

Somerset Council Report - August 2026

Somerset must make its voice heard in the Big Conversation on Care

Baroness Casey of Blackstock, Chair of the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care, has launched the Big Conversation on Care — a national engagement exercise inviting the public to help shape what a National Care Service in England could look like, and how it is paid for.

This lands as Somerset Council published its own new Adult Social Care Strategy for 2026 to 2029, which confirms that adult social care alone accounted for 38% of Somerset Council's budget in 2025/26 (£230.867m).

Council Leader Cllr Bill Revans has long raised this pressure with central Government. Giving evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee at Westminster in March 2025, he told MPs that adult and children's social care combined then accounted for 66% of the Council's budget: "We've almost slow walked into a situation where Council Tax is funding social care – Council Tax based on 1991 property values. Some 66% of our budget goes to fund social care. What we are saying is Council Tax is the wrong way to do it. That's my message."

Council sets out vision for adult social care in Somerset:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-sets-out-vision-for-adult-social-care-in-somerset/>

Big Conversation on Care platform: <http://caseycommission.co.uk/bigconversation/>

Scoping consultation for the new Somerset Local Plan

As most of you will know Somerset Council allowed extra time to complete responses to this consultation which finally closed on Sunday 9 August 2026. The Council is developing a new Local Plan that will guide where and how change happens across Somerset's towns, villages and countryside over the next 20 years, and is inviting views on what policies should be included before detailed work gets under way.

The Council has been clear that this stage of consultation is not for comment on specific sites and that no sites have been agreed; anyone wishing to put forward a site can still do so separately through the Council's ongoing Call for Sites process and during the conciliation in September 2027.

Have your say: <https://orlo.uk/ZHS0E>

Full consultation and documents: <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/planning/local-plan-scoping-consultation-2026/>

Local Plan background pages: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/>

New 567 bus service links Butleigh, Lydford and Street to Castle Cary station

A new community responsive bus service, the 567, launched on Monday 3 August, connecting Glastonbury and Street with the rail network via Castle Cary station, stopping at Butleigh, Lydford, Keinton Mandeville. The service will run 15 times a day Monday to Friday, 9 times on Saturdays and 4 times on Sundays, with timings designed to link directly with trains at Castle Cary.

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The full stop-by-stop timetable for the new 567 service, alongside the related 667, has been published. Timetable: [567 and 667 Bus Stop Timetable, 3 August 2026 \(xlsx\)](#)

Free bus travel for all 5 to 15 year olds this summer

Throughout August, all 5 to 15 year olds can travel free on participating bus services across Somerset, under the Government's Kids Go Free scheme. This builds on the existing concession for under-5s, who already travel free, and sits alongside the £3 cap on single adult bus fares, making it easier and cheaper for families to get out and about together over the summer holidays.

Not every operator or route is included, so residents are encouraged to check which bus operators and routes are taking part before travelling.

More information: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/bus-it-you-know-it-makes-sense/>

Best Value Notice issued to Somerset Council

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government issued Somerset Council with a Best Value Improvement Notice on 15 July 2026, formally notifying the Council of Government concerns about its capacity to comply with the Best Value Duty. It follows the May 2026 CIPFA review, which found the Council's financial position fragile, and cites continued reliance on Exceptional Financial Support, low reserves, and demand pressures in Children's Services, Adult Social Care and SEND. The Council is expected to engage with the Department at least quarterly on progress; the notice will be reviewed by 15 January 2027.

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/best-value-notice-issued-to-somerset-council/>

Somerset Council awarded funding to explore bus franchising

Somerset Council's transport team has been awarded funding by the Department for Transport (DfT) to carry out a bus franchising pre-feasibility assessment. Bus franchising is a system where the local transport authority — Somerset Council — awards exclusive contracts to private operators to run services on specific routes or areas; unlike the current enhanced partnership arrangement, franchising would mean the Council keeps control over routes, fares, timetables and service standards.

Recent changes to Government legislation and guidance, together with this new funding, mean the Council can now carry out a formal, evidence-based assessment of the different franchising models available, to get a clear picture of whether any could deliver better outcomes for operators and passengers in Somerset.

Selwood Academy wins Somerset's Active Bystander podcast competition

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Selwood Academy in Frome has won Somerset's Active Bystander podcast competition, with its entry receiving 477 public votes after standing out among submissions from more than 40 schools across the county. The competition, commissioned by the Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership and delivered by Collaborate Digital, encouraged young people to think about how they can help keep themselves and others safe while building the confidence to speak up and support those around them.

Students who took part first completed workshops on personal safety, anti-social behaviour and the role of the Active Bystander, before writing and producing their own podcasts to share safety messages with other young people; a shortlist of ten entries then went to a public vote. The Council has praised the creativity, teamwork and commitment shown by all the students involved, and thanked every school that took part for helping spread an important message about young people looking out for one another.

