1. Introduction

Somerset is a beautiful, vibrant county enjoyed by many thousands of people every day. Our National Park, our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and of course our unique history and heritage, are rightly regarded as being nationally important.

But are we making the most of Somerset?

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

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

But are we making the most of Somerset?

With reducing income and increasing demand, it is clear that we need to change. We will have to reduce what we do in some areas. This will prove unpopular but 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, wherever possible we all need to take on more responsibility ourselves. The Council will be a provider of core services and a safety net for those residents who truly need our help. However in difficult financial times, it is difficult for the council to be everything to everyone.

This strategic plan for Somerset is all about: giving you the chance to have your say; giving you the chance to shape your Council and the services it provides; giving you the chance to make a Somerset, a better place to live, learn and work.

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 am launching a series of roadshows, under the title “Listening. Learning. Changing”. Across Somerset, your Council will listen to your voice, learn what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

This is what Somerset County Council all about. We want to be known as a place that is:

- Listening to its residents.
- A destination of choice for business and tourism.
- Giving young people the chance to succeed.

A place where:

- People can have healthy and fulfilling lives wherever they live and whatever their personal circumstances
- Vulnerable people are cared for and protected.
- Individuals and communities are able to help themselves where this Council can no longer provide all it has done in the past.

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

There 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 sets out what we want to achieve as we look to 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 every chance to learn, work and enjoy themselves and achieve their ambitions/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
Our Priorities set out how we will make all this happen and provide targets we want to achieve throughout the Council.

Our Priorities are that Somerset is:

A safer and healthier place

- Look after our vulnerable people
- Keep children safe
- Promote healthy living

A place where people have every chance to learn, work and enjoy themselves

- Improve schools and results in schools and colleges
- Improve prospects for those seeking work
- Protect and promote Somerset’s unique natural environment

Thriving local economy attracting jobs and investment

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

Place where people have the good quality services they need

- Give residents a voice and act on what they say
- Join-up with partners, organisations and communities to provide and run efficient services to make every pound work hard for Somerset
- Help individuals and communities to help themselves

A Council that will listen to you, work efficiently and effectively for you to bring the Somerset Vision to life
Our Targets for Somerset sets out what we want specific targets we want to realise for the residents of Somerset

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. Better schools producing better results for our children
4. Help residents stay healthy; encourage our children to be active
5. Protect our environment; more recycling, less waste to landfill
6. Invest in Somerset; improve broadband connections and road links like the A303 to help businesses and residents
7. Attract jobs and apprenticeships into Somerset
8. Consult with, and listen to, our residents, businesses, communities and visitors.
9. Keep Council tax frozen for as long as possible
10. Work more effectively with partners for a smaller, leaner and more customer-focused public sector in Somerset
5. 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 be high profile events that travel around Somerset to ask residents

1. Where their priorities lie
2. Their views on the financial challenges before the council
3. The areas where we should invest
4. How we can work better with local people and communities
5. This County Plan
6. The targets they believe we should hold

We will give 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 evaluate their responses and feed them into our budget setting process so that people can see that they have made an impact on decisions. We will publish results so that people can see our targets and hold us to account.

Only by truly listening can we all Serve Somerset together.