

**From:** Cllr Sue Osborne <sue.osborne@somerset.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 January 2024 14:14  
**To:** Cllr Sue Osborne  
**Subject:** Sue Osborne monthly report January 2024

Welcome to my first report for 2024.

Sorry it's later but I thought it was waiting for more information

I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and New Year.....and now back to the real world.

I have added this briefing note to alert you to the publication of draft budget proposals for 2024 - 2025.

These are just draft proposals for now as no firm decisions have been taken.

The link to the budget papers is below along with a further link to the Councils own public consultation seeking residents feedback.

This should provide a flavour of some of the proposed options and possible costs for fees and charges which may assist your precept setting deliberations.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries/thoughts/feedback.

## **Budget Papers, plus detailed list of proposals: Published tomorrow(Friday)**

As you will be aware, the process of setting the 2024/25 is well underway and is now entering an important stage.

The papers for the 15 January Executive Committee meeting are due to be published at the end of the day tomorrow (Friday 5 January) and will be of interest to everyone at what is a time of severe pressures on our budgets, not least elected members.

The papers should be published at 5pm and you will be able to find them on this page [Agenda for Executive on Monday, 15th January 2024, 10.00 am - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

We expect there to be media interest and coverage from Friday evening onwards.

The Council declared a financial emergency last year as it, like authorities across the country, looks to cope with the pressure of increased demands and costs, particularly in care services.

We continue to make representations to Government, and the dialogue continues with city, town and parish councils around where they may be able to step up where Somerset Council cannot afford to support services in the way it has done previously.

In the meantime, the Budget Paper published tomorrow sets out the Council's approach to bridging a £100m budget gap for 2024/25.

In short, the plan to bridge the gap includes use of reserves, significant savings, increasing Council Tax to the maximum allowed by Government, and capitalisation - which allows a council to use capital receipts or borrowing for revenue spending on services.

The papers will include a list of proposals to raise income and make savings by reducing what we spend.

These are not recommendations at this stage, *they are the available options.*

As part of the work to keep decision-making in the Council's control and avoid a Section 114 notice, officers were asked to look at ways that we can spend less and increase income. That is what these proposals are, published on 5 January.

No decisions have been made and will not be made until the budget-setting meeting of the **Full Council on 20 February.**

As a reminder, the process regarding budget setting in the coming weeks is as follows:

15 January. Meeting of Executive Committee will discuss Budget Update report, including savings proposed approach to bridging the funding gap.

22 January. Budget consultation closes.

25 January. Audit Committee to discuss technical budget papers and make recommendations to the Executive Committee.

1 February. Meeting of the Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Due to discuss the budget, including savings proposals and make recommendations to the Executive Committee.

7 February. Meeting of Executive Committee to consider feedback from Scrutiny Committee and results of budget consultation before recommending budget for decision at Full Council.

20 February. Full Council meets to agree final budget for 2024/25.

Persimmon planning application Canal Way Ilminster. This application is going to the Area South Planning Committee on Tuesday 9th January. The meeting will be held at Council Offices Brympton Way Yeovil starting at 2:00. If you wish to speak about the application to the committee you will need to register by 12:00 Noon on Monday 8th January 2024. This is a major housing application for Ilminster and it's outcome will have an impact on Ilminster and the surrounding villages for years to come.

**Council's Financial Position:** As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement, the Government announced a 6.1% increase in Core Spending Power for Somerset Council. The provisional settlement is less than being forecast mainly due to reductions in Service Grant and New Homes Bonus but partially offset by a 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 Council is currently inviting the public to have

their say on finances and council services. The consultation is open to everyone and can be found at [www.somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/budget-consultation-2024-2025/](http://www.somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/budget-consultation-2024-2025/) or can be completed in libraries across Somerset. The consultation closes on 22 January.

**End of Charges for DIY Waste:** Following a recent 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 Somerset West and Taunton 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. Changes will be made for the rest of the county later in the year. 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. The funding will be used to expand the Council's existing phosphate credit scheme and deliver both interim and long-term phosphate mitigation measures including the use of new energy efficient water processing technology trialled at the Fivehead Wastewater Treatment Works near Taunton earlier this year.

**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. Somerset's HDRC, which is expected to launch in January 2024, will focus on the building blocks of good health such as housing, education and the physical environment to tackle the root causes of health inequalities and wider deprivation. Through the programme, the council will involve communities in applying evidence about the building blocks of health to local decisions, and in doing new research where there is not enough evidence.

**The Range:** A Taunton superstore has been fined £960,000, reduced to £640,000 for an early guilty plea, for food hygiene offences following a successful prosecution by Somerset Council. Guilty pleas were entered by CDS (Superstores International) Ltd, operating as The Range Home and Leisure at Hankridge, Taunton, for seven food hygiene offences in September

2023. An Emergency Hygiene Prohibition Notice was served in August 2022 to prohibit the business selling food for human consumption. During monitoring visits made to the premises, it was found that food was being sold in contravention to the Order which could have caused an imminent risk to health.

**School Appeals Panel Members:** Somerset Council is looking for new volunteers to become Independent Panel Members for School Appeals. Independent Panels hear and decide on admission, exclusion and transport issues for maintained schools and Academy schools in Somerset. A panel meets when a parent or school lodges an appeal against a decision related to a child's education. These panels are independent of Somerset Council and the governing bodies of the school. The Panels meet online so there is no need to travel, and applications are welcome from across Somerset. No qualifications are needed and full training is provided. For more information, and to apply, please visit [www.assemblevolunteers.somerset.gov.uk/opportunities/50638-independent-school-appeals-panels-member-2023-07-17](http://www.assemblevolunteers.somerset.gov.uk/opportunities/50638-independent-school-appeals-panels-member-2023-07-17) or email [neil.milne@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:neil.milne@somerset.gov.uk)

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