

**November 2021**



## ***Our one and only***

**A**T MIDNIGHT ON 31 March 2023 Somerset will see the biggest change in local government arrangements for around 50 years. The current four district authorities will cease to exist and there will be one unitary authority, using the current county boundaries, responsible for planning and delivering all traditional local authority services. Parish councils will continue to exist on unchanged boundaries, but with everything else changing around them.

There have been several local meetings so far and will undoubtedly be many more to come about what this means at the local level.

Here is a summary of what I have gleaned so far. I have far more information than I can include here, so if any parishioner wants to know more or ask specific questions then do contact me and I can share meeting notes and PowerPoint slides.

The timetable is as follows –

- The minister for local government, then Robert Jenrick, accepted SCC's proposal for a single unitary authority for Somerset in July 2021.



- Planning for a new structure of around 20 local community networks (LCNs) takes place between Oct and Dec 2022. Two to four pilots will start from Dec 2022 with themes such as highways, children and young people, economic development and health and wellbeing.

- A structural change order (SCO) will be set before parliament in Jan 2022 with approval by March 2022.

- Elections for both the new unitary council (with around 100 new single member wards) and existing parish councils will most probably take place in May 2022.

- Between May 2022 and April 2023 there will be a shadow unitary as current district responsibilities and some staff will be taken over by the single authority.

- April 2023 the new council comes into being and the 20 or so LCNs will also start operating.

- So what are local community networks?

These are intended to be committees of main council with some spending powers, both revenue and capital. They will be made up of representative councillors from clusters of current parish councils, plus the unitary

councillors (between 4 and 9) for those areas and representatives from other public sectors areas such as police, fire and health. Their role is advisory and unitary councillors will have the

final say, although all the rhetoric is about community engagement and collaborative working.

The number of LCNs is not yet fixed, but it looks like the clusters will be built around existing towns, so for Westbury this would mean being part of a network which is based on Wells and includes St Cuthbert Out, Wookey, Godney, Priddy and possibly Chewton Mendip, Rodney Stoke and more. Numbers of parishes within a network group are being suggested as between 10 and 14.

Each LCN will have a dedicated unitary council officer, possibly 2, and a senior manager or Director level champion.

There is a big emphasis on devolving community assets. Local government has been trying to do this for some time now. You may have noticed that Mendip has devolved ownership and responsibility for Wells Recreation Ground and the Bishop's Barn to Wells City Council within the last couple of years. This is a contentious area because while hyper local control is good in one way it is bad in another if the financial resources to support local control do not come over with the asset. At the moment this is unlikely to affect Westbury directly as our main community assets are already managed locally, but could well affect our LCN cluster and ambitions for the future.

Currently district and county level council tax has been capped at a 2 per cent per annum increase, but parish precepts are not capped. It looks as if this will continue to be so.

There is a promise that communications between LCNs and the main council will be made simpler and more direct, ensuring that local issues and priorities are properly addressed.

I'd say there's still a lot of work to be done to ensure the role of community connectors is clearly valued and understood and that local discussion, consultation, oversight and action actually happens.

Finally for now, we understand that the current Mendip Local Plan will continue to remain in place for several years. Planning for housing and transport links is the biggest concern for parishes and much frustration has been expressed about the lack of clout we have in decision making. I can see no prospect that this position will change at all for the better. Planning is explicitly excluded from the remit of the LCNs and currently the County Council has little experience in this crucial area of concern, so details of how planning will be managed by the unitary Somerset is still worryingly vague.

I will continue to update as more knowledge becomes available. And, of course, any comments and opinions from parishioners are welcome at any time.

**Sue Isherwood**

## **Westbury Village Hall**



**is available for hire!**

**To request a booking and for information about Covid safeguards, contact Peter Bright on 870640.**

# Coronavirus latest

**C**ORONAVIRUS IS NOT over and winter is coming. We have been getting updates about the alarmingly high rate of new cases in Mendip.

There is no need to panic but there are practical steps we can take to keep ourselves and others safe.

Over 50s can book a top-up jab six months after their initial injections, as can doctors and other key workers. Public health leaders are reminding people of their duty to protect others.

Professor Trudi Grant, director of Public Health for Somerset County Council, said: "We want people to relax, but in light of the recent rise in cases, we must remain vigilant.

People are being encouraged to test regularly, including before visiting loved ones, to wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces, and to regularly wash their hands.

We would encourage everyone to follow the safety measures – such as letting fresh air inside, wearing a face-covering in crowded areas and testing yourself with a lateral flow test regularly.

