

Change is coming to Somerset...

The Government is consulting on proposals to transform the system of local councils in Somerset. This will affect you and it's important that you have your say.



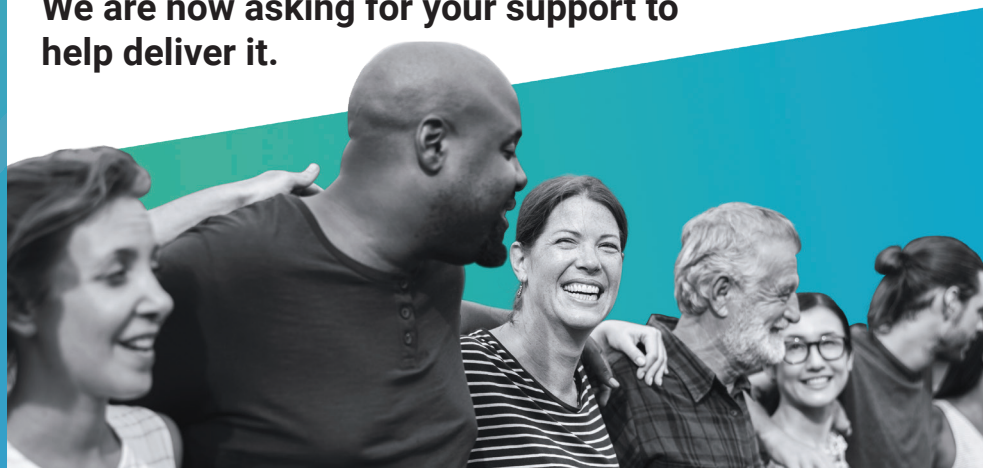
One Somerset is...

An ambitious plan from Somerset County Council to improve public services in Somerset that would directly benefit you and your family.

One Somerset would:

- Replace the existing five councils with ONE united council
- Deliver better value for money and savings to reinvest in high quality services.
- Enable improved local services and better joined up working with the NHS, police and partners.
- Increase powers for local communities and a stronger voice for the people of Somerset.

We are now asking for your support to help deliver it.



one somerset

Freeing up £18.5m EVERY year to invest in services and support for you.

That means council tax can be kept as low as possible and savings could be reinvested into frontline services, tackling the real local issues and challenges.

How?

One Somerset would replace **FIVE** councils with **ONE**, united and focused council delivering for everyone in Somerset.

- Not five chief executives or sets of senior managers - **one**
- Not five sets of contracts or contact centres - **one**
- Not five IT departments or finance teams - **one**
- Not five sets of Councillors and related expenses - **one**

ONE team focused on delivering the best value, best quality services. Making more decisions locally across the county and supporting your local community – wherever you live in Somerset.

Sounds too good to be true – but it is already happening in other parts of the UK and Somerset deserves to benefit too.

one council

Have your say

The Government's consultation is now open. To take part or find out more, visit www.onesomerset.org.uk/proposals You can also write to:

Governance Reform and Democracy
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Please include your name, email address and make it clear you are responding to the Somerset consultation.



If you have a question or to pledge your support for One Somerset, either personally or on behalf of a business or organisation, please email onesomerset@somerset.gov.uk

Five main issues for the future of Somerset

Staying the same is no longer an option. We believe that however you look at it, a single council will deliver significant benefits. It will not deliver everything at once, but is a huge step towards improving lives across Somerset. If we do not take this step now, we will store up issues and challenges for future generations.



