

**Unitary Reports for April 2025 from Somerset Councillors
Nicola Clark and Hayward Burt**

Enforcement and Planning Issues

Thank you to everyone who has made contact in relation to both the above, if you are not getting responses in a timely fashion please get in touch and I will try and move them along so you know what is happening.

Update on the Boundary Commission Review for Somerset.

The deadline for stage 1 of phase 2 of the consultation was extended by the Boundary Commission (at the request of Somerset Council) to 4 March 2025. Somerset Councils submission was agreed at the Constitution and Governance Committee on 3rd March for submission by the deadline on the following day.

This is the link to the submission papers –

<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=7579>

Supplement 1 - Appendix A has the details of the proposed structure of electoral divisions. The overall electorate of Somerset, based on the projected 2030 figures is 467,274; the target figure for 96 divisions per member was 4,867, and the Council has endeavoured largely to stay within 10% of that figure.

More information about the review can be found here: - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>

Timeline Moving Forward

3 June 2025 - 11 August 2025	Public consultation on the proposals
2 December 2025	Publication of the recommendations
TBC	Ask Parliament to approve our recommendations
2027	New arrangements apply to local elections

Somerset Recycling sites Now Operating on Spring/Summer Hours.

All 16 of Somerset Council's recycling sites have reverted to their spring/summer opening schedule on 1 April. Sites will be open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm at the weekend.

Opening days vary across sites midweek, however all sites are open on a Saturday and Sunday.

Residents wishing to take their waste to the recycling site can check online at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/find-your-nearest-recycling-centre/> for opening days.

Materials accepted at recycling sites will vary, residents can check ahead before they visit as there are queue cameras at Bridgwater (Saltlands), Chard, Highbridge, Minehead, Street, Taunton (Priorswood), Wellington (Poole), Wells (Dulcote), and Yeovil (opening days vary) - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/recycling-site-queue-cams/>

Somerset Council's review of car parking.

At the Executive Meeting on 3 March it resolved to

- EXPAND Sunday charges covering the whole county.
- NEW on-street parking charges – e.g. parking bays/Blue Anchor

After review it was decided to not proceed with NEW overnight charges.

So what happens next - these proposals have been supported by the Councils Executive and they are all now subject to a formal consultation process.

Once resources have been secured the draft parking orders will be prepared – it is anticipated that this will happen in May with bespoke notices being produced for each location with specific changes being identified. This will provide more of the detail.

The public 6 week statutory consultation will then follow, possibly commencing in mid to late May. This will be followed by a review of the responses to determine whether they can proceed as planned or whether changes, including mitigations are needed. The decision will then be made as to whether to proceed or not. The final decision will then be made by the Executive possibly during August or September – dates yet to be confirmed.

Open Consultations

Family Feedback Survey on Digital Social Care Records

A Digital Social Care Record (DSCR) is the digital recording of care information and care received by your relative, from their care provider, replacing traditional paper records. This is sometimes called an electronic care plan, electronic care record or electronic care management. This allows everyone involved in a person's care to see appropriate information to help with that care.

The Digitising Social Care Records initiative is being managed by NHS England **closes 30 April**

Somerset Tree Planting Register

Somerset Council published a 10 year Tree Strategy in June 2023 to enhance and protect Somerset trees and woodland across the county.

Amongst its ambitious aims, the strategy sets out a plan for planting 240 hectares of new trees and woodlands each year across the county until 2033.

From Somerset's famous apple orchards to Exmoor's mighty oaks, the aim is to increase the county's tree coverage from its current 8% to the national average of 13% and more if possible.

We know there are many groups, farmers, residents, organisations and businesses that are involved in planting trees and hedgerows, so it's important that we record and celebrate their efforts.

By mapping your tree planting, it will help us to know if the county is on target to meet its important planting goals.

Why your views matter - We are building a map of new tree planting across Somerset. We would like to hear about tree planting activities you are involved with, to allow us to measure the increase of Somerset's tree coverage and recognise the collective efforts of the people of Somerset. **Closes 31 Jan 2033**

OPEN CONSULTATIONS - <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/>

A Fire Service Consultation relating to responses to Automatic Fire Alarms Closes 9 April 2025 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service has started a consultation with options to change how we respond to automatic fire alarms. The consultation is open until 9 April 2025. <https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/about-us/AFA-consultation>

Somerset School Nurse Feedback – closes May 2025 Feedback will be used to better understand how we serve you well, where we might need to improve and what you value most from our service.

