Update to Frome North's Parish Council meetings, October 2026
Adam Boyden, Somerset Councillor, Frome North

A few things of note this month include:

Councillors to decide less planning applications:

New national planning rules are coming into force from October 31st that will reduce the number of planning applications that can be determined by councillors on Planning Committees, and reduce Parish/Town Councils' and local councillors' ability to refer applications to committee. The aim is to speed up decisions so that planning committees focus on larger and more significant developments.

Up to now, Somerset Council's Constitution allowed applications to be referred to Planning Committee by a local councillor or parish/town council (if there is a difference between the officer's recommendation and the local councillor/parish council response) either automatically (for major development) or with the Chair of Planning Committee's agreement (for minor development). Major and minor developments are as defined in the Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015[1]. This will change from 31st October.

Under the Government's Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and the statutory guidance *Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions*[2], all relatively minor planning applications (defined in a ***Schedule 1*** to The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026[3]) will **always be delegated to officers to decide**. This includes householder applications and minor developments of up to nine dwellings (see list below for details).

More major applications falling within ***Schedule 2*** (including for over 10 dwellings, see details below) will have a **presumption in favour of planning officers taking the decision**, **but can be referred to planning committee if** the Chief Planning Officer and the Chair of the Planning Committee (or Vice-Chair in their absence) **agree** that the application raises:

- A: an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area; or
- B: a significant planning matter, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations.

The Government guidance states that for applications which do not raise a significant planning matter, what could constitute a significant economic, social or environmental issue will vary depending on the local area, but examples could include applications for outline planning permission for a large multi-phase residential development allocated in the local plan, for a change of use of a community shop in a rural area, or for changes to a notable listed building in a town centre.

As under the National Scheme of Delegation, councillor call-in rights or automatic referrals to committee will no longer be permitted, Somerset Council has therefore had to amend its Constitution to align with the National Scheme, as agreed at Full Council in September (see item 6 on the Agenda for Full Council on Wednesday, 16th September, 2026[4]). In summary this means:

[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/595/contents/made
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england
[3] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/854/made
[4] https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=214&MId=7882&Ver=4

1. The Parish/Town/ City Council and the Local Somerset Councillors (and/or a Councillor of an adjoining division) need to respond to a Planning Application within 21 days of being notified, with material planning reasons.
2. A Parish/Town/ City Council may request an extension of the time limit in which they must notify the Planning Service that they wish to comment on a Planning Application in order to allow for consideration at their next meeting. Such a request shall be granted where possible.
3. Parish/ Town/ City Councils and local Somerset Councillors are unable to request that a Schedule 1 application is referred to Planning Committee under any circumstances.
4. If the application is listed in Schedule 2, and the Officer recommendation on the application is in agreement with the Parish/Town/City Council's and local councillors' view/s, the decision will be delegated to Officers.
5. If the application is listed in Schedule 2 and the Officer recommendation on the application is not in agreement with the Parish/Town/City Council view or the Local Councillor/s' view, then:
    a. the application will be triaged to the Lead Member (the Chair of Planning Committee, or Vice Chair in their absence) with a copy of the Officer report and recommendation, copied to the relevant Local Councillor/s.
    b. The Local Councillor/s will be responsible within 3 working days of receipt of the report and recommendation, for informing the Lead Member of any comments they may have and if they wish the item to be triaged to the relevant Committee, with material planning reasons.
    c. The Lead Member will then determine with the relevant Lead Officer (Chief Planning Officer or any officer with appropriate delegation) within 2 working days whether the application should be delegated or if it should go to Committee, providing material planning reasons for either.
    d. A record of all decisions made within the gateway triage meeting shall be maintained and published on the applications to ensure transparency.
    e. If the Lead Member (Chair of Planning Committee or Vice Chair in their absence) and the Lead Officer (Chief Planning Officer or any officer with appropriate delegation) having differing views on the determination route, the Lead Officer's view takes precedence.

In addition, if an application for over 150 homes, or commercial developments over 15,000sqm, is refused permission, the Secretary of State must be notified to consider (over a period of 21 days) the need to Call In the application for determination.

