

## Monthly Somerset Councillor Report May 2026

From your Somerset Councillors:

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### Have Your Say on Somerset's SEND Reform Plan

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities across Somerset are being urged to share their views as part of a [consultation on the Government's SEND Reform Plan](#). Somerset Council must submit its local SEND Reform Plan by 19 June. Young people with SEND can take part via the [SEND Reform Plan Survey](#), with responses needed by Friday 15 May 2026.

### Nominations Open for Celebrating Care and Achievement 2026

Somerset Council is inviting nominations for its Celebrating Care and Achievement event on Thursday 30 July 2026. The event has been renamed and expanded so that all care-experienced children and young people across the county can attend for the first time. Nominations close Friday 29 May 2026.

Nominate a child/young person: [forms.cloud.microsoft/e/pRs2ZVuGWC](https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/pRs2ZVuGWC)

Nominate an adult: [forms.cloud.microsoft/e/wjZGyQR0uC](https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/wjZGyQR0uC)

### Somerset's Public Health Chief Urges Residents to Get Free Heart Check

Somerset's Director of Public Health, Alison Bell, is encouraging eligible residents to book a free NHS Health Check after having one herself. The checks, available to those aged 40–74 with no pre-existing heart conditions, assess cardiovascular health and risk of conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke. Appointments are available at libraries and community venues across the county including Chard, Frome, Glastonbury, Wellington, Minehead, Porlock, Shepton Mallet, Taunton, Street, Highbridge, Wells and Wincanton. [Book your appointment here.](#)

For full article see: [somerset.gov.uk/news/director-of-public-health-leads-from-the-front-with-nhs-health-check/](https://somerset.gov.uk/news/director-of-public-health-leads-from-the-front-with-nhs-health-check/)

### New Tobacco Law Prompts Call for Somerset Smokers to Quit

The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 has received Royal Assent, introducing a generational ban on tobacco sales to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009, along with restrictions on vape advertising and a retail licensing scheme. Somerset's public health leaders are using the milestone to urge the county's 60,000 smokers to quit, with free support available through Smokefree Somerset.

#### Free help to quit smoking:

Website: [smokefreesomerset.org.uk](https://smokefreesomerset.org.uk) | Phone: 01823 356222 (9am–5pm) | Email: [smokefree@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:smokefree@somerset.gov.uk)

Free app: [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#)

### **Somerset's Social Care Challenge: How the Council is Responding**

Somerset Council's Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Housing, Councillor Sarah Wakefield, appeared on BBC Somerset to address questions from residents about the growing pressures on social care in the county. With Somerset having one of the oldest populations in the country, demand for adult social care is rising. She outlined steps including working more closely with the NHS and voluntary sector, investing in technology to help people live independently for longer, and incorporating AI to save time. Listen at: [bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002vc94](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002vc94) (available for 24 days from 29 April).

### **England's Chief Medical Officer Visits Somerset to Study Rural Health**

Professor Sir Chris Whitty, England's Chief Medical Officer, visited Glastonbury in March as part of his research into health in small towns and rural communities, which will inform his next Annual Report. During the day he saw Somerset's community health initiatives at first hand, including food pantries, early years support, library-based NHS health checks, and services supporting people experiencing homelessness and substance use. He praised the work of public health, NHS and council partners in the county.

### **£22 Million Fund to Help Somerset Residents Through Financial Crisis**

Somerset Council has received £22.6 million from the Government over three years to support residents facing financial hardship. Citizens Advice Somerset has been appointed to lead the scheme, working alongside partners including Age UK Somerset and Somerset Community Foundation to provide crisis payments, debt advice, budgeting support and employment guidance. Residents can apply via [citizensadvice-somerset.org.uk](https://citizensadvice-somerset.org.uk) or by calling 0808 278 7842.

Residents across Somerset who are feeling the financial squeeze can access a range of free local support — from food pantries and help with heating bills to mental health advice and assistance with rent and everyday essentials. Full details at: [somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support](https://somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support)

### **New Music Project Aims to Tackle Isolation Around Wellington**

A community music initiative called Together in Tone has launched across the Wellington and Wiveliscombe area, with the aim of reducing isolation and supporting wellbeing through music. Funded through the Community Health and Wellbeing programme, the project will connect local choirs, bands and musicians while creating new opportunities for people of all backgrounds to get involved. Contact project manager Caz Besterman at [caz@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk](mailto:caz@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk)

### **Record 99% of Somerset Children Get Primary School of Their Choice**

Somerset Council has announced that 99.43% of the 4,938 families who applied for a primary school place this year were offered one of their top three preferences — a record high. Of those, 95.38% received their first-choice school. Children will begin at their new schools in September 2026.

### **Somerset Pupil Referral Units Reorganised to Improve Consistency**

Somerset's four Pupil Referral Units — which provide education for children unable to attend mainstream school — have been consolidated into two. From April 2026, the western unit is now called Willow Vale School and the eastern unit retains the name Tor School. Two behaviour partnerships in Frome and West Somerset will be fully

integrated into the new structure by September 2026. The council says there will be no changes to funding or existing sites.

### **Somerset Leisure Centres Kept Open After Operator Collapse**

Somerset Council has moved swiftly to keep gyms, pools and leisure centres in Frome, Wells, Glastonbury and Street open after operator Fusion Lifestyle went into administration. The Council has agreed funding for three months to ensure time to appoint a new operator. The Shepton Mallet Lido has opened as expected on 1st May. Members are encouraged to keep using the facilities and maintain their memberships as usual.

