Monthly Somerset Councillor Report
Nov 2026

Dear Councillors,

I'm delighted to be back at work after six months away, and especially pleased to be able to join you at Parish Council meetings again.

With darker evenings and colder weather setting in, it's important that we look out for vulnerable people in our communities and help ensure they can stay warm and have enough food.

This month's report is a little longer than usual, but it includes lots of positive news as well as some important information.

As ever, if you or anyone in your community needs help, please get in touch with Adam or me.

Best wishes,

Jo and Adam

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Wessex devolution: £460 million for the West Country, decided in the West Country

The Chancellor's Budget statement has confirmed the Government's support for devolution in Wessex, covering Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. In a joint statement, the four council leaders, Cllr Bill Revans (Somerset), Cllr Millie Earl (BCP), Cllr Nick Ireland (Dorset) and Cllr Ian Thorn (Wiltshire), welcomed it as a vote of confidence in the region, saying Wessex is ready, has done the groundwork, and will keep working with the Government towards an agreement.

Somerset Council Leader Cllr Bill Revans said: "Wessex Regional devolution comes with £460 million of central government funding over 30 years into the region that would otherwise go elsewhere in the country."

Growing the local economy: the investment is estimated to grow the regional economy by £16 billion over that period, with growth focused where the region has a competitive strength: defence, agriculture and food, clean energy, high value manufacturing, and the hospitality and creative sectors.

Decisions made here, not in Westminster: investment will go into transport infrastructure and public transport, skills and education for young people, and the right homes in the right places for local people. The South West Peninsula will also have a stronger voice nationally, with WECA,

Wessex, Devon and Cornwall all represented, so decisions are no longer dominated by the South East, the Midlands and the North.

Why the Council has backed it: some residents have asked why this is moving forward without a local vote. For the Council, the investment is the deciding factor. This is new money for our region, and without devolution it would be spent elsewhere in the country. Cllr Revans has described it as a game changer for the West Country.

More information: Council news release

£100 Household Energy Payment for Council Tax bands A to D in January 2027

The Government has announced that households in Council Tax bands A to D will receive a new £100 Household Energy Payment in January 2027.

You don't need to contact Somerset Council about the payment at this time. If you already pay your Council Tax by Direct Debit, the payment can be made automatically. If you don't, you can sign up now to help make sure you receive the £100 as quickly as possible.

There will also be a separate discretionary scheme for residents not eligible for the £100 payment. Further details of the discretionary scheme, and arrangements for those who do not pay by Direct Debit, are not yet confirmed but will be published nearer the time.

More information: £100 Household Energy Payment: information and Direct Debit sign-up

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£5.2 million to be invested in boosting Somerset's economy

The Executive has agreed to invest £5.2 million of legacy funds from the former Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership in strategic economic development, with at least a further £1.4 million expected by October 2029. Guided by the Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025 to 2045 and advice from the Somerset Economic Growth Board, the money will back projects that build on Somerset's strengths and support business start-up, scale-up, innovation and investment.

Useful links:
Council news release
Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy

Helping more Somerset children in care stay closer to home

Of the 164 children currently in residential care in Somerset, 97 are placed outside the county. Proposals going to the Executive on Wednesday 4 November set out a more flexible mix of homes and support, timed with the end of the Homes and Horizons contract in November 2027.

The Council would run two short-term assessment homes for children entering care in crisis and a short-breaks home for children with disabilities, commission eight further homes from at least two providers, and bring the High Needs Fostering Service under direct council management. Partnerships with Somerset CAMHS and Horizons Therapeutic Education Trust would continue, and changes would be phased to keep stability for children in the three homes currently open.

Useful links:
Council news release
Executive papers, 4 November

£8.9 million to create more local specialist education places

The Executive has approved £8.9 million of government capital funding to create more local places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), so more children can learn closer to home, with shorter journeys and less reliance on costly independent placements out of county.

The plan includes £3.84 million for specialist inclusion bases at 11 mainstream schools, providing 104 places, including Whitstone School in Shepton Mallet and St Benedict's Junior and St John's Infants in Glastonbury; £2.616 million to expand The Mendip School by up to 24 places, with an option for a future satellite in Frome; £1.68 million for 42 inclusion support bases between 2027 and 2030; £400,000 for alternative provision in Frome and West Somerset; and £340,000 for accessibility adaptations such as ramps, lifts and hygiene rooms.

Useful links:
Council news release
Executive report

Private Fostering Awareness Day, Wednesday 4 November

Wednesday 4 November is national Private Fostering Awareness Day, and Somerset Council is using it to help families understand what private fostering is, when the Council must be told, and the support available. Many people don’t realise an arrangement they have is private fostering.