Schedule 1 to The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 includes:

- *applications for Householder development,*
- *Discharge of conditions,*
- *Permission in principle (1-9 dwellings),*
- *Non-material amendments,*
- *Prior approval applications,*
- *Minor commercial development,*
- *Minor residential development (development of up to nine dwellings on sites below 0.5 hectares),*

- *Section 73 applications where the related planning permission was a Schedule 1 planning permission,*
- *Reserved matters approval where the outline planning permission is for fewer than 500 dwellings or less than 50,000 square metres of floorspace,*
- *Certificates of lawfulness of existing/proposed use or development and certificates of lawfulness for proposed works to listed buildings,*
- *Section 106A applications where a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 planning permission,*
- *Biodiversity Gain Plans, and*
- *Certificates of Appropriate Alternative Development.*

Schedule 2 to The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 includes:

- *Planning applications which are not householder, minor commercial or minor residential, (e.g. over 10 dwellings)*
- *Applications to modify or discharge a planning obligation under Section 106A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990*
- *Applications for Listed Building Consent*
- *Applications for the variation or discharge of conditions related to a listed building*
- *Applications for advertisement consent*
- *Tree Preservation Order applications*
- *Applications to develop land without compliance with conditions under Section 73(1)*
- *Reserved matters related to large outline planning permissions (500 dwellings or 50,000sqm floor space).*

Please let me know if you have queries.

Farleigh House

The long saga of planning enforcement at Farleigh House (Farleigh Hungerford) seems to be over. On 23rd September, Somerset Council's planning team issued a decision notice on the application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for Farleigh House, for *'The use of the buildings and associated land for the holding of corporate events and private functions, including private parties and weddings, together with the erection and use of temporary marquees in connection with such events'* (2026/0421/CLE) which confirms that wedding celebrations and other open-market private party events are **not** covered by the existing planning permissions and are therefore not lawful.

This is a victory for residents who have been complaining about noise from amplified or live music and traffic from some of the weddings since June 2023 when Somerset Council's Licensing Sub-Committee granted a licence despite our objections. I supported their complaints and objected to the Certificate of Lawful Use application in relation to the weddings and private parties, as I could not agree that Bath Rugby had the necessary planning permission to host weddings and private parties. As Bath Rugby has agreed not to host weddings after September, it seems likely this difficulty has been resolved. Please see - https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2026/09/27/planning-update-farleigh-house/.

Somerset Local Plan – what next?

Somerset Council has issued a statement on what happens now after the 'scoping' consultation for the Somerset-wide Local Plan in June-August – see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somersets-local-plan-what-happens-next/. Responses to the consultation are being analysed and a summary will be published in November.

The Council is developing its spatial strategy for future growth, to define the pattern of development in the Local Plan. Potential development sites which landowners and developers have nominated through the Call for Sites are being assessed in the *Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment* (HELAA) for their suitability, availability and achievability. The HELAA includes sites in and around Frome, Rode, Beckington and Norton St Philip - see Initial HELAA REPORT. Any potentially suitable sites would be assessed for their consistency with the spatial strategy, and sites proposed for allocation would be subject to further evidence gathering, assessment and consultation.

The next consultation on the content of the Local Plan, with the proposed spatial strategy planned for September-October 2027, followed by public consultations and the final Local Plan being submitted in 2028, and formal adoption in 2029 – see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/somerset-local-plan-timetable/. Please see Somerset Local Plan 2045 and you can also sign up to the *Plan-it Somerset Newsletter*– see Plan-it Somerset Newsletter Sign-up.

Beckington housing allowed on appeal

Planning application 2024/1865/FUL, the *Erection of 20 dwellings (including affordable housing) with associated highway access, public open space, landscaping & external works, including demolition of outbuilding & installation of sewage pumping station & electricity sub-station*, was initially deferred at Somerset Council's Planning Committee East in May 2025, to allow for more information to be gathered on the impact of the discharge of sewage into the River Frome, the designated wild swimming area at Farleigh Hungerford, and further clarification regarding the need of a financial contribution to the provision of primary health care in the village.

It was then refused when it came back to committee in July 2025, for three reasons, in summary (1) harm to the setting and heritage value of the surrounding Conservation Area and nearby Listed Buildings, (2) insufficient information to demonstrate no unacceptable impact on the River Frome as a consequence of sewerage and surface water flows during periods of heavy rainfall given local examples of waste discharge during peak events; and (3) overdevelopment leading to an unacceptable impact on local infrastructure and connectivity.

