

# SOMERSET COUNCIL

## Rode Parish Council

### Cllr Dawn Denton

#### SEPTEMBER 2023

**Somerset Press Releases:** You can view all the Somerset County Council press releases for the last month using this link:

<https://somersetnewsroom.com/category/press-releases/>

**Local Community Network (LCN):** The first (hybrid) LCN meeting was held at the end of July. Cllr Max Wide (of the Frome Town Council) was selected as Chair of the Frome LCN and Cllr Adam Boyden (of the Somerset Council) as the Deputy Chair. Cllrs Helen Kay and Claire Sully will work alongside Cllr Wide and Cllr Boyden as part of a 'steering committee'. The first meeting was to install the committee and to set the direction of the LCN with the next steps.

**Issues to chase in September:** Due to officers taking summer holidays, many projects have been stalled. I will be chasing the following over the next couple of weeks:

- St Lawrence Church wall signage
- Slip road signage from Straight Lane onto the A36
- Church Farm path maintenance
- Roam Somerset insurance cover
- EV Chargers for the village

**Council Finances:** Somerset Council has warned that it will have to draw on reserves for the second successive year to meet its budget for 2023/24. A recent Executive report describes the council's financial position as "stark and challenging". The latest budget gap for the current year is £28.6m. The papers reveal that the Council has already drawn £18 million from reserves to fund spending beyond the 2022/23 budgets. These figures are despite an £18.5m annual bonus created by moving to a Unitary Council and which were planned to be fully realised by next year.

**Soft plastics recycling:** More than four tonnes of plastic bags and wrapping such as bread bags and confectionary packets, have been collected for recycling as part of the Council's role in a national project to expand recycling collections. The small-scale pilot involving 3,600 homes across two locations in Frome (mostly in Frome North) started at the end of May.

**Covid autumn booster programme:** As the result of a newly identified variant the Covid-19 vaccine is being brought forward by one month and offered to those at high risk of serious disease and who are therefore most likely to benefit from the vaccination. Specifically, JCVI advises the following groups to be offered a Covid-19 booster vaccine this autumn:

- residents in a care home for older adults
- all adults aged 65 years and over
- persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group

- frontline health and social care workers
- persons aged 12 to 64 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression
- persons aged 16 to 64 years who are carers and staff working in care homes for older adults

Booster vaccinations are now planned to start on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

**Flu vaccinations:** NHS England has confirmed it will start by prioritising flu vaccinations for children from September, to prevent children from getting seriously ill and to break the chain of transmission to the wider population. School aged children will be able to get the flu vaccine at school or at community clinics. Children aged two and three years will be able to get an appointment with their GP practice. This year, based on the latest scientific evidence, the JCVI has recommended adults over the age of 65 and those with underlying health conditions will be eligible for a flu with the offer starting from early October, to maximise protection for patients right across the winter months. The flu season typically peaks in January when more people gather indoors.

**Suspected Arson Attack:** Police are investigating a suspected arson attack on a Somerset Council compound in Taunton which destroyed seven minibuses. The incident happened early on Thursday, 24 August in a secure compound at the Silk Mills Park and Ride site. The compound was locked and is monitored by CCTV. There were no injuries, and no other vehicles were damaged.

**Roundabout sponsorship:** Local businesses are being invited to take advantage of roundabout sponsorship to advertise socially responsible goods and services. The space is available for advertising a wide range of goods and services. The new ethical advertising policy means that the Council will not sanction certain adverts such as those promoting junk food, fossil fuels, gambling, or consumption of alcoholic drinks. The money generated by the initiative will go back into the Council's highways maintenance budget although not specifically earmarked for roundabout maintenance.

**Gambling Policy Consultation:** Under the Gambling Act 2005 Somerset Council must review its Gambling Policy every three years. Comments are invited on the draft revised Gambling Policy from all interested parties including residents and those running businesses in the County, the consultation documents can be found at <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/licensing/gambling-policy-consultation>  
The consultation closes on 22nd September 2023

**Single use plastics ban:** Trading Standards are reminding businesses, such as takeaways, sandwich bars, care homes and retailers who supply certain single use plastic items, that a ban comes into force October 1st. The ban includes all single use plastic cutlery, trays, plates, bowls, and balloon sticks, as well as banning the use of certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers used to supply food which is ready to consume.

Best wishes,

*Dawn*