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not a parent or close relative for 28 days or more in a row. Close relatives include grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and step-parents. Parents and private foster carers have a legal duty to tell Somerset Council, and support is available.

Useful links:
Private fostering in Somerset
Council news release

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Ofsted and CQC to inspect SEND services in Somerset

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are expected to inspect special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services in Somerset very soon. The inspection covers support for children and young people aged 0 to 25 and usually lasts around three weeks. Inspectors will look at families' experiences, how well needs are identified, how services work together, and whether support improves outcomes. The area was last inspected in 2020. Day-to-day support carries on as normal, and the findings will be published in a report.

Useful links:
Area SEND inspections: information for families
Council news release

Council plan outlines major investment in transport infrastructure

The Executive has approved Somerset's Local Transport Delivery Plan, setting out how more than £283 million of government funding will be used between 2026 and 2030. It covers maintaining and improving the road network, more investment in road safety schemes and public rights of way, support for bus service improvements and better access to sustainable travel. Funding bids have been submitted for the B3191 Cleeve Hill Road at Watchet, repairs at Ansford Hill, and A38 improvements including the Edithmead roundabout.

Useful links:
Local Transport Delivery Plan 2026-27 to 2029-30
Council news release

£5.87 million to help people sleeping rough into safe accommodation

Somerset Council has secured £5.87 million over three years from the Government's new Rough Sleeping Programme: £1 million in 2026/27, £2.26 million in 2027/28 and £2.61 million in 2028/29. The funding will expand existing services and support new ones, including female-only accommodation and higher-support accommodation for people with complex needs. The programme asks councils to offer accommodation to everyone sleeping rough by Christmas.

Homelessness also includes sofa surfing, sleeping in cars and living in temporary accommodation. Anyone worried about becoming homeless can get advice from the Council, and if you see someone sleeping rough, alert StreetLink so outreach teams can help.

Useful links:
Homelessness and prevention
StreetLink
Council news release

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New strategy to tackle domestic abuse

The Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026 to 2029 sets six priorities: preventing abuse and raising awareness, better understanding abuse within families, more access to safe accommodation and support, holding people who cause harm accountable, reducing inequalities in access to services, and recognising children as victims in their own right. In 2023/24, around 21,084 people aged 16 and over in Somerset experienced domestic abuse, and the Somerset Domestic Abuse Service received 2,435 referrals.

Help is available: call the Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline on **0800 69 49 999** (8am to 8pm, seven days a week), or use the online live chat. In an emergency call 999; if you cannot speak, press 55 when prompted.

Useful links:
Somerset Domestic Abuse Service
Read the strategy
Council news release

Somerset Council switches back to renewable electricity

From April 2027, the Council's electricity will come from a Clean Renewable tariff, sourced from wind, solar and hydro generation, covering all metered and unmetered supplies in its contract. The Council moved to a standard tariff in 2024 during its financial emergency. The switch costs an extra £53,000, less than 1% of its annual electricity spend of around £6.58 million.

Cllr Liz Leyshon, Lead Member for Finance, Procurement and Performance, said: “We know the Council needs to play its part in tackling climate change, and that includes looking carefully at where the energy we use comes from. Our financial position meant we had to make some very difficult decisions, including temporarily moving away from renewable electricity. I’m really pleased that we are now in a position to restore this commitment. From next April, the electricity we buy through this contract will be sourced from wind, solar and hydro generation. It is one part of our much wider journey towards net zero, but it is an important and positive step.”

More information: Council news release

New community fund to help nature recover: apply by 4 December

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy Community Seed Fund offers grants of up to £10,000 for projects in Somerset that help nature recover and bring clear community benefit, such as creating or restoring habitats, helping priority species, connecting wildlife areas, or surveys and feasibility studies. Parish, town and city councils, community groups, charities, CICs, schools, farmers, landowners and estates can apply. Applications close on **4 December 2026**; read the guidance first, and pre-application advice is available from LNRS@somerset.gov.uk.

Useful links:
Application form and guidance
Council news release

‘Do something amazing for someone amazing’: Lord-Lieutenant launches honours campaign

The Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, Mohammed Saddiq, is writing to town and parish councils and community organisations across the county to encourage more nominations for UK Honours. Anyone can nominate and anyone can be nominated, from a long-serving village hall volunteer to a carer supporting neighbours. Mr Saddiq said: “I am quite certain there are many unsung heroes out there who deserve to be recognised.”

