

## **South Cadbury and Sutton Montis Annual Report May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2025**

Since being elected in November it has been a busy and challenging time for the Council.

Finance and Restructuring are the 2 most dominant items, and I would ask that any residents who are struggling to get replies from the council to please ask for help in find an answer, if not always a solution.

### **Somerset Council Budget and Restructuring**

After a number of meetings the council tax was finally set. The council budget was set using Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) measures offered by the Government, which includes increasing Council Tax by 7.49% – above the referendum limit of 4.99%.

The Increase in council tax will reduce the budget the gap by approximately £9.2m a year, leaving a £43m gap which will be covered by the capitalisation direction. Capitalisation direction is a form of one-off assistance which allows the Council to finance everyday revenue costs by selling assets or borrow money

The staffing structure is beginning to settle down, this is where we are with staffing and council structure, as it starts to change following the financial constraints and restructuring.

£34m paybill savings delivered in 12 months (from 2025/26 budget)

New Council structures live 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 (4400 FTE)

Voluntary Redundancy Scheme - 2024 (194 posts)

Corporate Leadership Team restructure – went live from 1 November 2024 (22 to 16 posts)

555 FTE reduction of posts – not people

### **Update on the Boundary Commission Review for Somerset.**

The Boundary Commission public consultation on these recommendations is due to start on 3<sup>rd</sup> June finishing on 11<sup>th</sup> August.

If you want to read the Somerset Council Submission then 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>

## **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.

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 final decision will then be made by the Executive possibly during August or September – dates yet to be confirmed.

There are 2 other issues that may have an impact later when legislation is passed by Government

1. Planning and Housing, The Government National Target
2. Local Devolution – A Mayor of Wessex

Planning and House Building. The Governments National Target  
A couple of points to pick out from this locally important subject.

### **Housing targets and land supply**

The new NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) being brought in by the Government increases the total annual national target from 300,000 to 370,000. It is likely therefore that Somerset will have a higher target for building more houses.

There is a concern that making housing targets mandatory with the rigid, centrally calculated methodology proposed in the consultation risks leading to a large number of new planning permissions that will saturate the market and not be built out.

But analysis by the Local Government Association found that 1.1 million homes granted planning permission had not yet been built. If we are to ensure delivery of homes, councils need new levers to unlock stalled sites.

And the Five-Year Land supply (the amount of land identified by a local council as being available and suitable for residential development over the next 5 years) which was not reached in South Somerset, and made the policies of the local plan redundant, and therefore meant that it was far more difficult to defend an area against unwanted, or unneeded development. The Governments announcements have not addressed this

This risks precisely the type of speculative development that the Government says it wishes to avoid. It will also damage local community confidence in the planning process.

## **Year in Review: May 2024 – April 2025 Cllr Nicola Clark**

### **Introduction**

Over the past year, the Blackmoor Vale division has seen significant developments across highways, planning, governance, environment, and community services. Despite severe financial pressures, the commitment to supporting residents and improving local services has remained strong.

### **Key Themes and Achievements**

#### **Planning and Development**

Planning matters have remained a top concern for residents, particularly around Sutton Montis, South Cadbury and our surrounding community. Several applications have strong community scrutiny, and continue to be a source of concern for residents. Planning enforcement casework has been high, and efforts to improve response times are ongoing.

#### **Highways and Infrastructure**

Somerset Council launched an extensive highways maintenance programme. The partnership with Kiely Bros brought the 'Multipatcher' vehicle to the county to help tackle potholes more efficiently. A new Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot was introduced, allowing Parish Councils to commission minor works directly, alongside the development of a volunteer training scheme to support local maintenance initiatives.

#### **Financial Challenges and Council Budget**

The 2025/26 budget faced a £52.2 million gap, with £48 million in savings identified, including significant staffing reductions. A 7.5% Council Tax rise was approved under Exceptional Financial Support arrangements, though Somerset's rates remain below the national average. Further balancing measures, such as asset sales and capitalisation directions, are being used.

#### **Community Resilience and Environment**

There has been strong progress in environmental initiatives, including tree planting campaigns, a new biodiversity strategy, and partnerships to boost recycling rates. Community resilience has also been strengthened through events like the Somerset Prepared Resilience Day. A new partnership with VolkerHighways is supporting the drive to transition Somerset's street lighting to 100% energy efficient LEDs. Extensive public consultations were held throughout the year on matters including Council Tax Reduction, SEND services, pharmacy services, and planning validation. Residents were encouraged to have their say via surveys and public meetings.

## **Public Transport – Bus Services**

Public transport has been an important focus. Following discussions with First South West, concerns were raised that the 58/58A Yeovil to Wincanton service would be withdrawn without further funding. To prevent the loss of this vital service, Somerset Council stepped in under the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) scheme. From 22nd April 2025, service adjustments include merging weekday journeys at 1710 from Yeovil and 1815 from Wincanton, and consolidating Saturday journeys. The service continues with a slightly reduced but viable schedule, ensuring continued rural connectivity without the need for a full-service withdrawal.

## **Supporting Vulnerable Groups**

The Council continued to champion support for vulnerable residents. Initiatives included fostering recruitment, urgent appeals for more volunteer drivers, and expanded programmes for unpaid carers. Homelessness prevention also received a major funding boost.

## **Looking Ahead**

Despite continuing challenges, including ongoing financial constraints, I remain focused on representing local residents, protecting rural services, and building a greener, more resilient community.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our community's strength and spirit over the past year.

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