

22/11/2023

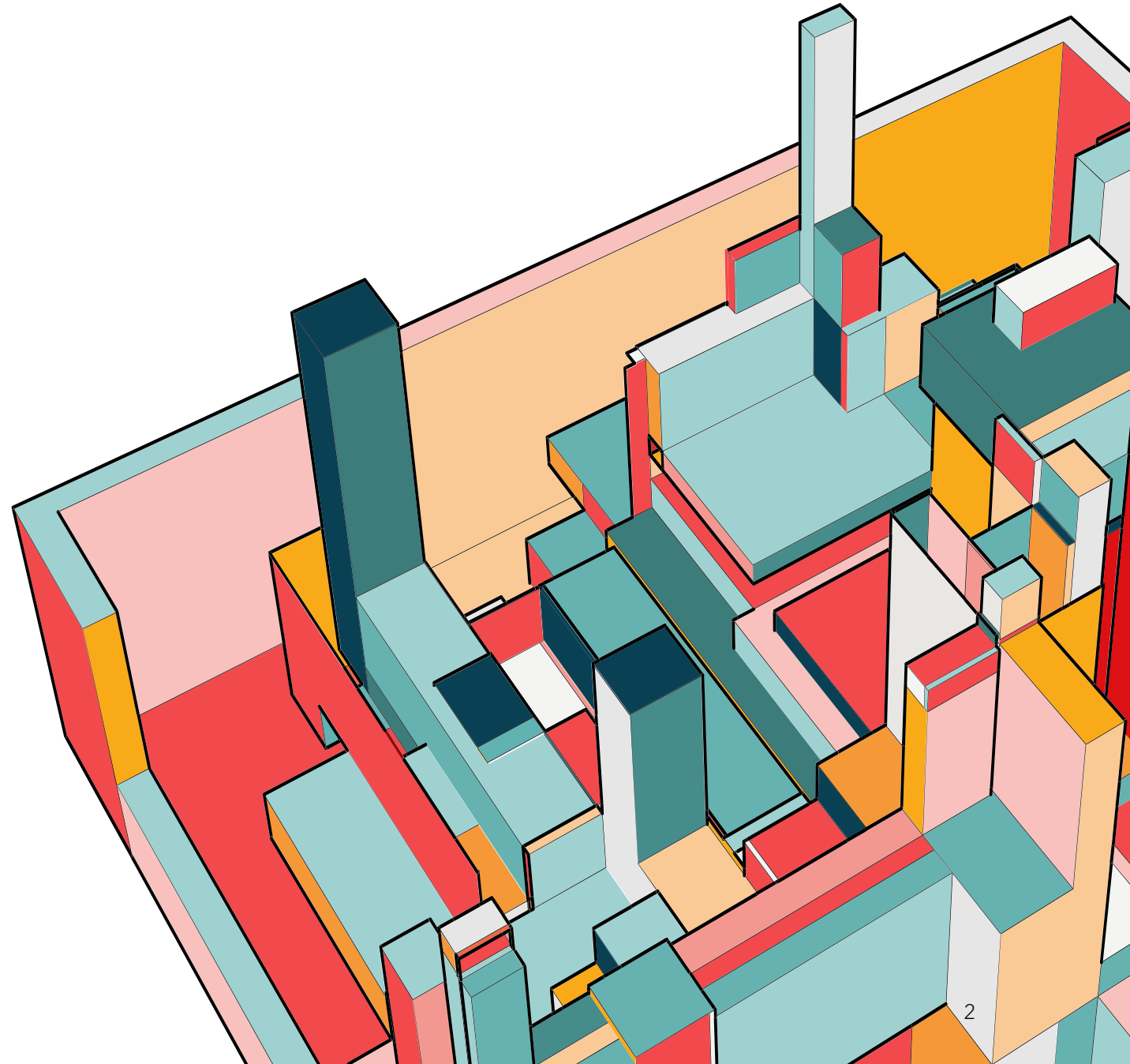
# **Building The Future for our Communities**

