

**SOMERSET COUNCIL**  
**Norton St Philip Parish Council**  
**Cllr Dawn Denton**  
**Annual Report 2026 / 2027**

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of representing our community across a wide range of local initiatives, meetings, events, and strategic discussions. It has been a year focused on listening, learning, advocating, and helping bring people together around the issues that matter most locally.

It would be an impossibility to list everything I have been involved in. More details are, of course, in my monthly reports, which I have submitted religiously.

So, here is a high-level overview of my involvement across the Frome North division in the 2025/2026 period.

One of the consistent highlights throughout the year has been attending the Frome Chamber of Commerce breakfasts. These gatherings provide an important opportunity to hear directly from local businesses, understand the challenges they face, and strengthen relationships across the local economy.

***Supporting thriving local businesses remains central to building resilient communities.***

Community fundraising and local support initiatives have also played an important part in the year. I was pleased to support the Blue House fundraiser and the People for Packsaddle fundraising coffee morning (and out in the fields), both of which demonstrated the generosity and commitment that exists within our community.

***These events strengthen local connections and create spaces where people can come together.***

Another important area of work has been reviewing and contributing to discussions around the Local Community Network. Ensuring that local voices are heard effectively, and that communities can shape local priorities, remains essential.

***Community engagement only works when people feel included in decision-making and can see that their contributions matter.***

Encouraging wider participation in local democracy has also been a priority during the year. I have led sessions on becoming a councillor to help demystify the role and encourage more people to consider participating in public life. Local government benefits from a wide range of experiences and perspectives, and it is important that people feel local politics is accessible to them. I was also interviewed by Civic Imaginaries regarding political engagement in Frome and the ways communities can become more involved in shaping local decision-making.

Supporting education and inspiration for younger people has been another rewarding part of the year. I delivered a schools talk focused on inspiration (some for students and other for Heads of Departments), and careers, encouraging students to think broadly about their future opportunities and the importance of civic involvement and leadership.

Alongside community engagement, a significant amount of time has been spent on strategic and governance-related work. I undertook finance and leadership training with the Local Government Association, which provided valuable insight into local authority finance, governance, and effective leadership. These opportunities are important in ensuring councillors are well-equipped to make informed and responsible decisions. And of course, these programmes have helped me perform my duties as the Opposition Spokesperson for Finance, Procurement and Performance.

I also had the opportunity to serve on the Chief Finance Officer interview panel at the council. Participating in this process highlighted the importance of strong financial leadership within local government, particularly during a time of increasing pressure on public services and local authority budgets.

Several meetings and discussions this year focused on local infrastructure, environmental issues, and public services. I attended numerous meetings with Wessex Water to discuss local concerns and ongoing issues affecting residents. Water quality and environmental sustainability continue to be significant priorities for many communities across Somerset.

Environmental initiatives featured prominently throughout the year. I attended the Green Conference marking the conclusion of the lottery-funded Green and Healthy Future Frome programme, celebrating the achievements of organisations and individuals working to improve sustainability, health, and community resilience. I have also been involved in the Frome Waste Programme and attended a Frome Town Council River Stakeholder Group meeting, both of which contribute to wider conversations about environmental responsibility and the future of our local area.

Another important strand of work has involved health and wellbeing. I met with Adult Social Care representatives regarding the removal of community hospital beds at Frome Community Hospital. These discussions are extremely important to residents and families who rely on accessible local healthcare services. I also visited the Farmers Health Hub, which provides vital support for members of the farming community, particularly around health and wellbeing challenges that can often remain hidden.

This year also included involvement in several wider strategic projects and working groups. I have been part of the Farleigh Hungerford Bathing Working Group (with the Environment Agency) and involved in aspects of the Saxonvale process, both of which reflect the importance of long-term planning, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development.

Supporting leadership and enterprise within the community has also been rewarding. I was pleased to be part of the Edventure Panel, helping support women entrepreneurs as they begin and develop their business journeys. Encouraging confidence, innovation, and local enterprise is an important investment in the future of our communities.

Public remembrance and civic occasions have remained important moments throughout the year. Attending Remembrance Sunday services provided an opportunity to reflect collectively on sacrifice, service, and community solidarity. My invitation to have tea with the King and Queen in the gardens of Buckingham Palace was one of the highlights, not only for the year, but of my life.

There have also been opportunities to communicate local issues to a wider audience through regional media. I spoke on BBC Somerset regarding the flags being raised across the county and also appeared on BBC Politics West to discuss wider local and regional matters. I also had the pleasure of a radio / podcast discussion about political engagement with FromeFM and Andrew Lee of the Somerset Confidential.

