

# **SOMERSET COUNCIL REPORT MAY 2025**

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene and Cllr Adam Dance MP

**This year has been a difficult one for Somerset Council. We have been going through reorganisation and transformation. This has involved slimming down the organisation as we bring the five councils into one. On 1<sup>st</sup> April the new ways of working commenced with more than 500 fewer members of staff and many starting new and challenging roles.**

Managing the ever increasing demands on the budget has not been easy. Throughout the council savings have been made. This is due to different ways of working, fewer staff and better use of technology. There is still a big risk of a 114 notice, should the council be unable to meet its expenditure commitments from its income.

Since the beginning of the year our main focus has been of highways, potholes, drains and flooding. For some residents it has been a very hard time keeping the water out of their houses and many of the villages have seen flooding where it has never happened before. If you would like a walk around your village with the Highways Officer please let us know. We are still struggling with planning enforcement issues. There is only one enforcement officer at the moment and he is overloaded. A lot of work is going on to recruit more officers to the planning service which will make a great deal of difference.

The LCN's are having a mixed response and a review is currently underway. There has been some good work with the Crewkerne and Ilminster Highways working group recently. Unfortunately these meetings are held in the morning making it difficult for those who work to attend.

We try to attend your parish council meetings, often having several on one night. Please can you inform us as soon as possible if there is a change of date so we can do our best to be there.

If you have any concerns or problems please get in touch and we will do our best to help.

Best wishes

*Jo and Adam*

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# **PUBLIC HEALTH - RAISING AWARENESS, CHALLENGING MYTHS - SOMERSET SUPPORTS NATIONWIDE STALKING CAMPAIGN**

As part of national Stalking Awareness week, Somerset Council took proactive steps to raise awareness and debunk myths surrounding stalking. Highlighting that one in five women and one in ten men may experience stalking, the campaign offered essential resources for victims. The campaign highlighted the support available for those experiencing stalking, including:

- National Stalking Helpline: 0808 802 0300
- Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service: 020 3866 4107
- Somerset Domestic Abuse: 0800 69 49 999

Victims are urged to report incidents online or by calling 101, or 999 in emergencies.

## **SCHOOLS - NATIONAL OFFER DAY: SOMERSET SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES ANNOUNCED FOR 2025/26 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Somerset Council is pleased to report that 99% of children received primary school offers for the 2025/26 academic year at one of their top three choices, showcasing the council's commitment to accessible quality education. With offers emailed or posted to families, the message is clear: the council is dedicated to ensuring every child's educational journey begins positively. There are options and support available for families who did not receive their preferred choices, emphasising an inclusive approach for all.

Parents and carers of children not offered one or more of their three primary school preferences have various options available. Information can be found on the Council's applying for a school place webpages:

[www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/applying-for-school/refused-a-place-at-your-preferred-school/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/applying-for-school/refused-a-place-at-your-preferred-school/)

# SOCIAL CARE: UNPAID CARERS IN SOMERSET ATTEND FREE INFORMATION DAY IN BRIDGWATER

Somerset Council hosted a free drop-in event for unpaid carers in Bridgwater, highlighting the invaluable role these individuals play. The event featured tailored advice and informative seminars addressing essential topics like Lasting Power of Attorney and Direct Payments. Local organisations came together to provide guidance and show appreciation for the dedication of unpaid carers, enhancing their confidence as they continue their vital work in the community.

Adult Social Care staff guided unpaid carers through questions they might have. Other organisations involved providing advice, included:

- Second Step, <https://www.second-step.co.uk/>
- Age UK, <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/somerset/>
- Open Mental Health, <https://openmentalhealth.org.uk/>
- Healthwatch, <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/>
- DeafPlus, <https://www.deafplus.org/>
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There will be more information days taking place across Somerset for the rest of the year.