David Mears FSLCC (Town Clerk/CEO Bridgwater  
TC, CiLCA Trainer, SLCC/De Montfort Uni  
Community Governance Tutor)

Paul Wynne (Town Clerk Frome TC)

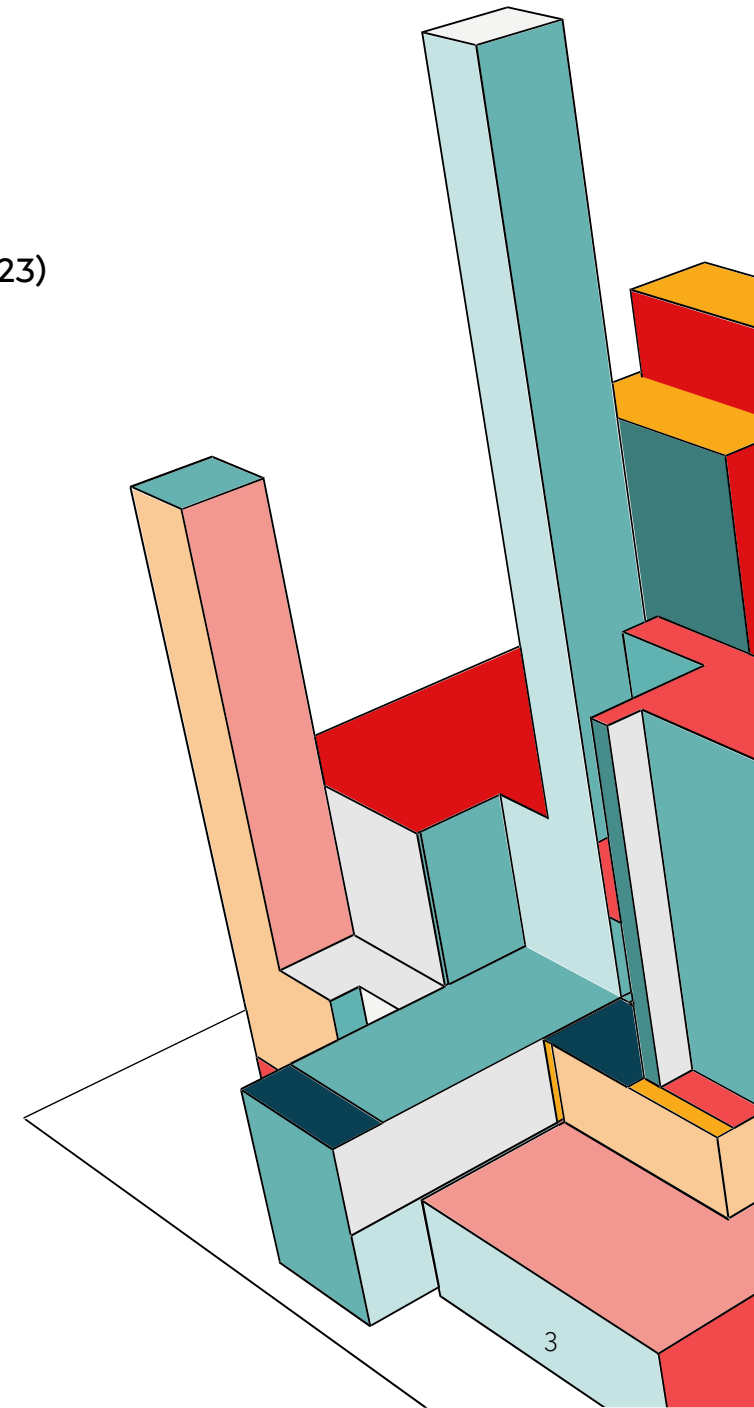
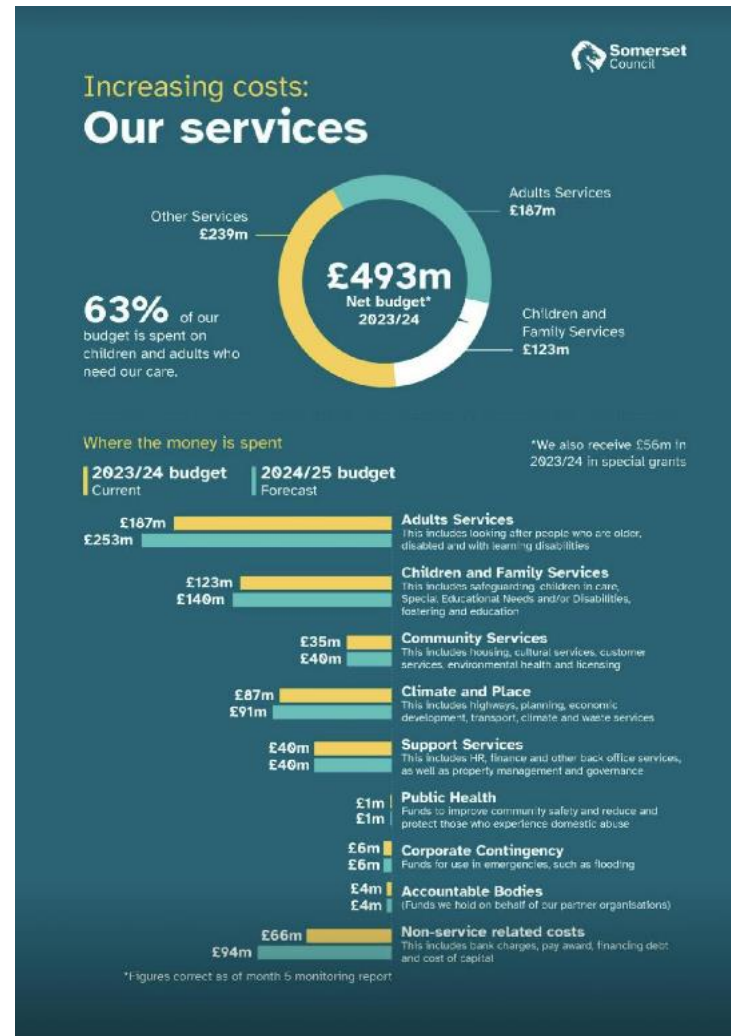
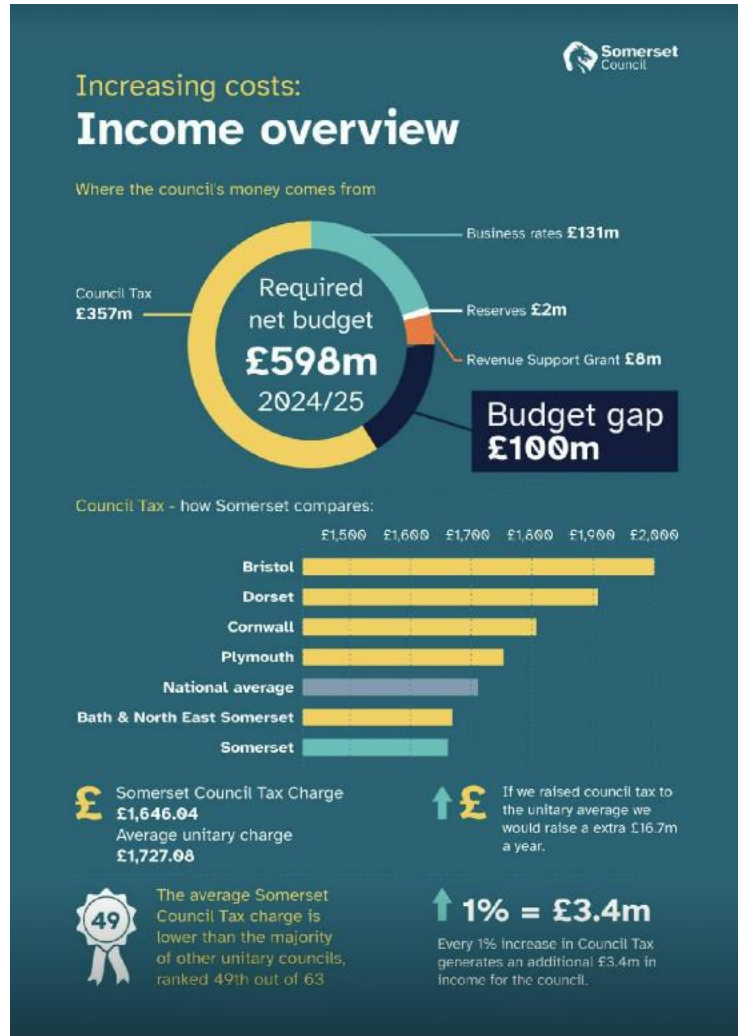
# Today's Workshop

