SOMERSET COUNCIL

Briefing Sheet for July 2026

Commercial Property Sales Expected to Generate £90 Million Loss: Somerset Council is expected to make an overall loss of around £90 million from the sale of its commercial property investment portfolio. The authority inherited 48 investment properties that were originally purchased by the former district councils for £301 million. Based on the sale prices achieved for assets already disposed of, together with the current valuation of those remaining, the council expects to recover around £211 million, approximately £90 million less than the original purchase cost. The proceeds from asset sales are being used to support day-to-day council services.

Adult Social Care Rated 'Requires Improvement': The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has rated Somerset Council's Adult Social Care services as "Requires Improvement" following an inspection carried out in September 2025, despite the Adult Social Care budget being £80m larger for the 2024/25 financial year than it was in 2022/23. The independent regulator identified long waits for assessments across a number of service areas due to capacity pressures, inconsistencies in safeguarding recording and delays in processing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) applications.

Children's Services Downgraded by Ofsted: Ofsted has downgraded Somerset Council's Children's Services following an inspection carried out in April and May 2026. The service was judged to require improvement in three of the four areas inspected, leadership, services for children who need help and protection, and services for children in care, while services for care leavers remained rated Good. Inspectors concluded that "the quality of some services for very vulnerable children has deteriorated" since the previous inspection in July 2022. The report identified delays in assessments, weaknesses in child protection decision-making, inconsistent management oversight, high workloads and a shortage of suitable placements for children in care.

Planning Performance Shows Delays in Decision Making: Somerset Council's latest Planning Services Performance Review shows a decline in the timeliness of determining a number of planning applications. During 2025/26, the proportion of minor applications decided within target timescales fell from 85% to 76.7%, while "other" applications determined on time fell from 92.5% to 83%, below the Government's 85% performance threshold. The report also shows that 1,137 planning enforcement investigations were open at the end of March 2026, an increase from 877 at the end of 2024. While the council states that overall performance remains above Government intervention thresholds, it has acknowledged variations in performance across Somerset and says work is underway to improve consistency and reduce backlogs.

£5.3 Million SEND Recovery Plan: The Somerset Council Executive is set to consider a £5.3 million recovery plan after a report to the Executive described significant failings in the authority's SEND services. The report states that Somerset Council is "one of the most poorly performing Local Authorities in England" for completing Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs), with fewer than 3% completed within the statutory 20-week timescale. It also reveals there are 989 assessments awaiting completion, with the

average assessment taking 51 weeks, more than double the legal 20-week target. The report warns that delays are placing education settings "under intense pressure", leading to poorer outcomes for children, including poor attendance, suspensions and permanent exclusions. Officers are recommending £5.3 million of temporary emergency investment to reduce backlogs and improve statutory compliance.

Somerset Local Plan Consultation Opens: Somerset Council has launched the first public consultation on its new Local Plan, which will guide development across the county over the next 20 years. Residents are invited to share their views on the scope of the plan, its vision and objectives, how communities should be engaged, and broad options for where future development could take place. The consultation closes on **24th July 2026** and can be accessed here: https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/planning/local-plan-scoping-consultation-2026/

2027/28 Budget Consultation Opens: Somerset Council has launched a public consultation to help shape its 2027/28 budget. Residents, businesses and community organisations are invited to share their views on spending priorities as the council prepares next year's budget. Feedback will help inform budget proposals before they are brought forward later this year. The consultation closes on **27th July 2026** and can be accessed here: https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/budget-consultation-2027-2028/

Fostering Information Sessions Announced: Somerset Council is encouraging more people to consider becoming foster carers by hosting a series of free information sessions across the county. With more than 650 children currently in care in Somerset, the council says more local foster carers are needed to help children remain close to their schools, friends and communities. Upcoming sessions will take place in Wincanton, Wedmore, Taunton and Bridgwater during the coming months. Find out more here: www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk/events