Monthly Somerset Councillor Report - Peter Seib
Nov 2026

Wessex devolution: long term investment for the West Country

The Chancellor's Budget statement confirmed intent for devolution in “Wessex” (Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole). This will involve a new Mayor and brings £460 million over 30 years into the region, the aim being to grow the regional economy by £16 billion over that same period, with growth focused where the region has a competitive strength: defence, agriculture and food, clean energy, high value manufacturing, and the hospitality and creative sectors.

Household Energy Payment (for Council Tax bands A to D)

The Government has announced that households in Council Tax bands A to D will receive a new £100 Household Energy Payment in January 2027. If you already pay your Council Tax by Direct Debit, the payment will be made automatically (you can still sign up to pay this way). There will also be a separate discretionary scheme for residents not eligible for the £100 payment. Further details of the discretionary scheme, and arrangements for those who do not pay by Direct Debit, are not yet confirmed but will be published nearer the time.

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-tax/100-household-energy-payment/

Legacy LEP money to be spent boosting Somerset's economy

The SC Executive has agreed to invest £5.2 million of legacy funds from the former Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership in strategic economic development. At least £1.4 million is expected by October 2029.

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licensing/somerset-economic-prosperity-strategy/

Helping more Somerset children in care stay closer to home

There are 164 children currently in residential care in Somerset, and 97 are presently housed outside the county. Proposals to fix this are timed to coincide with the end of the Homes and Horizons contract.

The Council will run two short-term assessment homes for children entering care in crisis, and a short-breaks home for children with disabilities. It will also commission eight further homes from at least two providers, and bring the High Needs Fostering Service under direct council management.

Partnerships with Somerset CAMHS and Horizons Therapeutic Education Trust will continue, and changes would be phased to keep stability for children in the three homes currently open.

More local specialist education places

The Executive has approved capital funding to create more local places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), so more children can learn closer to home, with shorter journeys and less reliance on costly independent placements out of county. The plan includes:

- £3.84 million for specialist inclusion bases at 11 mainstream schools, providing 104 places;
- £2.616 million to expand The Mendip School by up to 24 places, with an option for a future satellite in Frome;
- £1.68 million for 42 inclusion support bases between 2027 and 2030;
- £400,000 for alternative provision in Frome and West Somerset; and
- £340,000 for accessibility adaptations such as ramps, lifts and hygiene rooms.

Ofsted and CQC to inspect SEND services in Somerset

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are expected to inspect special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services in Somerset very soon. The inspection covers support for children and young people aged 0 to 25 and usually lasts around three weeks. Inspectors will look at families' experiences, how well needs are identified, how services work together, and whether support improves outcomes. The area was last inspected in 2020. Day-to-day support carries on as normal, and the findings will be published in a report.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/area-send-inspections-information-for-families

Council plan outlines major investment in transport infrastructure

The Executive has approved Somerset's Local Transport Delivery Plan, setting out how more than £283 million of government funding will be used between 2026 and 2030. It covers maintaining and improving the road network, more investment in road safety schemes and public rights of way, support for bus service improvements and better access to sustainable travel.

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/local-transport-plan/

Investing to help rough sleepers into safe accommodation

Somerset Council has secured £5.87 million over three years (£1 million in 2026/27, £2.26 million in 2027/28 and £2.61 million in 2028/29) from the Government's new Rough Sleeping Programme. The funding will expand existing services and support new ones, including female-only accommodation and higher-support accommodation for people with complex needs. The programme asks councils to offer accommodation to everyone sleeping rough by Christmas.

Homelessness also includes sofa surfing, sleeping in cars and living in temporary accommodation. Anyone worried about becoming homeless can get advice from the Council.

If you see someone sleeping rough, alert **StreetLink** so outreach teams can help.

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/housing-and-homelessness

https://www.streetlink.org.uk/

New strategy to tackle domestic abuse

The new Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy sets six priorities:

- preventing abuse and raising awareness,
- better understanding abuse within families,
- more access to safe accommodation and support,
- holding people who cause harm accountable,
- reducing inequalities in access to services, and
- recognising children as victims in their own right.

In 2023/24, around 21,084 people aged 16 and over in Somerset experienced domestic abuse, and the Somerset Domestic Abuse Service received 2,435 referrals.

Help is available: call the Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline on 0800 69 49 999 (8am to 8pm, seven days a week), or use the online live chat.

In an emergency call 999; if you cannot speak, press 55 when prompted.

https://www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk/

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/domestic-abuse/

Somerset Council switches back to renewable electricity

From April 2027, the Council's electricity will come from a Clean Renewable tariff, sourced from wind, solar and hydro generation, covering all metered and unmetered supplies in its contract.

The Council had reluctantly moved to a standard tariff in 2024 because of its financial emergency. The switch back costs an extra £53,000, but that's a very tiny proportion of its annual electricity spend of around £6.58 million.

New community fund to help nature recover: apply by 4 December

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy Community Seed Fund offers grants of up to £10,000 for projects in Somerset that align with at least one priority in the Nature Recovery Strategy and which bring clear community benefit, such as creating or restoring habitats, helping priority species, connecting wildlife areas, or surveys and feasibility studies.

Parish Councils, community groups, charities, CICs, schools, farmers, landowners and estates can all apply. Applications close on 4 December 2026; read the guidance first, and pre-application advice is available from LNRS@somerset.gov.uk.
https://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/local-nature-recovery-strategy/