Information about Somerset Day 2025 weekend of 10th and 11th May

The Big Somerset Picnic

The Big Somerset Picnic invites everyone to come together on Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th May with friends, family and neighbours to enjoy the best of local produce – indoors or outdoors. Whether it's a homemade feast or a simple gathering with some classic Somerset cider and cheese, this is the perfect way to celebrate the county's rich food heritage – and an opportunity to raise funds for a local cause or charity.

Get the official event pack here https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67a08fa95679cc09e67d5f99/67d01c6a4bf6c5846d32a71f_the-big-somerset-picnic-25-pack.pdf

Show Your Somerset Pride!

A limited number of FREE flags, bunting and car bumper stickers are available here <https://www.somersetday.com/merchandise>

You can find a full list of events taking place here <https://www.somersetday.com/events>

Useful phone numbers to use in an emergency

Service name	Phone number
Police, Fire, Ambulance and Coastguard	999
Police (Non-emergency)	101
Gas (Transco)	0800 111999
Western Power Distribution	0800 365 900
Scottish and Southern Energy	0845 7708090
Bristol Water	0800 801011
South West Water	0800 1691144
Wessex Water	0845 6004600
Environment Agency	0800 807060
Floodline	0845 9881188
Met Office	0870 9000100
NHS non-emergency number – Use this service if you urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation. You can find more information about this service on NHS Choices	111

Planning concerns

Planning continues to be an important issue within the Blackmoor Vale division. Please do encourage members of your communities to get in touch if they have any concerns about planning, or any questions that they would like to put forward.

Somerset Council's budget

In March 2025, Somerset Council approved its budget for the 2025/26 financial year, addressing a significant £52.2 million budget gap. To mitigate this shortfall, the council implemented £48 million in savings, including a £34 million reduction achieved by decreasing staff and management positions. Additionally, the council received Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from the government, permitting a 7.5% increase in Council Tax—exceeding the standard cap of 5%—resulting in an additional £129 annually for Band D properties. Despite this increase, Council Tax rates in Somerset remain below the national average.

Even with these measures, a £43 million deficit remained, which the council plans to address through a capitalisation direction. This approach allows the council to sell assets or borrow funds to finance everyday operational costs. Council Leader Bill Revans emphasized that while these steps are necessary to balance the budget, they are not sustainable long-term solutions. He highlighted the urgent need for systemic reform in local government funding, particularly concerning escalating expenses in social care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services.

You can find out more here - <https://orlo.uk/iAMpk>

Our bus service

I received the following update on the bus service from Somerset Council's transport team:

"In our discussions with First South West regarding Bus Service Improvement Plan funding (BSIP) they indicated to us that a small number of services that were no longer commercially viable due to insufficient patronage across the journeys operated, and needed assistance, one of these was service 58/58A Yeovil to Wincanton. This is not the first time that they have approached us for financial assistance for this service as we previously provided some funding through a similar scheme (BSIP plus) a couple of years ago.

They were clear that without funding this service would be withdrawn and as a result we are stepping in to save the service (which we are able to do under the BSIP funding scheme). As a result, the service will largely be maintained except for the withdrawal of 58A journeys, but in removing these journeys there has been some adjustments to service 58 to cover some of the gaps left by the removal of the 58A's.

The main changes are on Mondays to Fridays the current 1645 58 and the 1715 58A journeys from Yeovil Bus Station have been merged into one journey from the Bus Station at 1710, with a return from Wincanton at 1815, instead of 1746.

On Saturdays, the two 58A journeys at 0711 and 0831 from Wincanton have been replaced by one journey at 0735.

The two journeys from Yeovil at 0730 and 0830 have been replaced by one journey at 0835 and in the afternoon the two 58A journeys from Yeovil at 1645 and 1745 have been replaced by one journey at 1655 with a last journey from Yeovil at 1855."

If you don't have a copy of the new timetable, please let me know and I will forward it on.

