

SOMERSET COUNCIL NOTES FOR MAY 2025.

Update on the Boundary Commission Review for Somerset

The public consultation on these recommendations is due to start on **3rd June**.

It will be important to express local views. The initial proposal from Somerset Council is for the Axe Vale villages to be included with Cheddar and Axbridge with 2 elected members.

Publication of the recommendations **2nd December 2025**

If you want to read the Somerset Council Submission then this is the link to the submission papers –

<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=7579>

Supplement 1 - Appendix A has the details of the proposed structure of electoral divisions. The overall electorate of Somerset, based on the projected 2030 figures is 467,274; the target figure for 96 divisions per member was 4,867, and the Council has endeavoured largely to stay within 10% of that figure.

More information about the review can be found here: - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>

Council Sells Part of County Hall to Developer of Key Worker Housing

Somerset Council has completed the sale of C Block of County Hall in Taunton to Prime PLC.

Prime, a specialist developer of health and care property, intends to redevelop the 4,600 metre building to provide new key worker accommodation for the town.

Prime has a wealth of experience in developing a variety of facilities including clinical buildings, hospital car parks, care homes and housing for key workers. It has a track record in creating spaces that focus on thoughtful, sustainable design

New accommodation in the C Block building will be operated by Hyve, a not-for-profit provider of key worker housing and the accommodation is exclusively for people working to provide public services.

Planning Changes Government Consultation

Angela Rayner's proposals for planning reform will soon be out for consultation.

Part of the proposals are to remove local democratic input from planning decisions on any applications with fewer than 10 properties proposed (Non-Major applications).

Suggestion is that these applications should be decided by Planning officers and no longer be able to be referred to local planning committees.

This is being suggested will fast track housing applications, but does nothing to address the circa 1 million planning permissions across the country that have been granted but remain unbuilt.

Council Finances

Somerset Council was one of only 6 English Councils to have been given permission for an increase above the 4.99% Council Tax Cap – Approving a 7.5% Council Tax increase raising approx. £8-9 million.

The government also allowed Somerset to have a £43m “Capitalisation Direction” (allowing the Council to sell capital assets and use the receipts to pay day to day revenue costs). The £43m budget gap will be bridged using a which is a form of one-off assistance (that was also requested last year).

This is obviously a short-term fix that is not sustainable in the longer term.

Car Park Charges

Somerset Council have announced their intention to introduce a new parking policy that will see residents across the county pay more for parking. At the Executive Meeting in March it resolved to

- * EXPAND Sunday charges covering the whole county.

- * NEW on-street parking charges – e.g. parking bays

Following considerable challenge from Councillors it was decided to not proceed with NEW overnight charges.

Once resources have been secured the draft parking orders will be prepared – it is anticipated that this will happen in May with bespoke notices being produced for each location with specific changes being identified. This will provide more of the detail.

The public 6 week statutory consultation will then follow, possibly commencing in early Summer. This will be followed by a review of the responses to determine whether they can proceed as planned or whether changes, including mitigations are needed. The decision will then be made as to whether to proceed or not. The final decision will then be made by the Executive possibly during August or September – dates yet to be confirmed.

Responding to these consultations will be very important.