

MDC News Briefing

For publication

Issue 10

3rd August, 2020

Mendip news



Mendip District Council, along with Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West & Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council, are jointly contacting the Secretary of State expressing their disquiet about Somerset County Council's proposal for a single unitary authority for our county.

As you may know, last week Somerset County Council approved a business case for a single unitary authority for Somerset and has sent it to the Secretary of State (even though The Secretary of State did not ask any Somerset council to develop a case for unitary).

The Leaders of four of the five councils in Somerset will remind the Secretary of State **there is not universal support for unitary**, and should he wish to see a unitary future for Somerset then *all* of the councils in our county will need to be involved in developing business cases.

You can read the joint statement from the leaders of the District Councils, here:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9384/30-07-20-Joint-Statement-from-the-leaders-of-Mendip-District-Council-Sedgemoor-District-Council-Somerset-West-Taunton-Council-and-South-Somerset-District-Council>

Mendip District Council highlights commitment to Making Mendip Matter

At Mendip's first 'virtual' Full Council in July, Leader Cllr Ros Wyke thanked the staff for adapting so quickly to the COVID-19 crisis.

She said: "It is fair to say life has changed and nothing will ever seem the same again. On behalf of all Councillors, I would like to say a very genuine and BIG thank you to all the staff at Mendip. You have made things work. You have made the District matter. Alongside the staff, elected Councillors, of all parties and independents, have been working hard with, and for, their communities. Together we have ensured that help, in many guises, was available to those who needed it."

Read a full update from Council here:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/9376/Mendip-District-Council-highlights-commitment-to-Making-Mendip-Matter>

Businesses urged to apply for Pavement Licences

Mendip District Council has been providing businesses with advice regarding tables and chairs being placed on the Highway, as new legislation has come into force. The Council have a duty to ensure that any outside tables and chairs are in a safe position - and not in the road. Businesses which place furniture outside their premises must have the appropriate Pavement Licence in place. Those who haven't, should apply for one urgently.

The Council understands this is a difficult situation, as the legislation surrounding Pavement Licences is so new, and Officers are acutely aware of the need to balance the safety of pedestrians with the economic impact on businesses.

For further information on Pavement Licences visit:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/pavement>

Current guidance and proposals can be found on our MDC website:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/pavement>

And here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pavement-licences-draft-guidance>

Annual Canvass

The Council is legally required to undertake an 'Annual Canvass' of all of the residential properties in the area, to ensure Mendip's Electoral Register is correct. This year the canvass is taking place during a challenging public health situation, but Council staff are confident communities will respond positively to the prompts.

Find out more here: www.mendip.gov.uk/annualcanvass

Mendip businesses urged to complete new survey

By completing this vital survey, local businesses will be providing much-needed intelligence to help shape the government response to the crisis, including the support that businesses are able to receive in our area of Mendip. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes - and these views from businesses could make a real difference. Personal data will not be shared with anyone outside of Somerset's local authorities, and participants remain fully anonymous in any reporting.

To complete the survey, please click on the following link:

<https://somerset.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/COVIDBusinessImpacts/answerQuestionnaire/>

If you have questions about the survey or wish to provide additional feedback, please email us at: economy@mendip.gov.uk

New powers to help Mendip respond quicker to cases

New powers are now in place for local authorities to be able to close specific premises, cancel events and close public spaces in response to local coronavirus outbreaks. Previously, a similar process to shut down something in response to public health concerns required going to a magistrates' court which can take a number of days to agree and enforce.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

Amendment to the parish meeting regulations

On 1st August new regulations came into force that enable parish meetings in Mendip to: conduct all meetings of these bodies remotely; allow the public and press to access meetings and associated documents for meetings remotely; and hold and alter the frequency and occurrence of meetings without requirement for further notice.

Regulations: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/808/contents/made>

These amendment regulations correct the earlier omission of these bodies which was an accidental oversight due to the pace at which the Coronavirus Act 2020 was drafted.