Have your say on dog fouling in our area

Have your say on dog control in South Somerset! Somerset Council have launched a consultation on Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) for:

Tackling dog fouling across the area: <https://orlo.uk/s1AcF>

The consultation closes on 5th May 2025. Make sure you share your views and help shape the future of our community spaces. Please do feel free to share this with your communities.

A message from Somerset Waste Partnership

A message from Somerset Waste Partnership - Thank you Somerset! You helped to recycle 145,133 tonnes last year! And 96% was re-processed in the UK.

SWP publish their tracker every year, so that you know that we do the right thing with your recycling.

- No recycling is burned, dumped or ends up in the ocean.
- Our recycling in Somerset could become anything from cardboard boxes and plastic pipes to soil conditioner and car parts.

Read more at: www.somerset.gov.uk/recycling-tracker/

Customer service - what you can expect from Somerset Council.

We've recently been receiving a high volume of calls, and if you are calling Somerset Council you may experience long wait times. If your issue isn't urgent, please consider visiting the website for more information or to report any issues.

Find direct links for some of our most asked-for services:

Missed rubbish or recycling collection

www.somerset.gov.uk/missed-collection

Report a pothole or problem on the road

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/.../report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

Questions about your Council Tax bill

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/.../your-council-tax-bill.../>

Pay for your Somerset Lifeline or another invoice

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/benefit.../pay-a-council-invoice/>

Apply for or renew a Blue Badge

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/.../apply-for-or-renew-a-blue.../>

If what you're looking for isn't in this list, you can find lots of information about council services and different ways to contact us at www.somerset.gov.uk/contact-us/

Thank you for your patience.

A better deal for councils is needed.

Somerset Council Leader Bill Revans joined local government leaders from across the country at Parliament to put the case for a better deal for councils nationwide.

Cllr Revans told the committee that funding from central government had almost halved in recent years – down by 40 per cent – and that it was not realistic to expect Council Tax income to pay for essential services such as social care for adults and children 🙏

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/leader-joins-local-government-leaders-at-westminster/>

Tackling rural crime

The government has announced a boost of over £800,000 in funding to tackle rural and wildlife crime, supporting both the National Rural Crime Unit and the National Wildlife Crime Unit. This investment will help crack down on theft, hare coursing, and the exploitation of endangered species, with a focus on using better data and stronger collaboration between police forces. Local initiatives are already making a difference — including new partnerships and targeted projects like extra CCTV in rural hotspots — but this national support is a significant step forward. You can read more about the announcement here: gov.uk/government/news/more-funding-to-combat-rural-and-wildlife-crime

That said, we know that funding alone won't fix everything. We need to keep encouraging people to report crime in our area — no matter how small it might seem. If anyone feels that a crime they've reported hasn't been taken seriously or if they're unsure where to turn, please do get in touch with me directly. You all (I think!) know how I feel about local police response to crime in our area and I'm here to help make sure your concerns are heard and followed up properly.

Help for local businesses

Businesses and organisations in Somerset are being encouraged to find out if they are eligible for capital funding grants aimed at supporting businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas.

The funding is available following Somerset Council's successful £3.4 million submission into Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

This first call for applications is seeking to allocate a total of £850,000 to eligible capital infrastructure projects. These projects must be delivered – and grant funding spent – by the end of

March 2024. Grants can be between £5,000 and £100,000 and match-funding contributions are required.

The REPF has very specific criteria set by Government. Therefore, Somerset Council's Economic Development team is urging businesses and organisations to carefully check eligibility on their website: [Funding and grants for business](#)

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

In February 2025, Somerset Council introduced the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, inviting farmers, landowners, and land managers to participate in efforts to restore and enhance local biodiversity. The strategy outlines funding opportunities and environmental benefits, encouraging collaboration to achieve nature recovery goals across the county.

Somerset Council meetings

Just a reminder for you and your communities that members of the public can access agendas for all council meetings. They can also ask questions at these meetings. Details of how to do this can be found in the link below:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/>

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/speaking-at-a-council-meeting/>

Details of all upcoming meetings can be found here –

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-agendas-and-minutes/>

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My available Cllr hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday - all day.

Thursday, Saturday - not available on phone.

Please text/WhatsApp or email on these days.