

March 2026 Update to Norton St Philip Parish Council from Adam Boyden, Somerset Councillor, Frome North

Somerset Council moves into financial recovery after budget approval:

Somerset Council is shifting from financial emergency to recovery after councillors approved the balanced 2026/27 budget at Full Council on Wednesday 4th March. Independent reports show the authority has 'grasped the challenges' and is on the right track after taking difficult decisions while protecting frontline services and vulnerable residents. The council highlighted progress in narrowing its funding gap from £101m in March 2025 to £25m in February 2026, despite the Government's Fair Funding Review hitting rural counties like Somerset (together with other Government policy changes reducing revenue by over £40m over three years). Councillors agreed a 4.99% Council Tax rise, taking the average Band D bill from Somerset Council to £1,950.30 a year (about £1.78 extra per week), still below many neighbouring and other unitary councils. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-council-moving-into-recovery-phase-after-approving-budget/>.

Council Tax bills will also include demands from the Police, Fire and Rescue Authority, and the Parish Council, which has a lower than average precept - see Appendix Y to item 8 at [Agenda for Full Council on Wednesday, 4th March, 2026, 11.00 am - Modern Council](#) (extracts below).

Appendix Y(ii)

VALUATION BANDS

Council Tax Schedule	Valuation Bands							
	Band A £	Band B £	Band C £	Band D £	Band E £	Band F £	Band G £	Band H £
2026/27								
Somerset Council - General	1,089.70	1,271.32	1,452.94	1,634.56	1,997.79	2,361.03	2,724.26	3,269.12
Somerset Council – Somerset Rivers Authority	9.77	11.39	13.02	14.65	17.91	21.16	24.42	29.30
Somerset Council – Adult Social Care	200.72	234.18	267.64	301.09	368.00	434.91	501.82	602.18
Police and Crime Commissioner	205.47	239.71	273.96	308.20	376.69	445.18	513.67	616.40
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority	73.12	85.31	97.49	109.68	134.05	158.43	182.80	219.36
Totals excluding City/Town/Parish Precepts & Special Expenses	1,578.78	1,841.91	2,105.05	2,368.18	2,894.44	3,420.71	3,946.97	4,736.36
Special Expenses	0.39	0.46	0.52	0.59	0.72	0.85	0.98	1.18
Average City/Town/Parish	127.88	149.20	170.50	191.82	234.45	277.08	319.70	383.64
Total including Average City/Town/Parish Precepts and Average Special Expenses	1,707.05	1,991.57	2,276.07	2,560.59	3,129.61	3,698.64	4,267.65	5,121.18

To close the remaining gap, the council will use one further year of Exceptional Financial Support via a Capitalisation Direction (selling assets where needed, to protect services) while seeking further savings through transformation. The Inspiring Innovation Transformation Programme will invest £45m by 2031, targeting roughly £135m in savings (a 3:1 return). Plans also include up to £5m more over three years to smarten up road signs and lines, to clear more gullies, pavements and cycleways, plus an extra £2m for the Exceptional Hardship Fund.

An opposition group budget amendment was proposed and debated, but after the S151 (Chief Finance) Officer advised that there was a significant risk of unbalancing the budget and of a Section 114 Notice (effective bankruptcy) being submitted to the Government, it was voted down.