Looking back over the year, what stands out most is the importance of collaboration, persistence, and community engagement. Whether through public meetings, strategic discussions, training, fundraising events, environmental initiatives, or conversations with residents, the common thread has been working together to strengthen and support our communities.

I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve and represent local residents, and I look forward to continuing this work in the next 12 months in my role as your Somerset councillor for Frome North, and as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition with the portfolio of Finance, Procurement and Performance.

## **Across Frome North**

**Council Tax:** Times are incredibly difficult for so many residents, and I have received many emails to ask for help to apply for the reduction scheme.

**Rights of Way:** This is a constant in my inbox, but as the Rights of Way team has been dramatically reduced in the council reorganisation programme, things will take a lot longer than we would like.

**Flooding:** The Climate team has also been reduced, and I know there are concerns across the division around flooding. At the May Local Community Network the Somerset Rivers Authority presented their work and will be engaging with parishes and residents directly with their concerns.

**National Highways:** Although I have a good line of communication with National Highways in our area, they too are confined to budgets and priorities.

**Somerset Highways:** The Highways team has become less responsive over the past 12 months, which has been frustrating for residents, parish councils and for Somerset Councillors. We can only submit our issues on the website and hope that our problem will be addressed at some point. There is a constant struggle to get 'No HGV' signs installed and is thus ongoing.

**Licensing:** There are a few business licensing issues that have been raised with me, as well as issues around Environmental Health. These have been passed on and tend to get dealt with quite quickly.

**Fly tipping:** This has been a constant struggle across the division. I have asked publicly for a stand-alone fly tipping policy at the council, but have been told there isn't one and there are no current plans to put one in place.

**Housing developments:** My focus has been on the Longmead Development in Norton St Philip. The residents have submitted an official complaint and are waiting on a response.

**Unauthorised developments:** There are calls for Multi-Agency Groups to be set up for issues across the division, but this is proving difficult.

**Enforcement:** There is only one Enforcement officer looking after cases in the East of the county, and thus a constant frustration, and often fear around these issues.

**Rivers and Bridges:** I am working closely with the Bridges team to get repairs down to Great Bridge in Lullington, but the concerns around the bridges in Farleigh Hungerford are proving almost impossible to get sorted.

**Enterprise Advisor:** In my role I have delivered career and inspirational talks for secondary schools across Somerset and helped Heads of Department incorporate oracy into their lessons.

**Frome Times:** There are six Somerset Councillors in Frome. The Frome Times comes out every two weeks, so I submit a piece for the Councillor's Corner every 12 weeks.

**Adult Social Care:** Many enquiries have come in, have been referred and thankfully been actioned very quickly.

**Road Safety:** There are constant requests for parking enforcement, dangerous parking and speeding outside nursery schools etc. These are referred to the council, and the residents are reminded to report to the police too.

**Local Community Networks (LCN):** I was invited to be part of the review of the LCNs to consider making them more effective.

**Buses:** I have asked questions publicly on bus funding for Frome and continue to push for more support in our rural communities.

## Committees

**Planning East:** Planning has been incredibly challenging over the past year. The council is unable to show a 5-year housing supply and thus there is pressure to approve as much housing as possible. This has been difficult, but I have tried to push back as much as I can.

**Scrutiny:** I no longer officially sit on a scrutiny committee, but I enjoy substituting on the Climate and Place committee, which I have done a few times over the year.

**Shadow Executive:** As Opposition Leader and Spokesperson for Finance, Procurement and Performance, I have met with the Head of Procurement a number of times, and now that the CFO is staying until March 2027, I will be meeting with Clive Heaphy more regularly.

**Audit Committee:** In my role as Finance Spokesperson, I sit on the Audit committee, which involves reporting from the external auditors, and plays an important role in the direction of the council in relation to finance, delivery of service and overall performance.

**Executive Committee:** Although we are not expected to attend the council Executive meetings, I try to ask questions in-person or online, as much as I can.

## Plan for the next 12 months

As I move into the last 12 months of a 5-year term, I am focused on getting those outstanding issues, which have gone on for years, completed. I will be working closely with our villages to set up Youth Clubs (as Norton St Philip has been asked to consider by a resident), and in Beckington, there is a request to find funding for an After School Hub. This would be a wonderful project to end my term. As I have watched and experienced things getting worse at the council, I know 2026 / 2027 will not be easy, but I believe in getting things done as part of a team.

***Thank you for being part of the team, and your ongoing support.  
I look forward to a productive and successful year ahead.***