

# **Somerset County Council**

## **Business Plan 2021-2023**

## **The Plan for Somerset**

Somerset deserves the best services, opportunities and investment possible and this business plan sets out how we will look to achieve these ambitions.

The plan gives our residents, businesses and communities a clear view of our strategic direction for the next two years, and provides the organisation with a single point from which all further strategic planning can flow. It describes the outcomes we are setting out to achieve and our key priorities that will enable this, how we will deliver on the plan and how we will evidence this delivery.

First, among some of the major initiatives on the horizon and issues we face, we will be dealing with the Coronavirus and its impacts for years to come. Our strategy to invest to boost the local economy is important and ambitious. Climate change is an issue that must be addressed and the public rightly expect us to take a lead on this. Local Government Reform is coming to Somerset, disbanding councils and creating a new approach to running services. This plan describes what we will begin and continue to do to serve the residents of Somerset over this time. To work locally with our communities to build resilience within our county, to invest to support business and the economy through this difficult period, to build social value into all that we do, and to serve as a focal point for all strategic planning for the organisation.

Somerset has a strong foundation on which to improve the lives of our residents.

- A mixture of both rural and urban areas and blessed with four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 15 National Nature Reserves and Exmoor National Park.
- Prior to the pandemic Somerset had low unemployment levels and a mixture of agricultural, engineering and tourism economies.
- Somerset County Council works well with our partners and we have a strong and wide-ranging voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

But there are also challenges in Somerset to overcome.

- The climate emergency increases risk of flooding, sea-level rises and coastal erosion.
- Somerset has an aging population which places greater demand on our social care services, and needs more opportunities to attract young people to stay or move into the county.
- There are areas of the county where people don't have the same opportunities for employment or education that need targeted support and the pandemic will not have improved this. More widely the economy needs a further boost to help Somerset recover.

The Council has delivered a lot of great work under the last business plan and it is from this foundation that we wish to grow. The County Council Vision set out the tenets of our organisation and these remain true.

- A thriving and productive County that is ambitious, confident and focussed on improving people's lives.

- A County of resilient, well-connected and compassionate communities working to reduce inequalities.
- A County where all partners actively work together for the benefit of our residents, communities and businesses and the environment in which we all live.
- A County that provides you with right information, advice and guidance to help you help yourself and targets support to those who need it most.

Out of these, 4 overarching outcomes helped shape the work of the organisation, these have been refined and continue through this business plan.

- 1. A County Infrastructure that drives recovery, supports economic prosperity, productivity and sustainable public services.***
- 2. Safe vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment whilst addressing climate change.***
- 3. Fairer life chances and opportunity for all***
- 4. Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer***

Somerset County Council has done this with the encompassing theme that to deliver these outcomes we need to meet the Council's own challenges. This is why a fifth outcome joins the existing four to describe how we will do this.

- 5. Meeting the challenges for the people of Somerset through innovation and improvement***

**Outcome 1**  
**A County Infrastructure that drives recovery, supports economic prosperity, productivity and sustainable public services**

Key Priorities

- Drive economic recovery through inclusive growth
- Improve transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity
- Increase the productivity of businesses and individuals
- Strategic leadership of local places and supportive providers, collaborate with people, communities and partners to secure investment and support where it has the most impact on people's lives

**Outcome 2**  
**Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment whilst addressing climate change**

Key Priorities

- Work with people to build a climate resilient Somerset
- Work with partners and communities to deliver sustainable local services
- Grow and collaborate with safe, strong, resilient and well-balanced communities
- Work with local towns and parishes to deliver rural and urban solutions enhancing community assets

**Outcome 3**  
**Fairer life chances and opportunity for all**

Key Priorities

- Improve the life chances for those in greatest need, reduce inequality and improve social mobility
- Better outcomes for all children and adults so that they are healthy, safe, and have good physical and emotional wellbeing
- Ensure access and opportunities for all to high quality local education, skills and employment and health and care provision
- Improve outcomes for vulnerable children

**Outcome 4**  
**Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer**

Key Priorities

- Continue to deliver a robust response to the impact of Coronavirus on our residents
- Embed a joint approach that is based on need and provides evidence-based care and support
- Foster an environment that gives residents the very best quality of life
- Support healthy lifestyles that build health resilience

