

## **COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT FOR FROME NORTH: RODE, BECKINGTON & NORTON ST PHILIP PARISH COUNCILS: 9 MAY 2023**

### **ADAM BOYDEN, SOMERSET COUNCILLOR FOR FROME NORTH**

#### **New Somerset Council:**

A reminder that Somerset Council formed just last month and now provides all the services previously managed by Mendip District and Somerset County Councils. To access council services there is now a single website [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk) and a single telephone number **0300 123 2224** (open from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday). Council Access Points, including in Frome Library will remain (with several more opening elsewhere).

The Council also started a **weekly email newsletter** you can sign up to at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>.

#### **Local Community Network:**

The first meeting of the full Frome Area Local Community Network (LCN), including the Frome North parishes, will be arranged in June, but further meetings are needed to plan this.

#### **Cost of living support:**

The Somerset Household Support Fund may be able to help support for vulnerable households which are struggling to afford household essentials – <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/somerset-household-support-fund/>.

Information on discounts or exemptions on Council Tax and to claim a Council Tax reduction (previously Council Tax Support) is at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-discounts-and-exemptions/>.

#### **Sign-up for the latest climate news from Somerset Council:**

Somerset Council has launched a new climate, environmental and ecological newsletter – you can sign up to [receive it here](#). Sent on the last Friday of every month, it is “full of news, project updates, and inspirational ideas about the work going on in the county in response to the Climate Emergency, along with information and tips to help us all live better, waste less and reduce our environmental impact...” ([see here](#)).

#### **Councillor advice surgeries start next Saturday:**

I have always kept in touch with residents via email newsletters and my website which has over 500 articles (to subscribe or get in touch please email me), but I know councillors need be visible and available, so I am holding new monthly informal advice surgeries where residents can come and talk about any issues or concerns. More dates will be arranged in the villages.

- Saturday 13th May at the Cheese & Grain cafe, Frome, 9.00-10.30am
- Saturday 3rd June at the Cheese & Grain cafe, Frome, 9.00-10.30am

### **History of One Nation – Ukraine benefit concert:**

Somerset Aid for Ukraine is hosting a special concert of entertainment and discovery in the Cheese & Grain on Thursday 18th May, ‘designed for the British who opened their homes and hearts to refugees from Ukraine’ – please see <https://www.cheeseandgrain.com/events/history-of-one-nation/>. ‘This theatrical production is educational from a historical point of view, fascinating by the musical talents of participants and exciting from the emotional side. It combines elements of the performance, video clips from the history of Ukraine and wonderful music numbers performed by famous stars, professional singers and amateurs. The evening reveals the wealth of Ukrainian history and culture, the difficulties that Ukrainians faced on the historical path of development of the state ... All funds raised at this event will go to send medicines and humanitarian aid to people in Ukraine – see [www.somersetaidforukraine.org](http://www.somersetaidforukraine.org)’.

### **Swimming Club to propose Bathing Water designation on River Frome:**

As discussed at Norton St Philip Parish Council’s meeting in April, Farleigh & District Swimming Club is planning to apply to the Government to designate their stretch of the River Frome at Farleigh Hungerford as an official Bathing Water. Designation of the site would recognise that the river is legitimately used for swimming here, and help put pressure on Wessex Water and the Environment Agency to reduce river pollution. Recently, I and Dawn visited the swimming club, I have sent a letter of support for the application, and I requested and received (via cllr Sarah Dyke) a letter of official support from Somerset Council. The club is expected to apply in the near future. Please see the club’s website <https://farleighswimming.co.uk/>.

### **Public consultation on new solar farm near Rode:**

Renewable energy developers ‘Low Carbon’ are launching a public consultation into their emerging plans for a solar farm development. The solar farm with battery storage, is being proposed on approximately 69 hectares of farmland adjacent to the A361, Bradford Road and Rode Hill to the east of Rode, and will have the capacity to generate approximately 49.9 Megawatts (MW) of renewable electricity. A public consultation is being planned from Tuesday 2 May 2023 to Thursday 25 May 2023, including a Webinar and Q&A session on 10<sup>th</sup> May and a Drop-in event at Rode & District Memorial Hall on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

The developers have also asked Somerset Council whether the future planning application will require Environmental Impact Assessment, submitting a description of the development and potential environmental impacts, and the proposed methods for assessing them including proposed photoviewpoints – please see <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2023/04/30/public-consultation-on-new-solar-farm-near-rode/#page-content> for details.

