

County Councillor's Brief for Town & Parish Councils



South Petherton and Islemoor Division

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HinkleyPoint C Nuclear Power Station Confirmed. Somerset County Council has heralded (15 September) the government announcement on Hinkley Point C as one that will bring unprecedented investment and job creation to the county and the wider region. As the largest engineering project in Europe, the construction of the new power station is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to boost jobs and economic prosperity, and to generate thousands of training opportunities for local people. Following a comprehensive review of the Hinkley Point C project, and a revised agreement with EDF, the Government has decided to proceed with the first new nuclear power station for a generation. During construction alone, the project is expected to bring £200 million to the local economy whilst over the lifetime of the project, the regional economy is set to benefit by around £4 billion" he added. "It looks set to kick-start the national nuclear renaissance and will be the catalyst for economic growth in Somerset and the wider South West region."

Economic Benefits of HPC. At the Nuclear South West Conference David Hall, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Business and Inward Investment confirmed that Somerset is the perfect place for nuclear business to grow. The Councils and the Somerset Chamber of Commerce have been working closely for many years now with EDF Energy to develop a robust local supply chain that will support the project. More than 3,000 Somerset and South West businesses have registered on the dedicated website as potential suppliers for the Hinkley Point C project and an additional 2000 companies have registered across the UK. "The facts speak for themselves. EDF Energy has already awarded £465 million worth of contracts across the South West."

SCC Budget. The delivery of the Somerset County Council 2016/17 budget was considered by Cabinet (26th Sep). To put the budget into context it should be noted that over the last six years the county council's revenue budget has been reduced by central government by over £100 million. With less budget and the resulting reduction in staff, it has become increasingly difficult to deliver our key services. A forecast was given. Please note the key word, forecast. It was forecast that if our current level of expenditure continues for the rest of the financial year, that the council would overspend its budget by some £24 million. This does not mean that the council has actually overspent or will overspend by £24 million. It is completely inaccurate to state that we have overspent by £24 million.

Action taken. To make sure the 2016/17 budget is delivered on target the Chief Executive and Leader have already taken action. A comprehensive 10 point plan and service specific management plans have been formulated. The 10 point plan contains the following actions: An immediate review of existing budgets and forecasts; A spending freeze; A staffing review; Allowing applications for voluntary redundancy; A recruitment freeze, A review of temporary staffing; A review of agency spending; Reviewing our contracts and the spending; Meeting with our key providers of services and green light for all officers to challenge any expenditure. The 10 Point Plan and specific and detailed management plans have been drafted for all areas that are currently forecast to overspend and have been made available for all staff, councillors and the public.

The key areas of service where the forecast overspend could occur are in Adult social care: £12 million forecast; Children social care: £9 million forecast; Learning Disabilities (£3 million forecast). Across these areas the biggest area of spend is on agency staff. In brief we are having difficulty in recruiting social workers to care for our children and vulnerable adults. Therefore £9.8 million of our

overspend relates to the forecast spend on temporary members of staff. These temporary members of staff invariably cost more than full time employed members of staff. We have active campaigns to bring in more full time staff.

Safeguarding Adults and Children. If you are worried about a vulnerable adult or child and would like our help, please don't stay silent. Contact Adult Social Care or Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224. Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk or childrens@somerset.gov.uk or Police: 101 or in an emergency 999.

Safeguarding Adults - Sign the Pledge: The Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board, as part of its ongoing 'Thinking it, Report it' awareness-raising campaign, is actively encouraging the local community to sign up to a public pledge to stop the abuse of vulnerable adults. It's a very simple gesture, but, by doing so, you are joining others who are committed to protect adults at risk in this county. It sends a strong message to abusers that people in Somerset will look out, and speak up, for victims. <http://ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/pledge/>

Grant boost for Somerset youth clubs. **South Petherton Youth Club and ten other** Somerset youth clubs have shared nearly £30,000 in grants from Somerset County Council to help run popular sessions. The grants will support projects across the county. "This will be an added boost to the continued hard work of numerous local volunteers and fundraisers who help these youth clubs to thrive." The grants from the County Council are being matched by nearly £19,000 in locally-raised funding and hundreds of hours of volunteers' time – all for the benefit of Somerset's young people.

