

February 2026

Monthly Report from your Liberal Democrat Somerset Councillors

The relentless rain and grey skies have given us a bleak start to the year. Flooding in many parts of our county has brought misery to many and the forecast is not very favourable.

Thank you to all of you who have braved the elements in your villages, to prevent houses from being flooded and to look after your neighbours. The Somerset Rivers Authority is working hard to find ways to prevent future flooding of property and to raise the alarm across the area as rivers start to rise.

Please contact us if we can be of help.

Best wishes

Adam and Jo

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Flooding in Somerset: why a "major incident" was declared

Somerset Council declared a major incident after Storm Chandra because exceptionally heavy rain fell on already saturated ground, causing rapid rises in river and moorland water levels and localised flooding across the county. Calling a major incident is used as a precautionary, multi-agency trigger: it allows councils, emergency services, the Environment Agency and voluntary partners to pool resources quickly, run a central incident cell, redeploy staff, share information, stand up rest centres if needed, and prioritise support for the most vulnerable. The declaration does not automatically mean mandatory evacuations, but it signals the heightened risk and ensures a coordinated, scalable response while further warnings and flood alerts remain in force.

Storm Chandra followed multiple recent storms, producing new short-duration rainfall records in the south-west and rapid flooding across previously less-affected areas.

[Experts argue the pattern is directly linked to global heating \(warmer air → more water vapour → heavier downpours\)](#) and that communities are already experiencing impacts earlier than expected.

Local leaders and flood scientists warn that emergency, short-term measures (pumps, cranes, contractors) are necessary but insufficient without sustained funding, maintenance and nature-based interventions; some voices even raise the difficult prospect that, without major investment, some settlements may become increasingly hard to protect long term.

This is a rapidly changing situation for updates please see links below:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/beaches-ports-and-flooding/flooding-information-and-advice/>

<https://www.somersetriversauthority.org.uk/news/>

https://www.facebook.com/travelsomerset/?locale=en_GB

Council delays budget meetings after Government postpones funding announcement

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Somerset Council has revised its budget timetable after the Government confirmed the Final Local Government Settlement will be published on the 9th of February 2026, a week later than expected. The delay reduces the time available to analyse the settlement, complete approvals and prepare statutory budget papers.

The 9th of February announcement is also expected to confirm whether councils may set Council Tax above the 4.99% referendum limit and whether financial support will be provided for the accumulated Dedicated Schools Grant deficit. Decisions on Exceptional Financial Support via a Capitalisation Directive — which last year arrived in late February — may also be delayed.

Revised meeting timetable for budget decision making:

- 11th of February: Executive
- 25th of February: Extraordinary Executive
- 4th of March: Rescheduled Full Council — Budget and Council Tax setting

Nearly two-thirds of Somerset residents back council tax rise to protect services

Nearly two-thirds of residents (62%) said they would accept a council tax increase to avoid cuts, according to Somerset Council's December 2025 budget consultation of more than 1,400 people. Of those, 27% favoured a rise below 4.99%, 21% supported 4.99% and 15% favoured a larger increase; 36% opposed any rise.

A strong 86% want the council to lobby central government for more funding and reform. Top priorities were roads and pavements (55%), followed by crime (29%), public transport and schools (28% each); 83% opposed cuts to road maintenance and 68% opposed cuts to waste services.

Fewer residents now back giving the council more local control over council tax (38%, down from 49%), citing concerns about perceived waste on consultants and regeneration.

Somerset recognised for road condition with green ratings for condition and maintenance

Somerset Council earns green ratings for the condition of its A, B, C and unclassified roads and for its preventative maintenance under the Department for Transport's new traffic-light gradings. In 2025/26 the council plans to resurface 55 km and apply preventative treatments to 185 km of road; of nearly £45m capital and just under £5m revenue funding, around 89% is earmarked for preventative work. Despite strong condition and maintenance ratings, the council receives an overall amber rating because it is graded red for capital spend, even though it is on track to use 98% of its DfT capital allocation this year. The council says it will keep prioritising preventative work to maintain road standards. [Report problems via the council's online portal](#) and follow [@TravelSomerset](#) on Facebook and on [X \(formally Twitter\)](#) for live updates.