These small things we can all do may appear restrictive, but they really are there to protect you and others and are ever more important right now, whilst our case numbers are so high."

So please remember – **Hands, Face, Space.**

**Sue Reece and Mick Fletcher for Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council**

## Council offices in Mendip re-open



**F**ACE-TO-FACE VISITORS are again welcome to Mendip's offices in Shepton Mallet. Residents who feel the need to talk to staff in person, will find the Council campus doors open Monday to Friday. There also access points. The nearest for Westbury residents is Wells Town Hall. For all the Council access points, [click here](#).

With Covid variants still circulating in communities, customers are encouraged to

contact Mendip online or by telephone in the first instance. To find links to the Council's online forms and systems via the relevant service webpages, [click here](#).

Mendip has a contact centre open five days a week to help with queries. Call 0300 303 8588 Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm. If you are contacting us out of hours, and your call is an emergency, please select option 4, then option 5. Local rate call tariffs apply.

# *Citizens Advice – helping people for more than eighty years*

Phone us for Advice  
FREEPHONE  
0808 27 87 842  
10-4 pm Mon - Fri



**Citizens Advice Mendip** provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and seek to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. We provide free, independent, confidential, and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities across the Mendip district. Our simple aim is to offer the support at the time it is needed to help clients improve their lives.

Many people believe that Citizens Advice is a government funded agency, but this isn't the case, we rely on fundraising, donations and project funding to support our work. Each year we approach Parish and Town Councils to support our work in their area. We have recently

been supported by Shepton Mallet Rotary Club who have sponsored a new volunteer.

In the last financial year (delivered virtually) Citizens Advice Mendip assisted 1,672 clients with 7,929 issues.

By far the largest issue is debt and financial difficulties. Nationally, in 2020:

- We helped 258,000 people with debt problems.
- We supported clients to write off a total of £180 million of debt.
- 135,000 clients gained £840 million of extra income.
- The money and debt advice pages on our website received 4.4 million views.

We also delivered financial awareness sessions to over 1,000 young people in this period. We have continued to work to support people online for when they are unable to physically get to one of our offices. The Covid-19 pandemic made us review our delivery practices and we will keep some services delivered virtually for the time being.

We are always grateful for any offers of support or interest from potential volunteers and can be reached at the following email address : [\*\*samh@citizensadvicemendip.org.uk\*\*](mailto:samh@citizensadvicemendip.org.uk).

## **Volunteer with us**

Nationwide, over 20,000 highly trained volunteers support the delivery of our service. Our volunteers come from a range of backgrounds and find volunteering rewarding, challenging and fun. We have a range of roles in local Citizens Advice and Witness Service, want to find out more?

[Click here](#)

# THE FRIENDS OF WESTBURY CHURCH

## Winter Warmer Lunch

Thursday 11th November 2021

12 noon for 12.30pm in The Village Hall

## Meet up and Eat up



## Raffle

\*\*\*

*BYO Wine*

*Free drink on arrival*

*Main course with vegetarian option*

*Selection of desserts, including gluten free choices*

*Coffee or tea*

*Tickets: Shop and committee or call Pippa on 870042*

*Covid guidelines will be followed. At the moment that means airing the room, so please wear something warm*

# Parish Council meeting

## 6th October 2021

**I**F YOU HAVE a concern or item for the agenda, please let the Clerk or one of the Parish Councillors know well before the next meeting. There is no “any other business” at a Parish Council meeting so an item must be on the agenda to be discussed and considered. The public have a session in which to voice opinions. This lasts for only 15 minutes so be ready to be precise in what you have to say because once this session has ended there will be no opportunity for you to speak again.

For official minutes of all council meetings, please [click here](#).

The Parish Council (PC) met in the Village Hall on October 6th 2021.

There was one member of the public present. After the initial formalities were dealt with, Councillor Ros Wyke gave a verbal report on the work being done by Mendip District Council.

Four planning applications were considered at the meeting and the PC's thoughts and decisions sent to Mendip for their consideration.

Various village items were discussed amongst which were:-

- Whether the website provider should be changed.
- The possibility of a joint venture with the Westbury Friendly Society in planning a Beacon for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next June.
- The refurbishment of the notice boards at Stoneleigh, the work on which has been started.
- Discussion on the amount of rubbish being left on the Playing Field and disposal of the rubbish. Neighbourhood Services at Mendip District Council will be contacted to ask whether

the emptying of the bin can be added to the route.