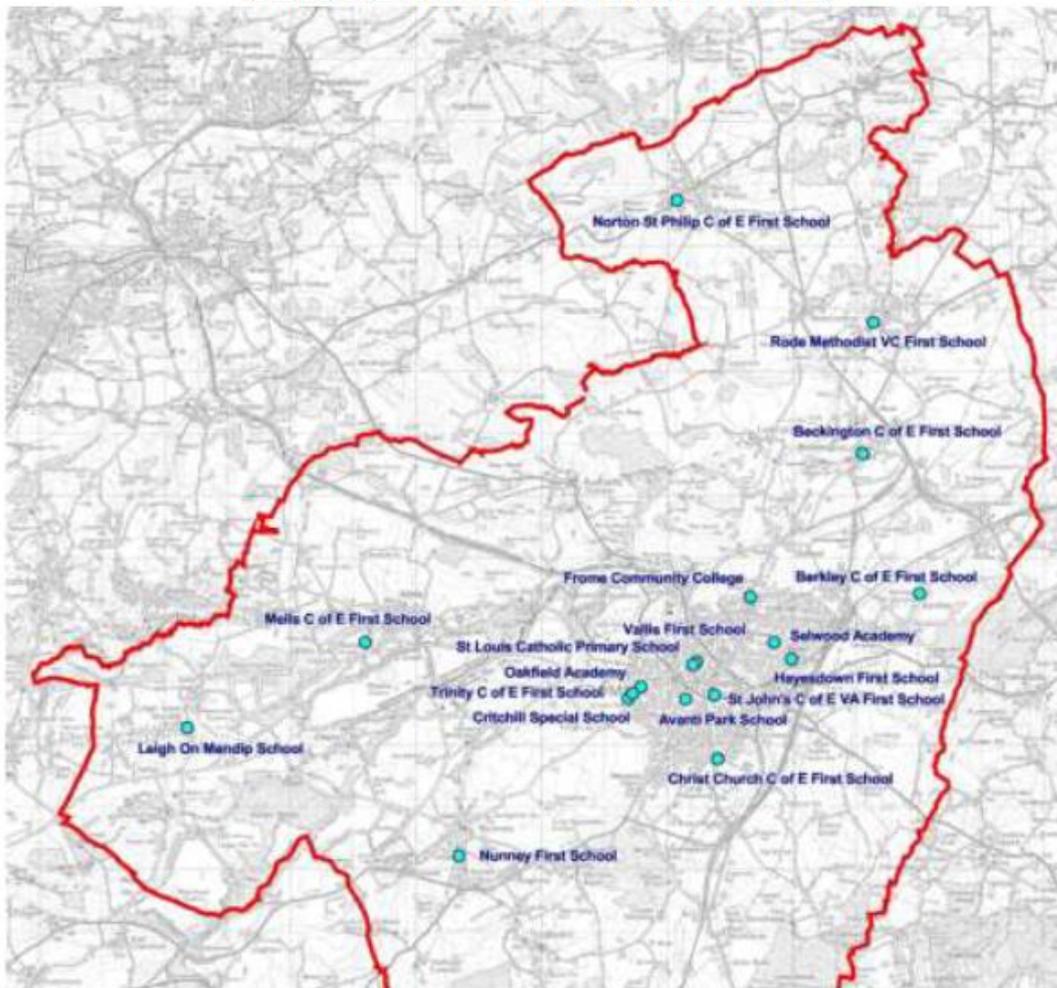
School reorganisation consultation:

As discussed last month, Somerset Council's informal consultation into whether to change the schooling system in and around Frome and surrounding villages from a largely three-tier system to a two-tier system, is now live. This covers the 18 schools in the area, including Frome, Rode, Norton St Philip, Berkley, Beckington, Mells, Nunney, and Leigh-on-Mendip. The high-level proposal would see two secondary schools and up to 15 primary schools feeding into them, with additional provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The consultation is intended to test community appetite before any detailed proposals are developed. If there is sufficient support to proceed, a detailed proposal will be developed for formal and detailed consultation in the summer. If progressed, the new system would be introduced from the 2028/29 academic year (September 2028).

To find out more and get involved, please read the document outlining the proposed changes, come to one of two drop-in sessions on **Wednesday 11th March** at: The Key Centre (2.00–4.00pm) or Frome Town Hall (5.00–7.00pm), and fill in the online questionnaire until **Friday 20th March** - see [Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Education Structures in Frome - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#).