- What's the problem?
- Key updates from SLCC Somerset Branch Reps.
- Somerset Town and Parishes in Numbers.
- What is at stake - do not bury your heads in the sand.
- Opportunities of Devolution for all shapes and sizes of councils.
- How can we do this? Tips and ideas
- Somerset Council Service Directors
- What are your thoughts / questions / concerns?



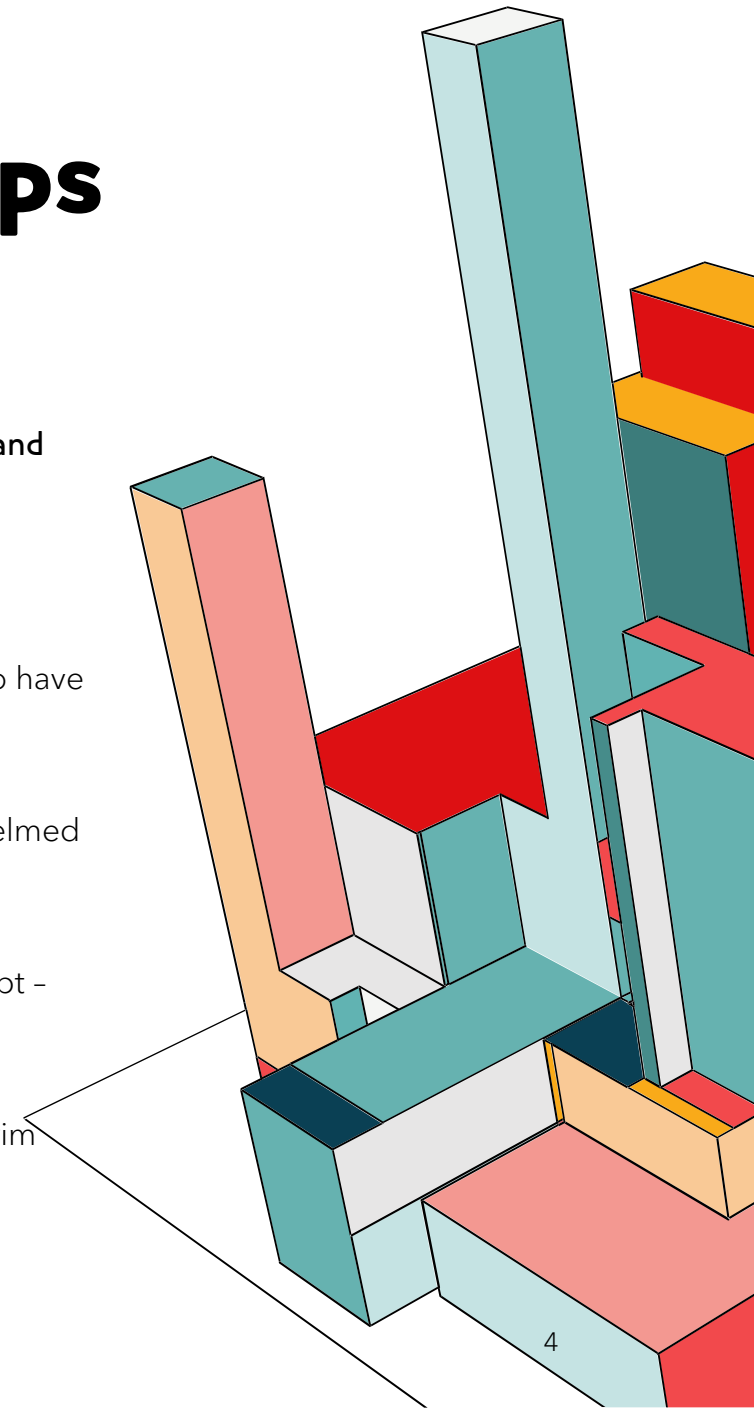
# What's The Problem?

