

## Somerset Council Report to Croscombe Parish Council meeting Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025

### Budget

Serious discussion on the 2025-2026 Somerset Council budget is underway.

The Executive, Scrutiny and the Audit Committees have constantly and closely monitored progress of the 2024-2025 budget during the year and can report a controlled situation with underspends in many areas but overspends in others, in particular Children's and Families' Services. This is an area which is both difficult to predict and beset by particular financial pressures for which the solutions, e.g. the Homes and Horizons project, are in place but are slow in development.

Despite all measures, including the Council re-structure that I mention below, we approach the setting of the 2025-2026 budget not only with a gap that we had calculated to fill but now set back by other pressures including National Government's proposed increase in National Insurance contributions. The Government has committed to meet this increase on behalf of local authorities, but it is not clear that this will apply to our third-party contracts and other partners where we may have to meet this increases.

### Council re-structure

The relevant periods of consultation are coming to an end and before too long the proposed new Council structure to be in place from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 will be announced. I cannot speculate on impacts and implications before that point.

### Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

The first draft proposal of the Somerset Council new division boundaries will be considered by the Constitution and Governance Committee next Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January. The imperative in drafting this has been to arrive, where possible, at single member divisions of <> 5,000 voters, but not exceeding that by very much. In Croscombe Parish's case I flag up that it is proposed that Croscombe no longer be connected with Shepton Mallet but with a collection of parishes encompassed by the north side of St. Cuthbert Out (north of City of Wells) going west as far west as Rodney Stoke. Somerset Council is one of many consultees. All consultees have until 20<sup>th</sup> January to submit views via [Somerset | LGBCE](#).

### Combine Authority

As well as everything else to be considered Somerset is being invited to be part of the Heart of Wessex Combined Authority, joining Dorset and Wiltshire. This will have the benefit of attracting Government funds to the region. The condition however is establishing an elected mayor. Our involvement so far is an "expression of interest".

### Devolution

I do not have any updates on other devolution matters relating to parish councils.

Local Community Network (LCN)

Please note that the next meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network (LCN) is scheduled for Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 starting at 7 p.m. in Shape Council Chamber Shepton Mallet.

Martin Lovell                      09/01/2025