

# SOMERSET UNITARY COUNCIL REPORT

## CLLR SARAH DYKE & CLLR NICOLA CLARK

### SEPTEMBER 2024

#### Somerset Council meetings

Just a reminder for you and your communities that members of the public can access agendas for all council meetings. They can also ask questions at these meetings. Details of how to do this can be found in the link below:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/>

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/speaking-at-a-council-meeting/>

Details of all upcoming meetings can be found here –

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-agendas-and-minutes/>

#### Council's team continues summer road maintenance programme

The biggest resurfacing programme in at least four years continues across Somerset over the next two weeks.

Somerset Council's road surface treatment specialists Kiely Bros are undertaking work that will see 1,000,000 sqm of road surface dressed, equivalent to 141 football pitches. The treatment is a greener and more cost-effective form of maintenance, helping to improve the road network whilst emitting significantly less carbon compared to alternative solutions.

The busy surface dressing programme is being done under short-term road closures or under stop-go signs depending on location. The road will only be closed for one-day within the stated period and advanced notice will be given to communities and road users.

Surface dressing is a nationally recognised maintenance technique for sealing a road, improving skid resistance, and preventing water getting under the surface. This is crucial to help stop potholes forming.

It works by coating an existing road surface with bitumen, covering it with stone chippings and then rolling it. It can only be carried out in dry weather, so the programme is flexible, and dates can change at short notice.

In some cases, a secondary treatment 'Kiely Lock' is applied a couple of weeks later. It is designed to further lock in loose chippings on the road surface and give the dressing the best life span.

As well as surface dressing the team from Kiely will be carrying out footway crack sealing, preparatory drainage, patching and cleaning, as well as post surfacing road markings, studs and high friction surfacing.

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For more information and to see our interactive map visit here

[Surface Dressing \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk).

\*During the spring and early summer you may have seen an innovative new vehicle out and about, the Multipatcher – [You can find out more about the Multipatcher here](#).

If you do spot a problem on the road, you can alert us quickly and easily here: [Report a problem on the road \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

You can see dates of planned works here: [www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roadworks-and-travel/](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roadworks-and-travel/), and follow Travel Somerset on X and Facebook for live travel updates and travel news.

### Launch of the Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot and Volunteer Training

In July 2020, Somerset County Council approved a Business Case for the creation of a single unitary Council for Somerset. The Business Case included the creation of new Local Community Networks (LCNs) to promote active community decision making, scrutiny, ensure local influence over council and wider public service activity, and to inspire more responsibility for local place-shaping.

Eighteen LCNs have since been created across Somerset.

All LCNs have encouraged the establishment of a Highways and Traffic Working Group as part of their set up, to support and advise the LCN on matters of detail associated with highway and traffic matters.

These Working Groups are also mandated to promote self-help and localised enhanced highway maintenance works delivery in various forms.

On 27 February 2024, the Service Director, Infrastructure and Transport, wrote to all Parish Councils in Somerset outlining the options available to localities to enhance the level of highway maintenance services in their area.

The letter set out a range of measures briefly summarised as:

- The provision of a Highway Steward
- Local self-delivery through local suppliers commissioned by a Parish, or by Parish collaboration, or through a volunteer network (which includes highway safety awareness training package where volunteers from the community can get online training to do some low-risk activities on the highway)

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- The Highways Parish Price List enabling City, Town, and Parish Councils to purchase highway maintenance services direct from the Councils' contractor Kier Transportation.

#### Parish Price List

The development of the Parish Price List has been a priority for the Highways and Traffic Working Groups in collaboration with ICT and Kier Transportation Ltd.

The development of a Parish Price List has been complex and challenging as it involved the redesign of technical and financial business processes, the communication and approval process, the customer interface, the data management and reporting, and the resource allocation and scheduling.

#### Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot

The indicative day visit charges for 2024 / 25 (payable directly by the Parish Councils to the contractor) are as follows, and it envisaged that part-day rates will also be available:

The rates are based on:

- 2 No operatives (8 hr days)
- Vehicle up to 7t (inc fuel) and small tools

Examples of typical services that potentially can be purchased by Parish Councils are:

#### Enhanced routine maintenance services

- Pothole repairs (where potholes are not considered to be a safety issue by the highway authority)
- Localised grass cutting
- Localised hedge cutting
- Localised siding / ploughing on footways and carriageways
- Localised 'grip' clearance (channels from the roadside leading to ditches)
- Single sign and / or post installation
- Sign cleaning
- Timber fencing repairs
- Minor aesthetics works (painting, cleaning, etc.)
- Other minor civils as identified and deliverable by minor works crew

#### Specialist services

- Gully emptying
- Surface water drainage jetting
- Ditching
- Drainage repairs
- Road and / or footway lining (refresh)
- Tree surgery
- Minor masonry works
- Traffic management for local events

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#### Communicating with our City, Town and Parish Councils

A letter should have been sent to City, Town and Parish Councils containing details of the proposed pilot including the pilot start date (2nd September 2024) and relevant contact details. **Please do let me know if you have not received this letter.**

The email will be: somersetehm@kier.co.uk

The letter will also provide guidance of typical services that can be purchased and the mechanisms to request works.