The refusal was appealed by Cotswold Homes Ltd & Redrow Homes Ltd, with a hearing in July 2026. The Planning Inspector's decision in September was that the appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted. The reasons in summary were that:

- There would be harm to the setting of listed buildings and the Conservation Area, but the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm to heritage assets, and therefore the harm does not provide a strong reason to refuse planning permission.
- In light of the planning condition agreed between the Council and the Appellants (which would provide suitable mitigation for foul water discharges) there is now no reason to withhold planning permission on the basis of the likely impact of waste water inflow at Beckington sewage works.
- Beckington is a primary village as identified in the Local Plan, and has a range of services and a bus service, and the application provides a contribution towards improving transport infrastructure, so this proposal would be situated in a sustainable location and would not conflict with the objectives of the Local Plan as set out in Policies CP1 and DP9.

A number of planning conditions were agreed, and a Section 106 agreement was agreed including to provide: 6 affordable housing units on site, 5 for social rent; management of the open space to be provided on site; contributions to mitigate the anticipated increased demand at Beckington Family Practice GP surgery; contributions towards the improvement of early years provision; a contribution towards mitigating anticipated extra demand at Royal United Hospital; and contributions towards improvements to 2 roundabouts resulting from the increase in population.

I remember proposing the initial deferred in May 2025 due to concerns on sewage discharges into the River Frome, and the need to expand the GP surgery. But there are lessons to learn here.

The Inspector also awarded the appellants' appeal for costs, citing the Council's 'unreasonable behaviour' in initially deferring and then refusing the application and also in relation to two issues during the appeal. All documents can be found on the Council's portal at 2024/1865/FUL | Erection of 20 dwellings... | Land At 380227 152171 Great Dunns Close Beckington Frome Somerset.

Housing proposals being prepared for Land off Church Lane, Rode

Cotswold Homes has also announced they are preparing a planning application for housing development off Church Lane, Rode, and are inviting residents to give feedback before submitting the application before the end of this year. Their '*initial masterplan for 34 new homes'* would *'include a mix of one- to four-bedroom properties, designed to meet a range of local needs. As well as housing, the designs include proposals for landscaping, parking, and energy measures such as EV charging, air source heat pumps and solar panels. The proposals would also secure affordable homes and any necessary contributions towards upgrading local facilities and services...'.*

To take part in the consultation please visit www.CH-Rode.co.uk until **30th October**.

Oldford Hill housing development update

The planning application for **360 homes** between Oldford Hill, Windsbatch Lane and Gypsy Lane adjacent to the northern edge of Frome (2026/0216/OUT) has attracted further responses. Consultees have required further information, and various additional reports have been submitted to attempt to address these. National Highways has recently issued a **second holding objection** on 2nd September for 6 months to require further information to assess the impact on the A36, so Somerset Council cannot now approve the application until March 2027.

Service station and drive-thru at A36 White Row Farm Roundabout

A hybrid (part-outline, part-full) planning application for a petrol station and shop, drive thru unit and EV charging hub (full), and another drive thru unit (outline), and associated car parking, has been submitted at the A36 White Row Roundabout (ref. 2026/0121/FUL | Hybrid Planning application). Beckington Parish Council has objected on highways and drainage impacts. National Highways has issued a second holding objection for another three months from 14th July to require further information on traffic impact and highways estate. Further information has been submitted, but Somerset Council cannot approve the application until 14th October. I am asking for an update. The lack of a safe pedestrian crossing at the A36 between Beckington and White Row Farm is an issue of concern.

Rudge Lane

The unauthorised travellers encampment to the south of Rudge on Rudge Lane remains an active planning enforcement case (Somerset Council ref. ENF/2025/0160) and has had police involvement.

Rode Café and General Stores to reopen

Rode's Post Office, café and shop in the heart of the village on the High Street sadly closed at the end of September. But the good news is it due to reopen under new owners, from Tuesday 10th November, "serving breakfast and lunch, great coffee, a curated selection of everyday essentials, beautiful local produce and lovely gifts". Villagers can have a preview to look around and see what is on offer, on Saturday 7th November 11am-1pm. Here's hoping that Rode café, Post Office and shop will soon be a thriving and vital part of the Rode community once again. The website will be https://rodecafe.co.uk/

Vale of Frome Local Community Network

LCN Highways Working Group

The next LCN Highways Working Group will be on Thursday 15th October between 11.00 and 12.45 in Frome Town Hall (in person and on Teams – please see email from James Moore, LCN Link Officer on 24th September. Items were requested for discussion by email to ValeofFromeLCN@somerset.gov.uk .