**Outcome 5**  
**Meeting the challenges for the people of Somerset through innovation and improvement**

Key Priorities

- Introduce, embed and maximise the benefits of new ways of working
- Prepare for transition to new local government arrangements
- Continue to ensure financial sustainability for Somerset County Council
- Commission services in a more collaborative way producing the best outcomes for people
- Maximise the use of digital, data and technology to drive efficiency, intelligence, innovation and deliver better services for our customers

## Our Outcomes

The Business Plan continues to build on the four strategic outcomes already established and adds a fifth 'wrap around' outcome that focusses on the way in which Somerset County Council works. Beneath each outcome are the Key Priorities that will deliver the improvements for our residents.



### ***A County Infrastructure that drives recovery, supports economic prosperity, productivity and sustainable public services.***

#### Key Priorities

- Drive economic recovery through inclusive growth
  - Create the conditions for businesses to recover, safeguard employment and enable new jobs to be created via an initial £6m investment in an economic recovery fund in Somerset.
  - Support individuals to get the education and skills they need to access job opportunities now and in the future.
  - Tackle economic inequality, disadvantage and exclusion among people and places in Somerset as a means to lasting recovery and growth
  - Improve business and housing growth in Somerset through a more integrated and resilient planning process to meet the needs of the whole community.
- Improve transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity
  - Provide the physical and digital infrastructure to support recovery and enable growth.
  - Create attractive places, and homes, for the people of Somerset.
  - Connect people to the information and support that they need. Better digital and transport connections enabling our businesses and

communities to thrive whilst reducing the carbon emissions within the county.

- Increase the productivity of businesses and individuals
  - Develop a highly skilled workforce to support productivity growth.
  - Support high-productivity growth sectors, including clean growth, aerospace, digital and agri-tech.
  
- Strategic leadership of local places and supportive providers, collaborate with people, communities and partners to secure investment and support where it has the most impact on people's lives.
  - To modernise and improve local support whether in the own home or in supported accommodation environments. To link people and their support into the local community whilst providing progressive, enabling support models of care.
  - Build the right specialist accommodation solutions and changing the shape of others where demand and people's choices have changed.
  - Work with a strategic partner to ensure that we develop good quality therapeutic homes (children's and fostering) and education for children in Somerset.
  - Work with local providers to shape the market to deliver high quality local services. Work with our providers, people and communities to enable choice and control locally. Continue to improve the quality and diversity of provision whilst working with local provider associations and partners to be clear on needs and support required.



## Outcome 2

### ***Safe vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment whilst addressing climate change.***

#### Key Priorities

- Work with people to build a climate resilient Somerset
  - To decarbonise Local Authorities, the wider public sector estates and reduce our carbon footprint.
  - Work with our partners towards making Somerset a Carbon Neutral County by 2030.
  - A Somerset which is prepared for, and resilient to the impacts of Climate Change.
  - Promote active travel to improve health, quality of life and the environment.
  - Ensure flood prevention remains a focus for the protection of communities in Somerset. To encourage behavioural change by providing communities and individuals with information and knowledge to enable them to make better choices to reduce their carbon footprints.
  
- Work with partners and communities to deliver sustainable local services
  - Embed Community Connect approach - embed and develop strength-based practice, infrastructure and partnerships to connect people, communities and public sector to ensure people are able to access information, advice and support appropriate to their need in a timely manner.

