

**December 2025 Update from cllr Adam Boyden, Somerset Councillor, Frome North****Somerset Council budget consultation:**

Residents and businesses are being encouraged to take part in Somerset Council's annual budget consultation, which runs until **14<sup>th</sup> January 2026**. In previous years this has helped councillors understand people's views and priorities before difficult decisions are made to avoid the threat of a Section 114 Notice. Budget proposals discussed at a recent Executive meeting show Somerset Council is facing a £73m budget gap for 2026-27, reflecting ongoing pressures in areas like social care, children's services and homelessness, combined with uncertainty in government funding (see [Agenda for Executive on Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025, 10.00 am](#), item 11). The aim is for the Council's financial decisions to reflect the needs and aspirations of the community we serve. Please see [Budget Consultation 2026/2027 - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#). Paper copies are available in libraries.

**Consultation on Somerset Council's Electoral Boundaries Reopened:**

Earlier this year, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) consulted on redrawing Somerset Council's ward boundaries for the 2027 local elections, to reduce the number of councillors from 110 to 96, and was expected to publish its final recommendations in early December. However, the Commission admits it misunderstood Somerset Council's preference for predominantly single-councillor divisions as a formal request, and it has reopened its consultation on draft recommendations.

Somerset residents now have another opportunity to respond in the re-opened consultation until **14<sup>th</sup> January 2026** - please see <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>. Feedback can also be submitted via email at [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk) or by post to the Review Officer (Somerset), LGBCE, 7th Floor, 3 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8YZ. Final recommendations are expected in March 2026, with new arrangements taking effect in May 2027, pending parliamentary approval.

I previously proposed we retain the current three two-member wards for Frome and the surrounding area (see [Have your say on a new political map for Somerset Council, part 2 | Councillor Adam Boyden](#)), to avoid there being a much larger rural ward covering 11 parishes that would be difficult for a single councillor to serve well, but the Commission's draft Report (see [Somerset | LGBCE](#)) explains why they rejected this along with Rode and Berkley PCs' requests (paras 47-50).

**Planning enforcement**

I am chasing and awaiting updates this month from the Planning Enforcement East team on Farleigh House (enforcement case ENF/2023/0117), and Burlington Bath Castle.

**Somerset Local Plan and site assessments delayed:**

Councillors have been informed that the Somerset Local Plan and the preceding Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) are delayed. The HELAA (a high level assessment of submitted sites with potential for housing and economic development) will now be issued early in 2026, not this month. The delay is due to the time being taken to implement a new digital assessment tool (to support the analysis of over 1,600 sites submitted through the Call for Sites process).

It is worth noting that no representations will be invited on the HELAA, and inclusion of a site in the HELAA would not give it any planning status, but it will allow people to see what has been promoted and begin thinking about responses to the draft plan consultation in 2026. The HELAA will be followed by more detailed work on sites that warrant further consideration. Delivery of the Local Plan remains challenging, and the Planning Policy team is now working towards a Regulation 18 consultation on a draft Local Plan by the end of 2026. Evidence base documents are being published on the Council's website as they become available. The Government is also preparing regulations on the new *30-month plan-making* timetable, which will inevitably influence things.

Anyone can sign up to the *Plan-it Somerset Newsletter* for updates on Local Plan progress and evidence base publications – see [Plan-it Somerset Newsletter Sign-up](#). See also [Somerset Local Plan 2045](#), which will be updated to reflect the above.

**Vale of Frome Local Community Network update:**

I reported on the last meeting of the *Vale of Frome Local Community Network* (23<sup>rd</sup> October in Rode) last month. Since then the Chair of the LCN - Max Wide, has resigned as a Frome Town Councillor, but is able to stay on as chair of the LCN. The next meeting will be in January. Agendas of future LCN meetings are to be confirmed, and may cover the Somerset Local Plan (work so far, and potential Development Management policies), water quality, and flooding / winter and emergency preparedness, so **please let me know** any suggestions. How the 18 LCNs in Somerset work and how effective they are is also now being reviewed as part of a review of community engagement.

**River Frome water quality:**

I and other councillors attend the regular meetings of the Environment Agency's steering group for the Farleigh Hungerford Bathing Water site on the River Frome. The last meeting was on 15<sup>th</sup> October, and the next is to be arranged. Water quality at Farleigh had apparently been good during dry weather earlier this year, but this year's recent Bathing Water classification was again 'poor' based on the EA's monitoring of harmful E.coli and intestinal enterococci during the bathing season (May – September).

More must be done to improve river water quality. Wessex Water are committed to improving discharges from Rode sewage treatment works (STW) as the closest STW to the Bathing Water, through new ultra-violet (UV) treatment and increased storage, which are being planned and designed now within the 2025-30 Asset Management Planning period. Other improvements to Beckington and Frome are on hold pending the results of investigations on sources and apportionment, and we await an update on that.