More details about how to make an Honours nomination can be found on somersetlieutenancy.com or by emailing honours@somerset.gov.uk.

Useful links:
Somerset Lieutenancy
Nominate someone for an honour
Council news release

‘I'm so glad I went’: residents praise free NHS Health Checks

Residents who have had a free NHS Health Check in Somerset have praised the friendly staff, clear advice and welcoming venues, including libraries. The 20 to 30 minute check includes blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar tests, with advice based on your results. It is open to adults aged 40 to 74 who live in Somerset or are registered with a Somerset GP, are not already being treated for a vascular condition, and have not had a check in the last five years.

One resident said: “(Practitioner) was fantastic and I’m so glad I went as I found I had high cholesterol. I was going to start diet anyway but now I have a goal so will be easier to stick to.”

Another said: “Andrea, who carried out my health check, was brilliant. She was very professional but also very friendly and kind and put me at ease.” A third added: “This is an excellent service that should be given more publicity.”

Useful links:
Book a free NHS Health Check
Council news release

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Somerset partnerships shortlisted for two national awards

Somerset Council and SUEZ UK have been shortlisted in two categories at the MRW National Recycling Awards 2026, Campaign of the Year: Recycling Incentive and Food Waste Initiative, for a food recycling campaign that raised food waste recycling by 7.3%, saved more than £60,000 and gathered 1,500 resident pledges. Winners are announced on 1 December.

The Council and Kier were also shortlisted for Net Zero Project of the Year at the Department for Transport Special Recognition Awards, for a low-carbon winter gritting approach that uses route-based forecasts to treat roads only where needed, cutting fuel and salt use and saving an estimated 70,867 $kgCO_2e$.

Useful links:
Recycling awards news release
Winter service news release

Community heroes celebrated at Chairman's Service to the Community Awards

Council Chairman Cllr Mike Best hosted the annual Service to the Community Awards at Taunton Rugby Club on Friday 16 October, recognising volunteers nominated by city, town and parish councils, with 49 nominations this year.

More information: See the full list of winners

Free business support through the new Somerset Growth Hub

The new Somerset Growth Hub offers businesses of all sizes fully funded, impartial support, including one-to-one help to create a growth action plan, access to mentoring and innovation programmes, and guidance on skills, digital, new markets, net zero and finance.

More information: Somerset Growth Hub

Review recommends stronger action on self-neglect

The Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board has published a review following the deaths of three men living in severe self-neglect. It calls for clearer shared responses where there is a risk to life, better escalation when risk keeps rising, persistent relationship-based work with people reluctant to engage, and stronger professional challenge when agencies disagree.

More information: Council news release

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Somerset stood together for Hate Crime Awareness Week

Somerset Council, Avon and Somerset Police and Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) marked National Hate Crime Awareness Week from 10 to 17 October with a joint statement that hate has no place in Somerset, and County Hall was lit in colours spelling HOPE. Hate crime and incidents can be reported to the police online, on 101, or 999 in an emergency, and SARI offers free support whether or not you report to the police.

Useful links:
Report hate crime online
SARI
Joint statement

Council backs campaign to kick gambling ads out of football

Somerset Council, a member of the Coalition to End Gambling Ads, is backing the 'Protect young fans: let's kick gambling ads out of football' petition, which calls on the Government to remove gambling advertising and sponsorship from football. Portfolio Exec Lead Member Cllr Evie Potts-Jones and Director of Public Health Alison Bell have signed.

More information: Sign the petition

Thousands of students learn how to safely stand up for others

More than 14,000 students at schools and colleges across Somerset have taken part in Active Bystander assemblies, a campaign shaped by Somerset Youth Parliament members from Haygrove School and delivered by Collaborate Digital through the Violence Reduction Partnership, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

More information: Council news release

School places for September 2027: next deadline 15 January

The deadline for secondary and upper school applications was 31 October. Families of children starting school, or transferring to a junior or middle school, in September 2027 must apply by 15 January 2027 for the best chance of a place at a preferred school.

More information: Applying for school

Dementia technology drop-in at Taunton Library

Residents dropped in to Taunton Library on Thursday 29 October to see dementia-friendly technology and equipment that can help people stay safe, live well and manage everyday tasks, with the chance to look around the Somerset Independent Living Centre based at the library.

More information: Equipment to help you

Health and social care information day in Crewkerne

Crewkerne Community Hospital hosted a free health and social care information day on Friday 16 October, with mini health checks and face-to-face help from Adult Social Care, NHS Somerset, the Financial Assessments and Benefits team and Somerset Independent Living Centres, alongside local organisations. Recorded webinars remain available for anyone who could not attend.

