

Somerset West and Taunton

Dear Resident

SWT has set a balanced budget for 2021/22 which will allow us to continue supporting residents and businesses throughout the Coronavirus crisis while delivering frontline services, taking opportunities to kick-start economic recovery and investing in ambitious plans for the future.

I am proud that through the commitment and hard work of our staff we have delivered the services so valued by our community, and we are still planning and investing for the future through our growth programme, creating jobs, improving our housing and protecting the environment.

I am also grateful for the support of our communities throughout this difficult time and have been humbled by the efforts of everyone as we have all adapted to the many challenges of this pandemic.

The budget includes funds for the Council's corporate priorities as a customer focused enterprising council with our environment and economy, homes and communities at the heart of everything we do.

On top of funds for the statutory services, we have set aside –

- £500,000 funding towards projects identified in the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan, adding to the £500,000 allocated in 2020/21.
- £100,000 additional budget for tree planting across the district.
- £100,000 for a new Community Enhancement Fund to help support the community across Somerset West and Taunton following the impact of COVID.
- £25,000 increase to ensure we continue to meet our dredging obligations at Watchet Outer Harbour.
- Over £600,000 additional investment across our general fund and housing assets to ensure compliance with modern safety standards.
- A continued policy of suspending parking charges in Council-owned car parks on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas and on one Sunday in Dulverton in line with previous years, to support local economies.

All this for an average Band D charge of £169.63 - comprising of £167.88 for SWT services and £1.75 on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority to fund its programme of flood prevention and mitigation works.

Somerset West and Taunton's share of the overall Council tax bill is nine per cent of the total with the remainder going to fund Somerset County Council, Police and Fire services, and Town and Parish council services.

Our priority is and always has been to make sure that local people continue to receive the services they value while investing in our area to develop a thriving and resilient economy.

You won't have a vote in county elections this year but you do have a say in the future of your county.

The Government has postponed elections to the county council, which were to take place on 6 May. Instead, they want to hear what you think about the future of local government in Somerset. You have until 19 April to make sure they hear your views.

The District Councils in Somerset are proposing that the five Councils in Somerset are replaced by two Unitary Councils. One in the West and one in the East of Somerset. Details of what is being proposed are available at: www.strongersomerset.co.uk.

Somerset County Council is proposing one Unitary Council for Somerset. Details of what they are proposing are available at: <https://onesomerset.org.uk/>

This is a significant decision that will impact on the provision of Council services to all residents in Somerset. Please do have your say. It's your choice - <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>.

In the meantime, I believe we have a duty to ensure we continue to deliver the best service for our residents in the here and now.

I would be grateful if you could take a moment to tell us what you think we do well and how we can improve our interaction with you. Please complete this short survey at: www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/customerinsight

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts
Leader of the Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Roberts', with a stylized initial 'F'.