State-Maintained Schools in Frome

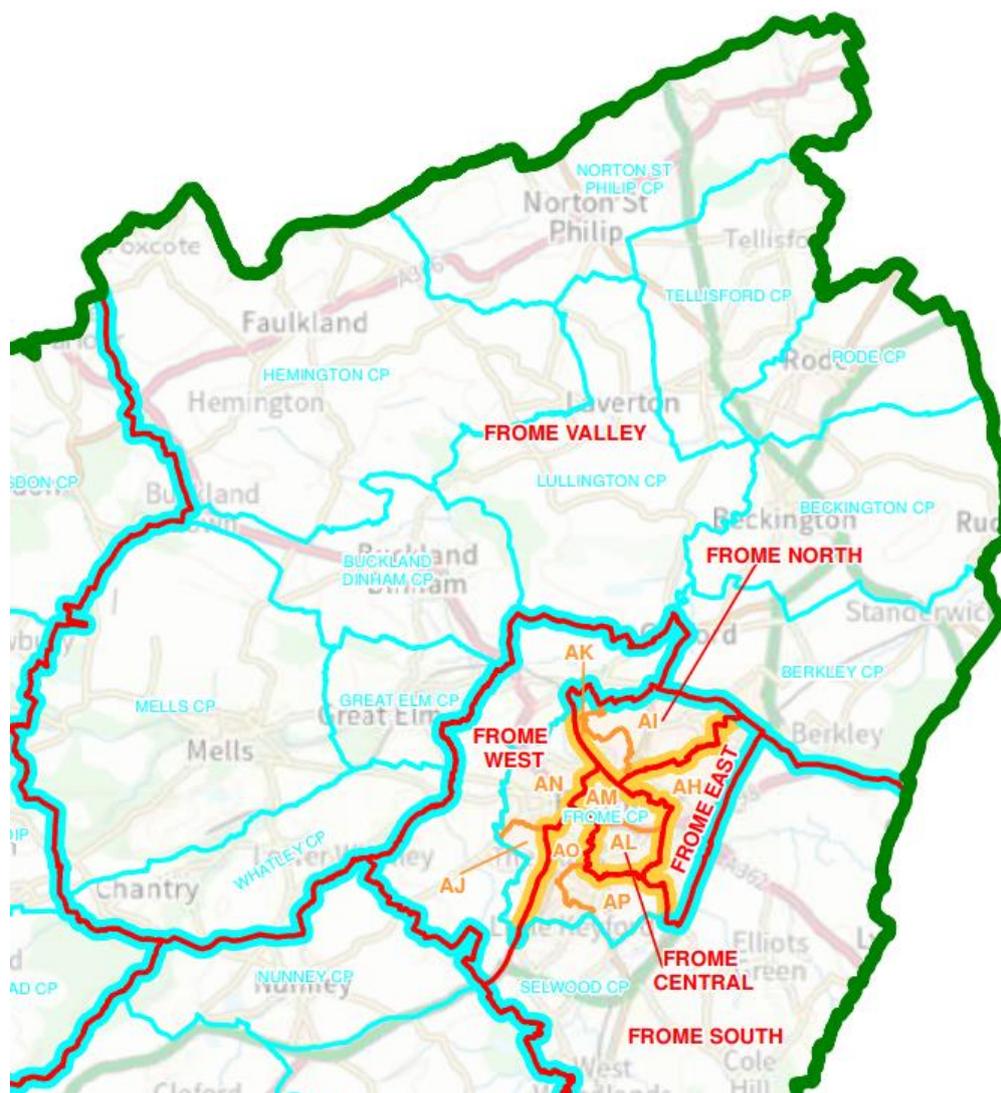


Final recommendations for Somerset electoral arrangements published:

After its re-consultation in December/January, the Local Government Boundary Commission has just published its final recommendations for changes to Somerset Council's future electoral boundaries. This will reduce the number of councillors by just 14 (from 110 to 96), and proposes 90 single-councillor and three two-councillor divisions. The final report and maps of the proposals are at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>. The new divisions will be presented to Parliament and if passed, will be used in the May 2027 local elections onwards.

