

**January 2026 Update from cllr Adam Boyden, Somerset Councillor, Frome North****Somerset Council budget consultation:**

Residents and businesses still have until **14<sup>th</sup> January 2026** to respond to Somerset Council's annual budget consultation, which will help councillors understand people's views and priorities - see [Budget Consultation 2026/2027 - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#).

**Somerset Council and MPs respond to Local Government Finance Settlement:**

Somerset Council's Leader Bill Revans has cautiously welcomed the recently announced three-year Local Government Finance Settlement, but has urged the Government to do more to increase councils' spending power without putting the burden on local taxpayers - see [Somerset Council welcomes Local Government Finance Settlement but continues to call for fairer funding](#).

But Somerset's Lib Dem MPs have described the Government's provisional funding settlement for Somerset Council for 2026-27 as "profoundly disappointing", and have written to the Local Government Minister asking for an urgent meeting, as it suggests Somerset would only receive a 1% increase in funding from £249million to £252million next year, and it also appears Somerset will lose out significantly on income received from business rate collection - see [Liberal Democrat MPs challenge Government settlement for Somerset - Taunton and Wellington Liberal Democrats](#).

**Re-Consultation on Somerset Council's Electoral Boundaries:**

Somerset residents also still have until **14<sup>th</sup> January 2026** to respond to the re-opened consultation about the future ward boundaries for Somerset Council from the 2027 local elections - please see <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>. Final recommendations are due in March 2026.

**Do you know a good location for an electric vehicle charge point?**

Somerset Council will be expanding electric vehicle charging across the county with Government funding which will support at least 1,600 low-powered (3.5kW and 7kW) public chargepoints on the street and in car parks, to target overnight and long-stay charging, which should help residents without off-street parking. To help ensure chargepoints are installed where they are most needed, Somerset Council is asking residents to suggest suitable locations for new public chargepoints – such as near homes, on local roads, or in places that attract high footfall. When suggested locations have been reviewed, the project team and chargepoint operator will engage with local residents and city, town and parish councils, before any installation. Please see [Do you know a good location for an electric vehicle charge point?](#).

**Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) Activated in Somerset**

Somerset Council activated its Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) over the festive season to ensure rough sleepers could access emergency accommodation. Outreach teams contacted rough sleepers to encourage them to accept emergency accommodations and provided additional support for those who remained on the streets. If you're concerned that someone is rough sleeping in Somerset during the severe weather, please visit [Street Link](#) to refer them, so they can get access to suitable accommodation. You can also learn more about rough sleeping on the Council's [Help for people who are rough sleeping](#) page.

**Somerset Council responds to Audit recommendations:**

Somerset Council has agreed actions to address recommendations included in the Auditor's Annual Report. There are three statutory recommendations - the first two 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 concerns the 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](#)

[welcomes progress on Auditors' recommendations](#) and [Somerset Council acts on audit recommendation over Glastonbury Life Factory project](#). The audit report was discussed at Full Council in December, and Council endorsed the proposed actions in response as set out in a report in item 6 at [Agenda for Full Council on 17th December, 2025](#).

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

The last *Vale of Frome Local Community Network* meeting in October in Rode had discussions on Connect Somerset, Adult social care, community hospital beds and ICB reorganisation, a Movement Strategy for Frome, and how the LCN Link Officer helped facilitate Buckland Dinham Parish Council's bid for funds for part of the Missing Link cycle path. The next LCN meeting is Thursday **29th January** in **Beckington** Memorial Hall from 7pm. The agendas of future LCN meetings are TBC (so please let me know any suggestions) and may cover the Somerset Local Plan, water quality, and flooding / winter / emergency preparedness. How the 18 LCNs in Somerset work is also now being reviewed. Although LCN chair Max Wide gas resigned as a Frome Town Councillor he is able to stay on as LCN chair, and I will remain Vice Chair, until the AGM in the summer. Please see here for more - [Vale of Frome Local Community Network update](#).

#### **Planning Service update:**

At the recent Full Council meeting, a motion on the planning service was agreed (see item 7 at [Agenda for Full Council on Wednesday 17th December 2025](#)) to ask the Executive to publish a publicly available Planning Service Recovery Plan, produce quarterly performance reports, and to engage with parish councils and councillors, planning agents, and key stakeholders to review lessons learned and agree a "good practice charter" for the future operation of the planning service.

#### **Planning Enforcement:**

In light of complaints from residents of Farleigh Hungerford since summer 2023 about noise from live or recorded music and traffic, from a number of wedding parties and other events at **Farleigh House**, Somerset Council's position on the planning status is now that there has been a breach of planning control and planning permission for the events use is required, but Bath Rugby disagrees with this. I now understand that Bath Rugby has agreed to submit an application for a lawful development certificate before the end of January 2026, which is a positive step towards resolving this dispute - see here for more: [Planning enforcement: – Farleigh House](#).

