

# **SOMERSET COUNCIL**

## **Conservative Group Briefing Sheet for Parish & Town Councils September 2025**

**NHS Somerset Community Beds:** At Somerset Council's Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee (21 Aug), NHS Somerset faced criticism over proposals to close or repurpose beds in community hospitals. Public speakers warned that local access, transport links, and staffing had not been addressed. NHS leaders insist no final decisions have been made and further consultation is underway through the "Big Conversation" events. NHS Somerset will have a presence at the following events and locations:

- August 26: Wincanton Cares Community Talking Table, Morrisons, Southgate Road, Wincanton
- August 27: Wacky Wednesday, Wellington Park, Wellington
- September 2: Williton Talking Cafe, Williton Pavilion Hall, Roberts Street, Williton
- September 20: Chard Market, A30 Fore Street, Chard
- September 27: Crewkerne Farmers' Market, Falkland Square, Crewkerne
- September 27: Taunton Together, The Square, Taunton

If you are unable to attend any of these events you can complete the online survey by visiting [www.nhssomerset.nhs.uk/big-conversation-2025](http://www.nhssomerset.nhs.uk/big-conversation-2025) or email [somicb.engagement@nhs.net](mailto:somicb.engagement@nhs.net)

**People Strategy 2025–2028:** Somerset Council has set out a new People Strategy aimed at supporting staff through transformation and improving recruitment, retention and morale. The strategy focuses on three priorities: Reset and Refocus (strengthening the basics), Attract and Retain (building fair, motivated teams), and Improve and Thrive (embracing innovation). While deliberately high-level, much of the detail is deferred to Directorate Workforce Plans due later in 2025.

**AI Road Safety Cameras (Frome Bypass):** Following six fatalities on the A361 Frome Bypass in five years, Somerset Council and Avon & Somerset Police are trialling AI cameras to detect dangerous driving. Installed in August for six months, the cameras identify behaviours linked to the "Fatal Five": speeding, seatbelt non-compliance, distraction (e.g. mobile phones), drink/drug driving, and careless driving. Offenders will initially receive warning letters and educational materials. The technology, already used elsewhere in the UK, is being tested alongside recent safety upgrades at the A361/A362 junction.

**Fire Risk from Gas Canisters:** Somerset Council has issued a warning following a near-serious fire at a recycling facility caused by gas canisters being placed in blue recycling bags. In the past six months, almost 1,500 canisters have been wrongly disposed of, leading to four fires in one month. Crews cannot always spot canisters in collections, and the risk of explosion when crushed is high. Residents are urged to take small canisters, vapes, lithium-ion batteries and devices to recycling sites for safe disposal. Only empty aerosols may go in blue bags.

**Digital Slinky Transport:** Somerset Council is expanding its Digital Slinky demand-responsive transport service. First piloted in Somerton and Langport in May 2024, the service is now being rolled out to Sedgemoor (covering Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and nearby villages) from 18 August, funded through the Government's Bus Service Improvement grant. Taunton and Wellington will follow in September, with further expansion dependent on future funding. Digital Slinky allows passengers to book via an app just one hour in advance, rather than 24 hours, with phone bookings still available. The service runs Monday–Friday, 7.30am to 5.30pm. Information on how to register and book can be found here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/slinky-services/>

**Bridgwater Docks Consultation:** Somerset Council and consultants WSP have launched a public consultation (18 Aug to 14 Sept) on plans to regenerate Bridgwater Docks, part of the £23.2m Town Deal investment in the town centre. Proposals include new walking and cycling routes, a swing bridge at Newton Lock, upgraded marina facilities with additional moorings, improved lighting and landscaping. Engagement events include a Teams webinar (28 Aug) and a drop-in at Victoria Park (13 Sept). To take part in the consultation, please complete this questionnaire.  
<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/bridgwater-docks-regeneration/>

**City, Town & Parish Preparedness Survey:** Somerset Council and Somerset Prepared are inviting all parish, town and city councils to complete the first Preparedness Survey to help assess emergency risks across the county. The survey asks councils to score the significance of local hazards and reflect on their preparedness in terms of planning, people and resources. Responses will inform support for community resilience, establish a baseline for tracking progress, and allow councils to request specific help. The survey closes 19 September 2025, with findings shared at the Community Resilience Day on 15 October. Complete the survey here: <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/climate-and-environment/city-town-parish-preparedness-survey/>