

SOMERSET COUNCIL

Briefing Sheet for Parish & Town Councils September 2025

People Strategy 2025–2028: Somerset Council has set out a new People Strategy aimed at supporting staff through transformation and improving recruitment, retention and morale. The strategy focuses on three priorities: Reset and Refocus (strengthening the basics), Attract and Retain (building fair, motivated teams), and Improve and Thrive (embracing innovation). While deliberately high-level, much of the detail is deferred to Directorate Workforce Plans due later in 2025.

AI Road Safety Cameras (Frome Bypass): Following six fatalities on the A361 Frome Bypass in five years, Somerset Council and Avon & Somerset Police are trialling AI cameras to detect dangerous driving. Installed in August for six months, the cameras identify behaviours linked to the “Fatal Five”: speeding, seatbelt non-compliance, distraction (e.g. mobile phones), drink/drug driving, and careless driving. Offenders will initially receive warning letters and educational materials. The technology, already used elsewhere in the UK, is being tested alongside recent safety upgrades at the A361/A362 junction.

Fire Risk from Gas Canisters: Somerset Council has issued a warning following a near-serious fire at a recycling facility caused by gas canisters being placed in blue recycling bags. In the past six months, almost 1,500 canisters have been wrongly disposed of, leading to four fires in one month. Crews cannot always spot canisters in collections, and the risk of explosion when crushed is high. Residents are urged to take small canisters, vapes, lithium-ion batteries and devices to recycling sites for safe disposal. Only empty aerosols may go in blue bags.

Digital Slinky Transport: Somerset Council is expanding its Digital Slinky demand-responsive transport service. First piloted in Somerton and Langport in May 2024, the service is now being rolled out to Sedgemoor (covering Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and nearby villages) from 18 August, funded through the Government’s Bus Service Improvement grant. Taunton and Wellington will follow in September, with further expansion dependent on future funding. Digital Slinky allows passengers to book via an app just one hour in advance, rather than 24 hours, with phone bookings still available. The service runs Monday–Friday, 7.30am to 5.30pm. Information on how to register and book can be found here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/slinky-services/>
