

Monthly Report from Somerset Council – June 2025

May was a very busy month with all the Annual Meetings and we tried to attend as many as possible. The Bank Holidays meant date alterations for Parish Council meetings and it was difficult to accommodate all the changes, so apologies if we didn't make your meeting.

As we head into the new council year there is a great deal of work going on with the Transformation Programme. This sets out new ways of working across council services and is challenging for staff and members. We continue to look for savings and ways to improve services without spending more. There is still a way to go but there have been some significant successes.

The biggest ongoing savings have come from reforms to the Adult Social Care system, £10M savings this year and £3M for next year and significant savings have been made by decreasing the senior directors from 7 to 4 and reducing overall staff numbers by over 500.

Children's Services continues to cause concern with more and more children presenting with SEND. The Council is creating 15 special units across the county, in primary and secondary schools to enable our children to access support in an inclusive setting. We are planning to open these units in September.

If you have any problems that you would like to discuss please get in touch. As ever, we are always happy to help if we can.

With best wishes

Adam and Jo

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Somerset Lib Dem Councillors and MPs Respond to Yeovil Hospital Maternity Service Closure

On May 12th, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust announced the closure of the Special Care Baby Unit and inpatient maternity services at Yeovil Hospital for an initial six months, citing safety concerns.

In response, every Somerset Lib Dem councillor and MP has collectively written to NHS Somerset leadership, at the hospital, to voice opposition and dismay over the plans for a 'temporary' closure. Somerset Council has not received any guarantee that the unit will reopen after six months, leading to questions being raised at Prime

Minister's Questions in Parliament by Adam Dance MP.

The situation has sparked widespread alarm within local communities, leading to a peaceful protest with many Lib Dem councillors joining hundreds of residents and tearful maternity unit staff protesting outside the facility.

The closure will force pregnant women to travel to Taunton, Dorchester, and Bath, leaving Somerset with only one operational maternity unit. The Yeovil facility is essential for large parts of rural South East Somerset, as well as residents of Yeovil and Chard. The Lib Dems are demanding clear assurances about its future.

Somerset Council Delivers First Council Houses in West Somerset for a Generation

Somerset Council is delivering the first new council houses in West Somerset in decades. All 54 homes at the Rainbow Way site off Seaward Way in Minehead are being allocated to residents with a strong local connection, either current residents or those with family ties to the area. The scheme is now in the final stages and has recently been nominated for a major award recognising outstanding construction projects across the South West.

Recent political debate at Full Council focused on concerns raised, questioning the impact of government-funded migration schemes on local housing availability. It was argued that Somerset residents should be prioritised for social and affordable (Council) housing and called for assurances that future development would meet local needs without reducing housing for local people.

However, Somerset Council's housing schemes explicitly **exclude** applicants without a local connection, ensuring local prioritisation. It's false to suggest that affordable or new Council homes in Somerset aren't for local people, or that they're being diverted to refugees or asylum seekers.

In fact:

- Somerset has relatively few asylum seekers. As of December 2024, only 297 asylum seekers are supported in Somerset, which is just 0.05% of our population of 581,145.

This development of new council houses marks a significant achievement for the Lib Dem-led Somerset Council, demonstrating their commitment to building affordable homes and strengthening local communities.

Trial of Smart Lighting Systems to Reduce Falls in Somerset Care Homes

Somerset is trialing innovative smart lighting (Nobi) in four care homes to help prevent falls among elderly residents. The system alerts carers immediately if a fall occurs and provides data to analyse causes, seeking to improve safety and quality of life. An external evaluation, including Oxford University, will guide future applications. [More on this story here.](#)

Household Support Fund Extended to Support Somerset Residents

The Household Support Fund has been extended until March 2026, providing £6.74 million from the UK government to assist families, older residents, and those facing financial hardship. Funds are allocated for food vouchers, community hubs, crisis support, hospital discharge aid, and utility bill reductions for young people. The program aims to lessen the impact of the ongoing cost of living crisis, reflecting the Lib Dem commitment to promoting equality and community well-being. Support can be accessed online or through council customer services.

