

Huntspill DIVISION

Briefing Sheet for Parish Councils November 2025

Somerset Council Criticised Over Financial Management and Delays: Somerset Council has come under renewed criticism following an in-depth report by [Somerset Confidential](#), which accuses the authority of poor financial control, overreliance on consultants, and slow progress in addressing its £101 million budget shortfall. The report highlights that key statutory recommendations from auditors Grant Thornton (intended to secure the Council's financial future) remain incomplete months after their deadlines. It also criticises the Council for continuing to operate multiple legacy IT systems more than two years after becoming a unitary authority, rising agency staff costs despite redundancies, and weak financial controls. The publication suggests that Somerset Council may again need to seek exceptional financial support from Government to avoid insolvency for 2026/27.

£3m Pay and Grading Review: After cutting 555 full-time posts to save £33 million last April, Somerset Council's Executive is now approving a £3 million review of staff pay and grading over the next two years. The review aims to create a more consistent pay structure following the merger of five former councils. The programme, separate from the £20 million "Inspiring Innovation" transformation contract with Newton Europe, will be supported by consultancy firm Korn Ferry, and changes are expected to take effect from April 2027 following consultation with staff and unions.

Leader's £32k Aide Advertised Amid Financial Emergency: The Leader of Somerset Council has received criticism after advertising for a "Leader's Office Co-ordinator" role at up to £32,000 a year during the council's 'financial emergency'. The part-time role (26 hours per week) involves drafting speeches, managing diary commitments and handling casework. The advert follows the council's decision to cut 555 job posts earlier this year to tackle a £101m budget gap for 2026/27.

Motion Wins Cross-Party Support for Planning Service Improvements: [A Conservative motion](#) calling for improvements to Somerset Council's planning service received full crossparty backing at the latest Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee. Introduced by Opposition Leader Cllr Diogo Rodrigues, the motion calls for a Planning Service Recovery Plan with measurable targets, quarterly reporting, stronger planning enforcement, and a new "good practice charter" to improve engagement with stakeholders, including parish councils and applicants. The Motion will now go to a Full Council meeting on 17th December for a vote.

Sunday Parking Charges Consultation Closes: Somerset Council's six-week consultation on proposals to introduce Sunday parking charges across the county has now closed. The feedback will be considered by the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee on 19th November before a final decision is made by the Executive in December.

Council Ready for Winter Road Conditions: Somerset Council and its winter service partner Kier Transportation Ltd have completed preparations for the cold season, with a fleet of 23 gritters ready to treat key routes when freezing temperatures or snow are forecast. Last winter, crews carried out 1,679 gritting runs, covering over 117,000 miles and using more than 6,000 tonnes of salt. The Council prioritises a precautionary network of major roads, emergency routes and community links, supported by weather stations and local contractors. Gritting bins are also being topped up across Somerset ahead of winter. More information, including a map of the gritting routes, is available here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roadstravel-and-parking/gritting/>

Cost-of-Living Support for Somerset Residents: Somerset Council is urging residents to make use of the wide range of cost-of-living support available this winter. Working with local charities and community groups, the Council is distributing Government funding to help people access essentials such as food, heating, and household items. Support includes food pantries, council tax and housing payment assistance, and help for older residents struggling to heat their homes. Full details, including eligibility and how to apply, are available at: www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/cost-of-living-support-for-somersetresidents/

Consultation Launched on Charitable Collections Policy: Somerset Council has opened a public consultation on a new Charitable Collection Licensing Policy to simplify and standardise how charity collections are managed across the county. The proposals include allowing collections on any day of the year, permitting multiple collections at the same location, and removing the requirement to publish proceeds in local newspapers. The draft policy aims to reduce bureaucracy and administrative costs by replacing the differing arrangements inherited from the former district councils. The consultation runs from 1 November 2025 to 23 January 2026: <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/licensing/charitable-collection-licensing-policy/>