

SOMERSET COUNCIL

Briefing Sheet for Parish & Town Councils April 2026

Somerset Council Sets 2026/27 Budget & Council Tax: Somerset Council has set its 2026/27 budget following the Government's decision to reject proposals for a council tax increase above the 4.99% referendum threshold, with the authority having previously considered a rise of up to 11% to address a £25 million funding gap. The Government also raised concerns about the Council's financial management and pace of transformation in response to a request for £30 million of Exceptional Financial Support, of which £25 million will support the budget gap and £5 million ongoing service transformation. The average Somerset council tax bill will increase by nearly £122 a year.

Somerset Council reject plans to extra investment in Planning Enforcement, Highways & SEND: The Somerset Conservatives tabled a budget amendment proposing a Common-Sense Plan aimed at financial stability and targeted investment in underperforming areas. The amendment outlined £26 million in medium-term savings, reducing agency reliance and holding some vacant posts, while reinvesting in planning enforcement, SEND support, and gully clearing, but the amendment was ultimately rejected by the Liberal Democrats.

Somerset Rivers Authority Agrees Work Plans for 2026/27: Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) has [approved its enhanced programme of works for 2026/27](#), backed by several million pounds of investment in flood prevention and resilience measures across the county. This includes £775,000 for River Parrett dredging and maintenance, £425,000 for natural flood management through the Hills to Levels programme, and £350,000 for enhanced gully clearing, alongside £150,000 for drain jetting.

Somerset Council Amalgamates Housing Models: Somerset Council has approved plans to bring its two housing management models into a single system, transferring all landlord functions into its arm's length company, Homes in Somerset. The change will see around 9,700 council homes managed under one structure, with the council retaining ownership of the housing stock and responsibility for the Housing Revenue Account. The move is intended to reduce duplication, improve consistency for tenants and deliver financial efficiencies, with early estimates suggesting potential savings of around £3.5 million per year over time.

Somerset Council Officer Response to NPPF Consultation: Somerset Council has submitted an officer response to the Government's consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework. The response supports elements such as a clearer plan-led system, increased housing delivery and the introduction of spatial development strategies, while also identifying a number of areas where amendments are sought. These include concerns about the deliverability of the proposed 30-month timetable for local plans, the capacity required to produce supporting evidence, and the application of national policies in large rural areas. The submission also raises points relating to housing delivery, climate and flood risk policy, and the role of local decision-making within the planning system.

Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Somerset Council has approved the [publication of its Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#), fulfilling its statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021. The strategy sets out priorities for habitat and species recovery, alongside mapping areas where action will deliver the greatest environmental benefit. It is intended to provide a strategic framework to guide planning, Biodiversity Net Gain, land management and investment decisions across the county. The strategy has been developed with input from partners including statutory agencies, landowners and community groups, and will support coordinated delivery of nature recovery, climate resilience and environmental improvement.

New phonenumber for residents struggling to afford the increasing cost of oil: Somerset Council has launched a dedicated phonenumber to support residents struggling with the rising cost of heating oil, delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice Somerset. The service allows residents in need of financial assistance to call a freephone number, 0808 278 7842, and request support from the Household Support team. The initiative is funded through the Household Support Fund as part of the Help Through Winter programme, with additional support also available through the council's Help4All scheme and community hubs network.

Crisis and Resilience Fund: Somerset Council has approved plans to deliver the Government's new [Crisis and Resilience Fund](#), a three-year programme running from April 2026 to March 2029 aimed at supporting households facing financial hardship. The council will receive £21.5 million over the period, with £7.2 million allocated in each of the first two years and £7.1 million in the final year. The fund will provide immediate financial support for essentials such as food, energy and housing costs, alongside longer-term measures including debt advice, benefit checks and employment support. Delivery will be carried out in partnership with voluntary and community organisations, with a focus on both crisis response and building long-term financial resilience.

New Electoral Boundaries Agreed for Somerset: The Local Government Boundary Commission has [published its final recommendations for new electoral arrangements](#) in Somerset, reducing the number of councillors from 110 to 96. The new structure will include 90 single-councillor divisions and three two-councillor divisions, designed to ensure each councillor represents a similar number of electors and that the council can operate effectively. The recommendations will take effect once approved by Parliament and are expected to be in place for the May 2027 elections.

Somerset Health & Wellbeing Survey: Somerset Council's Public Health team has launched a new survey to gather residents' views on health and wellbeing priorities across the county. The survey aims to inform future service planning, building on previous feedback which has shaped areas such as smoking cessation and healthy eating support. You can take part in the consultation by **27th April** [here](https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/public-health/somerset-health-wellbeing-survey/) :