

Somerset Council

Monthly Report from your Councillors – 1st June 2025

Somerset Lib Dem Councillors and MPs Respond to Yeovil Hospital Maternity Service Closure

On May 12th, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust announced the closure of the Special Care Baby Unit and inpatient maternity services at Yeovil Hospital for an initial six months, citing safety concerns.

Within two days the council's Scrutiny Committee for Health questioned the hospital Trust's Chief Medical Officer and her team; Cllr Mike Stanton's questions elicited the fact that the problem was really caused by shortage of consultant level staff, with four on sickness absence.

Every Somerset Lib Dem councillor and MP has collectively written to NHS Somerset leadership, at the hospital, to voice dismay over the plans for a 'temporary' closure. Somerset Council has not received any guarantee that the unit will reopen after six months, leading to questions being raised at Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament by Adam Dance MP.

The closure will force pregnant women to travel to Taunton, Dorchester, and Bath, leaving Somerset with only one operational maternity unit. The Yeovil facility is essential for large parts of rural South East Somerset, as well as residents of Yeovil and Chard. We are demanding clear assurances about its future.

Somerset Council Delivers First Council Houses in West Somerset for a Generation

Somerset Council is delivering the first new council houses in West Somerset in decades. All 54 homes at the Rainbow Way site off Seaward Way in Minehead are being allocated to residents with a strong local connection, either current residents or those with family ties to the area. The scheme is now in the final stages and has recently been nominated for a major award recognising outstanding construction projects across the South West.

Full Council debated on 21 May whether government-funded migration schemes affect local housing availability. However, Somerset Council's housing schemes explicitly exclude applicants without a local connection, ensuring local prioritisation. It's false to suggest that affordable or new Council homes in Somerset aren't for local people, or that they're being diverted to refugees or asylum seekers.

In fact Somerset has relatively few asylum seekers. As of December 2024, only 297 asylum seekers are supported in Somerset, which is just 0.05% of our population of 581,145.

This marks a significant achievement for Somerset Council, demonstrating our commitment to building affordable homes and strengthening local communities.

Trial of Smart Lighting Systems to Reduce Falls in Somerset Care Homes

Somerset is trialling innovative smart lighting (Nobi) in four care homes to help prevent falls among elderly residents. It alerts carers immediately if a fall occurs and provides data to analyse causes, to improve safety & quality of life. An external evaluation, including Oxford University, will guide future applications.

[More on this story here.](#)

Household Support Fund Extended to Support Somerset Residents

The Household Support Fund has been extended until March 2026, providing £6.74 million from the UK government to assist families, older residents, and those facing financial hardship. Funds are allocated for food vouchers, community hubs, crisis support, hospital discharge aid, and utility bill reductions for young people. The program aims to lessen the impact of the ongoing cost of living crisis, reflecting the Lib Dem commitment to promoting equality and community well-being. Support can be accessed online or through council customer services.

[More details](#)

Changes to reporting highways issues

Somerset Council is implementing changes for reporting to our highways service. **Fix My Street** will no longer be an access point for reporting issues. Instead, please use SC's online reporting portal:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

This ensures issues like potholes, blocked drains, and overgrown vegetation are logged accurately, tracked, and quickly addressed. When reports are submitted through this portal or the call centre, they are automatically assigned to the correct team, and enquirers receive updates via reference numbers.

Councillors and the public are asked to no longer use **Fix My Street or email reports for highways**.

This new process aims to streamline issue reporting, reduce unnecessary communication and duplication, and ensure quick resolution of highway defects.

Those without internet can call: 0300 123 2224.

Somerset Wins Awards for Smart Transport and Sustainability Projects

Somerset Council has received three awards from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, recognising excellence in transport and environmental sustainability. Notable projects include the Firepool Northern Boulevard (Taunton), which reused materials, reduced carbon emissions, and created a safe cycling and walking route to promote healthier, greener travel.

Somerset Strengthens Ties with Ukraine's Vinnytsia Region

Somerset Council has signed a partnership agreement with Ukraine's Vinnytsia region to promote collaboration in education, trade, and community support. Chair of Somerset Council Mike Best visited the Ukrainian Embassy in London to advance discussions. The non-legally binding agreement, initially for five years, aims to encourage joint working and demonstrate Somerset's solidarity with Ukraine.

Vinnytsia, with a population of 1.5 million, has key sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, and digital innovation, along with a rich cultural heritage and three of Ukraine's seven Wonders. The partnership will focus on knowledge transfer, educational and trade exchanges, & attracting inward investment.

Other UK regions, such as Norfolk and Kent, are exploring similar agreements with Ukrainian regions. The relationship is being developed through a series of online meetings, with the agreement signed through the Ukrainian Embassy. This initiative highlights our commitment to internationalism and community building.

Foster Care Fortnight Highlighted Urgent Need for Local Homes in Somerset

With around 630 children in care and fewer than 150 foster households, Somerset Council is encouraging residents to consider fostering, offering flexible options and full support.

Since being elected to run Somerset Council, we have been working to improve the placement system for vulnerable children. In the past, children were often placed in out-of-county locations, far from their families and friends. One of our manifesto commitments was to "bring our children home."

Council Leader Bill Revans points out that out-of-county placements have significantly reduced—from 18 down to just five—and the cost has dropped from £10.7 million to much lower figures.

The council has developed a successful partnership with the not-for-profit Shaw Trust to open therapeutic children's homes called Homes and Horizons. These homes are converted residences where children receive tailored education with expert staff experienced in mental health, therapy, and social work.

These homes are designed for children who find it more difficult to manage their daily emotions and behaviours, including those with verbal aggression, mental health challenges, and self-harming behaviours.

Anyone interested in fostering can visit fosteringinsomerset.org.uk or call 0800 587 9900, and they will find that almost anyone can foster provided they meet the basic requirements.

Reaching out does not commit anyone to anything, but it can make a real difference to the lives of children in need.

Blood Pressure Monitoring Kits Available in Libraries

You can borrow more than just books from your local library with free blood pressure monitors available alongside the latest bestsellers. To promote health and early detection of hypertension, SC and NHS Somerset encourage residents to borrow free blood pressure monitors from local libraries, click here for [More details](#)

Update on the Glastonbury Life Factory Project

Town Deal funding for the Glastonbury Life Factory project has been halted following an internal audit report revealing financial and governance issues. Further details can be found here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/update-on-glastonbury-life-factory-project/>

Work Begins on the Next Phase of the A39 Cycle Route

Somerset Council has started work on the next section of the A39 cycle route between Minehead and Dunster, which should take seven weeks. Work will be done with minimal disruption, maintaining two-way traffic during the day with some night work under light-controlled traffic management. A temporary 30 mph speed limit will be in place for safety. The scheme aims to provide a safe walking and cycling route, supporting our commitment to improving travel options for the community. More details can be found [here](#).

Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities

Report a problem on the road

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

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/>

Mike Stanton & Richard Wilkins