

April 2021

### Covid-19 Guidelines Update

Now that the 4-step plan to ease lockdown restrictions in England has started please keep a check on the government website for updates. It is critical that you follow all of the Government guidelines to keep both yourself and others safe. The virus is airborne. Guidelines are changing all the time about what we can and cannot do, and so you can find the most up-to-date information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/>



### Unitary Consultation for Local Government in Somerset

The Unitary Consultation for Local Government in Somerset has been organised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and is open until **19<sup>th</sup> April** for individuals to make comments.

The Government is proposing to change the structure of our local government (above the parish council level) to a Unitary status. This would mean abolishing the County Council together with all five existing District Councils in Somerset and replacing it with one form of governing body. The Government invited Somerset County Council and the group of 5 District Councils to submit proposals for the unitary structure and these are as follows:

- The County Council is supporting a 'one organisation' unitary council. District Councils would be abolished. Decisions are made centrally.
- The District Councils' alternative suggestion is to abolish the County Council and to have two unitary bodies called East and West Somerset. These would be based on the existing geographical areas of the five existing District Councils to two Council. This would ensure more local representation into issues, rather than a 'one size fits all' solution.

This potential change will have **significant** implications to the effectiveness of local representation for local area issues and all existing District Councils are united in saying that this 'one-stop shop' solution is not appropriate for Somerset. The county is very large with diverse interests (agriculture, manufacturing, tourism etc.); it is not an area like some of the existing unitary bodies which are primarily urban and manufacturing based.

Somerset's population will be more than 600,000 people within 10 years. Our County is also very large - 1331 square miles - which means our population is dispersed, with **48% of residents living in a rural area (compared to 18% for England at the last census). It takes people in Somerset 50% longer than average in England to access key services.**

The proposals may also change the role of parish councils: either to pass down more responsibility to us; or possibly take some decisions away from us - particularly in our role of consulting on individual planning applications; and possibly changing our role to have some 'parish council representation' on strategy groups.

The Parish Council strongly encourage residents to take part in this process and give your feedback. Please go to the website link below:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>

where you will also find the link to the Consultation Document and the two sets of proposals. You can feedback directly on each of the two proposals, **but the key on to complete is the Government survey** in order to make your opinion heard.

If you wish to respond in writing, please make it clear which area and questions you are responding to. Written responses should be sent to:

Governance Reform and Democracy  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

### **Parish Council Vacancies**



**Would you be interest in joining the Parish Council and helping us to support and protect our village facilities and activities?**

**We meet once on the third Monday evening monthly. We have 2 vacancies at present. If you would like to know more about it all, please contact Sarah Moore, our Parish Clerk on 822455 for an informal chat.**

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### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

#### **PARISH OF MONTACUTE**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 87 of the Local Government Act 1972 that two vacancies have occurred on the Montacute Parish Council. Unless a request for an election to be held is submitted in writing to the Proper Officer of the South Somerset District Council, at the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 2HT by no later than 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 by ten electors for the Parish of Montacute, the Parish Council will proceed to fill the vacancy by co-option.

Mrs S Moore  
Parish Clerk

25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### **Help Keep Our Village Tidy!**

Keeping our village and green spaces litter free is something each village is responsible for. Our lengthsman does a fantastic job but he is not in the village all the time and litter is still a problem all year round. One of our villagers has asked if the Parish Council could purchase some litter pickers which could be stored in various places around the village so that individuals could use them on an ad hoc basis.

However, the parish council would need to organise a more structured litter picking event in conjunction with the District Council who would supply all the PPE and collect the bags of litter afterwards. All we need is volunteers who would be willing to help. Any litter picking event would be organised so that it conforms to current government Covid guidelines. If you would be interested in helping please contact the Parish Clerk.

### **Speedwatch**

After recent incidents concerning speeding traffic, inconsiderate drivers, damage to vehicles in the village and roads being blocked, the Parish Council put an article in last month's magazine to once again ask for residents help. We received one response!

If you are concerned about the traffic and you wish something could be done, please take action and help to re-form the Speedwatch team. The Parish Council cannot do this without your help. It is not an onerous task and only takes up an hour or two of your time, once or twice a month. It is entirely up to the individual. You will have specialist training at no cost to yourself and you will be given all the necessary equipment and PPE. All that is required, is a group of around 5 or 6 people on a rota basis, with one person being the co-ordinator, who are prepared to log traffic speed and vehicle details. To register your interest or would like more information please contact the Parish Clerk.

### **Montacute Pre-School**

At the last parish council meeting we were pleased to award a £500 grant to Montacute Pre-School towards the refurbishment of their outdoor play area and garden.

### **Allotments**

A big thank you to everyone who has helped to tidy up the allotment site, it is looking great especially with the new planters along the fence line.

Did you started growing fruit and vegetables for the first time during lockdown in your garden? Do you want to continue doing this on a larger scale? Why not have an allotment. Contact Ann Gihon on 822359.

### **Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour**

**For any advice and further/up-to-date information on incidents please go to the website: [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk). If you are a witness to or the victim of a crime, then it is imperative that you report it to the police immediately whether it is during the day or at night. When reporting an incident please telephone either 101 for non-emergencies or 999 for emergencies only.**

### **Parish Council Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7pm**

The Parish Council are now holding their meetings via the virtual meeting platform Zoom. The basic package is free to use and can be accessed at <https://zoom.us/>. If you would like to attend our virtual parish council meeting please contact the Parish Clerk at [clerk\\_montacutepc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:clerk_montacutepc@hotmail.co.uk) for the ID link by the Friday before the meeting. If you do not have access to the internet but would still like to listen in on the meeting please telephone the Parish Clerk on 01935 822455 for the telephone conferencing number so that you can dial in.

If you would like to participate in the public session, please email/phone through the subject/question you wish to raise with the council when you asked for the ID link/telephone number.

If you are accessing the meeting via the **internet**:

- Click on the link or copy the link into your browser given to you in the email.

- Download the Zoom app, if not already done so.
- Test your speakers and microphone on your device (you will be prompted to do this)
- You will then be put in a 'Waiting Room' until you are invited to join.
- Once connected, you must click on the video camera icon at the bottom left-hand side of the screen to enable the video. This is so that councillors can see who is attending the meeting.

If you are accessing the meeting by **telephone**:

- Dial the number given to you by the Clerk.
- Once connected you will be prompted to type in the meeting ID plus #, then #, then the password plus #. You will be placed in a 'Waiting Room' until invited to join.

All microphones will be automatically muted from the start of the meeting. If you wish to participate in the public session your microphone will be unmuted when you are invited to speak.

Council meetings will continue in this form until such time as we are informed that public meetings/gatherings may take place in person.

*Contact details: Sarah Moore, Parish Clerk*  
*24 High Street, Stoke sub Hamdon TA14 6PS*  
*Email: clerk\_montacutepc@hotmail.co.uk*  
*Telephone: 01935 822455*  
*Website: www.montacuteparishcouncil.com*