Find out more here: [New Carer Information Roadshow – Somerset Carers:](https://somersetcarers.org/uncategorised/new-carer-information-roadshow/)

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## PLANNING - NEW LOCAL VALIDATION CHECKLIST IS PUBLISHED THANKS TO YOUR VIEWS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

Somerset Council proudly announces the launch of a new Local Validation Checklist for planning applications, shaped by invaluable community feedback from a November 2024 consultation. Effective from April 1, 2025, this checklist aligns national guidance with local needs, ensuring a smooth validation process for applicants. By taking local insights into account, the council exemplifies its commitment to collaborative governance and effective service delivery.

All applications will need to use the updated and consolidated checklist [which can be found here](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/information-requirements-for-planning-applications/): <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/information-requirements-for-planning-applications/>

## **ASSETS: SOMERSET COUNCIL SELLS PART OF COUNTY HALL TO DEVELOPER OF KEY WORKER HOUSING**

In a move to support essential workers, Somerset Council has sold part of County Hall to Prime plc for the development of key worker housing. This initiative will not only address local housing needs but also exemplifies the council's commitment to enhancing community welfare while generating funds to support vital services. As Prime and its housing partner, Hyve, work towards creating comfortable living spaces for public service workers, the council looks forward to the positive impact on both housing availability and community wellbeing.

## **PLANNING - NEW LOCAL VALIDATION CHECKLIST IS PUBLISHED THANKS TO YOUR VIEWS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION**

IA significant milestone has been reached in Yeovil's regeneration with the start of demolition work on Glovers Walk. This project is part of the larger Yeovil Refresh scheme and speaks to the council's commitment to revitalising the town centre. As local leaders and stakeholders collaborate throughout this process, community input remains a priority, ensuring that the future redevelopment reflects the aspirations of residents and fosters local pride while driving economic renewal.

## **WORK STARTS TO PROTECT DAM AT CHARD RESERVOIR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

Somerset Council has initiated a major project to strengthen the dam at Chard Reservoir Local Nature Reserve, aimed at protecting it from extreme flooding events. Partially funded by Somerset Rivers Authority, the project includes building a wave wall, reconstructing culverts, and re-grading the Anglers car park.

Contractor Kier will carry out the work, expected to be completed by summer, with some traffic disruptions as Chaffcombe Lane will fully close from April 28 for about 10 weeks. Pedestrian access to the reservoir will remain open, while the Anglers car park will be available for anglers only; other visitors should use the Oaklands car park (TA20 1HU).

The need for the wave wall was identified during an independent safety audit and is a legal requirement under the Reservoirs Safety Act. Somerset Council has collaborated with engineers from Stillwater Associates and conducted an ecological survey to monitor local wildlife during construction. Community engagement is underway to raise awareness about the project's significance.

## **YEOVIL MATERNITY UNIT CLOSURE**

Adam Dance in his role as Member of Parliament for Yeovil has been a vocal advocate for the reopening of the maternity unit at Yeovil District Hospital, which has been temporarily closed due to staffing issues in its paediatric services. The closure, initiated on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May followed a warning notice from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) regarding staffing and governance concerns in the hospital's paediatric services. This decision has left expectant mothers in the region facing significant challenges, as they are now required to travel to other hospitals, such as Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester, or Royal United Hospital in Bath, for maternity care.

In response to the closure, Adam Dance has actively engaged with the community and health authorities to address the situation; he continues to do so. On Monday 19<sup>th</sup>, he participated in a peaceful rally outside Yeovil District Hospital's maternity unit, joining over 200 local residents in expressing their concerns.

Additionally, Adam has launched an online petition urging Somerset NHS Foundation Trust to provide a clear timeline for the reopening of the maternity unit. The petition calls for immediate measures to address staffing shortages and governance issues within the hospital's paediatric services, as well as full transparency and regular updates from the Trust to the local community regarding the status and progress of the maternity unit.

# REPORT IT FIRST: USEFUL LINKS TO SHARE WITH YOUR COMMUNITIES

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

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/potholes-and-road-damage/>

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/>**