**Council Tax support for those affected by benefit changes:**

Citizens Advice Somerset has recently advised that the Government's programme of managed migration of people claiming income-related Employment Support Allowance (irESA) onto Universal Credit, has led to some vulnerable people's Council Tax bills rising although their income has not changed, as this is treated differently under Somerset's Council Tax Reduction policy. I and other councillors asked for a solution, which may take time while the Council gets all of Somerset's households onto one computer system.

In the meantime, Somerset Council's Executive recently agreed to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to assess anyone adversely affected by the benefits changes through the Council's means-tested *Exceptional Hardship Fund*, and to increase it (see

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/benefits-and-payments/housing-benefit/claim-a-discretionary-award/>). Further measures will be considered through a working group of the Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee. See [Council Tax support for those impacted by benefit changes](#).

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

- **Somerset Council defers plan to roll out Sunday parking charges across rest of Somerset:**  
Somerset Council was proposing to introduce charges at car parks in Somerset which are currently free on a Sunday (this does not include Frome), to ensure consistency across the county, but a recent public consultation revealed significant opposition, and the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee recommended the charges were not implemented. Somerset Council's

Executive has now agreed to defer any changes until a wider parking strategy (including for on and off-street parking in towns, tariff structures, payment mechanisms and accessibility) has been developed and approved.

- **Somerset Council to consider response to statutory recommendations:**

Somerset Council will consider steps being taken to address three statutory recommendations made by auditors. The recommendations are included in the Auditor's Annual Report, published ahead of Audit Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December. The first two recommendations are continued from 2023/24 and relate to the Council's work to develop a sustainable budget and the need for robust transformation plans. The third is new and concerns governance of projects where the Council acts as an accountable body, for projects such as the Life Factory, part of the Glastonbury Town Deal – see [Somerset Council to consider response to statutory recommendations](#).

- **Thousands of Driving Offences Logged on Frome Bypass as New Speed Limit is Considered:**

In just four months, AI cameras installed on the A361 Frome Bypass have recorded over 4,500 driving offences, including not wearing seat belts, using mobile phones, and speeding, some exceeding 80 mph. The speed limit on the road is 60 mph, but discussions are underway to potentially reduce it to 50 mph. This road had six fatalities between 2019 and 2024. Somerset Council and Avon and Somerset Police are collaborating on a road safety initiative, which includes continued use of AI cameras and a forthcoming engineering scheme aimed at enhancing road safety. Implementation of additional safety measures could begin in late 2026. Please see [1,000s of driving offences logged on Frome Bypass as new speed limit is considered](#). I asked officers and understand that traffic lights at the A361/A362 junction are still being considered.

- **Council's CCTV Team Key in Reporting Incidents to Police:** Somerset Council's CCTV team has reported nearly 700 incidents to police in the last three months, playing a crucial role in community safety. In total the CCTV team has processed 391 footage requests from police, and proactively detected 408 incidents during this period. Their prompt actions have led to the apprehension of offenders.

- **Cost-of-Living Support for Somerset Residents This Winter:** Somerset Council and community partners are offering support like food banks, mental health advice, council tax relief, housing payments, and heating assistance. People needing help can visit [somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support) to check eligibility and apply, or call 0300 123 2224 and ask for 'cost of living crisis support'. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/cost-of-living-support-available-for-somerset-residents-this-winter/>.

- **Somerset Council Invests in Improved Outcomes for Residents:** Somerset Council has approved new contracts for the Discharge to Assess (D2A) service, enhancing support for residents returning home from hospital. This service offers up to six weeks of tailored assistance, promoting independence and reducing long-term care needs. Currently assisting about 3,000 people annually, the D2A service helps lower hospital bed occupancy and speeds up recovery at home. The new contracts will ensure continuity of care after May 2026. See the Executive's [Decision Report](#).

**Open consultations:** see: [Find activities - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#):

- **City, Town & Parish Preparedness Survey:** Somerset Council in association with *Somerset Prepared* are inviting all City, Town and Parish Councils to take part in a survey to support our collective preparedness for emergencies, where they will be asked to determine the significance of hazards that the City/Town/Parish faces, and how prepared they feel in terms of planning, people and resources available. The deadline for responses is now **31<sup>st</sup> December 2025**.
- **Somerset Schools and Academies 2027-28 Admission Arrangements:** closes 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2026
- **Budget consultation 2026/27:** closes 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026.
- **Somerset Food Survey:** closes 20<sup>th</sup> January 2026.
- **Charitable collection licensing policy:** closes 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026
- **Domestic Abuse Strategy:** closes 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### Report a problem to Somerset Council

For handy links to report problems to Somerset Council please see

<https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2025/05/16/reporting-a-problem/#page-content> or call

**0300 123 2224.**

*Best wishes,*

Adam Boyden

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