



SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL PLAN

2013-2017

Serving Somerset



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Introduction

John Osman
Leader of Somerset
County Council



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Porlock Harbour

Somerset is a beautiful, vibrant county enjoyed by many thousands of people every day. Our unique history and heritage, our festivals and culture, the moors and levels and other tourist destinations are together rightly regarded as being nationally important.

But are we making the most of Somerset?

It is a place of business, of bustling markets, of music and art, of great food and drink. It is also a place where people volunteer, get involved, and a place that has a tremendous community spirit.

There is so much we can all be proud of in this county; our people, our businesses and our communities.

But are we making the most of Somerset?

As a Council we spend £330m providing vital services to Somerset. On top of that, over the past four years, we have invested an average of £54m a year, every year, to improve our county. We work extremely hard for the people of Somerset. We build bridges, new roads, new schools, we look after more than 500 children in care, we maintain roads and street lights and give the most vulnerable people in society the best life we can. We do a huge amount of good work in Somerset.

With reducing income and increasing demand, it is clear that in the future we will need to change how we work and what we are able to do. We will have to reduce what we do in some areas and stop what we do in others. This will prove unpopular. We know this, but have limited choices. If our budgets are reduced, we have to live within our means, the same as any family, organisation or business.

We need to tap into the community spirit that runs through every part of this county of ours. I know that in many parts of Somerset, this already happens. However, where possible we all need to take on more responsibility ourselves. The Council will continue to be a provider of core services where we can, and a safety net for

those residents who truly need our help. However, in difficult financial times, it isn't easy for the Council to be everything to everyone.

We are working closely with other public sector organisations in Somerset, from district councils, charities and voluntary groups, right through to the NHS. We all want to do the best we can for our residents. In some areas, such as housing, we all recognise we need to do more and will work together to achieve that.

I know that you want more of a say in how your Council works, what it does and what it doesn't do. That is why I launched a series of roadshows, under the title **"Listening. Learning. Changing."**

Over the next four years, and right across Somerset, your Council will listen to your voice, learn what we are doing well and where we need to improve. And, already that voice is having an impact. Our targets towards the end of this document are listed according to the public responses to our roadshows – a clear direction from our residents and communities.

We want to "Serve Somerset" and that is what we will do.

This is a new approach for the Council, an approach that puts you at the heart of what we are doing. **We want to listen to you and learn from you.** **Wherever possible, we want to reflect what you want.** We will not lose sight of the fact that we are here to serve Somerset.

John Osman
Leader of Somerset County Council





Our Vision for Somerset

Our Vision for Somerset sets out what we want to achieve as we help Somerset's people and businesses have the opportunities they need to succeed in this ever changing and challenging world.

Our Vision is that:

Somerset is a safer and healthier place.

Somerset is a place where people from all backgrounds have an equal opportunity to learn, work and enjoy themselves and to achieve their ambitions and full potential.

Somerset is a thriving local economy, which attracts jobs and investment.

Somerset is a place where people and communities have good quality services they need.

Together with residents, communities and the public sector we will all come together to 'Serve Somerset'.

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Our Priorities

Our Priorities set out how we will make all this happen and provide targets we want to achieve throughout the Council.

Our priority is that Somerset is a safer and healthier place where -

- Our most vulnerable people have the care they need and the choices they want.
- Our children feel protected and safe.
- All our residents have every opportunity to live healthy lives.

Our priority is that Somerset is a place where everyone has an equal opportunity to learn, work and enjoy where they live.

We strive to -

- Improve our schools and drive up results for our children at all ages.
- Boost prospects for those seeking work.
- Manage our environment by encouraging more recycling, sending less waste to landfill and reducing our carbon footprint.

Our priority is that Somerset is a thriving local economy, attracting jobs and investment by -

- Encouraging the creation of thousands of jobs and apprenticeships across Somerset.
- Attracting new businesses into Somerset. Help firms already here to expand and prosper.
- Improving key road, rail and broadband communication links.

Our priority is that Somerset is a place where people have the good quality services they need by -

- Giving residents a voice and acting on what they say.
- Joining-up with partners, organisations and communities to provide and run efficient services to make every pound work hard for Somerset.
- Helping individuals and communities to help themselves, to volunteer and take control of services they believe are important to them.



A Council that will listen to you, work efficiently and effectively for you to bring the Somerset Vision to life.



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Our Targets for Somerset sets out specific areas where we want to demonstrate real achievements for our residents and communities. These have been ordered according to responses from the public through our roadshows and online contributions.

Our Targets

1

Help vulnerable and elderly people stay in their own homes for longer.

2

Fewer children in Council care; more people approved to foster and adopt.

3

Attract jobs and apprenticeships into Somerset.

4

Help residents stay healthy; encourage our children to be active.

5

Reduce waste; reduce our carbon footprint.

6

Better schools producing better results for our children.

7

Keep Council tax frozen for as long as possible.

8

Invest in Somerset; improve broadband connections and road links like the A303, to help businesses and residents.

9

Consult with, and listen to, our residents, businesses, communities and visitors.

10

Work more effectively with partners for a smaller, leaner and more customer-focused public sector in Somerset.





Consultation

A theme throughout the 'Vision for Somerset' is our commitment to consult with, and listen to, our residents, businesses, communities and visitors more.

The Listening, Learning, Changing roadshows will continue through the life of this Administration and are high profile events that travel around Somerset to ask residents;

1. What your priorities are
2. Your views on the financial challenges we face
3. Areas we should invest in
4. How we can work better with local people and communities
5. What our targets should be

We have given, and will continue to give, many thousands of people the opportunity to comment through town centre events, through our web and social media areas, and through targeted consultation with specific groups. We will continue to evaluate your responses and feed them into our budget setting process, so that you can see where you have made an impact on decisions.

Only by truly listening can we all 'Serve Somerset' together.

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Contacts

If you have any specific questions or comments on this publication, please phone the Planning and Performance Team on (01823) 359251 or email planningandperformance@somerset.gov.uk.

This document is also available in Braille, large print, tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details. Please phone **0845 345 9166**.



RNID **typetalk**



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