Somerset Council's Budget and letter from the leader of Somerset Council. Image: Somerset Council (2023)



# An Update from SLCC Branch Reps

- Somerset Council's Budget and the letter from the Leader of Somerset Council.
- Somerset SLCC Branch Representatives have been meeting regularly with Executive Director Alyn Jones and Service Director Sara Skirton and:
  - We have pushed for flexibility with submission of Parish Precept demands.
  - Requested that SALC procures the Legal Services for local councils to streamline the process (better to have one legal firm than 50 different ones for Somerset Council to deal with.
  - Requested that Somerset Council outsources legal work to ensure in-house resources are not overwhelmed which will frustrate the devo process.
  - Encouraged SC officers to think differently - a more can do attitude, flexibility and a willingness to adapt - find solutions and not barriers.
  - To issue a Memorandum of Understanding or Service Level Agreements with local councils as an interim measure as legal transfers of land and assets will take time to complete.
  - Ensure facts and figures no matter how rough are provided to aid budget setting.



# Somerset's Parishes in Numbers.

(DLUHC, 2023)



10 Grouped  
Parishes



31 Parish Meetings (non-  
precepting)  
9 Parish Meetings (precepting)  
Total of 40 Parish Meetings



277 Parish  
Councils

# Somerset Town and Parishes in Numbers. Parish £s Overview (DLUHC, 2023)

**£300**

Smallest Precept  
(Upton Parish Council)  
Band D: £3.80

**£2,114,000  
Largest**

Top 10 Largest Precepts

Parish	Precept	Rate
Taunton	2,114,000	109.67
Frome	1,983,504	218.92
Yeovil	1,335,693	145.13
Bridgwater	1,153,746	112.05
Wells	1,149,307	264.04
Chard	775,334	173.09
Burnham on Sea and Highbridge	768,500	116.10
Minehead	759,293	177.74
Shepton Mallet	715,750	208.70
Glastonbury	650,924	200.00

**Largest Tax  
Base for  
precepting**

Top 10 highest in Somerset:

Parish	Value
Taunton	19,276.1
Bridgwater	10,296.8
Yeovil	9,203.6
Frome	9,060.5
Burnham on Sea and Highbridge	6,619.0
Wellington	5,509.0
Chard	4,479.5
Wells	4,352.8
Minehead	4,272.0
Street	3,832.1

**Average  
Band D  
£64.36**

Top 20 highest in Somerset:

Parish	Value
Langport	325.05
Wells	264.04
Somerton	260.68
Martock	248.41
Castle Cary	236.57
Frome	218.92
Crewkerne	209.52
Shepton Mallet	208.70
Glastonbury	200.00
Wincanton	183.06
Ilminster	181.38
Minehead	177.74
Chard	173.09
Street	169.62
Bruton	164.71
Mudford	162.57
Ash	160.24
South Petherton	159.02
Axbridge	155.37
Watchet	153.99



# What is at Stake – Do Not Bury Your Heads in the Sand.

Serious chance of Somerset Council not being able to set a balanced budget

- This will mean withdrawing/reducing to a skeleton the services as outlined in the letter to Local Councils from the Leader of Somerset Council.
- The bulk of these services are what the eye can see: street cleaning; parks and open spaces; waste recycling; community buildings; and weed control.
- This will in turn lead to a reduced quality of living and additional problems, such as negative impacts on the environment and biodiversity within the locality; health and wellbeing, local economy; and increased public resentment with local councillors and clerks/staff.