Innovation improves roads in Somerset. Major works to rebuild the A39 through Loxley Woods near Ashcott and the A3088 Cartgate Link Road, Yeovil by Somerset County Council used innovative methods to recycle 70 per cent of road material while strengthening and improving the carriageway. The bulk of the work took place at night, but there were road closure and the need for traffic lights during the day. Whilst these methods are not suitable for every scheme, traditional resurfacing could have taken several months the work in both locations was completed in weeks to help minimise disruption on both key routes. The recycling will also keep costs down and is better for the environment by vastly reducing the need to transport materials. **Stay up to date with live traffic conditions and find out about current and future roadworks at www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.**

County Ticket - SMARTER Public Transport "Love the Bus Scheme". **The Student County Ticket is the latest example.** As part of our campaign to improve services provided to residents, where possible, we want to make it easier for residents to order and buy our services and we are offering a growing number of them online. The latest addition is the Student County Ticket which can now be applied for entirely online. We are encouraging people to use this online option. There's no longer a need to fill out paperwork or provide a photograph, students can simply complete and submit the form found here www.somerset.gov.uk/countyticket

What is the Student County Ticket? The ticket covers travel to and from any 16+ education school or college, on any of the county's buses, including school bus routes where available. It costs £675.00 for the 2016/17 academic year, and we are expecting approximately 2,500 to 3,000 online applications this academic year. So far we have received 1800 online applications. **What is the "Love the Bus Scheme"?** The Love the Bus card is a *multiuse or multi-purpose* SMART card, where ultimately any appropriate transport product will be able to be added to the customer's SMART card. This will be followed by the Park and Ride tickets and any transport operator who wishes to add their commercial products to the scheme. In time a "sQuid" online purse function will be added to the active Love the Bus cards, allowing passengers to pay for individual fares with a cashless transaction.

Breastfeeding Café Launches. A baby friendly café has been launched in Yeovil that offers parents support with breastfeeding, the opportunity to relax, make new friends and share positive experiences. The official launch of the café was on Monday 12th September at getset's Reckleford Children's Centre, Eastland Road, Yeovil, BA21 4ET. The cafe promotes and supports parents with breastfeeding, which has many proven positive health benefits for infants and their mothers. It was set up by Somerset County Council's getset service in partnership with Health Visitors from Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The café is within easy walking distance of the town centre and bus station. Expectant and new mums and dads are welcome to come along to the café with their babies aged from 0 – 12 months. Support will be offered by Health Visitors who have specialist

training to assist parents to feel more confident with breastfeeding. Appointments are from 2:00pm to 4:00pm and it is recommended parents book a one to one session by calling 01935 475938, {extension 2}. Somerset County Council runs the 'Positive About Breastfeeding' scheme which encourages businesses and public places to offer their own warm welcome to mothers who wish to breastfeed.

Start date confirmed for Yeovil roundabout roadworks. Barratt Homes has confirmed that a major scheme to upgrade a key junction in Yeovil started (w/b 19 September). The mini-roundabout at the junction of Sherborne Road and Lyde Road will be replaced by a new traffic light controlled junction. This is required as part of a legal agreement linked to the construction of new homes at Wyndham Park which were originally approved by South Somerset District Council back in 2006. Barratt Homes and its principal contractor Tithegrove have been working closely with Somerset County Council to finalise the details of the scheme. The initial stages of work will not require any traffic management and include the removal and rebuilding of the existing stone wall next to the footpath on Sherborne Road. This work is programmed for completion before Christmas. The second phase will take place in January, after the busy Christmas shopping period, and will require the use of temporary traffic lights and the closure of Lyde Road. Further details of this will be provided nearer the time once they are finalised.

Investing to Save - Better Street Lights - Cutting Cost. A six-month programme to upgrade more than 18,000 street lights across Somerset and cut energy bills in half will start in September, replacing around one third of all its street lights with greener, more efficient and Dark Sky approved LED technology. As each new light will use around 53 per cent less energy, the initial capital investment of £3.6 million should be paid back in less than seven years. "The new street lights will use considerably less energy which means they are better for the environment and drastically reduce running costs – so the investment will pay for itself in a relatively short space of time. They're also Dark Sky approved, reducing light pollution by directing the light on the street where you need it, rather than being lost into the night sky.

Investing in our children - New Schools across Somerset –. Recent announcements have seen major improvements to our schools. A new school at Queen Camel opened in June; a ground breaking ceremony at Primrose Lane/Wyndham Park for a new school serving east Yeovil; allocation of capital funds for the new Kingfisher Primary Academy at Lufton in Yeovil; a new school at Bridgewater to cater for the influx of families for the Hinckley project and a £1.1million scheme to bring four new classrooms – and 120 much-needed additional school places – to Holway Park Community Primary School in Taunton completed in time for the new school year 2016.

Thank you' to Somerset's volunteer drivers. Somerset's fantastic team of volunteer drivers have been thanked at two annual celebration events this month. Nearly 200 dedicated drivers volunteer for Somerset County Council, providing transport for eligible non-emergency NHS patients and social care users, ranging from the elderly to young children. Passengers describe the drivers as 'lifesavers' and a 'godsend' and this month they have been thanked by the County Council at events in Taunton and Yeovil. Anyone can be a volunteer driver – the only criteria is that you must be over 18, have use of your own four-door vehicle, and hold a full UK driving licence with no more than six points. To find out more, please contact Somerset You Can Do by calling 01278 664180, or visit www.somerset.gov.uk/volunteering

