

## **SOMERSET COUNCIL**

### **Frome Town Council**

#### **Cllr Dawn Denton**

**March 2024**

**Somerset Press Releases:** You can view all the Somerset County Council press releases for the last month using this link: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>

**Roadworks and Travel Information:** All up to date travel information can be found on the Somerset Council website: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roadworks-and-travel/>. If there are any concerns, the first port-of-call is to ring the number on the boards on the road. If this is not successful, the Somerset Council can advise using this number weekdays between 9am and 5pm: **0300 123 2224**.

If there are any concerns outside of office hours, please call the police.

**Critchill Care Home Proposed Closure:** As there is a proposed closure in Frome and in Chard, my colleagues felt that tackling it as a Somerset issue would have more impact than trying to fight this as two separate towns. There are talks now between Somerset Adults Social Care and a care company who *may* consider buying the care homes and keeping the jobs as they are, but this is only in the early stages and may not come off. But we will explore all other opportunities.

**2024/5 Council Budget:** Somerset Council has voted through plans to set a budget for the coming financial year but received a stark warning of significant challenges in the years ahead. LibDem Council Members unanimously agreed a range of measures to bridge a funding gap of £100m for 2024/25, including cost cuttings, increasing Council Tax by 5%, and using £36.8 millions of reserves (a council's equivalent of savings). The proposals also include a 'capitalisation direction' request of £36.9m – seeking permission from Government to borrow money or sell assets to pay for day-to-day running costs. Amid specific plans to cut costs and increase fees, around 1,200 jobs are expected to go at Somerset Council over the next three years equivalent to about a quarter of the workforce. As a result of the cuts some Town Councils have stepped in to save services (CCTV, public toilets etc) but this has resulted in a 179% council tax increase in Taunton, 90% in Yeovil and 164% in Bridgwater.

Council papers are still predicting a further £103 million budget gap in 2025/26.

**Gigafactory plans for Puriton site:** Agratas, a new business within the Tata Group, has confirmed its plans to build a gigafactory producing EV batteries at the Gravity Smart Campus site in Puriton, near Bridgwater. A £4 billion investment, the factory will create up to 4,000 jobs and many more as part

of the supply chain. It is envisioned that the plant will be operational in the second half of the decade, eventually producing 40GWh of battery cells annually, enough to supply approximately 500,000 passenger vehicles. Once fully operational, the factory is set to be Britain's biggest battery factory, and one of the largest in Europe. Over the next five years, Somerset Council plans to invest in the infrastructure, skills, site access and connectivity which will be paid for by the Business Rates generated by the factory once it is operational.

**Under the surface exhibition:** 'Under the Surface' is an exhibition of photographs by renowned Somerset-based photographer Matilda Temperley, reflecting on 10 years since the devastating floods of 2013-14. It is on display at Somerset Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury from Saturday 2 March to Sunday 19 May. Alongside the exhibition, a programme of events and activities will take place supported by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). These include family activities during the Easter Holidays, run in collaboration with the RSPCA and Somerset Wildlife Trust, where visitors can take part in climate-themed craft activities.

**Healthy Somerset:** A new website has been launched by Public Health to help people in Somerset lead a healthier life. The new site – [www.healthysomerset.co.uk](http://www.healthysomerset.co.uk) – features health and wellbeing resources tailored to all age ranges – making it even easier for users to find the information and support they are looking for. The new refreshed layout of the site breaks down services and support to represent the ages and stages of life from the 'best start in life' (0-5 yrs), through to 'starting well' (5-18 yrs), to 'living well' (18-65 yrs) and 'ageing well' (65+).

To view the website and be empowered on your journey to a healthier lifestyle, visit: <https://bit.ly/healthy-somerset>.

**Take the Pressure Off:** Over half of all strokes and heart attacks in Somerset are caused by high blood pressure. Known as the silent killer, high blood pressure is quick and simple to diagnose and to treat. NHS Somerset, together with Somerset Council is launching their biggest ever campaign 'Take the Pressure Off' with the aim of testing thousands of residents to increase awareness and early detection of high blood pressure. The "Take the Pressure Off" campaign is designed to encourage residents, particularly those aged 40+, to regularly check their blood pressure and take necessary steps towards managing their health. In addition to workplace testing, the campaign will be partnering with local sports clubs to help raise awareness of the risks of high blood pressure, particularly to males and those who identify as male, across Somerset. Residents are also encouraged to borrow a free blood pressure monitor from their library to test their own blood pressure in the comfort of their home, or visit their local pharmacy for a quick and easy check.

Best wishes,

*Dawn*