I have also asked the Planning Enforcement team for an update on ENF/2022/WS56590 as I cannot find it on the portal/system.

#### **Farleigh Hungerford bridge:**

I have asked Somerset Council's Bridges team for an update on matters relating to the enforcement of the 7.5T weight limit at Farleigh Hungerford bridge.

#### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme:**

Somerset Council supports households with the lowest incomes through its Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme, and next year's Scheme (from April 2026) will include a 3.8% increase in income band thresholds to maintain discount values, based on the September CPI figure used by the Dept. for Work and Pensions.

Councillor concerns were raised about individuals transitioning from legacy benefits to Universal Credit who have lost, or will lose, their automatic 100% Council Tax discount. To address this, Somerset Council will assess those adversely affected through the Exceptional Hardship Fund, where appropriate. Additionally, a Councillor-led Task and Finish Group will be formed, to fully explore the Government's changes to benefits and how these have adversely affected some residents. Recently the issue was also considered at Somerset's Full Council meeting in December when councillors

agreed that officers will now investigate special transitional protection measures for people affected - see [Council Tax support for those affected by benefit changes](#).

**Disabled Facilities Grants:**

Recently I have been contacted by people about the need for Disabled Facilities Grants to be given more quickly to adapt the homes of people suffering with rapidly progressing life-limiting illnesses such as Motor Neurone Disease. I asked a question at Full Council in December, and have received a response. However, I am seeking clarification about the need for a fast-track process, with a potential motion drafted by the MND Association for all local councils (see [Disabled Facilities Grants and the need for speed](#)).

**Frome Leisure Centre:**

In late November I visited Frome Sports & Leisure Centre with Anna Sabine MP and councillor Dawn Denton, to meet Fusion's regional manager and site manager (both called Rob!), to discuss the improvements Fusion is making to the gym and get updates on other issues - please see [Frome leisure centre update](#).

**Frome banking hub:**

Frome's Banking Hub has moved from the Library into a new permanent home in the Westway precinct. It is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and offers basic banking and cash services, and a vital cashpoint outside (see [Frome Banking Hub - Frome Town Council](#) and [New banking hub opens in Frome - Frome Times](#)), as well as the opportunity to discuss banking matters with your own bank on the day they are in the hub, which are:

- Monday: HSBC
- Tuesday: Barclays
- Wednesday: NatWest
- Thursday: TSB
- Friday: Halifax

**Frome Bypass - new speed limit 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, including 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.

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

- Budget consultation 2026/27: closes 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026
- Somerset Food Survey: closes 20<sup>th</sup> January
- Charitable collection licensing policy: closes 23<sup>rd</sup> January
- Domestic Abuse Strategy: closes 26<sup>th</sup> January.

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

- **Devolution call:** The Leaders of the Wessex Partnership – comprising Dorset,

Somerset, Wiltshire and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils – have once again called on ministers to allow Wessex to move forward with a devolution deal - [Wessex leaders urge Government once more to unlock regional growth through devolution](#).

- **Tumble dryer warnings:** Household across Devon and Somerset are being warned by Trading Standards to stop using certain integrated heat pump tumble dryers immediately after a national safety alert revealed a serious fire risk - [Residents urged to check tumble dryers after fire risk alert](#).
- **Consumers urged to question meat product claims after traceability failures:** Heart of the South West Trading Standards is urging shoppers to check meat labels carefully this festive season after an investigation revealed misleading claims among some local butchers and farm shops - [Consumers urged to question meat product claims after traceability failures](#).
- **Safeguarding review urges stronger support for adults facing homelessness:** A [Learning from serious cases report](#) published by the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board has set out the findings of their review of homelessness, and calls for urgent measures to improve safeguarding and support for vulnerable adults experiencing homelessness - see [Safeguarding review urges stronger support for adults facing homelessness in Somerset](#).
- **Council agrees to review part of Celebration Mile regeneration project:** After a debate and petition presented to Full Council in December (signed by over 5000 residents and shopkeepers), Somerset Council has agreed to review the implementation of a new one-way system in Bridgwater along with local parking arrangements - [Council agrees to review part of Celebration Mile regeneration project](#).
- **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/>.

### Report a problem to Somerset Council

For handy links to report problems such as potholes, broken street lights or empty litter bins, to Somerset Council please see <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2025/05/16/reporting-a-problem/#page-content> or call **0300 123 2224**.

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

*Best wishes,*

Adam Boyden

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