Gritting routes survey

Please do complete the winter gritting survey to identify any additional roads that need gritting and why (e.g. bus routes, routes to schools) – see the email from James Moore on 18th September, or you can access the form directly here Vale of Frome LCN – Winter Gritting Parish Questionnaire.

Somerset Council and Kier have also been shortlisted for a national award thanks to a new, low-carbon approach to treating roads in wintry weather - https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-winter-service-innovation-shortlisted-for-prestigious-national-award/.

LCN meetings

The meeting in Frome on services and support for teenagers went ahead on 1st October and was well attended. The LCN has recently had a relaunch – see https://www.frometimes.co.uk/residents-invited-to-shape-local-priorities/ and https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2026/09/25/lcn-teenagers/#page-content.

The next LCN meeting is on Policing and Rural Crime with the Police and Crime Commissioner Clare Moody on Thursday 12th November (online).

See also Vale of Frome (https://lcn.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/local-community-network-areas/vale-of-frome/). Please contact the VoF LCN officer James Moore at ValeofFromeLCN@somerset.gov.uk or me with any queries.

Parking charges

Somerset Council's Executive has approved revised proposals to change parking charges across the county, after listening to feedback on the initial proposals from a Scrutiny Committee in September, and local councillors, residents and businesses. The revised proposals were approved by the Council's Executive on Wednesday 7th October.

This means that from January 2027, all parking fees in paid-for Somerset Council car parks will increase by 10%, the first increase in 17 months; a new tiered charging system will come into effect from Autumn 2027; outdated parking payment machines will be replaced; discussions will take place from Autumn 2027 with local communities and councillors on potential changes to parking permits and concessions and (from January 2028) on potential charging for on-street parking in some areas, and no decisions will be made before then; and a framework will be developed in which Frome Town Council (and other city, town and parish councils) could enter into an agreement with Somerset Council to pay for free or cheaper parking to support their objectives. I will be keeping an eye on this.

Please see https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2026/10/10/parking-charges/.

Road defects completed

The following lists the safety defects completed by Somerset Council in **September** in Frome North:

Report Date Range: 01/09/2026 to 30/09/2026 **Page 1 of 1**

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	U2909/10	PARKGATE LANE - RODE	5
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	T2575/50	CLINK ROAD - BERKLEY	3
• FW- Step in Level: Other	F1056/2440	URBAN FOOTPATH	2
• CW- Edge Loss	U2836/30	DYMOTTS COTTAGE ACCESS ROAD - LULLINGTON	2
• CW- Edge Loss	U2909/10	PARKGATE LANE - RODE	2
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U2949/70	NIGHTINGALE AVENUE	2
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	A361/1413	FROME BYPASS - BERKLEY	1
• CW- Edge Loss	A361/1510	FROME BYPASS - BERKLEY	1
• TR - Tree Down on Highway	A361/1720	FROME ROAD / RODE COMMON - RODE	1
• CW- Debris in Carriageway	A361/1730	RODE COMMON - RODE	1
• CW- Step in Level	A361/1730	RODE COMMON - RODE	1
• SG- Misaligned Sign	B3109/110	BRADFORD ROAD - RODE	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	T2832/11	LULLINGTON LANE - OLDFORD	1
• CW- Vegetation	T9249/10	FROME ROAD - BECKINGTON	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U2846/10	TELLISFORD HOUSE TO BATH ROAD - TELLISFORD	1
• CW- Carriageway Pothole	U2942/20	PARK HILL DRIVE	1
		Total:	**26**

Lullington lorries

Somerset Council's highways team has recently installed new 'Unsuitable for HGVs' signs at the junction of the A36 south of Woolverton to deter HGVs from using the rural lanes through Lullington, after lobbying by Lullington parish meeting, me and cllr Denton.

This is because articulated lorries trying to go this way to the Andros factory have got stuck, unable to pass along the narrow lanes and at the Great Bridge just to the west of the factory, and have caused property damage doing so. They then have to spend an hour reversing carefully back onto the A36. The new signs are in addition to the 'to Andros UK' sign installed a few months ago, which replaced the unofficial large red sign previously installed by Lullington Parish Council.

Somerset Council is now considering imposing a weight limit along this route, and Anna Sabine MP's team are also chasing Google Maps to confirm they have updated their satnav directions to indicate that the route is unsuitable for HGVs. Please see https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2026/09/26/lullington-not-for-andros-hgvs/ for more.

