

SOMERSET COUNCIL

BRIEFING SHEET JANUARY 2024

Council's Finances: As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement, the Government announced a 6.1% increase in Core Spending Power for Somerset. The provisional settlement is less than forecast due to reductions in Service Grant and New Homes Bonus but partially offset by higher than forecast increase in Social Care Grant. In November, Somerset Council's Executive declared a financial emergency with a projected budget gap of £100m for 2024/25. The public can have their say on finances and council services. The consultation can be found at www.somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/budget-consultation-2024-2025/ or can be completed in libraries across Somerset. Consultation closes on 22 January.

End of Charges for DIY Waste: Following a change of Government legislation current charges for disposing of construction and demolition materials including: asbestos, plasterboard, hardcore and rubble from household DIY projects have been removed. Each calendar month every household will be able to take up to eight, 50 litre sacks (or equivalent 2m sheets of asbestos or plasterboard) free of charge to a recycling site over a maximum of four visits in a month. Households will need to pre-book trips to dispose of this DIY waste, telling the council the amount of material they are disposing (up to 8x50 litre sacks per month) and the number of times they will need to visit (up to four visits per month). Disposal of asbestos, plasterboard or hardcore/rubble in excess of the free allowance can be paid for online.

Changes to waste collection days: Somerset Council recycling and rubbish collection days change for more than 120,000 households in western parts of the county in February. New collection routes are being introduced for homes in the former Sedgemoor and SWaT areas, as well as a small part of South Somerset. This means many homes in these areas will have a change in collection days from the week beginning Monday 12 February 2024. If a household's collection days are changing, they will receive a letter in early January making this clear. This will be followed by a service guide – including a collection day calendar – arriving near the end of January.

Phosphate Mitigation: The Government has awarded Somerset Council £9.6m of funding to deliver phosphate mitigation measures which will unlock the delivery of new homes across the area and provide for long term nature recovery.

Health Research Grant: The National Institute for Health and Care Research has awarded Somerset £5m over five years to form a Health Determinants Research Collaboration – a new research partnership to improve health and reduce health inequalities across the county..

School Appeals Panel Members: Somerset Council is looking for new volunteers to become Independent Panel Members for School Appeals. Panels hear and decide on admission, exclusion and transport issues for maintained schools and Academy schools. They meet online so no need to travel, applications are welcome from across Somerset. No qualifications needed, full training provided. For more info, and to apply, please visit www.assemblevolunteers.somerset.gov.uk/opportunities/50638-independent-school-appeals-panels-member-2023-07-17 or email neil.milne@somerset.gov.uk