Mendip press releases

Keep up with the latest Mendip news. The Marketing and Media Team issue press releases which can be found here: <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/8926/July-2020->

Energy Affordability Grant - applications open

Please spread the word about this potential funding opportunity backed by Western Power Distribution (WPD) and delivered by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE).

New grant funding is available to organisations within the WPD area to deliver innovative, local, affordable warmth and/or Priority Service Register (PSR) services, adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic and developing new ways of working to effectively support vulnerable customers.

Grants of up to £20,000 are available for eligible organisations to support activities running from October 2020 – April 2021 that help households cut their energy costs and make energy efficiency improvements.

CSE are looking to support organisations to deliver innovative approaches to providing affordable warmth and PSR services in ways which adapt to the circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recipients of the grants will also receive mentoring and support from CSE, and must be free to attend a networking and skills sharing online webinar on **Friday 2nd October 2020**.

The fund is open to all types of organisations as long as they are legally incorporated. Unincorporated organisations may apply if they team up with a larger organisation. Statutory bodies and private entities will be eligible if they can demonstrate a significant need for the funding.

To qualify for a grant, organisations must be currently delivering energy advice and outreach activities (or have done in the past 18 months). Organisations without this experience must be able to demonstrate that they have relevant links to other organisations that do.

Applications are open until midnight on Sunday 23rd August 2020.

For further information please visit the [CSE website](#) to download a copy of the application form. Specific enquiries about the fund can be sent by email to wpdfund@cse.org.uk.

If your organisation isn't in a position to apply for this funding then please feel free to pass on the information to any organisations you think may benefit.

COVID-19 business updates

Eat Out to Help Out Scheme webinars

HMRC are running free webinars over the next two weeks on the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme. The webinar provides an overview of the scheme, including how the scheme works, eligible establishments, registering and making a claim and what happens after a claim has been made.

Friday August 7th 3.45pm-4pm

Register here now: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/5193432531510711555/>

Business support

The Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Simon Clarke, has announced £20 million in new funding to help businesses in England. Small and medium sized businesses can access grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 for new equipment and technology and specialist advice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/20-million-in-new-grants-to-boost-recovery-of-small-businesses>

Meanwhile, HM Treasury (HMT) has confirmed that a change to EU State Aid Rules will allow more small businesses to access the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

The rules have been relaxed so that small and micro businesses – those employing fewer than 50 staff and with a turnover less than £9 million – will be exempt from elements of the ‘undertaking in difficulty’ test.

HMT expect that all accredited CBILS lenders will implement the changes, which would also mean that businesses whose CBILS applications have previously been declined may now be eligible.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904897/200709_EST_letter_-_UKF_UiD.pdf

Reporting outbreaks of coronavirus

The Department of Health and Social Care last week published guidance for businesses and organisations on how to recognise, contain and report incidents of coronavirus.

The early outbreak management information has been created to make sure that people who run businesses or organisations:

- Know how to recognise and report an incident of coronavirus; and
- Are aware of measures local health protection teams may advise in order to contain it.

This information is contained within 'action cards' that have been designed for specific situations where an outbreak could occur.

This could be a: restaurant or café

- construction site
- place of worship

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reporting-outbreaks-of-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-early-outbreak-management>

Workforce

New legislation provides furloughed employees with the right to receive redundancy pay based on their normal wage, rather than their furlough pay. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has confirmed that the majority of businesses have already been providing their redundant employees with the full entitlement. These changes will also apply to Statutory Notice Pay and basic awards for unfair dismissal cases.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-law-to-ensure-furloughed-employees-receive-full-redundancy-payments>

Reduced VAT rate for hospitality, holiday accommodation and attractions

The HMRC guidance for businesses to check if they can temporarily reduce the rate of VAT on supplies relating to hospitality, accommodation, or admission to certain attractions has been updated to include a new section on Retail Schemes.

