

## SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

### Frome Town Council

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**Somerset County Council Finances:** Despite the latest Month 7 budget monitoring figures for Somerset County Council showing a projected overspend of £21.3m the decision was taken at the December Executive not to formally report Month 8 and instead report quarterly figures at Month 9.

**Local Government Reorganisation:** Following the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset, vesting day for the new Unitary Council remains as 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. Tier 2 (Director level) appointments are taking place during mid-January and Tier 3 before vesting day in March. Unfortunately these appointments were due in last summer and the lengthy delay has created a significant risk to the programme delivery.

**Single rate bus fares:** Bus users in Somerset can now travel on most routes in the county for just £2 from January. The major fare cut is part of an initiative funded by the Government aimed at boosting bus use while helping passengers to save money as the cost of living crisis continues to bite, fuelled in part by higher petrol and diesel prices. The £2 single fare is available from all participating operators from 1 January to 31 March. The initiative will apply to most routes in Somerset. The six operators involved are:

- Dartline
- Faresaver Buses
- First South West (Buses of Somerset)
- First West of England
- Hatch Green Coaches
- South West Coaches

**Primary School Places:** Applications for Primary School intake places for September 2023 close on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Placements will be confirmed by the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 with any appeals needing to be received by 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

**Annual Flu Vaccinations:** Residents are again being reminded to protect their health and the health of people around them by getting their flu and Covid-19 vaccinations. If you're 50 and over, a frontline health or social care worker, pregnant, have a long-term health condition, or are a paid or unpaid carer, you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, and you can likely get the Covid-19 seasonal booster.

Children aged 2-15 years old are also eligible for free flu vaccination, which is delivered through either their GP for pre-school and school for school age children – parents need to sign a consent form. If you are eligible, you can book your seasonal Covid-19 vaccine using <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/> or by calling 119

**Dry January:** Dry January is a national campaign to help individuals discover the many benefits of going alcohol-free, including the financial, physical, and medical benefits this can bring. Drinking alcohol is linked to more than 60 health conditions, including liver disease, high blood pressure, depression, and seven types of cancer. Every day in the UK, 20 people die as a result of their drinking. Alcohol misuse is the biggest risk factor for death, ill-health and disability among 15-49 year-olds in the UK, and the fifth biggest risk factor across all ages. Annually, it is estimated that alcohol costs the NHS £3.5 billion in England alone. Residents can **download** an app or sign up at [www.dryjanuary.org.uk](http://www.dryjanuary.org.uk)

**New Coroner for Somerset:** Mrs Samantha Marsh has been appointed as the new Senior Coroner for Somerset. She has been in post as Acting Senior Coroner for Somerset since the retirement of Tony Williams in March 2022. Coroners are judicial office holders who are independently appointed by the County Council and are responsible for investigating deaths to find out how, when and where they occurred. Coroners will investigate a death if it was unnatural or suspicious, the cause of death is unknown or if the person died in any form of state detention, such as a prison or police custody.

**Prosecution for road disruption:** Virgin Media Ltd has been handed fines totalling more than £56k after being found guilty of five offences relating to roadworks which included failing to ensure the safety of pedestrians. Somerset County Council has brought successful prosecutions against Virgin Media Ltd. for offences occurring in Weacombe Road, Halsway, Gordon Terrace and Redgate Street Bridgwater. The fines against Virgin Media Ltd totalled £56,000.00, with costs of £6,711.41.