**Somerset Council Report**

**Ash Parish Council 2nd June 2025**

**1.0 - Somerset News**

1.1 -Somerset Lib Dem Councillors and MPs Respond to Yeovil Hospital Maternity Service Closure
On May 12th, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust announced the closure of the Special Care Baby Unit and inpatient maternity services at Yeovil Hospital for an initial six months, citing safety concerns.

In response, every Somerset Lib Dem councillor and MP has collectively written to NHS Somerset leadership, at the hospital, to voice opposition and dismay over the plans for a ‘temporary’ closure. Somerset Council has not received any guarantee that the unit will reopen after six months, leading to questions being raised at Prime Minister’s Questions in Parliament by Adam Dance MP.

The situation has sparked widespread alarm within local communities, leading to a peaceful protest with many Lib Dem councillors joining hundreds of residents and tearful maternity unit staff protesting outside the facility.

The closure will force pregnant women to travel to Taunton, Dorchester, and Bath, leaving Somerset with only one operational maternity unit. The Yeovil facility is essential for large parts of rural South East Somerset, as well as residents of Yeovil and Chard. The Lib Dems are demanding clear assurances about its future.

1.2- 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 Councill 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.

This development of new council houses marks a significant achievement for the Lib Dem-led Somerset Council, demonstrating their commitment to building affordable homes and strengthening local communities.

1.3 - Household Support Fund Extended to Support Somerset Residents
The Household Support Fund has been extended until March 2026, providing £6.74 million from the UK government to assist families, older residents, and those facing financial hardship. Funds are allocated for food vouchers, community hubs, crisis support, hospital discharge aid, and utility bill reductions for young people. The program aims to lessen the impact of the ongoing cost of living crisis, reflecting the Lib Dem commitment to promoting equality and community well-being. Support can be accessed online or through council customer services.
[**More details**](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/somerset-household-support-fund/)

1.4- Somerset Strengthens Ties with Ukraine’s Vinnytsia Region
Somerset Council has signed a partnership agreement with Ukraine’s Vinnytsia region to promote collaboration in education, trade, and community support. Chair of Somerset Council Mike Best visited the Ukrainian Embassy in London to advance discussions. The non-legally binding agreement, initially for five years, aims to encourage joint working and demonstrate Somerset’s solidarity with Ukraine.

The Vinnytsia region, with a population of 1.5 million, has key sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, and digital innovation, along with a rich cultural heritage and three of Ukraine’s seven Wonders. The partnership will focus on knowledge transfer, educational and trade exchanges, and attracting inward investment.

Other UK regions, such as Norfolk and Kent, are exploring similar agreements with Ukrainian regions. The relationship is being developed through a series of online meetings, with the agreement signed through the Ukrainian Embassy. This initiative highlights Somerset Lib Dems commitment to internationalism and community building.

1.5-Foster Care Fortnight Highlighted Urgent Need for Local Homes in Somerset

With around 630 children in care and fewer than 150 foster households, Somerset Council is encouraging residents to consider fostering, offering flexible options and full support.

Since being elected to run Somerset Council, the Lib Dems has been working to improve the placement system for vulnerable children. In the past, children were often placed in out-of-county locations, far from their families and friends. One of our manifesto commitments was to "bring our children home."

Since taking over as leader, Councillor Bill Revans points out that out-of-county placements have significantly reduced—from 18 down to just five—and the cost has dropped from £10.7 million to much lower figures.

The council has developed a successful partnership with the not-for-profit Shaw Trust to open therapeutic children’s homes called Homes and Horizons. These homes are converted residences where children receive tailored education with expert staff experienced in mental health, therapy, and social work.

These homes are designed for children who find it more difficult to manage their daily emotions and behaviours, including those with verbal aggression, mental health challenges, and self-harming behaviours.

Anyone interested in fostering can visit [fosteringinsomerset.org.uk](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/new-tech-on-trial-to-help-reduce-falls-in-somerset-care-homes/) or call 0800 587 9900, and they will find that almost anyone can foster provided they meet the basic requirements.

Reaching out does not commit anyone to anything, but it can make a real difference to the lives of children in need.

1.6-Blood Pressure Monitoring Kits Available 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, click here for [More details](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/borrow-a-life-saving-blood-pressure-testing-kit-from-your-local-library-this-world-hypertension-day/)

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| 1.7-More than 100,000 miles of Somerset roads gritted this winter With storms and ice galore over the past few months, Somerset Council’s winter-ready team went out 1679 times this winter covering more than 117,000 miles of Somerset’s roads. Teams from the council’s highways maintenance and winter service partner, Kier worked hard throughout the cold weather to treat the network and help prevent the formation ice. More than 6,000 tonnes of salt were used to help keep the network running, with crews heading out during both day and night.This year the coldest road surface temperature was logged at -5.3c on 3 January 2025.The winter road treatment team use weather stations across Somerset and receive special daily forecasts. Gritting usually takes place when road surface temperatures are predicted to drop below 1°C and frost or ice is expected to form on the road.  |
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**2.0 - Local Issues**

**2.1 - Highways and Transport – We are still awaiting an update on 2025-26 plans**

**- Speed past Hillview school**

There have been no recent comms on any concerns. The below is still relevant. The school is also reporting any incidents of note.

All near misses should be reported by local residents who should be encouraged to do this as data collection of such incidents adds to the weight of receiving official monitoring the road.

**-. Drainage works** between the school and Stapleton Cross planned for inclusion into the 2024/25 following a CCTV survey to be carried out this year works to be designed following survey (done), now with contractor to design, works phased over three years starting in 2025-26

**-Trees between the school and Stapleton Cross,** no safety issues at this time, to be monitored. To be included in next tender. Highways state they are not their responsibility unless they fall on the highway

**-**. **Jetting of the system to be arranged on the section leaving Ash towards the A303 f**ollowing the patching and depending on available budgets (jetting at new school, competed by contractors undertaking new school build) Recent work has been completed to clear outlets near the A303 turn off. Jetting between SEND school and Ash to be carried out on completion of the build in April 2024. No budget available but awaiting review for 2025- 26

**- Burrough Road drainage –** This has been added to the works list for investigation.

**2.2 - Traffic and Safety strategy - ongoing**

 Long Load and Ash PC’s linked to pick up and move forward any agreements about sharing the SIDs between the two parishes.

**Regards**

**John and Emily**

 **Report it first: useful Links to share with your communities**

*Visit 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*
Somerset Council repair potholes and other road defects, and maintain our roads, for the safe access of all road users:
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/potholes-and-road-damage/>

For traffic updates and roadworks follow @travelsomerset on X and Facebook.

*Live travel information*
<https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/>

*Report a problem with a street light*
We maintain and repair street lights to national standards to provide safe access to all road users:
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-with-a-street-light/>

*Roads, travel and parking, road signs, markings and lighting*Includes information about non-illuminated bollards, pedestrian crossings, requesting a village nameplate and how to apply for a new road sign Speed limits:<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/road-signs-bollards-and-road-markings/>

*Speed limits*
Request information about new or existing traffic calming measures:
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/speed-limits/>

*Traffic lights*
We maintain over 200 traffic light locations throughout the county
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/traffic-lights/>

*Street and roadworks*
We maintain the roads and pavements that are managed at public expense in Somerset
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/street-and-roadworks/>

Sign-up for the latest climate news:
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-food-safety/climate-and-ecological-emergency/newsletter-sign-up/>.