Changes to reporting highways issues

Somerset Council is implementing changes for reporting to our highways service. **Fix My Street** will no longer be an access point for reporting issues. Instead, the preferred method is to use Somerset Council's online reporting portal:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

This ensures issues like potholes, blocked drains, and overgrown vegetation are logged accurately, tracked, and quickly addressed. When reports are submitted through this portal or the call centre, they are automatically assigned to the correct team, and enquirers receive updates via reference numbers.

Councillors and the public are asked to no longer use **Fix My Street or email reports for highways**.

This new process aims to streamline issue reporting, reduce unnecessary communication and duplication, and ensure quick resolution of highway defects.

For those without internet you can call: 0300 123 2224.

Somerset Wins Awards for Smart Transport and Sustainability Projects

Somerset Council has received three awards from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, recognising excellence in transport and environmental sustainability. Notable projects include the Firepool Northern Boulevard (Taunton), which reused materials, reduced carbon emissions, and created a safe cycling and walking route to promote healthier, greener travel.

Somerset Strengthens Ties with Ukraine's Vinnytsia Region

Somerset Council has signed a partnership agreement with Ukraine's Vinnytsia region to promote collaboration in education, trade, and community support. Chair of Somerset Council Mike Best visited the Ukrainian Embassy in London to advance discussions. The non-legally binding agreement, initially for five years, aims to encourage joint working and demonstrate Somerset's solidarity with Ukraine. The

Vinnitsia region, with a population of 1.5 million, has key sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, and digital innovation, along with a rich cultural heritage and three of Ukraine's seven Wonders. The partnership will focus on knowledge transfer, educational and trade exchanges, and attracting inward investment.

Other UK regions, such as Norfolk and Kent, are exploring similar agreements with Ukrainian regions. The relationship is being developed through a series of online meetings, with the agreement signed through the Ukrainian Embassy. This initiative highlights Somerset Lib Dems commitment to internationalism and community building.

Foster Care Fortnight Highlighted Urgent Need for Local Homes in Somerset

With around 630 children in care and fewer than 150 foster households, Somerset Council is encouraging residents to consider fostering, offering flexible options and full support.

Since being elected to run Somerset Council, the Lib Dems has been working to improve the placement system for vulnerable children. In the past, children were often placed in out-of-county locations, far from their families and friends. One of our manifesto commitments was to "bring our children home."

Since taking over as leader, Councillor Bill Revans points out that out-of-county placements have significantly reduced—from 18 down to just five—and the cost has dropped from £10.7 million to much lower figures.

The council has developed a successful partnership with the not-for-profit Shaw Trust to open therapeutic children's homes called Homes and Horizons. These homes are converted residences where children receive tailored education with expert staff experienced in mental health, therapy, and social work.

Anyone interested in fostering can visit fosteringinsomerset.org.uk or call 0800 587 9900, and they will find that almost anyone can foster provided they meet the basic requirements.

Reaching out does not commit anyone to anything, but it can make a real difference to the lives of children in need.

Blood Pressure Monitoring Kits Available in Libraries

People in Somerset are being reminded they can borrow more than just books from their local library with free blood pressure monitors available alongside the latest bestsellers. To promote health and early detection of hypertension, residents are encouraged to borrow free blood pressure monitors from local libraries.

Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities

Report a problem on the road

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

For traffic updates and roadworks follow @travelsomerset on X and Facebook.

Live travel information

<https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/>

Report a problem with a street light

We maintain and repair street lights to national standards to provide safe access to all road users:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-with-a-street-light/>

Roads, travel and parking, road signs, markings and lighting

Includes information about non-illuminated bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate and how to apply for a new road sign Speed limits:<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/road-signs-bollards-and-road-markings/>

Speed limits

Request information about new or existing traffic calming measures:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/speed-limits/>

Traffic lights

We maintain over 200 traffic light locations throughout the county

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/traffic-lights/>

Street and roadworks

We maintain the roads and pavements that are managed at public expense in Somerset

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/street-and-roadworks/>

Sign-up for the latest climate news:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-food-safety/climate-and-ecological-emergency/newsletter-sign-up/>