Walk for a Life 2026 – suicide prevention walk in Taunton - 5th September

Somerset Council's Public Health team and partner organisations are inviting residents to Walk for a Life 2026, held to remember those lost to suicide, raise awareness and encourage and empower people in Somerset to take action to prevent suicide. The walk starts at 10.30am from the Quaker Meeting House, 13 Bath Place, Taunton, TA1 4EP, following a wheelchair and pushchair-friendly loop around Taunton and ending at Vivary Park; assistance dogs are welcome inside the venue.

Participants are invited to re-join organisers back at the Quaker Meeting House from 12.00pm to 1.00pm for refreshments and a chance to speak to local support services. Organisations attending include Open Mental Health, Mind in Somerset, Somerset Suicide Bereavement Support Service, Somerset Council, Young Somerset, Samaritans, Somerset Sports and Activity Partnership (SASP), and Help for Heroes.

Anyone with queries about the event can contact publichealth@somerset.gov.uk. The Council has also highlighted Mindline, Somerset's 24/7 confidential emotional support and mental health helpline, which can be reached locally on 01823 276 892 or freephone on 0800 138 1692.

Details & downloads: <https://walkforalife.org.uk/>

Somerset Council appoints new Chief Financial Officer

The Council announced the appointment of Lizzie Watkin as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and statutory Section 151 Officer, following approval by Full Council. Lizzie Watkin joins Somerset Council from Wiltshire Council, where she served as Corporate Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, and brings extensive experience of local government finance, organisational transformation, governance and strategic leadership.

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Council Leader reaffirms commitment to safe, welcoming communities in Somerset

At Full Council on 15 July, Council Leader Cllr Bill Revans responded to a question from Cllr Habib Farbahi about a protest march that took place in Taunton on Saturday 27 June, and about concerns that a further demonstration might follow (which it did at the end of July with more planned).

Cllr Revans reaffirmed the Council's commitment to community safety, cohesion and respect, describing the scenes witnessed in Taunton in June as "deeply concerning." He went on to say: "While most of those present conducted themselves peacefully and lawfully, I am appalled by the behaviour of a group whose actions and language sought to divide our communities, intimidate others and undermine the values that Somerset stands for. Somerset is a county built on decency, respect and neighbourliness."

He confirmed that the Council would continue to work closely with Avon and Somerset Constabulary, community organisations, faith groups and local leaders to support cohesion, and that he would be seeking assurances from the police that the public would be kept safe in the event of any future marches or similar events, in Taunton or elsewhere in the county. He pointed to existing initiatives, including the Somerset Diverse Communities project, the annual Together events, and the newly formed Interfaith and Belief Network, as practical examples of the Council's ongoing cohesion work, and reiterated the Council's status as a signatory to anti-racist organisation commitments.

Council spotlights new affordable homes for rural communities (#RuralHousingWeek)

To mark Rural Housing Week, which ran nationally from 6 to 10 July and is led by the National Housing Federation, Somerset Council highlighted the importance of affordable housing in helping rural communities across the county to thrive. According to the 2011 census, 48.2% of Somerset's population live in rural areas, making it one of the ten most rural authorities in England, and the Council's Affordable Housing team works with housing providers, developers, parish councils and community partners to support delivery where it is most needed.

The Council reported that 117 affordable homes were completed in Somerset's rural communities during 2025/26, with a further 25 rural applications currently in progress that could deliver around 450 additional affordable homes, three of which include wheelchair-adapted units. A further 43 sites already have planning consent, with the potential to deliver around 1,600 affordable homes in total, underlining the scale of the pipeline the Council is seeking to bring forward in rural parts of the county.

Somerset Council approves multi-million investment in SEND

The Council's Executive has agreed a major package of one-off investment worth £5.331m over two years to strengthen support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and

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Disabilities (SEND). The funding will be used to increase capacity across SEND services, support a restructure aimed at reducing duplication and improving efficiency, and help teams keep pace with rising demand and statutory timescales.

It will also expand capacity within the Preparation for Adulthood function in the Virtual School, including additional Learning Mentors to support young people with SEND who are at risk of becoming, or already are, not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The investment responds to a sharp rise in need: the number of children and young people in Somerset with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) stood at 6,578 at the end of May 2026, with EHCP numbers rising from 2.6% of the school population in 2019/20 to 5.8% in 2025/26, close to the 6% national average. The additional resource is intended to be temporary and time-limited, allowing the Council to reduce current backlogs while it assesses the impact of wider reforms to the SEND system.

Developer and Somerset Council work with utilities to co-ordinate essential work

Essential utility works are being co-ordinated on the A358 in north Taunton to minimise disruption and avoid repeated roadworks in the same area. Wales and West Utilities and National Grid are due to replace ageing gas services and electrical infrastructure along Staplegrove Road and Minehead Road, with work starting on 20 July and continuing through to October.

The programme has deliberately been timed so that the bulk of the disruptive work takes place during the school summer holidays.

At the same time, developer Bloor Homes and its contractors will continue related highway improvements to support access to a new development in the area, including works at the Silk Mills junction. Bringing the utility and development-related works together under one co-ordinated programme is intended to reduce the need for further major traffic management and excavation once the development's infrastructure is complete.