Somerset Foster Care Association Celebrate First Year. One year on the Somerset Foster Care Association (SFCA) celebrates. The SFCA is run by carers, working towards giving them greater influence over and input into the services that support them. It gives carers regular opportunities to come together to share ideas and network through its coffee mornings and monthly meetings. Foster carers, fostered children and birth families came together on Sunday 18 September at the Edgar Hall in Somerton for a colourful fete-style celebration. The SFCA has the potential to be a brilliant resource for all Foster Carers in Somerset, and we have had a very positive first year. However we obviously want to see our association grow and strengthen in the second, and we need our Foster Carers' input and energy to do this. If you have time to give, or simply want to be kept in the SFCA loop, we'd love to hear from you, so please get in touch. Visit www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk/resources/sfca

“Report a problem” on the Highway. Parish Councils – Briefing paper on reporting problems on the Highway. A new online, interactive map has been launched by Somerset County Council to allow residents to report potholes and other issues on Somerset’s Highways. ‘Report it’ is now available at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/problems-on-the-road/> and allows users to report any issues across all 4,206 miles of Somerset’s highways. **How does it work?** Residents can now go on the website to report issues they find on a highway such as a pothole, blocked drain or poor road surface. Simply log the issue on the map by location and then fill in the details of the problem using an online form. People can also leave an email address to receive updates on potholes they have reported. When residents report a road defect it will be inspected within 3 working days, and programme repair work will be scheduled where required. You can find out more [information about how we find and repair potholes here](#)

Explore Somerset – (Public Footpaths and Rights of Way) A new online mapping system to help people find their way around Somerset’s extensive rights of way network has been launched by Somerset County Council. **How does it work?** Explore Somerset is now available at www.somerset.gov.uk/rightsofway and allows users to plan their route across all 9,000 public rights of way in Somerset. The interactive system can also be used to simply report any issues you find on a right of way – such as a broken stile or blocked path. Residents can log the issue on the map and also upload photos to help wardens easily locate the problem. They can also leave an email address to receive updates when the issue is resolved or closed. Explore Somerset is being improved and developed all the time, and one of the next phases is to develop a volunteer module for the many individuals and groups who give up their time to help the County Council look after the network. or if you’re interested in volunteering opportunities on the path network then please visit www.somerset.gov.uk/rightsofway or email rowvolunteers@somerset.gov.uk. Website: www.roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map

Highways Contact advice. The Highways ‘Report It, and “Explore Somerset” online systems continue to be improved and will work in co-ordination with the all new Travel Somerset website, (www.travelsomerset.co.uk). Residents can also report issues to Highways and Public Footpaths and Rights of Way through our dedicated Contact Centre on 0300 123 2224. Please **encouraging people to use this online option, so please share this information with residents as you feel is appropriate.**

Broadband Moving at Speed. As Phase 1 of the broadband roll out draws to a close (December 2016) Somerset County Council’s Cabinet (26.09.16) received the latest update on work to bring superfast broadband to the county. The Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) programme has now given over 316,200 premises access to fibre broadband, of which 263,187 premises have access to superfast broadband (24Mbps). Meanwhile, the National Parks part of the programme will see the first properties on Exmoor connected this Autumn. **Phase 2.** Cabinet has approved a decision to move phase two of the programme forward at speed. The £39.5m government-funded second phase aims to give broadband access to tens of thousands more homes and businesses in Somerset. In July potential suppliers were invited to bid to deliver the work, and Cabinet’s formally gave officers decision-making powers to move the process of appointing a supplier forward. The market has shown a high level of interest in bidding for the contract before the deadline of 21 October, 2016. The timescales for reaching contract award will depend on the number of bids received. The final contract award decision will be made by the Connecting Devon and Somerset Board, and confirmed through the county council key decision process.

Celebrations for adults with LD following major care home refurbishment. Adults with learning disabilities are celebrating major improvements to two residential care homes provided by Somerset County Council. On Tuesday 4 October clients and staff at Selwyn and Russet in Yeovil will mark the refurbishment of the premises with a ribbon-cutting and celebration event. The work, started around six months ago, represents a commitment by the County Council in improving the quality of life of some of the most vulnerable people it supports. Selwyn and Russet’s accommodation has been completely remodelled and refurbished to reflect the high-quality care and tailored support workers provide for adults with learning disabilities. Both residences have been converted from large single homes to smaller, separate residences at each site. This is already proving a positive change for residents, who are now supported by smaller staff teams and sharing facilities with more compatible residents than before. Communal areas in both homes have been opened out to help support people

with mobility problems. The bathrooms are bigger and more accessible, equipped with specially designed baths to meet people's specific needs. Customers have also been involved with choosing new soft furnishings and colour schemes at Russet, and in arts and crafts sessions and creating a sensory garden at Selwyn. Councillor William Wallace, Somerset County Council's Lead Member for Services for People with Learning Disabilities, said: "We are proud of the work our care staff do to support adults with learning disabilities at Selwyn and Russet – a service they have offered for many years. These are homes to be proud of."