

Councillor Update

*From your
Unitary Councillors
Andy Sully and Mike Rigby*



**Somerset
Council**

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.

Recent political debate at Full Council focused on concerns raised, questioning the impact of government-funded migration schemes on local housing availability. It was argued that Somerset residents should be prioritised for social and affordable (Council) housing and called for assurances that future development would meet local needs without reducing

housing for local people.

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.

TRIAL OF SMART LIGHTING SYSTEMS TO REDUCE FALLS IN SOMERSET CARE HOMES



Somerset Council and NHS Somerset trial smart lighting systems in care homes to reduce falls, 4 residential care homes in Somerset will be fitted with smart lighting systems as part of an innovative trial to help reduce falls.

Somerset Council and NHS Somerset ICB have been awarded funding from NHS England to install the technology in bedrooms and ensuite bathrooms over the next 3 years via delivery partners Porters Care Ltd.

The smart light, known as Nobi, will alert carers to a fall immediately, ensuring help arrives within minutes. The system also allows staff to review events leading to falls, helping prevent future occurrences.

Every year, more than 70,000 people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will fall and sustain a hip fracture. This leads to the occupation of one in 30 hospital beds with a cost of an estimated £2 billion to care for this type of injury.

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.

None of the waste generated by the work went to landfill – it was all reused as part of the construction. The project achieved carbon savings of 26,481kg CO₂e in transport alone, and reduced the impact on the local road network. Around 7,500 tonnes of material was reused, avoiding the need to use “virgin” materials on the project, resulting in a cost saving of £140,000.

The green link will soon provide a walking and cycling route from the railway station, past the Firepool Innovation Centre and connect Trenchard Way to Canal Road. It is scheduled for completion later this month. As well as the space for walkers and cyclists, the route features seating and green spaces/rain

gardens for people to stop and relax.

Funded by a government grant, the boulevard will be a safe, green thoroughfare for people travelling from the north of the town towards the centre – including thousands of cricket fans heading for the Somerset County Cricket Ground from the station.

It promises to transform the way residents can travel into town, encouraging people out of cars and onto feet and bikes, with all the health and environmental benefits that come with it.

BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING KITS AVAILLABE IN LIBRARIES



People in Somerset are being reminded they can borrow more than just books from their local library with free blood pressure monitors available alongside the latest bestsellers. To promote health and early detection of hypertension, Somerset Council and NHS Somerset encourage residents to borrow free blood pressure monitors from local libraries.

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 is expected to take seven weeks. The project will be carried out with minimal disruption, maintaining two-way traffic during the day and carrying out 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 the council's commitment to improving travel options for the community.



*Best wishes to you all,
Andy and Mike*

Andy: andy.sully@somerset.gov.uk

Mike: mike.rigby@somerset.gov.uk