

County Councillor's Brief for Town & Parish Councils



South Petherton and Islemoor Division

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Headlines:

- **Schools Fairer Funding For Somerset.** As part of a wider programme SCC has been fighting for fairer funding for Somerset for some time. Supported by our newly elected MPs we are all working to reduce the extraordinary anomaly where, in the table of 150 LA's, Somerset is 135th in the amount received per pupil for DSG in 2015/16. We receive £4,889.71 per pupil, this compares to the highest funded, Tower Hamlets who receive £8,216.47 per pupil. The lowest funded in East Riding of Yorkshire at £4,726.52.
- **School Tier System - Dulverton.** Fresh plans to change the school system in the Dulverton area from three tiers to two are being put forward by the Governing Body of the Exmoor Federation. The new Governing Body has reviewed the situation following a previous consultation held last year. They have concluded that a two tier system is in the best interests of the children in the face of future budget constraints. Somerset County Council will now be asked to consult with the community for a second time. Alan Jones, Chair of Governors, said: "We believe that the current three tier system is not sustainable and not offering the best educational opportunities to our children. We will, therefore, now begin the necessary processes, including consultation, with a view to delivering a two tier system by the beginning of the 2016 Autumn Term.
- **Armed Forces Community Covenant (SAFCC).** The full partnership of the SAFCC met (15 Sep) to analyse the progress of the covenant in Somerset Action Plan and the changes brought about to the Covenant Grant system. Full details are on the SCC Website. In essence, there are now two types of grants available: small (up to £20,000) and large (up to £500,000). All applications will be made to London, copy to the SAFCC office at SCC for screening with a final decision to be made at Regional level. Somerset has a good rate of success with just under £400,000 already allocated to projects in Somerset. The intention is to maintain and improve that success rate.
- **New Benchmark Scheme to help quality check Somerset's youth clubs.** Somerset's youth clubs will need to meet new quality standards from this month, so that parents and carers know that their youth club is safe, sustainable and 'young people friendly'. The County Council's Somerset Youth and Community Service first launched its 'Benchmark Scheme' last year, and from October all clubs that use the service will need to have achieved level one. The Benchmark Scheme is broken down into three levels and aims to ensure all young people know what they can expect and the standard of care they will receive whilst attending the youth club. These are: 'Safe & Welcoming' – level one; 'Quality Youth Club' – level two; 'Quality Youth Club Plus' – level three. For further details about Somerset Youth and Community Services, or to understand how your youth club can get involved with the Benchmark Scheme please contact Zara Scott-Davies, 07919 540738 zscottdavies@somerset.gov.uk or Kirstie Brown, 07899 700170 kbrown@somerset.gov.uk.

- **Share your experience of the SEN&D Reforms.** Children and young people, families and practitioners in Somerset are urged to share their experiences of the national special educational needs and disability (SEN&D) reforms that came into force last September. The reforms require health, education and social care to plan and work together with parents and carers to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN&D. Somerset is one of 75 councils in England selected for a national programme looking at the impact of parts of the SEN&D reforms. The links for the questionnaires are below: **Survey for practitioners** working with children and young people who have an Education Health and Care Plan - <http://puttingpeoplefirst.limeask.com/index.php/947515/lang-en> **Survey for parents of children and young people** who have an Education Health and Care Plan <http://puttingpeoplefirst.limeask.com/index.php/613286/lang-en> ; **Survey for children and young people who have an Education Health and Care Plan**, their life and the support they get <http://puttingpeoplefirst.limeask.com/index.php/235254/lang-en>
- **Yeovil Eastern Corridor upgrade began on 1 September. An important milestone.** A major programme to improve transport links along the Eastern Corridor in Yeovil is due to begin on Tuesday (1). The first phase of work will see an upgrade of the Horsey Roundabout, improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists to help prevent unnecessary delays to traffic and increase the capacity of the junction. The work will include alterations to the roundabout approaches, including changing the Brunswick Street mini-roundabout to a traffic light controlled junction, and relocating the existing pedestrian crossing on Hendford Hill.
- **Award success for Fostering and Adoption Service.** The efforts of the team which recruits and trains foster carers in Somerset have been recognised in the Children & Young People Now Awards 2015. Somerset County Council's Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Service has been shortlisted for the Recruitment and Professional Development Award for their hard work in this area. Between January and December 2014, a record high of 62 foster carers and 41 adoptive households were approved in Somerset. This has been achieved through holding regular information events around the county for people who could help turn the life of a child around, an easy-to-use website containing lots of helpful information, and going that extra mile throughout the approval process. Every foster carer interviewed by Ofsted during a recent inspection said they would recommend fostering for Somerset County Council. They also said that they value the training they receive from the authority, their inclusion in the service, and new developments. If you are thinking about Adoption or Fostering and have space in your home, if you think you could give a young person much-needed support and guidance, please, do get in touch." Or why not come to our next fostering and adoption information event on **Wednesday 21 October, 7pm-9pm, at Wincanton Balsam Centre, BA9 9HB.**
- **Modernising Adult Care Contracts.** A new system that will help people with Learning Disabilities have quicker access to a wider range of support has been approved by Somerset County Council. The online 'open framework' modernises the way care contracts are awarded to Learning Disability care providers. It will allow providers of all sizes to register the services they provide online, making information more easily available to the Council's Social Workers who organise support and help for people with Learning Disabilities. It will help Social Workers more quickly find and order the support that best suits a person's particular requirements. All providers registered as part of the framework will be quality assessed, to ensure they meet the Council's quality standards during the qualification stage which will allow a greater focus to be placed on the needs of the individual.
- **BT Plans for even better Broadband BT.** Hitting back at rivals who have denounced the quality of UK broadband, BT has announced a series of new plans including:
 - Aim for a new universal minimum broadband speed of 5-10Mbps
 - Plan to extend fibre broadband beyond government's 95% of premises target
 - Co-funding of more community broadband schemes
 This comes as Ofcom is in the process of considering whether BT Openreach, which runs the telecoms network, should be separated from the rest of the firm. To read more on this story follow this [link](#).