# Opportunities of Devolution: For All Shapes and Sizes of Councils (1 of 2)

## Unique

Devolving services and assets to parish councils can promote local empowerment, enhance community engagement, and tailor decision-making to the unique needs of your area.

## Your Community First

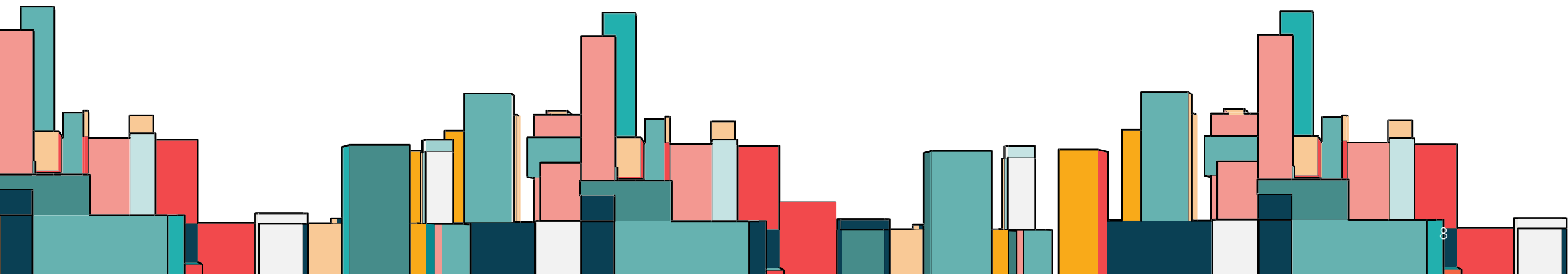
It fosters a sense of local ownership, encourages efficient resource allocation, and facilitates more responsive governance.

## Local Decision Making

Additionally, devolution can lead to increased accountability and transparency, as decisions are made by representatives who are directly connected to the community they serve.

## Service Redesign

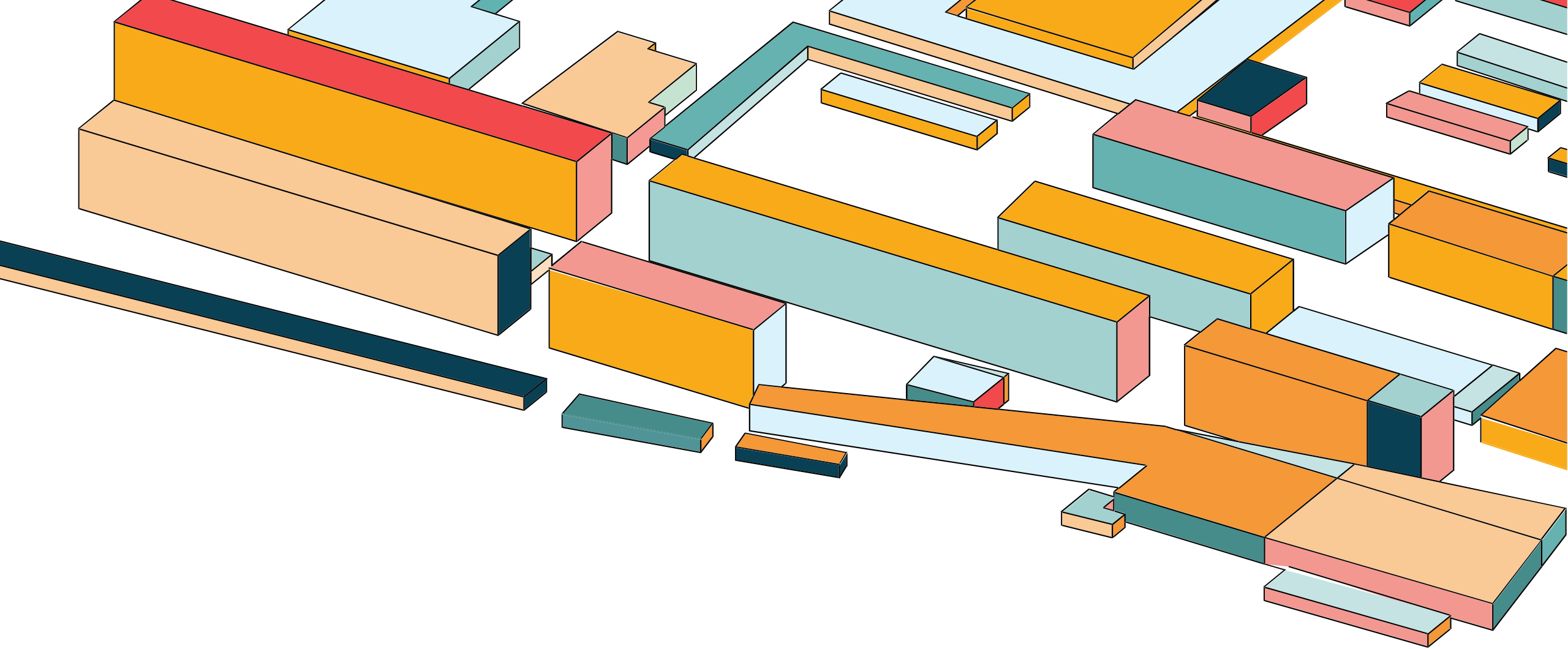
Redesign service delivery to better reflect your community's needs.