Council plan outlines investment plan for transport

Somerset Council's Executive has approved its Local Transport Delivery Plan. This is a requirement of the Department for Transport, and sets out how the Council intends to invest more than £283 million of government funding between 2026 and 2030 in transport infrastructure and services, including improvements to roads, road safety, bus services, and walking and cycling routes across the county. Please see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-plan-outlines-major-investment-in-transport-infrastructure/.

What does this mean for the Frome area? Appendix A of the report shows the proposed allocations to Individual schemes. The LTDP does not yet identify any major schemes local to the Frome area, as very few specific schemes have been identified, but the annual budget setting process will allocate the funds from the programme to specific activities, projects and schemes across Somerset. This will need to link in with the Council's Local Transport Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans and projects identified through the LCN Highways Working Groups and the emerging Frome Area Movement Strategy (see https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2026/09/16/movement-place-plan/)

Somerset Council awarded funding to explore bus franchising

Somerset Council's transport team has been awarded funding by the Government's Department for Transport (DfT) to carry out a bus franchising pre-feasibility assessment. Bus franchising is a system where the local transport authority awards exclusive contracts to private operators to run services on specific routes or areas; unlike the current enhanced partnership arrangement, franchising would mean the Council keeps control over routes, fares, timetables and service standards. Recent changes to Government legislation and guidance, and this new funding, mean the Council can now carry out a formal, evidence-based assessment of the different franchising models available, to get a clear picture of whether any could deliver better outcomes - see Somerset Council awarded funding to explore feasibility of bus franchising.

Decision on £50 million investment in flood prevention plans

In September, Somerset Council's Executive approved how £50 million for flood resilience, allocated to Somerset by DEFRA in June, will be allocated. The programme focuses on 15 projects, including extra river desilting, more gully clearance, improved pumping, better maintenance, new infrastructure, and an expansion of the *My Community* flood planning and prevention programme. More than £650,000 will reach communities before this winter: an extra £100,000 for Somerset Prepared small grants for emergency equipment plus first aid training; £50,000 for the Council's emergency response teams; and an extra £500,000 for more frequent gully clearing in flood-prone areas. Please see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-outlines-next-steps-in-allocating-50-million-of-flood-resilience-funding/.

Parish and Town Councils, charities and constituted community groups can apply for grant funding from *Somerset Prepared*, for example to provide training to local groups, equipment such as storage and protective clothing, and to help recruit volunteers, see https://www.somersetprepared.org.uk/get-support/funding-support/.

Somerset awarded £5million to reduce rough sleeping

Somerset Council has secured £5.87 million in Government funding to help people sleeping rough move off the streets and into safe, settled accommodation. The funding is from the Government's new Rough Sleeping Programme and is for three years, 2026/27-2029/30, in recognition of the significant challenge that rough sleeping places here in Somerset. The funding is being spent on both new initiatives and the expansion of existing services, including the delivery of female only accommodation and support, and some higher support accommodation to work with people with complex needs. Using this funding, Local Authorities must also offer accommodation to all people sleeping rough by Christmas. Please see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-awarded-millions-to-reduce-rough-sleeping-in-county/.

People who are concerned about the possibility of becoming homeless and need support or advice should visit https://www.somerset.gov.uk/housing-support/homelessness-and-prevention/.

Anyone who sees someone sleeping rough should alert **StreetLink** so that dedicated rough sleeping teams can arrange outreach support – see https://thestreetlink.org.uk/.

New strategy to tackle domestic abuse:

Somerset Council and its partners have launched a new strategy setting out how they will prevent domestic abuse, support victims and families, and hold people who cause harm to account. The Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026–2029 provides a shared plan for organisations across Somerset. It builds on the previous strategy and reflects the findings of the 2024 multi-authority Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment. See https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-launches-new-strategy-to-tackle-domestic-abuse/.

Government approves Somerset's SEND Reform Plan

The Department for Education has approved Somerset Council's SEND Reform Plan, unlocking significant investment to strengthen support and improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the county. See https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/government-approves-somersets-send-reform-plan/.

Multi-million plan to create more local specialist education places

A few days later, a proposal to expand specialist support in mainstream schools, increase special school capacity and help more children and young people learn closer to home was approved at Somerset Council's Executive (7th October). This will increase local education provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), through the investment of around £8.9m of Government capital funding in new and improved specialist spaces across Somerset. The programme supports 104 new places in specialist inclusion bases at 11 mainstream schools, up to 24 additional places at the Mendip School, accessibility improvements, 42 inclusion support bases and new alternative provision in areas where there are currently gaps. Please see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/multi-million-plan-to-create-more-local-specialist-education-places-in-somerset/.