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Residents to shape Somerset's adult social care future

Somerset Council has launched a short consultation to refresh its Adult Social Care strategy for 2026–2029 and is inviting residents, unpaid carers and organisations to contribute. The council will combine face-to-face engagement with an online survey to gather views on recent experiences of care, barriers faced, what good care looks like and priorities for the next three years. Responses will inform the revised strategy and a continuous improvement plan. The consultation closes on 27 March 2026.

Have your say: Somerset Adult Social Care Strategy (2026–2029) consultation page — <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/consultations/>

Have your say on Green Lane proposals

Somerset Council is consulting on trial changes at five rural/edge-of-residential routes (Burcott Lane, Wells; Comeytrowe Road, Taunton; Neville's Batch, Gurney Slade; Downend Road, Puriton; Touches Lane, Chard) to improve access for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and wheeling users by removing through motor traffic where appropriate. Trials would be followed by further consultation before any permanent changes. Nearby residents and businesses will be notified by letter.

Take part: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/consultations/green-lanes-consultation>

Changes to recycling collections for people in flats

Somerset Council will roll out expanded communal recycling collections from the end of March for about 13,000 households in flats and other communal properties. New collections will include plastic bottles, pots/tubs/trays, tins/cans/foil/aerosols, glass bottles and jars, cartons, food waste, and plastic bags/wrappers. A leaflet with start dates will be posted to affected residents; if you do not receive a letter, your collection remains unchanged. The scheme is funded by the Government's Simpler Recycling programme.

More information: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-recycling-and-environment/recycling/>

Bus service improvements proposed

Somerset Council is considering how to spend a government Bus Service Fund award (around £11.4m capital to 2029/30 and £13.1m revenue to 2028/29) to boost bus services, better integrate with rail, expand Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT), improve links to employment and health, develop transport hubs, and prepare for Project Coral multi-operator ticketing. Decisions on measures and costings will be taken by the Council's Executive in early March.

Monthly Report from your Liberal Democrat Somerset Councillors

More information: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/buses/>

Dawn French Sitcom and Agatha Christie A-List Drama Put Somerset on Screen

Somerset is enjoying a screen moment as two high-profile productions showcase the county and boost the local economy.

Can You Keep a Secret?, a new sitcom starring Dawn French largely filmed around Axbridge and Cheddar, is now available on BBC One and iPlayer, with viewers enjoying scenes of Axbridge's medieval town square, Cheddar Gorge and local cafés. Agatha Christie's Seven Dials, a lavish three-part adaptation that filmed key scenes on the West Somerset Railway at Blue Anchor and Minehead and at The Bottle Yard Studios, is currently riding high on Netflix's must-watch list, drawing attention to Somerset's coastal and heritage locations.

Both productions receive support from Screen Somerset, the council's film office, and film and TV work is estimated to bring £4.2m to the Somerset economy last year, supporting local businesses and tourism as audiences take in the county's scenery on screen. Somerset is continuing to reap benefits as filming activity keeps shops, cafés and tourism businesses busy and raises the county's profile, with local streets and heritage sites remaining in demand for future productions.

Somerset joins national Holocaust Memorial Day "80 candles"

Somerset took part in the national Holocaust Memorial Day "80 candles for 80 years" initiative in January, hosting the memorial candle in a handcrafted willow holder at Taunton Library from 5th to 16th of January. The display, chosen as one of 80 across the UK to mark the 80th anniversary of Auschwitz-Birkenau's liberation and the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, became a countywide community project: the travelling candleholder collected ribbon flowers representing persecuted groups and prompted residents to share personal and family stories. The project highlighted Somerset's historical links to global conflicts and encouraged reflection, listening and dialogue as the holder continued its journey around the county.

Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities

Visit - 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 to provide safe access to all road users:*
[Report a problem with a street light](#)

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Roads, travel and parking, road signs, markings and lighting - *Includes information about non-illuminated bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate or a 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 that are managed at public expense in Somerset:*

[Street and roadworks problems](#)

Traffic - updates and roadworks follow:

[Travel Somerset on X](#) and [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](#)

Travel and Tourist Information

[Travel Somerset - Art, Culture, Events, History & More](#)

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 COUNCIL TELEPHONE NO - 0300 123 2224