The current Frome North division, which includes Beckington, will still be replaced by a new single-member urban 'Frome North' division within the town of Frome, and a new larger single-member division (renamed 'Frome Valley') covering 11 parishes – Rode, Beckington, Norton St Philip, Berkley, Lullington and Tellisford, plus Hemington, Buckland Dinham, Great Elm, Mells, and Whatley.

I had proposed we retain the current three two-member wards for Frome and the surrounding areas (as did Rode and Berkley PCs) (see [here](#)) to avoid there being a much larger rural ward that would be difficult for a single councillor to serve well, but the Commission's draft Report (see [Somerset | LGBCE](#), pp47-50) and final report (<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>, pp 11-15)) both rejected this idea.



Planning applications and enforcement:

In relation to the planning enforcement case at **Farleigh House** concerning weddings and other events held since summer 2023 (Somerset Council Planning Enforcement ref. **ENF/2025/0160**), the planning enforcement and appeals Team Leader has confirmed that Somerset Council has received an application from Bath Rugby for a Certificate of Lawfulness, to ensure the matter and the clubs' reasoning why they believe their activities are lawful can be formally assessed and a robust decision made by the Council. The application reference will be **2026/0421/CLE** (it is not online yet) and as a Certificate of Lawfulness application it will be determined based on the lawfulness of the activity rather than an assessment against planning policies. Enforcement action by the council will be held pending determination of the application, but if it is refused, enforcement action will proceed.

Two of the three planning applications for extended hours of use at the rugby pitches at Farleigh House have recently been approved by planning officers (**2026/0081/VRC** and **2026/0082/VRC**) despite my and Dawn's efforts to refer these to planning committee. I responded to the referral requests to the Chair of Planning Committee and officers on 6th March (while on holiday in Dublin!) that I wanted all three to come to committee due to residents' valid concerns about noise impacts on neighbours. I will be checking why the Chair has allowed these to be approved despite this. As I said at the last parish council meeting, I have had confirmation in writing from Farleigh House that the pitches are for club use only and will not be booked by other clubs.

Vale of Frome Local Community Network update:

The last *Vale of Frome Local Community Network* (LCN) full meeting (on food resilience) in January was postponed due to weather-related apologies from speakers, and will be rearranged – in Beckington – possibly in June. The VoF LCN Highways Working Group met on 24th February.

There are two online Teams briefing meetings on the Frome Movement Strategy on Tuesday 17th March at 1pm and 7pm – invitations have been circulated to parish chairs and clerks.

The next full VoF LCN meeting will be in April (currently Wednesday 29th April), with an agenda that I hope will include flooding, gritting and winter resilience with presentations from the Somerset Rivers Authority and Somerset Council's Head of Climate and Natural Environment.

The AGM will be in July. Please contact the VoF LCN officer James Moore at ValeofFromeLCN@somerset.gov.uk or me with any queries. How the 18 LCNs in Somerset work is also being reviewed.

Plans to smarten Somerset's roads, pavements and cycleways:

Somerset Council is proposing to spend up to £5m over the next 3 years to smarten up roads, pavements and cycleways – meaning more drain and gully clearance, improved signs and road markings, litter collection and vegetation clearance near walking/cycling routes. Current road maintenance programmes focus on safety critical works which can mean lower priority issues like faded road markings, broken signs and overgrown hedges are left. Improvements will also be made to the council's public reporting system, to make it easier for residents to highlight any issues on the roads. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/new-road-investment-to-smarten-up-somerset/>. Since January 1st 2026 Somerset Council has received 16,332 reports about defects on the roads (including potholes and other issues) over three times as many (4,417) as the same period last year. As of 20 Feb, 35 teams have fixed 4,577 potholes. Repairs are prioritised by severity and will be completed within 2 hours, 24 hours, 7 days or 28 days depending on the category. I am reporting potholes when I see them. If you spot a problem on the road, please report it at the Council's **Report a problem on the road** page <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>. Depending on severity, it will be fixed on a timescale of 2 hours, 24 hours, 7 days or 28 days.

