

## **January notes for Parish Councils**

### **SHDC Service Delivery**

Our robust Covid-secure risk assessments and approach to offering staff flexible working means that, at the moment, we are in a position where we can continue to deliver our frontline services.

However, this remains under review. We may need to flex our workforce to respond to changing demands or to follow the latest Government guidance. We will keep you updated.

### **Pandemic Response**

We continue to work with the Local Resilience Forum and the Health Protection Board to support the response to the pandemic. At this stage, details on the vaccination roll-out are still under discussion.

You will be aware that the Primary Care Networks are dealing with the first tranches of vaccinations and it is envisaged that the mass vaccination sites will come online later in January. We have offered our support for the vaccination roll-out if needed. We'll keep you updated as we receive further information.

### **Business Grant Update**

The Government has announced a further round of grant support for the hospitality and leisure sector, as well as a top-up to the ARG grant fund.

A quick reminder on what grants apply now we are in lockdown three:

The national lockdown grant is called: LRSO Closed (Addendum).

The discretionary grant for businesses that aren't mandated to close but are impacted is called: Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG).

What we do know is:

The hospitality grant is on top of the LRSO Closed (Addendum) grant, which is good news for those businesses.

The amount that businesses get paid is linked to their RV rating.

£4,000 for businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or under

£6,000 for businesses with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000

£9,000 for businesses with a rateable value of over £51,000

As usual, the businesses that think they are eligible for these grants are keen to have them. Please signpost all enquiries you receive to our website [Coronavirus: Information for Businesses - South Hams District Council](#)

Please explain that we can't issue the money until we have a) been told the rules, and b) actually have the money to give, but thereafter we will do so swiftly.

### **Business Grants Get Easier - Apply Now**

Businesses in need of financial grants within South Hams and West Devon are being encouraged to come forward and apply via a new much simpler process.

Since 5 November, South Hams District Council has paid out £2,207,430, with West Devon Borough Council paying out £865,182. These grants have supported 2,131 businesses across the South Hams and West Devon.

With at least 11 different Government grant schemes currently available, South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils are more than aware how difficult and confusing applications can be. To help, the Councils have created a much simpler process, which means that application forms will be fast to complete, process and pay.

It also means that customers will be issued payments from any of the other 11 available grants, or future ones that follow the same format, which they are eligible for, with a simplified application process.

The Councils' focus is to pay out as much money as possible, to as many businesses as possible, as quickly as possible, while working within the rules set out, which does include some essential checks to avoid fraud.

To complete online application forms, businesses will now choose one of three categories:

You haven't applied for any grants from November 2020 onwards, so you must complete the full application; or

You have completed one full application form since November 2020. You now need to complete the supplementary form; or

You have completed one full application form and the LRSO (Open) form, which went live in December. In which case you do not need to do anything and we will contact you if we need any further information.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, said: "This new system is more efficient, since businesses will no longer need to understand which grants to apply for. It has been terribly confusing to know which grants to apply for, because there are so many with similar names.

"The great thing about it is it will check all eligible grants on each business' behalf, so they could be in line for a greater grant than the one they initially applied for.

"I would encourage as many businesses as possible to apply for funding because funds are available. We know that businesses need that money in their accounts quickly and I can assure them, it is on its way. In future, payments will now be much quicker since the new system is in place."

Like all other councils around the country, there are no warnings of new grants, meaning no time in advance to prepare processes and systems. The Councils need to be exceptionally careful that public money goes to those who need it and not into the hands of those trying to defraud the system.

Council officers have committed to working seven days a week, to support eligible local businesses to gain their grants, so funding should be arriving into accounts very soon.

Cllr Neil Jory, Leader of West Devon Borough Council, said: “We have listened to businesses about the complexity of these grants. We have now developed a great process, which will be invaluable to our customers who can more easily and quickly access all of the money they are eligible for in future.

“By working out this system, which removes the risk of grant errors, and automatically checks applications to decide eligibility for each grant, we will save a huge amount of time and will ensure that more businesses will benefit under the right schemes. For example, a business may think they are only applying for one grant of £1,000 but could in fact, be in line to receive up to £10,000 from multiple grants.

“If you have not yet applied for a business grant, please go to the Council’s website because there are still funds coming through from Government.”

For more information, and to apply for a grant, go to:

[www.southhams.gov.uk/businesscovid19](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/businesscovid19)

[www.westdevon.gov.uk/covid19business](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/covid19business)

### **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) Information**

People who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) will be receiving correspondence from central Government advising them to shield until at least 21 February 2021.

In November, we sent a localised letter in Devon advising people of the local hotlines and how we may help support them. This letter yielded minimal contact and the primary reason was to help those experiencing difficulty accessing priority food delivery slots.

Anyone who joined the CEV list after 11 November 2020 will now receive a copy of that letter, with the local details, in the next week. The Government has requested we contact people who received support from us in November, and we will start these calls next week. These are low numbers. We will receive any requests for support made by the CEV group daily via the Government database and make contact within seven days unless indicated it is more urgent.

Community Pharmacies continue to help with medication.

If you have anyone who you have concerns about, whether they are CEV or vulnerable for another reason, such as age or frailty, please contact [community@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:community@swdevon.gov.uk) and we will make contact.

## **Hardship Help**

As we start the third lockdown, we are very mindful of people in our communities who are struggling to make ends meet. If you come across anyone in your communities enduring hardship, please advise them that the Council has funding available to assist with rent, council tax and homeless prevention.

