

11th June 2025

Dear Norton St Philip,

Here is my update for this month:

### Petition against cuts to Frome Community Hospital

Anna Sabine, MP for Frome and East Somerset, and I have launched a petition to call for an urgent pause of proposed cuts to Frome Community Hospital that could see vital beds and capacity lost. NHS Somerset Foundation Trust are proposing to lose 8 of the 24 beds, and 9 staff, which would likely see pressure increased on local services and the RUH by reducing inpatient care. So please sign and share to call on the Trust to stop - <https://www.anna4fes.uk/campaigns/stop-the-cuts-at-frome-hospital>.

### Have your say on D2/D2X bus timetables

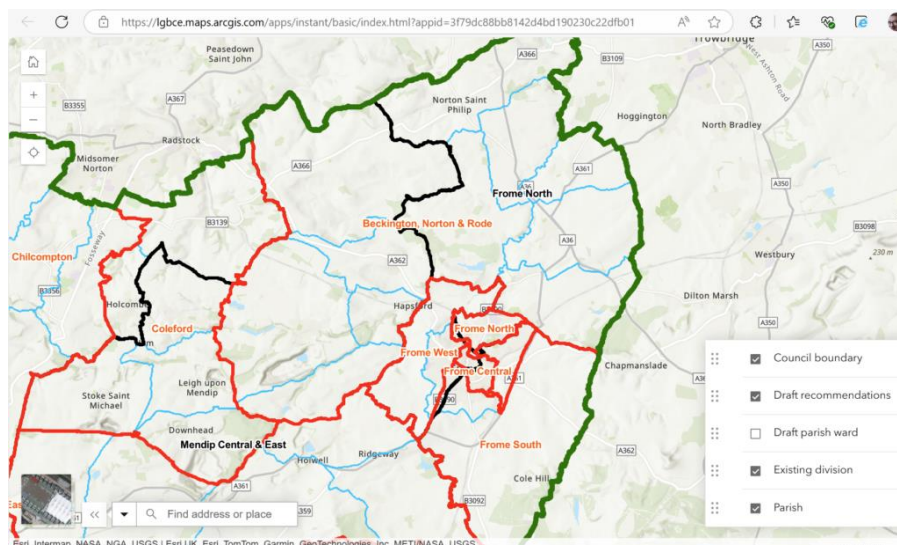
In April new bus timetables and routes were issued for the D2 and D2X Frome – Bath services. Timetables have changed again from 1st June as too much time had been allowed along the route. As the D2X avoids Beckington, Rode and the Critchill and Stonebridge estates in Frome completely, and there are gaps between D2 services, please send comments you have about the bus times *asap* so First Buses can consider comments before the next opportunity for timetable change in the Autumn. Rode parish chair Peter Travis has kindly agreed to collate responses along the route.

### Reporting a problem on the highway

The best way to report problems on the highway is now to use Somerset Council's online reporting portal, which ensures issues like potholes, blocked drains and overgrown vegetation are logged accurately, tracked and addressed, with enquirers receiving updates via reference numbers. See <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2025/05/16/reporting-a-problem/>.

### New ward boundaries proposed

The Boundary Commission is proposing changes to Somerset Council's ward boundaries at the next local elections in 2027, to reduce the number of councillors. Norton St Philip would fall into a new large 'Beckington, Norton and Rode' ward with 10 other parishes. My and other parishes' proposal to keep the two-member Frome North ward were rejected by the Commission. The consultation runs until **11<sup>th</sup> August** so please have your say at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>.



### River water quality

I am attending meetings of the Environment Agency's steering group on the **Farleigh Hungerford Bathing Water** site on the River Frome. I supported the swimming club's application and the Bathing Water was designated last year. The EA is monitoring the river water for bacteria weekly during the bathing season and researching the sources of pollution. More investment should soon be required to improve upstream discharges into the River Frome from sewage works and storm overflows.

