

SOMERSET COUNCIL

November 2024

A358 Dualling: A decision has been made by the Government to shelve the £328 million National Highways upgrade of the A358 between Ilminster and Junction 25 of the M5 at Taunton. Confirmation came as the Chancellor announced a series of measures to balance the Government's books which included cancelling a number of rail and road infrastructure projects. The scheme to build a tunnel on a section of the A303 under Stonehenge was shelved in the summer.

Winter Fuel Payments: In a move to safeguard vulnerable older residents, Somerset Council overwhelmingly passed a motion to oppose the Government's changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance. The motion, brought forward by Conservative Leader, David Fothergill called for the government to reconsider its recent decision, which will see millions of pensioners lose vital support for heating this winter. The Council highlighted the vital role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping Somerset's 110,000 older residents afford heating during the colder months, preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas. The Council also pledged to raise awareness about Pension Credit uptake to ensure all eligible pensioners in Somerset receive the support they are entitled to and to work with Voluntary Charity Faith and Social Enterprise (VCSFE) partners to ensure a substantial portion of the Household Support Fund, is directed toward helping Somerset pensioners struggling with fuel poverty.

Mendip local plan: Somerset Council has submitted proposals to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to update the Mendip Local Plan Part II (LPP2) which runs to 2029. The LPP2 site allocations plan was adopted by the former Mendip District Council in December 2021 but was subject to a successful legal challenge. The Council has now met the Court deadline to submit proposals which identifies 9 sites capable of delivering 569 dwellings by 2028. A new Somerset wide plan is in preparation which will consider future housing sites after 2029.

Safeguarding adults: A series of recommendations have been made by the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) following the death of a resident. The recommendations were shared in a report which documents an elderly lady's life leading up to her death from a COVID-19 infection whilst being treated for injuries arising from an accident. There were also concerns about how money was being used. Highlighting weaknesses in the way agencies were able to communicate with the lady has been assessed and the information recorded and shared across the health and social care system, the report also makes various recommendations.

Wells Christmas Market: 'Christmas in Wells' will take place on Saturday 14th December, 9am-3pm, in Wells Market Place and on the Bishop's Palace Green featuring over 100 stalls.

Community Heroes: Forty-eight Community heroes and organisations from across Somerset have been recognised for their service with a Somerset Council Chair's Award. The awards were presented by the Somerset Council Chair at a ceremony in Taunton Rugby Football Club attended by the nominees and their guests. The award recipients were nominated by their city, town and parish councils in recognition of their outstanding contribution to their communities.

Recycling: Somerset Council has been given the green-light to roll out the collection of plastic bags and wrapping to more than 25,000 households. The county has been part of the national FlexCollect trial since May 2023 with around 3,500 residents in Frome having plastic bags and wrapping added to their weekly recycling collection. From October 2024 a further 25,000 residents in and around Wells, Draycott, Frome and Chilcompton will benefit from getting these hard to recycle plastics collected from home.

Winter Gritting: Highways partner Kier are working to keep roads safe this winter with the gritter fleet ready to head out when freezing temperatures or snow are forecast. Road users need to be ready too for adverse conditions. As the winter season approaches, it is vital that you travel according to the conditions and your vehicle is suitably maintained. You can find out more on driving in adverse weather conditions here, from Somerset Council's Road Safety Team at www.somersetroadsafety.org Preparation of the Council's depots, and filling of its salt barns has taken place throughout the summer and the winter team will also be topping up gritting bins across Somerset.

Sale of Disposable Vapes: Under recently published legal guidance the sale of disposable vapes are to be made illegal from 1st June 2025. Whilst rechargeable vapes are a good way to give up tobacco smoking there has been increasing evidence that young people are using disposable vapes as a lifestyle choice. There are currently 5 million sold weekly, each of which contains a lithium battery which cause frequent fires in recycling trucks and centres. The move to ban disposable vapes has received widespread support from Teachers, Waste Contractors, Public Health and even the RSPCA who have been concerned about the impact of vape waste on wildlife.

Kind Regards

Cllr Tom Power & Cllr Lucy Trimnell

Wincanton & Bruton Division

Somerset Council