is the third year we have held these events which aim to gather the views of the public about the council's priorities and other issues. As a Council we are committed to engaging with the public. In the current financial climate for local authorities it is more important than ever that we give people the chance to share their views and tell us about their priorities. Last year we spoke to nearly 3,500 residents and it was an excellent opportunity to discuss budget decisions and the breadth of services that the Council provides.

The plan for South Somerset is:

| Date             | Location    | Event                     | Timings   |
|------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Saturday 25 July | Chard       | Chard Outdoor Market      | 8m - 1pm  |
| Tuesday 28 July  | Castle Cary | Castle Cary Street Market | 9am - 2pm |

|                       |        |                                      |              |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Friday 11 September   | Yeovil | Stand in Town Centre (Quedam Centre) | 9am - 5pm    |
| Saturday 12 September | Frome  | Frome Cheese Show                    | 8.30am - 6pm |

- **Return of £200k fund to tackle flooding.** The successful scheme which offers Somerset communities a share of £200,000 to tackle flooding is back for a third year. Somerset County Council's Flood Mitigation Fund has supported 60 projects over the past two years, reducing the flood risk to roads, properties, a school and a village hall. This year the scheme will again focus on community projects proposed by Town or Parish Councils or other community groups. This could include schemes such as creating flood defence banks, clearing roadside ditches or opening blocked culverts to increase the capacity of a watercourse.
- **Somersetchoices.org.uk.** A new website that will help people across Somerset access care and support in the county is now live. Developed by the County Council and the NHS, Somerset Choices ([www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)) aims to help people help themselves stay independent, healthy and well. It will put people in control of their care and wellbeing and give them more choice when it comes to who provides their care and support. The new website guides people through self-help forms, provides easy access to information and a directory of local services, products, groups and events in their local area: such as care homes, help at home, mobility equipment, personal assistants, lunch clubs, exercise groups and breaks for carers.
- **Love the great outdoors? Now you can adopt-a-path.** People who regularly use rights of way in Somerset are invited to help keep routes open and accessible for all under a new adopt-a-path scheme. Somerset County Council's rights of way team is interested in hearing from anyone willing to adopt a public footpath, bridleway, restricted byway or a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT). Volunteers are asked to simply walk, cycle or ride their path as often as possible, report any problems to their local adopt-a-path co-ordinator, and help keep signs, gates and stiles clear of overgrown vegetation. In many parts of Somerset, local Parish Path Liaison Officers and parish councils already carry out a similar role by walking paths and carrying out maintenance. The adopt-a-path scheme looks to build on this. Please call 0300 123 2224, email: [ROWVolunteers@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ROWVolunteers@somerset.gov.uk) or view the leaflet online at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/get-involved/volunteering/volunteering>
- **Somerset Rivers Authority.** Last Friday I attended a SRA Meeting of interested parties to look at how the longer term funding can be achieved. A number of options were discussed in some detail with reports going to the board. I found it interesting to know that Somerset Business collectively lost £147 million in the last floods; that was on top of the damage to houses & roads, the horrible disruption to the lives of those affected and the damage across the South West peninsular. In other words, flooding really does affect everyone. It strikes me that whatever funding is needed to deliver the 20 year flood plan will have to be found from a number of sources and we will all have to play a part. More anon as this develops.
- **Waterloo.** On a personal note we went across to Belgium to attend the repeat of "the most famous ball in history" given by the Duchess of Richmond on the eve of the battle, enjoying an epic evening in Bruxelles with 500 guests, many of whose ancestors were either at the ball or took part in the great victory in 1815. I was there as a representative of the 13th Dragoons, 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars that took part and are now part of the current Light Dragoons. We also attended the re-enactment of the battle, held over two days, performed by 6,000 re-enactor enthusiasts from all over the world. A great experience and reminder of the impact that battle had on European history.