The Clerk reported that:

- Two areas of Westbury Sub Mendip were missed when the white lines were repainted. This has been reported to Somerset Traffic Management and has been put on the 'to do' list.
- Truespeed in the village – The trench work for the connection for the village hall is scheduled to commence before the end of the month. The school's connection is now fully working and synched with Priddy.
- A 20mph zone around the school is being implemented by the Somerset Traffic Department. This has been programmed into the works schedule to be carried out between October and December 2021.
- Posters have gone up on the noticeboard and website inviting residents to apply for a position of Parish Councillor. If anyone is interested, please contact the Parish Clerk for more information.
- A couple more police beat surgeries will be taking place in the Square on 5th November between 5-6pm and 8th December between 11-12am.
- Report from the Unitary Meeting held at Wells Town Hall on 21st September attended by the Chair and Clerk.
- The grant application for Opening Up Safely and Reconnecting Communities Fund on behalf of the Robert Glanville Playing Field Trust was submitted on 27th September.
- The two grant applications for Climate and Ecological Emergency Funds and Communities Funds were both submitted on 28th September.

A Financial report and items of correspondence followed. Lastly matters to report and items for the next meeting's agenda are:-

- a) Grant Applications
- (b) Traffic Calming
- (c) Removal of overgrown vegetation from areas in the village (d) Neighbourhood Plan.

**The next Parish Council meeting will be held at the Village Hall on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November, at 7.30 pm.**

The agenda is displayed on the noticeboard outside the shop.

## Recycle More is recycling (a lot) more



Somerset's new Recycle More service has delivered thousands of extra tonnes of recycling and proved extremely popular among residents using it, councillors have been told.

Launched in Mendip in October last year, it is estimated that the expanded weekly collections have produced more than 6,000 extra tonnes of recycling – including more than 1,000 tonnes of extra plastic.

Over the first 44 weeks, Mendip has seen an average weekly increase of more than 100 tonnes and week.

A customer survey in Mendip found that 84 per cent of respondents preferred their new Recycle More service to the previous recycling regime.

### What plastics go in your Bright Blue Bag

#### YES PLEASE

- ✓ **Plastic bottles**, such as those for milk, bleach, juice, shampoo, laundry and detergents
- ✓ **Plastic pots**, such as those for yoghurt, soup, face cream, hair gel, toiletries
- ✓ **Plastic tubs**, such as those for margarine, ice cream, laundry tablets
- ✓ **Plastic trays** – including black plastic – for meat, ready meals, plastic punnets for fruit and mushrooms, plastic egg boxes

#### NO THANKS

- ✗ **Thin stretchy and crinkly plastics**, such as carrier bags, food wrappings or the film from food trays and punnets
- ✗ **Other plastics**, such as plastic toys, CD cases, car parts, coat hangers, plastic paint pots, toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, blister packs, pens, expanded polystyrene
- ✗ **Mixed materials**, such as pet food pouches and crisp packets

Some plastics are hard to recycle. If you cannot reuse or recycle the plastic we do not yet recycle, they can go in your rubbish to generate electricity via energy-from-waste.

### What happens to your recycling?



The crew separate the materials onto the truck



Your recycling is turned into new products and packaging



Your food waste is turned into power and farm compost

Westbury-sub-Mendip

# Sue Shaw

Talking on

## House Histories

Westbury Village Hall

Wednesday 10th November 7.30pm



We will be happy to see you

For more details contact Sue 870618



**Coffee, Crafts and Cakes  
For Christmas**

**Westbury Village Hall**

**Saturday 27th November 2021**

**10.00 – 12.30**

**Entry £1.50 includes coffee and cake**

**Come and buy from a variety of stalls.  
There will also be a raffle and 'Guess the weight of  
the cake.'**

**All necessary arrangements will be in place regarding  
Covid 19**



## ***Staying in touch***

**Chair**

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**Vice Chair**

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## ***Grants for disabled residents who want to live at home***



*An accessible ramp installed to a resident's garden*

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL has always supported disabled people with the costs of home adaptations, to help them live independently and safely. Disabled Facilities Grants are means-tested grants of up to £30,000 and are available following a referral from an Occupational Therapist.

Examples of the life-changing facilities and fixtures available include stairlifts, level access shower rooms, heating improvements, better access, and room conversions and extensions.

For information on how to apply for the Disabled Facilities Grant, please first contact Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224 (Press 2 - Adult Social Care) to request an Occupational Therapy assessment.

For information on all Mendip District Council's grants and loans, [\*\*click here\*\*](#).

There are also grants for residents to make their homes safer (up to £10,000 available for low income home owners), healthier and warmer (up to £100 available to pay for the cost of getting an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and up to £500-£1000 available for completing energy efficiency improvements). For more details, [\*\*click here\*\*](#).