- Work with VCSE Sector and communities to develop, deliver and support place-based responses to local need and drive social value.
- Work with local communities to support schools to achieve financial sustainability in a well-maintained learning environment which provides children with positive places to learn.
- **Grow and collaborate with safe, strong, resilient and well-balanced communities**
  - Foster coherent provision of early help, building strength and resilience in our communities.
  - Build stronger partnerships in health, police and education, using these relationships to join up support.
  - Promote an environment where people are safe from discrimination and abuse.
  - Develop food strategy for Somerset to address underlying issues causing people to rely on foodbanks and emergency food provision; and address climate issues and costs associated with food waste.
  - Invest in and support a vibrant, sustainable voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to address social and health inequalities.
  - Develop the infrastructure and mindsets to create communities that are resilient to the effects of climate change.
  - Work towards rebalancing communities through attracting and retaining young people in Somerset.
- **Work with local towns and parishes to deliver rural and urban solutions enhancing community assets**
  - Work with partners to support the regeneration of communities in Somerset, focussing on the need to ensure inclusive growth, address economic vulnerabilities and maximise social value. Seek to help local communities to capitalise on existing strengths and assets and encourage local buying and wealth creation. We will also seek to maximise the leverage of Government funds to support the delivery of locally developed plans for growth and regeneration. Work with the tourism industry and other key partners to assist the recovery of longer-term resilience of this sector which we recognise has been hard hit by Covid 19.

- Work with parish and town councils to ensure local voices are heard and continue our work with local communities and voluntary sector partners to promote independence and improve people's lives.



### Outcome 3

## ***Fairer life chances and opportunity for all***

### Key Priorities

- Improve the life chances for those in greatest need, reduce inequality and improve social mobility.
  - Build on the work of the West Somerset Opportunity Area plan, implementing its principles to narrow inequalities.
  - Improve the quality of opportunities for young people, with the aim of increasing the number of young people progressing to higher level qualifications and reducing the number not in education, employment, or training.
  - Target disadvantage and look to reduce health and social inequalities, support greater life choices and employment opportunities for all.
  - Work with those leaving care to ensure opportunities are available and launch an Accessible Apprenticeship programme in partnership with the national charity Mencap.
  - Work to address areas of digital poverty to make sure nobody is left behind.
  - Work with our partners to address fuel poverty and access to energy efficiency initiatives.
- Better outcomes for all children and adults so that they are safe, healthy, and have good physical and emotional wellbeing
  - Promote positive behaviours to encourage wellbeing.

- Family Safeguarding will work with families to address adult problems or issues, to help the children and young people in those families to have a safe, healthy environment that gives will give them better opportunity and outcomes.
- Improve access and opportunities for all to high quality local education, skills and employment, and health and care provision.
  - Improve education through better teaching, leadership and curriculum – through a new relationship and structure with the Teaching School Hub, a new behaviour training programme and expanding curriculum training, plus extensive support for Early years providers in getting to grips with curriculum reform.
  - Deliver a whole family, strengths-based, system approach for our vulnerable families, children and young people to reduce reliance on statutory services and enable them to achieve excellent outcomes.
  - Create opportunity through a large-scale Somerset Works programme supporting those not in Education, Employment or Training, a Year 11 Summer school targeting pupils at risk of dropping out, and reform of Preparation to Adulthood.
  - Provide access to a wide variety of apprenticeships across Somerset County Council and work with our recruitment colleagues to create a culture of apprenticeships so they are considered when managers look to recruit externally.
  - A strong culture of upskilling where staff are encouraged to use apprenticeships to enhance their skills both professionally and personally and develop their continued professional development. Utilise the option to pass-through apprenticeship levy to other organisations to support the employment of new apprentices and the upskilling of existing colleagues, that otherwise wouldn't have been able to gain employment/qualifications.
- Improve outcomes for vulnerable children
  - Improve outcomes for our Children & Young People with SEND through the implementation of the Written Statement of Action.

- Change how agencies work together through better joint commissioning of services and the development of an effective neuro-developmental pathways, specifically Autism.
- Increase the inclusivity of schools through facilitating self-improvement activity, better partnerships and more systematic use of intelligence.
- Improve the quality and impact of inclusion Services through better identification of need, increasing capacity within the system to meet demand, the timeliness of assessment and the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Improve digital inclusion, reducing inequalities through ensuring access to devices and connectivity for our most vulnerable while investing in skills growth and local community support (digital community champions).



#### Outcome 4

### ***Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy lives for longer***

#### Key Priorities

- Continue to deliver a robust response to the continuing impact of Coronavirus on our residents.
  - Continue to work with our communities to prevent and manage outbreaks and to support residents impacted by the pandemic, both directly and indirectly in the short, medium and longer term. Focus, for example on mental health and wellbeing, educational attainment, poverty, social isolation, inclusive growth and recovery, to reskill those who may have lost jobs. Tackle inequalities which have been made more prominent through the Covid pandemic.