Useful links:
Your adult social care journey
Recorded webinars

Yeovil Literary Festival under way until 23 November

The Yeovil Literary Festival, led by Yeovil Library with partners including the Octagon Theatre, Westlands and Waterstones Yeovil, began on 14 October and runs until Monday 23 November, with 40 events in all. Book online or call 01935 422884.

More information: Yeovil Literary Festival

Winter at your library: coat exchange and Library Adventures

The free winter coat exchange is back for its fourth year at 16 Somerset libraries, including Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury and Street. Take a coat, donate a clean, good-quality coat, or both, for adults and children; donations are handed to library staff.

Library Adventures are bringing free family fun to Chard, Priorswood and Wellington libraries, with Active Saturdays, author and storyteller visits, crafts and The Big Adventure challenge. There is no need to book or be a library member.

Useful links:
Winter coat exchange
Library Adventures dates

New Deputy Lieutenants appointed

Four new Deputy Lieutenants have been appointed to support the Lord-Lieutenant: Professor Georgina Andrews, Vice-Chancellor of Bath Spa University; Professor Trudi Grant, former Director of Public Health for Somerset; Lord Mark Sedwill GCMG, former Cabinet Secretary; and Melanie Squires MBE, formerly of the NFU.

More information: Council news release

Get involved in your Unitary Council

Residents don't have to wait for an election to have a say in how Somerset is run. The Council's Council and Democracy pages set out the main ways to get involved, including having your say through open consultations and engagement, finding and contacting your local councillor, following or speaking at council and committee meetings, checking committee agendas, reports and minutes, submitting or signing a petition, and exploring what's involved in standing to become a councillor yourself.

Further information: Council and democracy

Upcoming Council meetings

Meeting dates are subject to change. When looking for details of a particular meeting, please contact the relevant officer to confirm that the meeting is going ahead as scheduled.

November 2026 meetings

Agendas are published around a week before each meeting. Each link below gives full details of where to attend, how to watch online and the start time. Want to ask a question? Email **democratic@somerset.gov.uk** before the public question deadline.

- Scrutiny Committee – Children and Education: Monday 2 November (agenda published 23 October; public question deadline 27 October)
- Executive: Wednesday 4 November, including proposals for children's residential care (agenda published 27 October; public question deadline 29 October)
- Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Strategic: Wednesday 11 November (agenda published 3 November; public question deadline 5 November)
- Scrutiny Committee – Adults, Health and Housing: Thursday 19 November (agenda published 11 November; public question deadline 13 November)
- Audit Committee: Wednesday 25 November (agenda published 17 November; public question deadline 19 November)
- Scrutiny Committee – Climate, Environment and Place: Thursday 26 November (agenda published 18 November; public question deadline 20 November)
- Next Somerset Rivers Authority Board: 4 December at 9.45am, Council Offices, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet

Useful links:

democracy.somerset.gov.uk – Council calendar

Somerset Rivers Authority – meetings and public questions

Report It First

Useful links to share with your communities

- **Report a Problem on the Road -** A list of all reporting pages to do with roads, pavements, lighting: Report a problem on the road
- **Potholes and road damage -** Somerset Council repair potholes and other road defects, and maintain our roads, for the safe access of all road users: Potholes, road damage and edge loss
- **Report a problem with a street light -** We maintain and repair street lights to national standards: Report a problem with a street light
- **Road signs, markings and lighting -** Includes bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate or new road sign: Road signs, bollards and road markings
- **Speed limits -** Request information about new or existing traffic calming measures: Speed limits
- **Traffic lights -** We maintain over 200 traffic light locations throughout the County: Traffic lights
- **Street and roadworks -** We maintain the roads and pavements managed at public expense in Somerset: Street and roadworks problems
- **Traffic updates and roadworks -** follow Travel Somerset on X and Facebook: Travel Somerset on Facebook
- **All ongoing roadworks -** Available on the Somerset Council website interactive map: Roadworks and travel information
- **Somerset Waste -** Collection days, replacement bins or recycling bags and missed collection reporting: Bins, recycling and waste
- **Sign-up for the latest climate news from across Somerset:** Climate newsletter sign-up
- **Open Somerset Council Consultations -** Which anyone can complete and take part in shaping the future of Somerset: Somerset Council - Citizen Space - Consultations
- **Somerset Prepared -** Community resilience information, funding support and the Community Resilience Awards: somersetprepared.org.uk

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