### Street and grounds maintenance services in former Mendip

In the former Mendip district, street cleaning services, flytipping clearance, bin emptying, grass cutting, and the inspection and maintenance of open spaces, play areas and trees are now being delivered in-house by Somerset Council, after the 2012 outsourced contract with IdVerde came to an end in June.

### Frome devolution

In April, Frome Town Council took over the Wednesday and Saturday markets in Frome from Somerset Council, and have appointed *The Frome Independent* markets team to operate the markets. FTC are also taking over the town centre toilets (including the Changing Places facility), land near the library, most public spaces in Frome, and the Key Centre (former SureStart childrens and family centre) from Somerset Council under new devolution agreements.

### Help for financial challenges

Somerset's Household Support Fund has been extended to help Somerset residents struggling with the cost of living. Residents are encouraged to access the Household Support offer online, or via 0300 123 2224. Somerset Council's Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing and Exceptional Hardship payment schemes can also help reduce bills for low income households.

### Cost of Living surgery

Anna Sabine, MP for Frome and East Somerset, is hosting a Cost of Living Surgery in Frome on **Saturday 21st June**, bringing together a range of local experts to offer advice and support on issues including energy, housing, debt, and wellbeing. Participants include representatives from Bristol Water, Fair Frome, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, Trinity Debt Advice, local village agents, and other partners.

### Urgent need for Foster Carers in Somerset

Since being elected in 2022, the Lib Dem administration has been working to improve the placement system for vulnerable children. In the past, children were often placed in out-of-county locations, far from their families and friends, but since 2022, out-of-county placements have significantly reduced, in line with our manifesto commitment. The council has also developed a partnership with the Shaw Trust to open therapeutic children's homes. With around 630 children in care and fewer than 150 foster households, Somerset Council is encouraging residents to consider **fostering**, offering flexible options and full support. This can make a real difference to children. Anyone interested can visit [fosteringinsomerset.org.uk](http://fosteringinsomerset.org.uk) or call 0800 587 9900.

### Somerset SEND survey

Somerset Council is inviting feedback from parent carers and professionals to improve special educational needs and disability (SEND) services across education, health and care. The findings should help identify strengths and areas for improvement in Somerset. The surveys close on **6 July 2025**.

### Frome Leisure Centre commits to improvements and repairs

After hearing complaints about Frome Sports and Fitness Centre, leased from Somerset Council by Fusion Lifestyle, Anna Sabine MP did an online survey of users to find out more, and we held a meeting

with Fusion and Somerset Council's leisure team. Fusion have now agreed to invest in repairs and improvements, and are also replacing the swimming pools' faulty boiler, which will take about a month.

### **Funding for rural businesses and community projects**

Somerset Council is relaunching its share of the Rural England Prosperity Fund, with £1 million funding available to support businesses and community projects across the county. Please see here for details <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/relaunch-of-the-rural-england-prosperity-fund-for-somerset/>.

### **Local Plan**

The Somerset Local Plan call for sites in January/February received submissions for around 1,500 sites, which need to be assessed for their suitability and environmental/sustainability implications. The updated timetable for a draft Local Plan being available for public consultation is now April 2026 (rather than later in 2025) – as shown on the Council's website <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/>.

### **NSP Neighbourhood Plan**

I was happy to see that Somerset Council as Local Planning Authority has decided that the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan, as amended in accordance with the recommendations in the Examiner's Report, is legally compliant and can progress to referendum, which will be on Thursday 17th July 2025, with the question, 'Do you want Somerset Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Norton St Philip to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'. See <https://nortonstphilipneighbourhoodplan.com/>.

### **Local Community Network**

Somerset Council's *Vale of Frome Local Community Network* aims to provide a local forum for parish and town councils, public sector bodies and community groups to come together with Somerset Council to agree local priorities for action (I am Vice Chair). The last meeting had useful discussions about planning for transport, education and health infrastructure needs. The next meeting is the AGM in July.

**Somerset Council news** – please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>

For details of all the above, see <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/>.

Please let me know if you have any questions or issues that need dealing with.

Best wishes,

Adam Boyden

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Web: see the latest news at <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/>