Highways safety defects completed:

The report of safety defects completed by Somerset Council Highways team within Frome North division for February is below:

Report Date Range: 01/02/2026 to 28/02/2026

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This report shows the number of safety defects (split by defect type and location) completed by Somerset Highways within your division for the previous month.

For reference, codes starting with T or U represent Unclassified roads.

Frome North ED

• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U2942/110	FOXBURY CLOSE	8
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	B3110/130	BATH ROAD - NORTON ST PHILIP	6
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U9201/10	CHURCH ROAD - BERKLEY	6
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	B3090/210	BATH ROAD	4
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	A366/190	FARLEIGH ROAD - NORTON ST PHILIP	3
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	T2596/30	RODDEN ROAD	2
• KB- Loose / Rocking Kerb	U2911/10	THE MEAD - RODE	2
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U9281/10	BEACONSFIELD WAY	2
• CW- Flooding in Carriageway	A366/150	WELLS ROAD - NORTON ST PHILIP	1
• Multiple CW Safety Defects	B3110/130	BATH ROAD - NORTON ST PHILIP	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	T2829/10	HIGH STREET - RODE	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	T2832/11	LULLINGTON LANE - OLDFORD	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	T2838/10	OLD SCHOOL TO MACKLEY LANE - LAVERTON	1
• SG- Dislodged Sign Post	U2906/10	GREEN PARK LANE - BECKINGTON	1
• CW- Edge Loss	U2908/10	MILL LANE - BECKINGTON	1
• Multiple CW Safety Defects	U2941/30	LOWER INNOX	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U2942/20	PARK HILL DRIVE	1
• CW- Step in Level	U2949/10	FOREST ROAD	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U9273/20	STONEBRIDGE DRIVE	1

Total: 45

Residents invited to shape the future of health and wellbeing in Somerset:

Residents are urged to share their views in a new survey by Somerset Council's Public Health team to help shape future health and wellbeing priorities. The [Somerset Health and Wellbeing Survey](#) opened on **Monday 2 March** and runs until **Monday 27 April**, and gives residents the opportunity to highlight what matters most to them, helping the council focus future work on the issues that have the greatest impact on local communities. Everyone who takes part will be entered into a draw to win a £50 love to shop voucher. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/residents-invited-to-shape-the-future-of-health-and-wellbeing-in-somerset/>. The survey covers a range of topics including: physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, smoking and vaping, alcohol and substance use, gambling, oral health, NHS Health Checks and how people access health information.

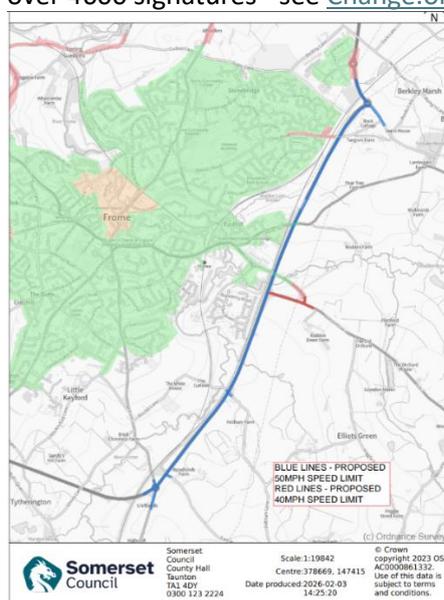
Funding to help residents lower energy bills:

Somerset Council has secured an additional £1 million in funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's 'Warm Homes: Local Grant' scheme to help homeowners and private rental residents across Somerset to save money on energy bills by improving their homes' energy efficiency, making them easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer, or replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. Types of measures that can be installed using the grant are floor insulation, wall insulation, loft insulation, door and window replacements, ventilation, solar panels, Air Source Heat

Pumps and Storage Heaters. The grants are means-tested, and residents can check if they are eligible and apply - see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-awarded-additional-funding-to-help-residents-lower-their-bills/>.