You may also be interested to know that there is specific help for parents who cannot afford the additional costs associated with their children accessing the internet for online lessons. Anyone struggling with the cost of the extra data needed for remote learning can apply for support. This help is accessed via the schools, not us. Please advise the people in your communities that they just need to approach their school(s) who can assist them.

Finally, Citizens Advice has also been awarded funding to make one-off payments to people struggling with their energy costs. If there is any situation where you would like some advice please get in touch and we will assist where we can.

## **Dartmouth Lower Ferry - Timetable Changes**

As a result of the national lockdown, the Dartmouth Lower Ferry has switched to the following service times:

### Monday-Saturday

First ferry leaves Dartmouth at 7.10 a.m.

First ferry leaves Kingswear at 7.00 a.m.

Last ferry leaves Dartmouth at 8.55 p.m.

Last ferry leaves Kingswear at 8.45 p.m.

### Sunday

First ferry leaves Dartmouth at 8.10 a.m.

First ferry leaves Kingswear at 8.00 a.m.

Last ferry leaves Dartmouth at 8.55 p.m.

Last ferry leaves Kingswear at 8.45 p.m.

In addition to these changes, from Tuesday 12 January to Friday 15 January 2021, there will be a second ferry running to help cope with additional demand while the Higher Ferry is off. The second ferry is scheduled to operate on Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri from 7.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. to 6 p.m., although this is subject to change if there is greater need.

We are asking passengers to please consider the health and safety of our staff and other passengers, and only use the service for essential travel.

For more information please visit the website [Dartmouth Lower Ferry - South Hams District Council](#)

## **Housing Strategy**

The consultation on the draft housing strategy closes on 1 February.

After this time, we will consider any changes required from the responses, before the next rounds of Committee and then hopeful adoption at full Council in March.

Please encourage your towns and parishes, neighbourhood groups or any interested individuals to complete the survey and share the links widely.

Engagement is challenging at this time. Any boost you are able to give will help us understand if the priorities we have set are the right ones for our residents and communities.

Have Your Say on Housing Priorities - South Hams District Council.

## **You Count – Sign Up For Election Roles Now**

Planning for the next elections, which are scheduled to take place on 6 May 2021, is well and truly underway. Local people are invited to sign up now to fill a number of essential paid roles at polling centres across the District.

Polling stations are located in towns and parishes across the South Hams and need to be staffed by a team of Polling Clerks and Presiding Officers. To sign up as a Poll Clerk you don't need any previous experience as full training is provided. The role of Presiding Officer requires previous experience of polling duties and training will also be provided. The cost of training is fully covered and participants in the training are paid to attend. There are also Counting Assistant roles on 6 May in the evening and on 7 and 10 May in the daytime, where no experience is necessary.

At the moment, the plan is for these vital elections to go ahead whilst following strict COVID-safe guidelines. Anyone working in the polling stations or at the counting stations can be reassured that their safety, and the safety of the public, will be a priority.

South Hams District Council's Returning Officer Andy Bates explained: "Our Poll Clerks, Presiding Officers and Count Assistants all play a vital role in preserving the democracy of elections and ensuring local communities have their voices heard. Preparations to ensure the planned May election is safe started last year. Now we need people to join our team, to take part in the training, and to make it happen. If you'd like to be part of the election this year and want to find out more about rates of pay and what's involved, please sign up now."

Team members are needed for elections taking place for the District, Town and Parish Council by-elections, Devon County Council elections and the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner election, which was postponed from May 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Applications for the roles are invited from local people who can work on any of these events. To apply for a role you must not be politically active, should be over 18 years old and able to travel to a polling station or count venue.

The Council is putting arrangements in place to help ensure polling stations are safe places to vote. The public and staff can expect to find at the polling booths many of the measures we've all become used to over recent months in shops and banks. This includes hand

sanitiser, floor markings and face coverings. The latest guidance will be followed. If COVID-restrictions mean the planned elections are unable to take place in May, recruits will be able to take the roles when the elections do occur.

If you're interested in joining the team, please head to [www.southhams.gov.uk/elections-recruitment](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/elections-recruitment) Here you'll find more information on the roles being recruited and you can sign up to register your interest.

For more details on the local elections please go to: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter)

### **COVID Compliance Officers**

The Council's COVID Compliance Officers have continued to be a re-assuring presence on our high streets. They're supporting businesses that are open, helping them to be COVID-secure and ensuring that those that have been required to shut have done so.

Feedback from business owners and the public has been positive and we are looking forward to working to support the safe re-opening of our high streets when Government restrictions are lifted.

### **Election Staff Wanted**

We've started recruiting staff for the elections scheduled to take place on May 2021. We're looking for Polling Clerks and Presiding Officers to work at polling centres across the District on 6 May. We also need Count Assistants at our count stations on 6, 7 and 10 May.

At the moment, the plan is for these elections to go ahead while following strict COVID-safe guidelines. Anyone working in the polling stations or at the counting stations can be reassured that their safety, and the safety of the public, will be a priority. If the elections do not go ahead, recruits will be able to take the roles when the elections do take place.

Please look out for more details on these vacancies that we'll be posting on social media. Please do share these posts within your communities to let people know about this opportunity to earn a little extra money.

Alternatively, you can direct people to [www.southhams.gov.uk/elections-recruitment](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/elections-recruitment)

Here you'll find more information on the roles being recruited and a link to sign up. Thank you.