Catering businesses using retail schemes may have to alter their accounting systems for the period 15 July 2020 to 12 January 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-reduced-rate-for-hospitality-holiday-accommodation-and-attractions>

Culture, hospitality, tourism and leisure

Detailed guidance for cultural and heritage organisations needing urgent funding to survive and return to viability by March 2021 has now been announced by Arts Council England, the Heritage Lottery Fund/Historic England, and British Film Institute. Council-run museums, theatres and heritage buildings are able to apply, as financial viability will be assessed at the service level rather than the council level. Libraries are not eligible for the funding.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/CRFgrants#section-1>

COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of council buildings

Can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/>

COVID-19 national updates

PM puts brakes on easing of lockdown measures

The Prime Minister announced that several measures to ease lockdown, intended for 1st August, will no longer go ahead.

- Venues that had been due to open this weekend will not do so until at least 15th August
- Changes to wedding celebrations will also be postponed
- Casinos, bowling alleys, skating rinks and remaining close contact services must remain closed
- Indoor performances will not resume
- Pilots of larger crowds in sports venues and conference centres will not take place
- The guidance for people to return to their workplaces where safe remains in place and the national pause on shielding advice will also go ahead as planned.
- From Saturday 8th August, people will be required to wear a face-covering in places where people mix with others such as libraries, museums, galleries, places of worship and cinemas.

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 31 July 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-31-july-2020>

Eat out, help out...and save 50% from today (Aug 3rd)



Thousands of outlets across the UK have signed up to the government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme. Look out for the logo or find an outlet online. The logo means diners that eat in will benefit from a 50% discount, up to a maximum of £10 per person, on food and non-alcoholic drinks, any Monday to Wednesday in August – and no voucher is needed. You can take advantage of the offer as many times as you like during the month.

<https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/eat-out-to-help-out/find-a-restaurant?/>

Enjoy Summer Safely

With warm weather expected this coming week ahead, it is important that the public continue to enjoy summer safely. A toolkit to promote this message is available. When in the countryside, the public should also follow the Countryside Code and:

- take all of their litter home
- not use barbecues as they risk causing wildfires
- keep dogs under effective control and on a lead when around farm animals
- leave gates as they find them and following instructions on signs
- use footpaths and follow signs where they suggest alternative routes

Enjoy Summer Safely toolkit: <https://dcmsblog.uk/enjoy-summer-safely-toolkit/>

English beaches packed despite social distancing plea

Tens of thousands of people visited southwest beaches on what was the hottest day of the year, causing some councils to plead with people to stay away so social distancing could be maintained – especially as warmer weather is coming again this week. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/31/england-beaches-packed-despite-covid-19-social-distancing-plea>

Parks and green spaces

Public Health England (PHE) has published their 'Improving access to greenspace' review. The paper includes recent evidence linking greenspace to health outcomes, intervention approaches, valuation of greenspace, and advice on how to strengthen local policies and strategies. Some £2.1 billion per year could be saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to greenspace, due to increased physical activity in those spaces.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904439/Improving_access_to_greenspace_2020_review.pdf

One in five targeted by COVID scammers

A new survey by Aviva has found that more than one in five people think they've been targeted by coronavirus scammers. Some 22 percent of people in the study believed that emails, texts, phone calls and other contacts they'd received from what appeared to be legitimate companies mentioning COVID-19, were in fact fraudulent. Despite suspecting them to be scams, nearly half of those surveyed didn't report it, the most common reason being they weren't sure who to report such scams to.

If you suspect that you've been scammed, report it to Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/>

Read the survey here:

<https://www.aviva.com/newsroom/news-releases/2020/07/almost-half-of-people-dont-report-coronavirus-scams/>

Hundreds of thousands face eviction when coronavirus embargo ends

Hundreds of thousands of tenants with rent arrears because of the lockdown are at risk of becoming homeless when the temporary ban on evictions ends in three weeks. Shelter estimates 227,000 adult private renters (3%) have fallen into arrears since the start of the pandemic, meaning they could lose their homes when the evictions ban ends on 23rd August.

