

Somerset Council Report

Stoke Sub Hamdon Parish Council 10th December 2025

1.0 - Somerset News

1.1 -Have your say on Somerset's new Domestic Abuse Strategy

On 10 November we launched a public consultation that will shape domestic abuse support for the forthcoming years.

Key information: The strategy will guide how services across the county work together to prevent abuse, protect those at risk, and support recovery over the next five years.

Background:

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background. It includes emotional, psychological, economic, sexual, and physical abuse, as well as controlling or coercive behaviour.

The new strategy will build on the existing work of Somerset Domestic Abuse Service and its partner agencies. It aims to reflect the voices and experiences of local people and ensure that support is accessible, effective, and responsive to the needs of all communities.

Why this matters:

Domestic abuse does not only cause physical harm. Coercive control, economic abuse, and emotional abuse can all leave people feeling isolated, hopeless, and unable to seek support. For families with additional pressures, such as those caring for children with SEND, the risks can be even greater.

Consultation details:

Residents, professionals, and partner organisations are invited to share their views on what is working well and where improvements can be made – from early intervention and community awareness, to safe accommodation and long-term recovery.

The consultation will help inform Somerset Council's priorities for the next five years, focusing on:

- Preventing abuse through education, awareness and community action
- Protecting people at risk and improving access to support
- Strengthening the response of professionals and partner organisations
- Supporting recovery and helping people rebuild their lives free from abuse

Support available in Somerset

Somerset Domestic Abuse Service is a confidential and experienced organisation that can provide the right support, including support for those having suicidal thoughts as a result of domestic abuse:

- Call: 0800 69 49 999 (8am–8pm, 7 days a week including bank holidays)
- Website: Somerset Domestic Abuse (including live chat)
- Email: domesticabuseservice@somerset.gov.uk
- In an emergency dial 999. If speaking puts you at risk, stay silent, tap the phone, and press 55 when prompted.

- For those who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired, register with emergencySMS.net to text 999 in an emergency. If you use British sign language (BSL) you can go to 999 BSL for a BSL interpreter.
- For those feeling suicidal, they can call Mindline Somerset (24/7 mental health support): Call 0800 138 1692 or the Samaritans: Call 116 123 (free, confidential, 24/7)

1.2 -Ham Hill gears up for a week of tree planting to celebrate National Tree Week

To mark National Tree Week (22 to 30 November), Somerset Council had a successful week-long programme of tree planting at Pit Wood, Ham Hill, culminating in a Community Tree Planting Day on Saturday 29 November.

Carbon Aware Productions and Ham and Doulling Stone are funding and supporting the planting of 3,000 native trees, and during National Tree Week, rangers will be joined by regular volunteers, teams from RNAS Yeovilton, Somerset Council volunteers, The Friends of Ham Hill, and members of the public, who will work together to get them in the ground and strengthen Ham Hill's biodiversity and resilience to climate change.

1.3 -National Supported Lodgings Week and National Care Leavers Month

This week marks National Supported Lodgings Week, which runs alongside National Care Leavers Month throughout November. These awareness initiatives shine a spotlight on care leavers, and the vital role supported lodgings play in helping young people transition to independent adulthood.

Our supported lodgings scheme, [Stepping Stones](#), provides a crucial bridge for young people aged 18 to 21 who are unable to live at home and are often moving on from Local Authority care, such as foster or residential placements. Stepping Stones hosts offer a safe and supportive home environment, helping young people build the emotional resilience and practical skills they need to thrive. This includes everything from learning to cook and managing money, to applying for jobs and navigating adult responsibilities. Hosts are not carers in the traditional sense but mentors and role models, offering guidance and encouragement. With a growing need for this type of support, we are actively seeking more hosts to join the scheme and help change a young person's life.

To mark National Supported Lodgings Week, we are working in partnership with [Host the Future](#) to promote our Stepping Stones scheme.

Learn about Fostering in Somerset here: www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk.

You can make a difference to Somerset's young people by:

1. Become a Stepping Stones host

Somerset Council supports care leavers and young people who are unable to live with their birth families through its Supported Lodgings

Stepping Stones scheme. Stepping Stones hosts provide 18–21-year-olds with a stable home and the opportunity to develop the practical skills and emotional stability they need to thrive, as they transition into adulthood and independent living. Hosts receive weekly payments, full training and ongoing support. If you're interested in becoming a Stepping Stones host, click here to learn more or email the team at SteppingStonesTeamLeavingCare@somerset.gov.uk.

2. Offering work opportunities, apprenticeships or work experience to those with care experience. Visit www.somerset-ebp.co.uk/imagine-the-possibilities to learn more or contact Imelda Leetch at imelda.leetch@somerset.gov.uk.

3. Volunteer with Route One Advocacy

Volunteering as an Independent Visitor or Advocate provides a child in care with a trusted adult who listens, supports, and champions their voice. You'll help them build confidence and enjoy new experiences while

offering additional stability outside of their care arrangements. It's a rewarding and flexible role with full training and support. Click [here](#) to learn more about Route One Advocacy.

