

SOMERSET COUNCIL

BRIEFING SHEET

Register to vote: Residents are being urged to check their electoral registration details or risk losing their chance to vote on decisions that affect them. Letters have gone out to an initial 83,000 houses across the County and all other households will be written to later this month. Residents can tell the Council of changes and if there are new people eligible to be registered at their address, they will receive an 'invitation to register form' either through the post (or via email, if this contact method has been provided).

School admissions 2024: Somerset parents and carers of children due to start school or move on to their next school in September 2024 are being urged to apply for their place online and on time. The application website for children moving to Secondary and Upper Schools is now open and parents and carers can apply for places from now until 31 October 2023 by visiting www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/applying-for-school/starting-at-a-secondary-or-upper-school-in-september/ The website for children starting school for the first time is open until 15 January 2024 at: www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/applying-for-school/apply-to-start-school-for-the-first-time/

Go Green grants: 'Go Green Scheme' and the 'Somerset Green Business Grant Scheme' are being introduced to offer businesses help and financial support to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The scheme offers free energy audits and support to develop individual, costed and prioritised sustainability plans. Grants can be capital and/or revenue and fund up to 50% of total eligible project costs, with the remainder funded by the applicant. The scheme is now open for applications for activity and expenditure which must be completed by end of March 2024. The deadline for submission is 31st October. Further information is available at www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/funding-and-grants-for-business/

Plastics recycling: Every piece of plastic Somerset Council collected from households and via the recycling sites last year was recycled in the UK. In total 6,500 tonnes of plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays all went to UK companies to be turned into new products and packaging – everything from plastic wrapping and compost bins to fleece jackets. The figure is up from 99.4% the previous year.

Youth Parliament: Young people aged 11 – 17 who live in Somerset or who go to school, college or a youth club in the County have the opportunity to influence change by nominating themselves to stand for election as a Member of the Youth Parliament (MYP). The deadline for nominations is midnight Sunday 12 November. Somerset's MYPs represent 3 areas – Taunton Deane & Somerset West, Bridgwater & Sedgemoor, and South Somerset & Mendip. Those wishing to stand should visit www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer/having-your-voice-heard/democracy-and-young-people/webpage to register their interest.

Somerset's 3 elected Youth Parliamentarians and their deputies represent Somerset at the national UK Youth Parliament. The County's current MYPs will hand over to the newly elected MYPs from next year, and their new term of office runs from March 2024 until February 2026.

Hosting: Autumn sees the return to university or college for many young people in Somerset, often leaving parents or carers with a sense of longing for peace and quiet. For others, a spare room gathering clutter and dust may also be ripe for a sort out and some useful employ. Hosting could be the answer, as the need continues for more host families to help support Ukrainian nationals forced to flee their homes and seek sanctuary in a new and unfamiliar setting. Since the Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched in March 2022, Somerset has welcomed over 1,500 Ukrainians to date, with host families playing a pivotal role in creating a safe environment for guests to re-settle and rebuild their lives in some way, supporting and helping them navigate a new life in the UK. Visit www.somerset.gov.uk/housing-support/homes-for-ukraine/ for more information.

Green libraries: Libraries Week, 2nd – 8th October, celebrates the nation's libraries and this year's theme is 'Green Libraries' which encourages communities to be more sustainable and support climate action. To mark the week, Somerset Librarians have launched a free loaning scheme of Thermal Imaging Cameras to help residents identify heat loss in their homes and take action to improve its energy efficiency and reduce fuel bills this winter. Residents can borrow the camera for three days by simply visiting their local library and speaking to a member of staff who can reserve the kit for them. Full details of the scheme can be found at www.southsomersetenvironment.co.uk/thermalimagingproject

BT prosecuted: British Telecommunications (BT) has been fined for carrying out work on Somerset's highway network without adequate traffic management or a valid street works permit. The utility firm was fined £12,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,158, plus a £2,000 victim surcharge by Taunton Magistrates after it pleaded guilty to offences.

Wells Christmas Market: The traditional 'Christmas in Wells' will again operate from 9am - 3pm on Saturday 16th December 2023 and will welcome more than 100 stalls to the Market Place and on the Bishop's Palace Green. Visitors can enjoy seasonal gifts and local food and drink with live music and entertainment.