

# **SOMERSET COUNCIL**

## **Frome Town 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/>

**Berkley School / Edmund Park:** I had a very productive meeting with Cllr Tessa Munt (Lead Member for Children, Families and Education). Cllr Munt wanted to draw attention to the primary function of the Council – ***ensure there are sufficient school places for all the children in the county.***

***Some of the children are only able to access a toilet outside of their classroom, braving the elements.***

When Cllr Munt made contact with the school, they seemed very happy with their facilities and it is for only one group of children, and only a few steps from the classroom.

***The structures are either too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter.***

Cllr Munt suggested the school seek financial support from the Bath and Wells Diocese in this regard.

***Drop-off and pick-up times are a hazard on this stretch of road as there is very little space for the parents / carers to drive into the school, so are backed up on the main road.***

*The school has a system in place that works well. It does not seem to be a problem for the school.*

***This stretch of road is not gritted in the winter months as there are less than 100 children at the school, despite farming vehicles and trucks using it to get to the Standerwick Cattle Market.***

*Both Cllr Munt and I have requested a gritting review, but in the event that the council does not think this stretch of road needs to be gritted, the parish council can install their own Grit Bins and buy grit for the road outside the school.*

***Most of the children come to the village school from Frome.***

As a Preference / Choice school, this means people want their children here and not in other schools in Frome or over the border in Wiltshire.

***The lease on the land is only for 7 years at a time which does not give the school much security.***

The council does not have any say over this lease, and if the school feel that terms of the lease need to be negotiated, this would need to be done through the Diocese. If the landowner chooses not to renew the lease, there are enough spaces for the children to go to other schools in Frome.

***The landowner is currently in a care home in Frome and his estate is managed by an Estate Manager.***

As per above

***Although it is a 'school of choice', and the village ethos is a valued aspect of their education, the children do miss out not being in Frome.***

If this was the case, the school would be empty. But because the school does not have any places available, it shows that parents feel that the children do get a lot from their education at the school.

***Because the school is leasing the land, they do not have 10% of the cost of moving the school to a new site.***

This was something new to the council. They have never heard of this before.

## **Overall**

Across the county, birth rates are falling. The forecast for the next 10 years, which includes all the new developments in and around Frome, shows an increase in the number of school placements available, year on year. Some schools are full, but overall, there are enough places to accommodate all the children in Frome, with over 95% of the children getting their First Choice School.

Statistics also show that families new to Frome are more likely to put their children in Independent Schools, which is an unusually high proportion.

The Selwood Gardens development of 1,700 houses, will include a whole new school and a nursery to support the new community.

St John's First School has not been in touch with the council about their facilities. If they are unhappy, they do need to let the Somerset Council know.

There is no consultation at this time for Frome to move to a 2-Tier education system. There are only initial discussions with the relevant parties reconvening in the Autumn.

***Therefore, there is no evidence to show that Berkley School needs to move to a new site. If you have any more questions, please do get in touch with Cllr Tessa Munt directly.***

**Asset Devolution:** I have had a request from a resident in the Packsaddle area to explore opportunities for devolution of the Packsaddle fields. This is on the Somerset Council radar but will take a long time to come to the fore as it is a process that needs to consider the whole county including cost, strategies, policy etc. This will not happen before the Packsaddle planning application comes to the Somerset East Planning Committee.

**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://sومersetcouncil.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*