- Embed a joint approach that is based on need and provides evidence-based care and support
  - The Somerset Health and Social care System has successfully applied for Integrated care System (ICS) designation. The system has therefore demonstrated to NHS England a shared common vision to improve the health and care of children and adults through joined-up system working.
  - The emerging ICS in Somerset will consist of a Health & Care Partnership; to bring together relevant partners to develop overarching plans across health, social care and public health. An ICS NHS Body; to oversee planning and delivery of NHS services across the whole system. Underpinned by Place-based partnerships; bringing local partner organisations together with meaningful delegated budgets to join up the bulk of services that meet people's day-to-day care needs. And Provider collaboratives; providing a formal arrangement to bring together providers, where appropriate to support the work of new and existing provider collaboratives.
- Foster an environment that gives residents the very best quality of life
  - Align and lead partnerships with people and health/social care partners that create more opportunities, enabling and quality support. Improve access to local options and move away from purchasing units of care to a system of more permissive and relevant support models.
  - A prevention focussed system that encourages and enables individuals and community to take opportunities to create healthy lifestyles.
- Support healthy lifestyles that build health resilience
  - Work to improve the health and wellbeing of the county through early intervention, prevention and promoting independence, taking a neighbourhood and population approach to health and giving mental and physical health parity of esteem and attention.

- Encourage a greater proportion of our communities to use active travel modes such as walking and cycling wherever possible. This will have multiple benefits including improved health outcomes linked to physical activity and reduced car trips leading to reduced carbon emissions, also helping tackle congestion in some areas. Funding for this activity is increasing considerably through the Council's capital programme and through capital and revenue grants from Government. A new body 'Active Travel England' will introduce an inspection regime which will influence future funding levels. The Council will therefore be using the new funds to increase capacity to deliver programmes of active travel network development, infrastructure improvement and associated behaviour change activities. We will also be reviewing the design and layout of our other highway improvement schemes to ensure they are compliant with new cycling standards, and will work with developers to ensure that the layouts of new estates are also compliant with new cycling standards.
- Work with partners on energy efficiency and fit for purpose housing in the light of the risks of climate change.



## Outcome 5

### ***Meeting the challenges for the people of Somerset through innovation and improvement***

#### Key Priorities

- Introduce, embed and maximise the benefits of new ways of working
  - Workforce engagement to create a culture where employees are motivated, productive and have a great work/life balance.
  - Promote Behaviours that adapt to and are built around the needs of our residents and services, are reflective of our core values and develop

the leaders of the future. Continuously improve, innovate, and develop a hybrid approach to working which is flexible for both the service and staff.

- Support our staff health and wellbeing to enhance productivity
- Support Somerset's aim to be climate resilient and reduce Somerset County Council's carbon footprint through new ways of working.
- Prepare for transition to new local government arrangements
  - Somerset County Council will work with district council colleagues to implement the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation, minded to the announcement due in July 2021 ahead of an April 2023 Vesting Day.
  - Work closely with staff and elected members from all five organisations to ensure we create the new organisation culture together and support staff through the transition phase and beyond.
  - Work across all service areas to ensure that service performance to residents and business is maintained during transition and unitary business plan programme commitments are delivered in full.
  - Work with communities, public sector partners, the voluntary sector, city, town and parish councils to design and develop the Local Community Networks adopting the seven recommendations made in the 2020 Somerset Association of Local Councils and Somerset Local Councils Clerks 2020 report.
- Continue to ensure financial sustainability for Somerset County Council
  - Robust Medium-Term Financial Plan including assessment of different funding scenarios.
  - Level of Reserves in line with risk-based assessment.
- Commission services in a more collaborative way producing the best outcomes for people.
  - Be more collaborative with communities, community partners, other public organisations, and businesses to understand local needs and effectively commission high quality measures.

