

Councillors Dawn Johnson and Habib Farbahi - January 26 Report

- Somerset's roads ranked among the best maintained in the South West, with Somerset Council placing 26th out of 153 local authorities nationwide under the Department for Transport's new road maintenance scoring system. The council scored 'green' for road condition and maintenance best practice, and 'amber' overall, reflecting strong performance despite significant financial pressures.

Council Funding and Finances

- Government settlement delivers a 13% increase in Core Spending Power over three years, but almost all funding comes from Council Tax.
- Somerset Council has delivered over £50 million in savings since becoming a unitary authority.
- Ongoing pressures remain in children's services, homelessness and placements.
- Exceptional Financial Support application submitted to protect essential services.
- Residents encouraged to take part in the Council's budget consultation.

Supporting Vulnerable Residents

- Severe Weather Emergency Provision activated to protect rough sleepers during extreme cold.
- Outreach teams provided welfare checks and emergency accommodation.
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme income thresholds increased by 3.8% from April 2026.
- Exceptional Hardship Fund available for residents affected by benefit changes.
- Councillor-led review planned to examine impacts of Universal Credit changes.

Environment and Transport

- £3.78 million secured to deliver over 1,600 electric vehicle chargepoints.
- Focus on residents without off-street parking.

- Community invited to suggest locations for new charging points.
- Essential road resurfacing underway across Taunton, Wellington and Cheddar Gorge.

Listening to Communities

- Sunday parking charges paused following strong public feedback.
- Review agreed for Bridgwater's Celebration Mile traffic and parking arrangements.
- Commitment to develop a fair, county-wide parking policy in 2026.

Growth, Culture and Heritage

- Leaders across Wessex pressing Government for a devolution deal to unlock growth and investment.
- £15 million redevelopment of Yeovil's Octagon Theatre progressing.
- New Visitor Centre opened at Ham Hill with improved accessibility.
- Nearly £1 million National Lottery funding secured for the Chew Valley Hoard exhibition.

Governance and Public Confidence

- Auditor recommendations addressed on finance and governance.
- Funding withdrawn from the Life Factory project to protect public money.
- Ongoing cooperation with police investigations.

Community and Volunteering

- Over 1,400 volunteers supporting council services recognised.
- Somerset residents celebrated in the New Year Honours.
- Community initiatives supported across libraries, schools and outdoor learning.

Children, Safety and Wellbeing

- Enforcement action taken against illegal tobacco and vape sales in Taunton.
- Fire safety warnings issued for affected tumble dryers.
- Local businesses supporting children in care through community donations.
- Continued promotion of fostering opportunities in Somerset.

Useful Links and Contacts

- Report a problem on the road: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>
- Potholes and road damage: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/potholes-road-damage-and-edge-loss/>
- Street lighting issues: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-with-a-street-light/>
- Road signs, markings and bollards: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/road-signs-bollards-and-road-markings/>
- Speed limits and traffic calming: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/speed-limits/>
- Traffic lights: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/traffic-lights/>
- Street and roadworks: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/street-and-roadworks-problems/>
- Travel Somerset updates: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/travel-somerset/>
- Bins, recycling and waste: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/>
- Somerset Council consultations: <https://somersetconsultations.org.uk/>
- Climate newsletter sign-up: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/>
- Electric vehicle charging: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/electric-vehicle-charging/>
- Fostering in Somerset: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/fostering/>

Somerset Council Contact Number: 0300 123 2224