Lower speed limit proposed for Frome bypass:

Somerset Council is proposing to improve safety by reducing the speed limit on the A361 Frome bypass from 60 to 50 mph. The speed limit on the A362 approaching the Bypass would also be reduced to 40mph. Five people have died on the Bypass and this junction in tragic collisions over the last 5 years. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/lower-speed-limit-proposed-for-frome-bypass/>. Other works proposed are an improved road surface, central hatching to reduce the road width, and cutting back vegetation to improve visibility at the junction. The proposal complements AI camera enforcement and planned resurfacing at the junction. Anna Sabine MP and I and other councillors have been calling for action here to improve safety. I will be supporting the speed limit reduction, while asking again for traffic lights at the junction. A petition to reduce the speed limit here has had over 4600 signatures - see [Change.org - Results page](https://www.change.org/p/somerset-council-reduce-speed-limit-on-a361-frome-bypass).



The draft Traffic Regulation Order and map are at [Traffic Regulation Orders](#) - see 'Various Roads, Frome', with the Order start date 27 February. Comments can be sent by email to TROinbox@somerset.gov.uk, quoting Reference No. KT04022026 until **20th March**. Subject to any objections being resolved, the reduced speed limits would be put in when resurfacing work is planned at the junction in May.

SEND reform proposals 'encouraging' but urgent, sustained reform needed:

The government's SEND reform proposals (a 12-week consultation, until 18th May, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-reform-putting-children-and-young-people-first>) set out a shift towards supporting more pupils in mainstream schools, rebalancing the EHCP system, strengthening prevention and early intervention, and reworking funding and tribunal arrangements. Somerset Council Leader Bill Revans has welcomed the direction but warns major challenges remain - see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-council-leader-describes-new-send-proposals-as-encouraging-but-warns-momentum-must-be-maintained/>.

Climate and Place Scrutinises transport, flooding and environmental work:

I attended Somerset Council's Climate & Place Scrutiny Committee this month, which scrutinised the council's environmental work, focusing on biodiversity and climate change, a draft Local Transport Delivery Plan, and reports into flooding incidents across the county – see here [Agenda for Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place on Thursday, 5th March, 2026, 10.00 am - Modern Council](#).

I called for greater engagement with local communities and parish/town councils (and the Active Travel LCN steering group, and Somerset's Bus Partnership and local bus user groups) on the more detailed plans for local transport improvements which will be required later this year, and for the Council to engage locally and keep track of 'what happens next' on local flood actions plans to ensure the lessons learned from flood events are put into practice in reality.

Reducing the prevalence of private estate management arrangements:

The Government is consulting on proposals to address the growing issue of unadopted amenities on privately managed housing estates in England, where communal infrastructure such as roads, green spaces and drainage systems are maintained by private management companies (which charge the residents) rather than public authorities, until Thursday **12th March** – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reducing-the-prevalence-of-private-estate-management-arrangements>.

Other news from Somerset Council:

see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>, including:

- Somerset Council recognised with 2 national award nominations for life-changing work in SEND and fostering
- Somerset pubs take pride of place in feel-good feature film (Mothers Pride, based in The George Inn and the Fleur de Lys pubs in Norton St Philip)
- A361 reopens as flood water recedes
- Planning approval for Octagon Theatre transformation in Yeovil
- 'Sky is the limit' for Somerset as helicopter manufacturer Leonardo lands £1 billion contract

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

- Somerset Adult Social Care Strategy (2026-2029)
- Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Education Structures in Frome

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**.

Best wishes,

Adam Boyden

Somerset Councillor for Frome North,

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