

HUNTPILL DIVISION

Briefing Sheet for Parish Councils February 2026

Government Rates Somerset's Road Conditions Among the Best in the Country:

Somerset Council has been ranked among the top performing authorities in England for road condition and maintenance in new Department for Transport assessments. Under the DfT's traffic light grading system, Somerset scores green for the condition of its A roads, B and C roads, and unclassified roads. The Council also scores green for its maintenance approach. Overall, the Council is rated amber however, due to a red rating on capital spend. You can report any damage on the road here: www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/potholes-and-road-damage/

Budget Consultation Highlights Mixed Views and Low Confidence: Somerset Council's December 2025 budget consultation attracted more than 1,400 responses and showed divided public opinion on council tax and spending priorities. The results of this survey (which attracted more than 1,400 responses) reveal that a slim majority of residents are happy to pay more to prevent further cuts to public services. However a declining amount, 38% compared with 49% last year, want the council to have more control over how it spends its budget, in light of "perceived wasteful spending" on consultants and regeneration projects.

Only 42% of respondents said they supported increasing council tax to bring Somerset Council in line with its unitary counterparts in the south west (such as Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire) - down from 53% last year.

Somerset Budget Setting Meeting Delayed: A delay in an expected Government decision on whether Somerset Council can impose an 11% council tax rise this year has forced the authority to revise its budget setting timetable. A decision is not expected until February 9th which means the Full Council meeting has moved from February 25th to March 4th to agree the 2026-27 budget.

Disabled Resident Challenges takes council to court over tax support: A disabled Taunton resident has been granted permission to bring a judicial review against Somerset Council over changes to its council tax reduction scheme, which he argues are discriminatory and unlawful. Before the changes he paid no council tax under the previous scheme, but following his migration from legacy benefits to Universal Credit he now pays around 90% of his bill, leaving him with an annual charge of more than £1,100 despite no change in his circumstances. A hearing is expected later this year, and the outcome could have wider implications for Somerset's council tax reduction scheme.

Bus Service Improvements: Somerset Council is considering a package of proposals to improve bus services across the county following confirmation of new government funding under the Bus Service Fund. The funding includes around £11.4 million in capital investment

over four years to 2029/30 and £13.1 million in revenue funding over three years to 2028/29. Discussions are focusing on priorities for 2026/27, with potential themes including continued support for existing bus schemes, better integration with rail services, expansion of demand responsive transport, improved access to key destinations, and work on transport hubs, ticketing and real time information. Measures and costings are still being developed, with final decisions expected to be taken by Somerset Council's Executive Committee in early March.

Expanded Recycling Service for Communal Properties: From March 2026, Somerset households with communal recycling collections will receive an expanded service bringing them in line with national Simpler Recycling regulations. Residents in flats and other communal properties will be able to recycle a wider range of materials, including food waste, cartons, plastic bags and wrappers, alongside existing collections for plastics, metals and glass. The changes include a new weekly food waste collection, new fortnightly collections for cartons and plastic bags and wrappers, and the introduction of new communal recycling bins with coloured lids to separate materials. Households will also receive a kitchen food waste caddy and liners, with the new service launching in the week beginning 30 March 2026.

Health Visitors to Offer Childhood Vaccinations at Home: Somerset is taking part in a national NHS pilot allowing health visitors to deliver routine childhood vaccinations in family homes, helping children who face barriers to attending GP appointments. The year long pilot focuses on families affected by issues such as travel, childcare, language barriers or GP registration, with a national rollout planned from 2027. Somerset Council is contributing through a health visitor led immunisation programme already in place locally, with around 400 children expected to benefit. From this month, children will also be offered protection against chickenpox as part of the routine NHS vaccination schedule through the combined MMRV vaccine.

Consultation on Proposed Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework: The Government has launched a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, seeking views on a revised approach to national planning policy in England. A draft version of the Framework has been published alongside the consultation and sets out the proposed policy wording, subject to feedback. The consultation runs from 16 December 2025 until 10 March 2026, and parish and town councils are encouraged to review the proposals and submit responses through the Government's Citizen Space portal here: <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/planning/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-f/>

Dog Control PSPOs Review and Consultation: Somerset Council is preparing to consolidate existing dog control Public Spaces Protection Orders across the county and introduce a new order for the Taunton Deane area. Ahead of a full public consultation later in 2026, councillors and parish councils are being asked to review existing dog control PSPOs in their areas and provide feedback during a pre consultation period running until 20 March 2026. All feedback should be sent to: consultations@somerset.gov.uk

Residents Invited to Shape the Future of Adult Social Care: Somerset Council is inviting residents, unpaid carers and organisations to share their views as it prepares a new Adult Social Care strategy for 2026 to 2029. The refreshed strategy will set priorities for the next three years and aims to reflect the experiences and needs of people who use care and support services, those who care for others, and professionals working in the sector. You can take part in the consultation here: <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/adult-social-care/somerset-adult-social-care-strategy-2026-2029/>

Have Your Say on Green Lane Proposals: Somerset Council is consulting on proposals to trial changes to a small number of rural and edge of settlement routes aimed at improving access for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding. The consultation covers five locations, Burcott Lane in Wells, Comeytrowe Road in Taunton, Neville's Batch in Guerney Slade, Downend Road in Puriton, and Touches Lane in Chard, where the removal of through routes for motor vehicles is being considered. Take part in the consultation here: <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/highways/greenlanes/>