### **Youth Parliament Members Meet Council Chair at County Hall**

Members of the Somerset Youth Parliament visited County Hall in Taunton in April to meet Council Chair Cllr Mike Best and discuss how young people can play a greater role in local democracy. The three members — Eva, Blake and Luca — outlined their campaign priorities, including mental health, online safety, access to sport, and financial literacy. The meeting is hoped to mark the start of an ongoing relationship between the council and Somerset Youth Parliament.

### **Are You Making the Most of Your Food Waste Recycling?**

If you're already recycling your food waste, give yourself a pat on the back — but a couple of simple checks could make your efforts even more effective. Food waste recycling is one of the easiest ways households can make a real difference to the environment. When food scraps are collected separately, they can be turned into energy and fertiliser rather than ending up in landfill. Find out more at:

[somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/join-the-food-waste-revolution-in-somerset](https://somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/join-the-food-waste-revolution-in-somerset)

### **Somerset Conference of Trees — Friday 12 June, Orchard Park Farm, Hornblotton**

A unique gathering of foresters, tree spiritualists and woodland enthusiasts is coming to Somerset this summer, bringing together some of the most influential forest thinkers of our time. The Somerset Conference of Trees takes place on Friday 12 June at Orchard Park Farm, Hornblotton, near Shepton Mallet, running from 9.15am to 4.30pm. Whether you are a professional forester, a passionate woodland walker or simply someone who loves trees, the conference offers a rare opportunity to connect with like-minded people in a beautiful outdoor setting. [Book your place here.](#)

### **New Bus Service to Connect Glastonbury and Street with Train Network**

Somerset Council is launching a new bus service in June linking Glastonbury and Street with Castle Cary railway station. The 667X service will run seven days a week, including Sundays, with connections timed to meet trains to London, Exeter, Plymouth, Salisbury, Weymouth and Gloucester. A similar link from Somerton and Langport is also being planned.

### **Four New On-Demand Slinky Buses Launched for Taunton and Wellington**

Somerset Council has introduced four new fully accessible on-demand buses serving Taunton, Wellington and Sedgemoor. The Digital Slinky service has no fixed route — passengers book via an app or by phone at least an hour in advance, with pick-up from existing bus stops or, for those with mobility issues, from home. The service runs

Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 5.30pm. Bookings by phone: 01823 331266 (9am–4pm, Mon–Fri). Register via the [Slinky Booking webpage](#) or search ‘Slinky’ in your app store.

### **Safety Works Begin on Frome Bypass After Five Deaths in Five Years**

Somerset Council is introducing new safety measures on the A361 Frome Bypass, which has seen five fatalities in the past five years, four of these between 2023 and 2024. Work starting from 11 May includes resurfacing, a reduced speed limit of 50mph, and central road hatching, carried out over three nights with a full overnight road closure. AI cameras installed in autumn 2024 recorded over 4,500 offences in their first four months, including 74 drivers exceeding 80mph.

The works follow extensive campaigning by residents, local councillors including Lib Dem councillor Adam Boyden, and Lib Dem MP Anna Sabine. Sabine made road safety on the bypass her very first priority upon being elected in 2024, tabling a question to the Transport Secretary in her first week in office.

### **£4 Million Roundabout to Replace Dangerous Junction Near Wells**

A notorious collision spot near Wells is to be transformed into a roundabout this summer. The Whitnell Corner junction on the B3139/B3135 near West Horrington has seen 67 collisions over 20 years, including one fatality. Work on the £4 million Government-funded scheme was delayed from April and will now begin in mid-June, with the road closed 24/7 throughout and completion expected in the autumn.

### **New Crossing Kicks Off Bridgwater Safety Improvements**

Somerset Council has begun a programme of safety works in Bridgwater, starting with a new toucan crossing at the Ascot Drive junction on the A38 Bristol Road. The crossing forms part of the town’s growing active travel network, and is the first of several planned improvements that will also include work at The Leggar and the Cannon/Cross Rifles junction. Some overnight road closures are expected during the final stages of the works.

### **Somerset Council Bids to Reopen Cleeve Hill Road**

Somerset Council has submitted a bid to the Government’s Structures Fund for a £30–40 million scheme to reopen the B3191 at Cleeve Hill near Watchet, which has been closed to vehicles since 2023 due to cliff instability. The funding would go towards either stabilising the existing route or redirecting it inland, with a decision yet to be confirmed.

### **A30 Hendford Hill to Reopen by End of May**

The A30 at Hendford Hill in Yeovil is set to reopen fully by the end of May, following damage caused by Storm Chandra earlier this year. The road has been operating northbound only after a bank slippage and fallen trees made it unsafe. Somerset Council’s Highways Team has carried out initial repairs and a geological assessment, with major vegetation clearance and debris removal now underway. Concrete barriers will then be installed at the base of the slope before both lanes can reopen.

### **Wessex Water Fined Over Somerset Roadworks Breaches**

Wessex Water has been ordered to pay over £13,000 by Taunton Magistrates after admitting two offences relating to street works on the A38 at North Petherton in July 2025. The company failed to put adequate safety measures in place and excavated the road when its permit only covered the footpath. The fine took into account previous convictions dating back to 2018. [More on this story here.](#)

