

SOMERSET COUNCIL

Rode Parish Council

Cllr Dawn Denton

August 2024

Somerset Press Releases: You can view all the Somerset County Council press releases for the last month using this link: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>

A36 slip road: The A36 to and from Bath is part of the *Road Optimisation Study*. Included in the study is marking / signage for the Rode slip road. *Road Investment Fund* runs from 2025 – 2030. There is currently no confirmation of the amount of money that will be made available, but they are hoping that there will be enough money to complete this job. I will keep you posted.

Conservation area extension: I have not heard anything back. I know the planning department at Somerset East is under a lot of pressure, but I will do what I can.

Fire Strategy: The Fire Authority has been in touch, and I have spoken to two fire safety education officers. They will find someone to come in to speak to the village about keeping homes and the wider village safe.

CALM Engineering: No news. I will continue to chase this month.

Asset disposals: A report recommending the disposal of several Somerset Council assets to generate funds and help bridge an £80m funding gap in the current financial year and a £100m budget gap for 2025/2026 will be considered by the Councils Executive on 7 August. The report outlines proposals to dispose of a number of non-operational buildings and small parcels of land which hold development potential and also several high-profile assets including the Market House in Taunton, The Cornhill in Bridgwater, Land at Evercreech, Yeovil Small Business Centre, C Block - County Hall, Saxonvale in Frome, Boden Mill Chard and St Mary's St Car Park in Taunton. The proposed sites have a combined estimated capital receipt range of £17m to £21m. However, information relating to individual asset disposals will remain commercially confidential.

Reduction in Council Tax support: Somerset residents are being encouraged to have their say on possible changes to a scheme which offers financial support to working age adults on low incomes. In November 2023, Somerset Council declared a financial emergency and agreed to several actions to reduce spending. This included a commitment to consult with the public on potential changes to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme. Council Tax Reduction is a discount offered for Council Taxpayers on low incomes. The proposed changes would only apply to working age adults – the support provided for pensioners would not be affected. It was initially proposed to consult on changes that could potentially save Somerset Council £6.4m a year. The options for consideration include reducing the maximum available discount from 100% to 75%. More information can be found at <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/ctr/> The consultation runs until 1 October, with any changes coming into effect from 1 April 2025.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection - Serious Youth Violence: Between 20th and 24th May 2024, the Care Quality Commission, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Ofsted and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation jointly inspected the Somerset area's multi-agency response to children over 10, who are at risk of, or affected by, serious youth violence in the county. The inspection found that partnership working between organisations is not effective in identifying, understanding or responding to the extent of serious youth violence and criminal exploitation of children in Somerset. The oversight of partnership working, led by the Safer Somerset Partnership and the Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership lacks rigour, drive and challenge. Serious weaknesses in practice across organisations has meant that risks are not identified at the earliest opportunity. These issues were accepted by both partnerships during the inspection process and work began immediately to plan a more impactful approach. Improvement plans will be submitted to Ofsted by Safeguarding Children's Partnership, by 25th October 2024.

E Scooter trials halted: E-scooter services in three Somerset towns have been suspended with immediate effect by the operator. Mobility e-scooter trials in Taunton, Minehead and Yeovil, which have run since 2020, have been halted by the operator due to an unexpected supplier issue. The trials were due to continue until the end of May 2026 but whilst the service is suspended the scooters are being removed from town centres and users have been messaged. The initiative is a collaboration between DfT, Somerset Council and Zipp Mobility in Taunton and Minehead, with operator Zwings running the trial in Yeovil. (Zwings has now been amalgamated with Zipp Mobility).

Government funded childcare for September: The Department for Education (DfE) is reminding eligible working parents in England making childcare arrangements for September 2024 that they need to apply by 31 August for the 15 hours childcare for their child aged 9 months old and 30 hours childcare for their 3 or 4 year old. Parents should visit <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-childcare-if-youre-working> to get their code and then share it with their childcare provider.

Go Green grants: Launched last October, the 'Go Green Scheme' was introduced by Somerset Council to offer businesses expert advice to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The scheme has been funded from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Local Growth Fund. The scheme is one of the gateways to apply to the Green Grant Scheme which is open to applications until 9 August. This scheme can fund up to 50% towards the capital costs of projects. Applicants must have an independently verified sustainability plan to apply for Green Grant funding. Further information on the Go Green Scheme and Green Grant Schemes are available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/net-zero-for-business/>

Please get in touch for questions, concerns or referrals:
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