4. Offering space for young people to meet with each other or for appointments.

5. Welcoming and supporting children and young people with care experience as part of your football, rugby, netball team etc.

1.4 - Consultation on the Future Electoral and Boundary Arrangements for Somerset Reopens

Somerset Council have been informed that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), the independent body responsible for reviewing local electoral boundaries, has reopened its consultation on the draft recommendations for new division boundaries for Somerset Council.

It is inviting residents and local organisations to share their views. The reopened consultation will run from 25 November 2025 to 14 January 2026. The consultation is being reopened because the Commission initially, and incorrectly, understood Somerset Council's preference for predominantly single-councillor divisions as a formal request for a uniform pattern of single-member divisions under the legislation guiding its review process. No such formal request had been made by the Council. This may have led some people to believe that multi-councillor divisions would not be given due consideration, as a formal request for single-member divisions carries greater weight in the Commission's considerations than a general preference.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the Commission is reopening the consultation so that all views, including any supporting multi-member divisions, can be taken into account.

Any submissions previously made will still be considered and do not need to be re-submitted.

Professor Colin Mellors, Chair of the Commission, said: "We want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to have their say on the future electoral arrangements for Somerset. Reopening the consultation ensures that all views, including any supporting multi-member divisions, can be properly considered."

Once all responses have been reviewed, the Commission aims to publish final recommendations in March 2026. Subject to parliamentary approval, the new arrangements will take effect at Somerset Council's elections in May 2027.

Full details of the proposals are available on the Commission's website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset

People can also give their views by e-mail at reviews@lgbce.org.uk, and by post:

1.5-Councillors defer plan to roll out Sunday parking charges across rest of Somerset

A proposal to harmonise Sunday parking charges in car parks across Somerset will be deferred following the results of a public consultation. Somerset Council was proposing to introduce charges at car parks in Somerset which are currently free on a Sunday, to ensure consistency across the county.

A recent public consultation on introducing Sunday parking charges revealed significant opposition to the proposal, and this was followed by the Council's Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee recommending the charges were not implemented.

Councillors at Somerset Council's Executive Committee this week agreed to listen to the feedback and defer any changes until a wider policy setting out guiding principles for parking across the County has been developed and approved.

The policy will look at all elements of parking including amongst other things, the role and function of on and off-street parking in Somersets towns, simplified tariff structures, payment mechanisms and

accessibility. There are currently different charging principles applied across the county's 200 Council-run car parks, and the system has not been reviewed since Somerset Council came into being in 2023. The aim of the policy will be to provide a comprehensive and integrated framework for managing parking across the authority providing a more consistent basis to support social, environmental and economic outcomes in Somerset's towns.

1.6-Council Tax support for those impacted by benefit changes

Somerset Council is taking steps to support people on low incomes who may be impacted by national changes to benefits. Each year, the Council is required by law to set a Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme which offers a discount for taxpayers on low incomes. At today's Executive, members agreed to recommend a CTR scheme for the 2026-27 financial year and also uplift income band thresholds by 3.8% in line with the CPI increase to most state benefits. This uplift will maintain the value of the discount in real terms for most households. However, members also discussed an indirect impact on some individuals who are transitioning from a former benefits system to Universal Credit (UC) and who lose an automatic entitlement to a 100% discount on their household Council Tax charge. Members agreed to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to assess anyone adversely affected through the council's means tested Exceptional Hardship Fund.

The three amendments agreed by Executive were as follows:

- That Executive endorse the establishment of a Task and Finish Group as resolved by Corporate and Resources Scrutiny.
- Note that should the £800,000 from Household Support Fund be inadequate to cover the Exceptional Hardship awards in the current year, additional funds will be made available from Reserves.
- Note that the Revenues and Benefits team will be further resourced if necessary to complete work on identifying those who have been migrated from Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (IRESA) to UC and to support them to apply for Exceptional Hardship if appropriate.

The Executive papers with full details can be found on the [Council's website](#).

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is reviewed every year, with a major review planned to take place during 2026-27. A final decision on next year's CTR scheme will be taken at Full Council on 17 December.

1.7-Have your say on Somerset Council's budget

Residents and businesses are encouraged to take part in Somerset Council's annual budget consultation. The budget consultation opens today (3 December) and is due to close on 14 January. The link can be found on the [Council's website](#), with paper copies available in libraries.

In previous years the budget consultation has helped Councillors understand people's views and priorities as they have taken difficult decisions to save millions of pounds and avoid the threat of a Section 114 Notice (this similar to a bankruptcy notice for councils, issued when they can no longer balance their budgets). Budget proposals discussed at today's Executive show the Council is facing a £73m budget gap for 2026-27, reflecting ongoing pressures in areas like social care, children's services and homelessness, combined with uncertainty in government funding.

Budget proposals will be discussed at Scrutiny Committees through December and January before final decisions are taken to Executive and Full Council in February 2026.

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 monitoring

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. Verbal update

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

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

2.7 – SC Invoices – EP chasing

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/>.