We also await the outcome of the Somerset Council's consultation into new arrangements for schools (Formal consultation opens on proposed changes to education structures in Frome).

Investment in Somerset's economy

Somerset Council has a confirmed that £5.2m of former South West Local Enterprise Partnership legacy funds will be used to support jobs, skills, innovation and major growth opportunities across Somerset, on strategic economic development activities which are in line with the Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045 and the Government's original intentions for the use of these funds. More money – at least £1.4m – is expected to be available by October 2029. See https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/5-2m-to-be-invested-in-boosting-somersets-economy/.

Somerset Council responds to Best Value Notice

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government issued Somerset Council with a Best Value Improvement Notice on 15 July 2026, formally notifying the Council of Government concerns about its capacity to comply with the Best Value Duty. It follows the May 2026 CIPFA review, which found the Council's financial position fragile. The Council is expected to engage with the Department at least quarterly on progress, and the notice will be reviewed by 15 January 2027. In response, Somerset Council has outlined actions to strengthen governance, finances and services - see Somerset Council sets out response to Best Value Notice.

Like many councils across the country, Somerset is facing rising demand and costs in essential services including Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and homelessness, alongside a local government funding system which does not adequately reflect the cost of delivering services in a large rural county. The Council continues to argue that relying on Council Tax increases to fund demand-led services is not sustainable. At the same time, the Council accepts that it must continue to improve financial management, governance, transformation and performance across key services.

However, external auditors Grant Thornton have placed Somerset Council in the highest category for financial accounts assurance recovery, recognising the progress made in improving how the Council delivers its statutory accounts. The assessment was reported to the Council's Audit Committee on 27th August, and places Somerset in "Category A", the highest rating available, reflecting auditor confidence that the Council can regain a fully unqualified, or clean, audit opinion by 2027/28. See Auditors recognise Somerset Council's strong progress on accounts management.

Wessex leaders issue joint statement on devolution

In August, the leaders of Somerset Council, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset Council and Wiltshire Council issued a joint statement following the Government's invitation to areas without a devolution arrangement to express an interest in establishing a Mayoral Strategic Authority. They said Wessex is ready and uniquely placed to move forward, describing this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring decisions closer to local people, unlock investment and drive long-term prosperity across the region. See https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/wessex-leaders-issue-joint-statement-on-devolution/

Recycle Week: Somerset reuse up by more than a quarter

Somerset's annual recycling tracker, published for Recycle Week, shows nearly 3,500 tonnes of materials rescued for reuse last year, up 26%, and more than 23,000 tonnes of food waste recycled, up 8%. Around 1,100 tonnes less rubbish went to energy from waste and 40% less to landfill. Somerset's 55% recycling rate for 2025-26 puts it in the top 10% of unitary authorities in England. Food waste collections are also up – see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-residents-show-their-commitment-to-recycle-more-food-waste/.

Upcoming Somerset Council meetings

See https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1:

- Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Strategic: 14 October at 10.00am, County Hall, Taunton (including Saxonvale sale decision call-in)
- Scrutiny Committee – Climate, Environment and Place: 15 October at 10.00am, County Hall
- Standards Committee: 22 October at 10.00am, County Hall
- Strategic Planning Committee: 22 October at 2.00pm, Bridgwater
- Licensing Sub-Committee (East): 27 October at 10.00am, virtual meeting
- Shareholder Executive Sub-Committee: 28 October at 10.00am, County Hall
- Planning and Transport Policy Executive Sub-Committee: 28 October at 2.00pm, County Hall
- Audit Committee: 29 October at 10.00am, County Hall
- Next Somerset Rivers Authority Board: 4 December at 9.45am, Council Offices, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet

See democracy.somerset.gov.uk – Council calendar

Open consultations

see Find activities - Somerset Council - Citizen Space

- Best Start in Life Parent Carer Survey (closes 16th October)
- Using Evidence to Create Healthier, Happier and Fairer Lives in Somerset (closes 30th October)
- Parent Carer School-age Childcare in Somerset Survey, Autumn 2026

Other news from Somerset Council

see https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/

Report a problem

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 there are any issues I can help on.

Best wishes,

Adam Boyden
Somerset Councillor for Frome North (Liberal Democrat)

Mobile: 07809 284817
Email: adam.boyden@somerset.gov.uk
Web: see the latest news at https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/