A presentation pack will be issued to Parishes, alongside a YouTube 'explainer' link.

#### Communicating with our LCNs

LCNs will receive an LCN Information Sheet, via their LCN Link Officers. They will also receive a slide presentation pack and YouTube 'explainer' link.

#### COMING SOON: Volunteer Training – Autumn 2024

Somerset Council is also preparing a Highway Safety Awareness Course to enable people such as volunteers or locally skilled people to undertake agreed types of work safely in the vicinity of the highway with the appropriate risk assessment.

The course will be available online when fully developed, however, an interim solution is being explored.

The course content covers safety matters and risk assessment preparing the volunteer to work safely in the vicinity of the highway.

The activities covered are considered low risk activities, and do not include working at height, manual handling, chemical hazards and traffic management signing lighting and guarding.

The scope of the course covers the following activities:

- Minor sign maintenance
- Clearing weeds
- Grass cutting
- Hedge cutting
- Cleaning gullies of detritus
- General cleaning and sweeping
- Litter picking

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In conjunction with the training course, a Highway Volunteer Handbook will be available. This handbook has been designed to provide simple guidance to volunteers working alongside and adjacent to the highway. It provides information on where to find support if an incident occurs, as well as guidance to help ensure all volunteers remain safe whilst helping to enhance the local highways.

#### Police and Crime Commissioner – Public Forums

Clare Moody is currently holding Public Forums across A&S to engage with the consultation of the draft Police and Crime Plan and the Precept.

This is just a reminder that the dates/locations/timings – and opportunity to sign up – can be found here [Police and Crime Plan 2024 – 2029 | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](#). Please note that some of the dates, including those for Bristol and North Somerset, have recently been altered.

The survey on the Police and Crime Plan and the Precept can also be found on this page.

#### Pedal powered reuse initiative keeps bikes on the road

A new initiative between Somerset Council, SUEZ and On Your Bike, means that bikes collected via the council's bulky collection service will now be donated to On Your Bike, and head back onto the road.

Recycling is great but buying less or second-hand, reusing and repairing is always better for the environment. Even if a bike is no longer roadworthy, the team at On Your Bike, will happily refurbish it or use it for parts.

Bikes are often collected from households as part of the Council's bulky waste collection service, and although previously recycled as scrap metal, they will now go to new homes thanks to the partnership.

On Your Bike is a bicycle recycling charity, based in Bridgwater and Taunton. The charity's aim is to train and support those in the community who have suffered social exclusion, have physical disabilities or mental health issues. This includes ex-service personnel, refugees, ex-offenders, homeless and long term unemployed.

Bikes that are donated to On Your Bike are refurbished and sold for affordable prices in their Bridgwater and Taunton shops. As well as providing affordable bikes, qualified mechanics offer servicing and repairs on all types of bike. All funds generated go back into local community projects.

During the first month of the new partnership, On Your Bike have received more than 25 bikes.

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Somerset Council offer a paid-for bulky item collection service that is operated by their collections contractor, SUEZ.

The charge for collecting up to three bulky items is £73.40 and an extra £18.40 for each additional item. There is a maximum limit of five items per collection. Collections can be booked online.

#### Somerset's children and young people - report

It's here! Our Engagement and Participation Annual Report for 2023-2024 is now published – find out what work has taken place in the last year to make sure the voices of Somerset's children and young people are heard.

This year's report features collaborations from Somerset in Care and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SiCC and SLCC), Children and Young People's Self Advocacy (CYP SA), Somerset Youth Parliament and The Unstoppables (a group for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities aged 13-25).

Find out more and read the report [👉 https://orlo.uk/HqC6p](https://orlo.uk/HqC6p)

#### Council tax reduction scheme survey

We want to hear your thoughts on potential changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age adults on low incomes.

You have until 1 October to take part in the survey. Have your say here [👉 https://orlo.uk/eiv3G](https://orlo.uk/eiv3G)

<p><b>Cllr Sarah Dyke</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:sarah.dyke@somerset.gov.uk">sarah.dyke@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Cllr Nicola Clark</b></p> <p>07429 831737 / 01935 840667</p> <p><a href="mailto:nicola.clark@somerset.gov.uk">nicola.clark@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>
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