# Opportunities of Devolution: For All Shapes and Sizes of Councils (2 of 2)

- **Flexibility:** Local councils are better positioned to respond quickly to changing local needs and circumstances, promoting adaptability in service delivery.
- **Citizen Participation:** It encourages greater citizen involvement in local governance, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and active participation in community affairs.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Localised decision-making often results in more cost-effective solutions, as councils can allocate resources based on specific local priorities and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Tailored Solutions:** Local councils can customise services to reflect the unique character and requirements of their communities, ensuring that initiatives are better suited to local contexts.
- **Enhanced Trust:** Empowering local councils can strengthen trust between citizens and local government, as people see tangible results from decisions made closer to home.
- **Community Identity:** Devolution helps preserve and celebrate local identity, culture, and heritage by allowing communities to shape their own policies in alignment with their values.
- **Efficient Service Delivery:** With a more localised focus, services can be delivered in a more targeted and efficient manner, addressing specific community needs with precision.
- **Innovation:** Local councils are often more innovative in finding solutions to local challenges, as they have a deeper understanding of the issues affecting their communities.



The benefits listed on the last two slides collectively contribute to the idea that devolving services to parish councils can lead to more effective, responsive, and community-oriented governance.

# How Can We Do This? Tips and Ideas (1 of 2)

## Towns could become 'hubs'

Surrounding parishes could buy in services, such as bin emptying, grass cutting, assistance with admin by way of an SLA for a fixed fee.

Outsourcing/contracting to another council, outside the scope of procurement rules

## People Power

Local volunteer litter picking, washing of street furniture, planting/in-bloom (parish council to provide equipment and refreshments).

Contract out to local businesses (grass cutting, planting, washing of street furniture or farmers for hedge cutting)

## Funding directly to SC

Local Councils could provide funding direct to Somerset Council to maintain a certain level of service (such as Waste Recycling Centres)

# How Can We Do This? Tips and Ideas (2 of 2)



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## Research

Start mapping within your parish. How many dog bins, litter bins, bus shelter, play areas?



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## Redesign

Can you deliver services as outlined in the letter? Think what could we do differently and better! Start talking to neighbouring parishes and hub town



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## Communicate

Reply to the letter using the devo email – even if your council is not interested

# Thank you. Now over to Somerset Council

Then Questions, comments and  
concerns