A one-way system will operate inbound to Taunton on the A358, with outbound traffic diverted via Silk Mills. A public drop-in session was held at Taunton Vale Sports Club on Monday 6 July for residents and businesses to discuss the scheme with representatives from WWU, National Grid, Somerset Council and Bloor Homes.

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/developer-and-somerset-council-work-with-utilities-to-co-ordinate-essential-work/>

Somerset Domestic Abuse Service and Somerset FA launch new partnership

Somerset Domestic Abuse Service and the Somerset Football Association have announced a new partnership aimed at creating safe, inclusive and supportive environments across grassroots football in the county. The collaboration will focus on raising awareness of domestic abuse among clubs,

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coaches, players and families, using football's reach into local communities as a platform for prevention and early intervention.

The partnership reflects a growing recognition of the role sports organisations can play in identifying and responding to domestic abuse, and forms part of wider efforts across Somerset to embed safeguarding and support services more deeply within community and voluntary organisations.

More information can be found here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-domestic-abuse-service-and-somerset-fa-launch-new-partnership/>

Council bangs the drum for Summer Reading Challenge

Somerset Council has encouraged primary school children across the county to take part in the Reading Agency's 2026 Summer Reading Challenge, which launched on Saturday 4 July. The initiative forms part of the wider National Year of Reading 2026 and is aimed at keeping children engaged with books over the summer holidays, helping to prevent the seasonal dip in reading levels that can occur when schools break up.

Somerset's libraries are supporting the challenge locally, offering activities and incentives to encourage participation, with the Council framing the campaign as part of its broader commitment to literacy and childhood development across the county.

More information can be found via this link: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-bangs-the-drum-for-summer-reading-challenge/>

Free beach parking in Brean and Berrow

Somerset Council has confirmed that beach-goers visiting Brean and Berrow will be able to park for free throughout the summer season, as part of a joint initiative with Discover Brean and EDF's Hinkley Point C project. The scheme is intended to boost footfall and support the local visitor economy along this stretch of coast, which relies heavily on seasonal tourism.

The move follows engagement between the Council and local tourism and business partners on ways to make the area more attractive to day-trippers and holidaymakers over the summer months, at a time when many families are looking for lower-cost days out.

Schools Against Waste marks milestone 500th Somerset school visit

The Council's Schools Against Waste (SAW) programme has reached a significant milestone, completing its 500th school visit at Priddy and St Lawrence's Federation school. Delivered on behalf of Somerset Council by Carymoor Environmental Trust, the programme provides practical, curriculum-linked sessions for primary and secondary pupils covering recycling, waste reduction and wider environmental responsibility.

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The milestone reflects the scale of the programme's reach across the county since it began, and the Council has highlighted it as evidence of its ongoing commitment to embedding waste-reduction education in schools as part of its broader climate and waste strategy.

Get involved in your Unitary Council

Residents don't have to wait for an election to have a say in how Somerset is run. The Council's Council and Democracy pages set out the main ways to get involved, including having your say through open consultations and engagement, finding and contacting your local councillor, following or speaking at council and committee meetings, checking committee agendas, reports and minutes, submitting or signing a petition, and exploring what's involved in standing to become a councillor yourself.

Find out more: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/>

Upcoming Council Meetings

August 2026 Meetings

- Scrutiny Committee – Children and Education: 3 August at 2.00pm
- Planning Committee – East: 4 August at 2.00pm (Cancelled)
- Executive: 5 August at 10.00am
- Planning Committee – North: 11 August at 2.00pm
- Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Strategic: 12 August at 10.00am
- Planning Committee – South: 18 August at 2.00pm
- Planning Committee – West: 25 August at 2.00pm
- Planning and Transport Policy Executive Sub-Committee: 26 August at 2.00pm
- Audit Committee: 27 August at 10.00am

Source: [democracy.somerset.gov.uk – Council calendar](https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/council-calendar)

September 2026 Meetings

- Planning Committee – East: 1 September at 2.00pm
- Executive: 2 September at 10.00am
- Scrutiny Committee – Climate, Environment and Place: 3 September at 10.00am
- Constitution and Governance Committee: 3 September at 2.00pm
- Scrutiny Committee – Adults, Health and Housing: 4 September at 10.00am
- Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Strategic: 9 September at 10.00am
- Full Council: 16 September at 1.00pm

Sources: democracy.somerset.gov.uk; [Council calendar](#); ilminster.gov.uk; democracy.somerset.gov.uk (Full Council)

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As ever, please check the Somerset Council democracy pages ahead of each meeting for the latest agendas, venue details and any late changes, including cancellations.

Report It First

Useful links to share with your communities

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- **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: [Report a problem with a street light](#)
 - **Road signs, markings and lighting** - Includes bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate or 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 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](#)

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- **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](#)
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SOMERSET COUNCIL TELEPHONE NO - 0300 123 2224