

Somerset Council Report

Stoke Sub Hamdon Parish Council 5th November 2025

1.0 - Somerset News

1.1 - Somerset Council Leader Reacts to DELAY in SEND Reform

Cllr Bill Revans, leader of Somerset Council, has voiced strong disappointment over delays to the Government's upcoming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform, now postponed to 2026. He highlighted the worsening crisis, with rising numbers of young people needing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), skyrocketing costs, and increasing wait times for families.

Cllr Revans emphasised the urgent need for comprehensive reform to prevent overspending and deteriorating services. He met with families protesting outside County Hall, supporting calls for urgent change. The council has already introduced local initiatives but stresses that national legislation reforms are crucial to address the growing crisis.

1.2 - Key Section of Somerset Circle Completed

A new 1.3 km traffic-free path linking Ham Wood Viaduct to Thrupe Lane has opened, completing a vital part of the Somerset Circle walking and cycling route in Mendip. This scenic route offers safe, active travel from Shepton Mallet into the Mendip Hills, connecting communities and supporting sustainable transport. The project, achieved through the efforts of volunteers and local partnerships, was officially opened by Cllr Ros Wyke. When finished, the Somerset Circle will be a 76-mile traffic-free circuit linking Bristol, Bath, the Mendip Hills, and the Somerset Levels, promoting active lifestyles and reducing car travel. Somerset Liberal Dems has championed active travel and green transport initiatives to create a healthier, more sustainable county.

1.3 - Six Somerset Heroes Honoured with British Empire Medals

Six local champions were awarded the British Empire Medal at a ceremony at The Newt in Somerset, for outstanding service to veterans, community, health, and support.

Recipients include:

- Paul Bunce (Yeovil): For dedicated services to veterans and the Royal British Legion, supporting fundraising and volunteer mentoring since 1977.
- Nola French (Evercreech): A lifelong community volunteer, supporting church activities, events, and outreach efforts, especially during COVID-19.
- Julia Knight (Taunton): For her exceptional work with the Somerset Lieutenancy and managing high-profile visits, including HM Queen Elizabeth's 2018 visit.
- Julie Matthews (Chard): Founder of a peer support group for mental health, inspiring others through her determination and compassion.
- Dr Harvey Sampson (Burnham-on-Sea): For 40 years of dedication to healthcare as a GP and leader, ensuring long-term sustainability of local medical services.

Lord-Lieutenant Mohammed Saddiq praised the awardees for their dedication. This recognition celebrates their invaluable contributions to Somerset communities.

1.4 - Somerset Council In-house Landlord Annual Report 2024-25

Somerset Council's [2024/25 Housing Report](#) highlights significant progress, improved services, and strong tenant satisfaction. Key achievements include managing nearly £33m, completing 19,000 repairs—over 4,300 emergencies with 95% responded to within 24 hours—and maintaining 100% compliance on home safety measures. The housing referenced in this report is the Council owned housing stock in West and North of the county.

The council invested in upgrading homes with new windows, kitchens, roofs, and bathrooms, and developed energy-efficient housing. Around 270 vacant homes were let, with rent collection hitting 99.8%, and support was provided for 200 anti-social behaviour cases. Overall tenant satisfaction reached 76%, with most measures exceeding national averages.

The council remains committed to delivering safe homes, excellent service, and ongoing engagement. [Visit the Housing Performance page for more details and previous reports.](#)

1.5 - Third Year of Somerset's Winter Coat Exchange

Libraries across Somerset are now collecting donated coats again to help residents stay warm and reduce waste. Last year, 2,470 coats were donated, with most given to the charity RAFT, supporting displaced people locally and abroad.

Participating libraries include Burnham-on-Sea, Chard, Dulverton, Glastonbury, Ilminster, Langport, Minehead, Porlock, Shepton Mallet, Street, Taunton, Wellington, Williton, and Yeovil.

Donations are welcomed in good, clean condition—any size or age—and can be left with library staff. For more info, visit your local library, the [Somerset Libraries UK Facebook page](#), or email librariesmail@somerset.gov.uk.

1.6 - Cost-of-Living Support for Somerset Residents This Winter

Somerset Council and community partners are offering support like food banks, mental health advice, council tax relief, housing payments, and heating assistance. Visit somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support to check eligibility and apply. If you lack internet access, call 0300 123 2224 and ask for 'cost of living crisis support'.

1.7 - Supporting Somerset Residents to Stay Safe, Warm, and Well This Winter

As winter approaches and costs rise, Somerset organisations are teaming up to help residents stay safe and healthy. Public Health Somerset, NHS Somerset, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, Citizens Advice Somerset, and community partners will hold a free Winter Wellness Webinar on Wednesday, 5 November, from 12pm to 1pm.

To join, [register on the Microsoft Teams event page](#). The webinar is open to all supporting Somerset communities.

1.8 - Somerset Council's Winter Service Ready for Ice and Snow

Somerset Council, in partnership with Kier Transportation Ltd, is fully prepared for winter with a fleet of 23 gritters ready to treat roads when temperatures drop. Gritting involves spreading salt on key routes to prevent ice formation and ensure safer travel during cold weather.

Last winter saw teams make 1,679 visits covering over 117,000 miles, using more than 6,000 tonnes of salt, often during day and night shifts. The council's preparation included summer depot work, weather monitoring, and coordinated snowplough efforts with farmers.

The council prioritizes critical routes, and community support is encouraged—roadside grit bins can be refilled on request, and residents can join the snow warden scheme. This winter, two new gritters will be added to the fleet, with a creative competition inviting school children to name them.

