

## **Hayward December 2025 Report**

**Cost of Living Support for Somerset Families, Please find below and attached to my email various support available.**

- #Help4All Universal early help offer (attached to email) and linked here: [#Help4All](#)
- Household Support Fund flyer (attached to email)
- Household Support Fund webpage - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/cost-of-living-support-for-somerset-residents/>
- Community Hub directory - <https://connectsomerset.org.uk/my-community/community-hubs/community-hubs-directory/>
- Warm Welcome directory - <https://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/find-warm-welcome/>
- Thrive Village Agent map - <https://thrivesomerset.org.uk/help-advice/>

### **Somerset Local Government Boundaries**

As you know from my earlier reports, we were expecting the final report on Somerset local government boundaries to be produced next week, in a bizarre, and I would say v rare event they have re-opened consultation, please see below from the commission.

The reopened consultation will run from 25 November 2025 to 14 January 2026. The consultation is being reopened because the Commission initially, and incorrectly, understood Somerset Council's preference for predominantly single-councillor divisions as a formal request for a uniform pattern of single-member divisions under the legislation guiding its review process. No such formal request had been made by the Council.

This may have led some people to believe that multi-councillor divisions would not be given due consideration, as a formal request for single-member divisions carries greater weight in the Commission's considerations than a general preference.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the Commission is reopening the consultation so that all views, including any supporting multi-member divisions, can be taken into account. Any submissions previously made will still be considered and do not need to be re-submitted.

Once all responses have been reviewed, the Commission aims to publish final recommendations in March 2026. Subject to parliamentary approval, the new arrangements will take effect at Somerset Council's elections in May 2027.

Full details of the proposals are available on the Commission's website: [www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset)

People can also give their views by e-mail at [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk), and by post: Review Officer (Somerset), LGBCE, 7th Floor, Bunhill Row, London. EC1Y 8YZ

## **Royal Recognition for County Charities**

Four Somerset charities have won the coveted King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS).

Equivalent to an MBE for individuals, KAVS is the highest award given to voluntary groups in the UK, celebrating outstanding work done by charities. They are awarded annually.

This year's Somerset recipients are: Exmoor Community Bus Association, Good Fellowship Club, based in the Yeovil area, Green Wedmore and The Thomas Poole Library, based in Nether Stowey

## **Council's CCTV team plays a key role in capturing and reporting incidents to police**

Somerset Council's CCTV team have reported nearly 700 incidents across the county to police in the last three months.

In the last three months, Somerset Council's CCTV team has reported 690 incidents across the county to police, and there have been nearly 400 footage requests from police to assist investigations.

In one case one of the operators successfully guided police to an offender who had stolen a woman's handbag.

The service is funded by city, town and parish councils across Somerset.

## **Community projects which help people find care and support networks close to their home are being supported by a new initiative.**

Somerset Council is investing in local projects using funding from the national Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF). This is a £42.6 million initiative by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) which aims to improve the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of adult social care.

After successfully winning a bid for £616,000 of funding from the ARF last year, the council is working with Somerset Community Foundation to invest in neighbourhood plans to make areas great places to grow older or live with disabilities.

In the latest round of funding, ten community groups and one Town Council were awarded grants. All the successful applicants have subsequently joined together to form a new collective called 'Somerset Cares Alliance'.

'Wincanton Cares' is one such organisation. Founded in 2022 as a response to the closure of a local care home, 'Wincanton Cares' has successfully established a network of community hubs, a bimonthly newsletter and support groups for paid and unpaid carers

## **Planning Training**

All Somerset Councillors are currently being invited to planning training. As additional context on planning, we were sent this from the BBC Panorama programme an interesting insight into the challenges currently facing councils:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002l5kh/panorama-the-race-to-build-15-million-homes>

## **South West Railway Update**

### **‘Hotshot’ thermal imaging cameras to help prevent delays on South Western Railway / December 2025 Timetable**

“One of our trains has been fitted with thermal imaging cameras, as part of an innovative year-long trial of the technology. The images captured will provide engineers with real time alerts of potential issues such as overheating or faulty connections, improving safety and efficiency, reducing maintenance costs, and helping to better manage resources during incidents.”

The December 2025 timetable will be coming into place (on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December). There are no significant changes to train times being made on the 14<sup>th</sup> December (although timings may shift slightly), however a small number of services may use different types of train from the 14<sup>th</sup> onward.

They have notified customers in a few different ways:

- Updated PDF timetables are now available on our website [Train Timetable | South Western Railway](#)
- An alert has been added to our journey planner [Live Train Times & Travel Information | South Western Railway](#)
- Announcements will be played at stations and on trains between now and the 14<sup>th</sup> December
- Posts will go out through SWR social media accounts

## **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure**

The LEVI programme is a national initiative funded by the UK Government to support the rollout of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, especially in communities where residents lack off-street parking and cannot install private chargepoints.

Somerset Council has been awarded £3.78 million in capital funding to deliver this programme locally.

What This Means for Somerset • A minimum of 1,606 low-powered public EV charging sockets will be installed at onstreet and car park locations. • The rollout will ensure rural

communities are not left behind, with 75% of installations in higher demand locations and 25% in lower demand locations.

### **Have your say on the 2027/28 School Admissions**

Somerset Council is asking members of the public to have their say on proposed changes to admission arrangements for Somerset schools for the academic year 2027 to 2028.

The consultation opened on 24 November 2025 and closes on 5 January 2026.

Admission arrangements can include catchment areas, the number of school places available, and how they are allocated according to the school's over-subscription criteria.

If you have a child due to start or transfer school from September 2027, you may wish to view and/or comment on any admission arrangements for schools that are relevant to you.

Individuals are invited to share their thoughts via the online consultation, which can be found here: [Somerset Schools and Academies 2027-28 Admission Arrangements Consultation - Somerset Council - Citizen Space](#)

### **Report from the Somerset Rivers Authority**

Some of you may have seen the report, and many parts don't relate directly to our villages, but if you wanted to see a full copy I am more than happy to forward it on to you. I have picked up one part relating to local grants which may be of help

The SRA launched a Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) in December 2024. It has since attracted a lot of interest across Somerset. The Fund offers small grants for works to reduce flooding directly to Somerset communities. The idea is to help people with good local knowledge of flooding problems take the initiative and get things done.

The Fund is aimed at not-for-profit organisations, such as town and parish councils, charities, social enterprises and community benefit societies. They are being urged to concentrate on practical actions that can be achieved quite quickly, with obvious flood risk reduction benefits.

Application packs for CFAF grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 are available through the Grants section of the Somerset Rivers Authority website. At the time of writing (27 November 2025), 13 grants have been given. Grants are awarded quarterly.