- Continue to develop our approach People and Place commissioning that enables commissioners to work more closely together to deliver cross-cutting outcomes and more joined up services that are vital to work in the Integrated Care System and place-based working.
- Promote equity through commissioning activities to reduce the opportunity gaps across the county.
- Information and intelligence led decision making.
- Maximise social value across the organisation.
- Continue to Maximise the use of digital, data and technology to drive efficiency, intelligence, innovation and deliver better services for our customers
  - Use shared data and analytics to provide insight and intelligence to improve decision making, performance and delivery of services.
  - Develop user driven online interactions for our customers to access our services 24/7.
  - Utilise the latest technology to revolutionise the way we deliver services for example through productivity tools, Chat bots, Artificial Intelligence.
  - Invest in digital inclusion across our communities supporting digital access, skills growth, community support and mental health support.
  - Utilise technology for sustainability as part of our climate strategy.
  - Reimagine health and care services optimising technology enabled care for example remote monitoring, virtual assessments, care@home.
  - Utilisation of technology to reduce the carbon footprint of SCC's estate and operations.

## How we will deliver the plan

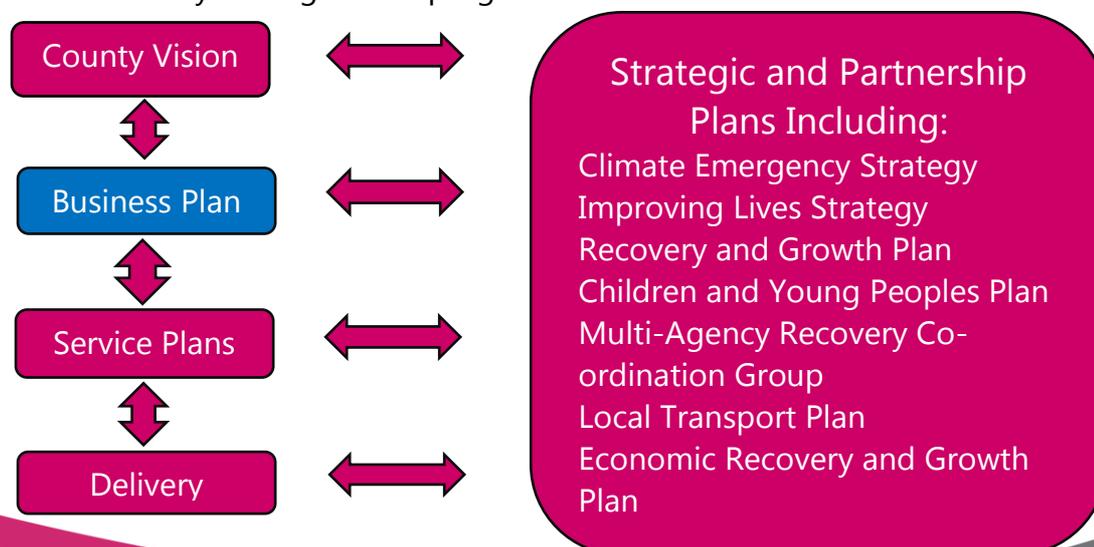
**Our Principles:** The council will work to a set of principles which cut across all our outcomes and key priorities and underpin how we deliver this plan. We will focus on economic recovery and growth. We will tackle inequalities and deliver services based on need. We will make the best use of the money and opportunities available to us. And, we will shift resources towards prevention and early intervention.

**Our Workforce:** The council is a great place to work with a thriving workforce. We will enhance team capability and capacity to deliver their priorities through cultural development and by providing development opportunities, workspaces and ICT that are fit for purpose and support hybrid working.

**Our Partners:** We will continue to work closely and improve our relationships with partner organisations and the volunteering sector to achieve better local outcomes.

**Our Finances:** The council has finite resources to reach the goals set out in this business plan so these aims must be achieved through careful planning, innovation, and transformation of services. Financial planning will be embedded through all service and commissioning planning to ensure that the best results for our residents are achieved within the money we have available to us.

**Strategic Context:** The business plan provides an overarching and joined up direction to the many strategies and programmes that sit below it.



## How we will evidence delivery of the plan

We have a robust performance management framework which sets out how we will monitor performance against the key priorities of the business plan. Performance is linked from the business plan down to individual staff appraisals through a mixture of published and internal scorecards and reports.

We therefore commit to continue publishing a quarterly performance report which shows the top-level performance indicators used as a barometer for performance in our services and progression of the business plan.

