

Councillor Update

*From your
Unitary Councillors
Andy Sully and Mike Rigby*



**Somerset
Council**

Somerset Council moves into financial recovery after budget approval



Somerset Council says it is shifting from financial emergency to recovery after councillors approved the balanced 2026/27 budget. Leader Bill Revans told Full Council that independent reports show the authority has “grasped the challenges” and is on the right track after taking difficult decisions while protecting frontline services and vulnerable residents.

The council highlighted progress in narrowing its funding gap from £101m in March 2025 to £25m in February 2026, despite the Government’s Fair Funding Review hitting rural counties. Councillors agreed a 4.99% Council Tax rise, taking the average Band D bill to £1,950.30 a year (about £1.78 extra per week), still below many neighbouring unitary councils.

To close the remaining gap, the council will use one further year of Exceptional Financial Support via a Capitalisation Direction while seeking further savings through transformation. The Inspiring Innovation Transformation Programme will invest £45m by 2031, targeting roughly £135m in savings (a 3:1 return). Plans also include up to £5m more over three years to smarten up road signs and lines, to clear more gullies, pavements and cycleways, plus an extra £2m for the Exceptional Hardship Fund. The council said it will sell assets where needed to protect services and countered claims it sought an 11% tax rise as a misrepresentation of government negotiations.

Taunton Library marks 30 years on Paul Street



Taunton Library celebrated 30 years on Paul Street with staff, residents and partners joining events including a children's Lego competition, an exhibition of memorabilia, and coffee and cake from the Friends of Taunton Library. The library continues to serve as a modern community hub offering free Wi-Fi, public computers, wellbeing services, a café run by Young Somerset, the Somerset Independent Living Centre, and a full programme of activities and events.

Plan in place to smarten Somerset's roads, pavements and cycle ways



Somerset Council to spend up to £5m over 3 years to smarten roads, pavements and cycle ways, more drain and gully clearance, improved signs and road markings, litter collection and vegetation clearance near walking/cycling routes.

Current road maintenance programmes focus on safety critical works which can mean lower priority issues like faded road markings, broken signs and overgrown hedges have been left. Improvements will also be made to the council's public reporting system, to make it even easier for residents to highlight any issues on the roads.

Mike Rigby, said: "we know the public want us to do much more than simply keep our roads safe, and we want to see improvements across our council area.

We will continue to prioritise pothole repairs and are working hard to clear the backlog caused by the many weeks of wet weather and flooding we have experienced this winter. We plan to allocate additional funds to tackle the backlog of potholes if we need to."

Since January the council has received 16,332 defect reports (4,417 in the same period last year). As of 20 Feb, 35 teams have fixed 4,577 potholes. Repairs are prioritised by severity and will be completed within 2 hours, 24 hours, 7 days or 28 days depending on the category.

Planning approved for £15m Octagon Theatre transformation



Planning permission granted for a £15m refurbishment of Yeovil's 50-year-old Octagon Theatre to secure its structure and deliver major front-of-house, backstage and accessibility upgrades. Works will improve the auditorium and rehearsal space, renew plant and infrastructure, add accessible toilets and a Changing Places facility, upgrade technical stage systems (including fly and backstage crossover), and introduce energy-efficiency measures.

Funding comprises £10m from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, £3.75m from Yeovil Town Council (loan and reserves) and just over £1.25m from ticket levy income, fundraising and Section 106 contributions via Somerset Council. The tender process can now proceed and work is expected to start in the 2026/27 financial year.

*Best wishes to you all,
Andy and Mike*

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