COVID-19 health updates

Roll-out of 2 new rapid coronavirus tests ahead of winter

Millions of new rapid coronavirus tests will be rolled out across NHS hospitals, care homes and labs from next week.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/roll-out-of-2-new-rapid-coronavirus-tests-ahead-of-winter/>

Coronavirus infections rising in England

Office for National Statistics figures suggest that coronavirus infections are rising in England. It says daily cases have risen from an estimated 3,200 to 4,200 since last week. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-53609354>

More places on face covering list

The government is adding museums, galleries, cinemas and places of worship to the list of places where face coverings should be worn in England. This is a recommendation at the moment, but will become law on 8th August. It's been compulsory to wear them in shops since 24th July.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/>

New 10-day rule for self-isolation

If you test positive for coronavirus, or you have symptoms, you now need to self-isolate for 10 days rather than seven. Evidence has shown that people with COVID-19 have a low but real possibility of infectiousness between seven and nine days after falling ill. This longer period of self-isolation will help to provide additional protection to others in the community as well as those who have been shielding.

The self-isolation period remains at 14 days for household members of a positive case, people contacted through NHS Test and Trace, and people returning to the UK from certain countries. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-long-to-self-isolate/>

The list of countries exempt from self-isolation measures

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>

Changes to shielding guidance

The guidance on shielding is changing. If you're clinically extremely vulnerable you will no longer be advised to take the extra precautions that were in place during the peak of the pandemic. You can get help from NHS Volunteer Responders to deliver the food, prescriptions and essential items you buy, and will still be eligible for priority supermarket slots if you're already registered.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/>

Food for health: Accessing food and essential supplies

Find the latest advice on how to get food and other essential supplies during the coronavirus pandemic, here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-accessing-food-and-essential-supplies/>

Get the latest health guidance

Public Health England (PHE) continues to provide COVID-19 guidance for members of the public, as well as for people in clinical and non-clinical settings. This is published and updated regularly on the [GOV.UK collection page](#).

Useful numbers, links and helplines

Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE)

CSE has adapted their advice to better support people during the pandemic. If you would like help and you live in the South West of England, please complete the referral form and they'll be in touch as soon as possible. They cover topics like topping up prepayment meters, gas, electricity and water bills switching suppliers, benefits advice, debt advice, housing, food banks and food delivery, prescriptions and befriending services.

If you're on a prepayment meter and have difficulty affording top-ups, they may be able to get you a voucher. Fill in the form by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.cse.org.uk/advice/how-we-can-help/covid-19-how-we-can-help-you-during-the-crisis>

Coronavirus helpline: 0300 790 6275

Please ring this number for help with personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions, support for the homeless, emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious, financial assistance, transport to medical appointments and waste collection and disposal.

An infographic from the Community and Resilience team is attached to this briefing, (**Document 1**)

Citizens Advice

Local communities and businesses in Mendip are being reminded that the UK's largest advice provider is there for you. If you need help, there are some new finance films and other online resources available, to help those with money worries. Worth a look.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/how-we-provide-advice/advice-partnerships/money-advice-services/>

Somerset Waste Partnership

Website: <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWaste/>

Twitter: <https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWaste/>

You can also sign up to SWP's e-newsletter [here](#).

Mendip District Council: www.mendip.gov.uk/coronavirus

Government information on coronavirus: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

NHS information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

LGBTQ+ services helpline and counselling service

<https://www.intercomtrust.org.uk/item/214-we-are-here-for-you>

Mind in Somerset, available on 01823 276 892

<https://www.mindinsomerset.org.uk/our-services/adult-one-to-one-support/mindline/>

Keep connected

These briefings are produced by Mendip's Marketing and Media Team. We're doing everything we can to make sure we're directing you to the most up-to-date information and advice. A version of these, suitable for publication, is available as a pdf, a Word document, and a web link. The shareable version can always be found here: <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/mdcbriefings>

Mendip District Council's corporate Facebook page

www.facebook.com/mendipcouncil

We are also on Twitter twitter.com/MendipCouncil

And LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/mendip-district-council

Finally, here's our official website: www.mendip.gov.uk