Stay updated with gritting plans via [@TravelSomerset](#) on X (Twitter) and Facebook. Drivers are reminded to drive cautiously, especially in wintry conditions, and to avoid overtaking gritters during salting operations. For tips on winter driving, visit [the Council's Road Safety webpage](#).

1.9 - Somerset Launches Homelessness Charter to Unite Community Effort

Somerset Council has introduced a Homelessness Charter to encourage residents, businesses, and services to work together to tackle homelessness. Launched on 23 October with community and lived experience speakers, the charter is based on four principles: improving data, ending rough sleeping, increasing access to suitable accommodation, and enhancing prevention efforts. Councillor Sarah Wakefield emphasized the importance of collective action, urging everyone to sign the charter or join action groups. Claire Tough, Chair of the Homelessness Reduction Board, highlighted the community's shared goal to prevent homelessness through dignity, respect, and support. Find out more and get involved via [the Council's Homelessness Reduction Board page](#).

1.10 - Supporting Domestic Abuse Victims and Improving Assistance in Somerset

Somerset Council has launched a comprehensive Domestic Abuse Toolkit for Solicitors, providing free guidance and training to help legal professionals support clients affected by domestic abuse. The toolkit includes advice on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, safe consultation practices, client confidentiality, and available local support services, empowering solicitors to make a meaningful difference.

In addition, Somerset Domestic Abuse Service has extended its online support hours to 4pm, making confidential help more accessible. The service offers free support via somersetdomesticabuse.org.uk, with a helpline open 8am to 8pm,

seven days a week. In emergencies, dial 999 or use the Silent Solution system.

Together, these initiatives aim to create a safer, more supportive environment for those experiencing domestic abuse. For help or more information, visit the website, call 0800 69 49 999, or email domesticabuseservice@somerset.gov.uk.

1.11 - Come for a Cuppa with a Carer: Fostering Events in Somerset this November

Somerset Council invites anyone interested in fostering to join relaxing 'Cuppa with a Carer' events this month. These informal sessions offer the chance to chat with experienced foster carers, share stories, and get answers about the fostering process, support, and options.

Events are scheduled in Bridgwater, Taunton and Shepton Mallet Offices

Fostering opportunities range from short-term care to long-term placements, with no experience needed—just a spare room and a desire to make a difference. For more details, visit fosteringinsomerset.org.uk or call 0800 587 9900.

1.12 - Unstoppable' Youth Group Launches New Website

Somerset's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) youth group, the Unstoppables, has launched a new website to give members a platform to share their experiences and connect. The site provides information about the group, meeting times, how to join, and links to useful resources. It also offers a space for young people with SEND, aged 13 to 25, to discuss their concerns, successes, aspirations, and influence local services. The launch aims to raise awareness and encourage more young people in Somerset to get involved. Visit somerset-unstoppables.org.uk to explore the site.

1.13 - Somerset's Community Heroes Honoured by Chair of Somerset Council

Somerset Council celebrated outstanding community contributions at its annual Chair's Awards, recognizing individuals and groups who make a real difference. Over 130 people attended, with many nominated by local councils for their dedication.

Locally, Martock Flood Group was recognised for all the flood resilience work the team have committed to across the community. Martock and the residents have been ever grateful for all the time the volunteers have dedicated over the many, many years keeping a passionate group of flood support members campaigning for mitigations, improved infrastructure and alleviation schemes and working to protecting homes and residents at times of risk.

Chair Mike Best praised all awardees for their invaluable service to communities.

1.14 - Somerset Unites to Support Loved Ones and Employees in Quitting Smoking

This autumn, Somerset residents are encouraged to show support for friends, family, and colleagues on their journey to become smoke-free. The 'What's Your Why?' Pledge by Smokefree Somerset aims to encourage conversations and community encouragement, helping those thinking about quitting to feel less alone. Residents can pledge at local events or online and access free, expert support to quit smoking. Leanne, a Somerset mum who successfully quit, shared how the pledge inspired her to quit and live healthier.

Alongside community efforts, Somerset Council and local businesses are launching a year-long scheme to help employees quit smoking, offering free therapies and support to promote healthier workplaces. With research showing smoking costs the UK economy billions, these initiatives aim to create a healthier, more supportive Somerset.

Find out more and make your pledge at smokefreesomerset.org.uk.

1.15 - Garden Waste Collection Changes for Somerset Subscribers

From 24 November, around 53,000 Somerset garden waste subscribers will have changes to their collection day due to increased subscriptions and route capacity limits. Some residents will see a change in collection week, day, or a one-off interim collection on Saturday, 22 November. Notices will be sent via email or post, and online calendars will be updated. Residents are encouraged to check their new collection [schedules online](#).

1.16 - Have Your Say: Shaping Somerset's Children's and Families Services

Somerset Council has launched a public consultation to gather views on improving children's and family support services. The goal is to help families stay together and ensure children grow up in safe, loving environments.

The feedback will help develop the Families First Partnership, a national initiative aimed at better collaboration between social care, police, health, and education to protect and support children.

To participate, visit the [Children and Families Social Care consultation page](#). Paper copies are available at libraries and council offices. The survey closes on 27 November, with a review of all responses afterward.

2 - Local Issues

2.1 - Roadside trees at East Stoke – Included in the next contract out for tender now. Still awaiting details of this tender. Ongoing.

2.2 - Traffic and Road Safety Meeting

Request to update lines and ‘SLOW’ at the end of West Street to improve visual notification of junction. Will need to push for these markings to be renewed.

2.3 - Overhanging vegetation and surface green creep A303 slip

IT IS DONE!

2.4 - Bonnies Lane – Length to be jetted in 2025-26 Date awaited

2.5 - Lamp post – It is done!

2.6 - Bins – An ongoing situation which Gilly keeps us updated with until all is complete.

Regards Emily and John

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/>.