Disadvantaged Children

- Social Mobility
- Poverty and Deprivation
- Troubled Families



The Environment

- Carbon Neutral Councils
- Carbon Emissions
- Flooding



Young People 16-24

- Higher Education
- Self Harm
- Affordable Housing



The Economy

- Low Wage
- Low Skill
- Low Productivity
- Affordable Housing
- Digital Connectivity
- Travel



Older People

- Increase in Older People
- Quality of Health
- Isolation

One Somerset: Our pledges to you

We're confident about the benefits of One Somerset, that's why we've made the following pledges to our residents:



No disruption to local services as local government changes in Somerset, and a promise to keep residents fully informed



Improved services for vulnerable residents, including housing, Adults' and Children's Services



Protecting frontline staff working with vulnerable people across the county



Improved services for children and young people, including education, training, jobs and transport



Council tax will not increase because of moving to a single unitary council



More local decision-making by town and parish councils and new local community networks



Physical, face-to-face council contact points across the county



Closer relationships with partners including the NHS, police, education, and the voluntary sector to deliver better services



One telephone number and one website to access ALL council services



And finally, not splitting Somerset in half, dividing communities, losing our proud identity, or weakening our standing on a local, regional and national level.



Making your life easier

One council for Somerset means you will always know who to ask for help.

- one** phone number or website
- one** council to support you and your community
- one** councillor to hold to account
- one** ambitious future for everyone

Homes and infrastructure

With services currently split across four districts and two tiers there is confusion and waste

One strong planning team will mean:

- Working with developers to build the right homes in the right places
- Planning for housing, roads, infrastructure, transport, school places and new job opportunities all considered as one
- Closer working with social care and public health to create healthier, happier homes and lives

Boosting businesses and post-Covid recovery

Jobs and strong businesses help ensure a good quality of life for everyone.

A single council would be better able to:

- Attract investment and national resources to allow Somerset businesses to thrive
- Support education, skills and training for our young people and those who need to retrain
- Co-ordinate between businesses and those working with vulnerable people to make sure everyone has access to the jobs market

"A single council will bring greater clarity to residents who often tell me that there is confusion. A unitary authority will have a much better overview of bringing economic wellbeing to our county."

- Sue Mountstevens, Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner

"I am a strong supporter of a single council for Somerset because I believe it would bring significant and tangible benefits to residents and businesses across the county. I believe it's a win, win for Somerset and I would encourage anyone who wants the best possible public services to support a single council approach."

- Rebecca Pow, MP for Taunton Deane

Caring for the most vulnerable

You've told us that taking care of the most vulnerable should be our top priority.

A single council would mean:

- Council and NHS health and care services delivered in partnership across the same geographical area
- Children's Services joined up with housing, leisure, mental health and wellbeing
- Housing integrated with social care so people can stay in their own homes or closer to loved ones

"The benefits of a single council should not be underestimated. One council reduces the cost of service delivery allowing you to invest more in frontline services, gives you a quicker response to business as usual and in an emergency and gives a louder, single voice for your area to secure resources and make a difference."

- Cllr Spencer Flower, Leader of Dorset Council (moved to single council in 2019)

Our environment

The five councils of Somerset have an agreed climate emergency strategy, but reaching that agreement was slow.

A single council could:

- Embed a 'green' approach and culture across a new organisation with clear direction and funding
- Work as one on key issues like recycling, flooding, and protecting and enhancing Somerset's natural environment
- Deliver the change we need at pace for a better future

"I strongly believe that a single unitary authority to replace the County Council and the four district councils in the county is the best option for the future."

- Marcus Fysh, MP for Yeovil

What does One Somerset mean for you?

Somerset County Council is already providing 80 per cent of public services in Somerset, and has more frontline staff working in each district than the district councils themselves. We have a proven track record on delivering key services, like public health, highways and protecting the vulnerable. We know the geography, we know the people and we know what can be achieved by working together. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to cut red tape, combine the strengths of our proud communities and drive Somerset forward.

Local decision making

We want to give you real power and real influence over the decisions that affect you most.

One Somerset will:

- Put local communities and their needs first
- Empower new Local Community Networks (LCNs) across the whole of Somerset to deliver local priorities
- Offer an enhanced role for parish, city and town councils

"Having spent a great deal of time over the last few months examining the differing proposals, engaging with local elected officials, talking to colleagues in Government and hearing the views of countless constituents, I'm delighted to give the One Somerset vision my support. A single unitary authority will ensure that local people can engage directly with those making decisions on their behalf and hold them accountable."

- David Warburton, MP for Somerton and Frome