### **New homes proposed in Norton St Philip:**

Three planning applications have been submitted recently for new housing in Norton St Philip by housing developer Lochailort:

- [2023/0640/FUL](#) – Land West Of 67 Fortescue Street, Norton St Philip, Frome – Erection of 8 dwellings, a new vehicular access & footpath links.
- [2023/0643/FUL](#) – Fortescue Fields Phase II, Norton St Philip, Frome – Erection of 27 dwellings including 8 affordable housing, with associated access and works.

- [2023/0644/FUL](#) – Fortescue Fields Phase II, Norton St Philip, Frome – Erection of 30 dwellings including 9 affordable housing, with associated access and works. (This is for the same site as 2023/0643/FUL).

These are all resubmissions of previous applications, and will be discussed at Norton St Philip Parish Council's next meeting on 10th May. The larger applications are likely to come to Somerset Council's East Planning Committee, and I will consider the need to refer the other. Somerset Council has agreed to extend the public consultation period on all three until **14th June**.

### **Appeal for 49 new homes in Rode rejected:**

An outline planning application for up to 49 new homes on agricultural land at Church Lane, at the edge of Rode, known locally as 'Barbara's Field', has been rejected at appeal by the Inspector. Application ref. [2021/0071/OTS](#) (appeal ref APP/Q3305/W/22/[3292838](#)) was rejected by a decision on 21st April after a two day virtual hearing, on the grounds that the harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding landscape, and considerable harm to the settlement pattern, outweighed the benefits of the provision of housing, open spaces and biodiversity, and economic benefits.

### **Farleigh House licensing application:**

Also being discussed at the NSPPC [meeting next Wednesday](#) is the application by Bath Rugby Ltd for a premises licence for their training facility at Farleigh House, Farleigh Hungerford, to permit the sale of alcohol, late night refreshment, and recorded music and live music until 1am – [see here](#) and [here](#). Concerns have been raised by some residents about the potential impacts of noise and traffic, and the current and advertised uses of the facility. A number of meetings are now planned to go through the issues. Representations can be made on the application until **23rd May**, to The Licensing Department, Somerset Council, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet Somerset, BA4 5BT or by email to [licensing.mendip@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:licensing.mendip@somerset.gov.uk)

### **Rudge Lane:**

On 26th April I met a group of residents in Rudge who are very concerned about a new large unauthorised development along Rudge Lane. I have had discussions with the Planning team at Somerset Council and Beckington Parish Cllr Mark Hollyoake. I understand that there has been a clear breach of planning control here, and await news of the enforcement actions to be undertaken by the Somerset Council Planning team.

### **Your views are needed to help make Somerset more accessible:**

A year-long project to make Somerset more accessible for disabled people was launched on 1st April. 'Accessible Somerset' is an ambitious project which will ask disabled people how life could be improved in various areas. The project is seeking volunteers to share their views and is asking for individuals and organisations to get involved by contacting [Disability.Inc@wecil.org.uk](mailto:Disability.Inc@wecil.org.uk) - please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/help-make-somerset-more-accessible-your-views-needed/>.

### **Schools urged to promote new mental health app for students:**

A new mental health app for young people has been launched in Somerset – the free *Tellmi* app is now available for all local 11-18 year olds, and gives young people the tools to manage their own mental health and support others – please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset-youth-parliament-urges-schools-to-promote-new-mental-health-app-for-students/>.

### **Rode roads:**

I have asked Somerset Council officers for updates on:

- the timescales and public consultation on the Traffic Regulation Order for the 30mph extension and 20mph speed limit, and Glasdon gates, village name plates and terminal signs, from Somerset Council's Traffic Management, Road Safety and Parking Service;
- the timescale for the implementation of the proposed works for the Rode Hill/ Bradford Rd crossroads, from Somerset Council's Service Manager for engineering projects and programmes, to finalise the Small Improvement Scheme there (drawings circulated in March). Quotes had been requested for the Vehicle activated signs, and the date of the works is still to be confirmed. I asked that the parish council be kept informed.

### **Police call for witnesses after fatal accident:**

Police are calling for witnesses to come forward after a tragic fatal accident occurred between a car and a van at the junction of the A361 and Parkgate Lane, between Beckington and Rode, on Friday 24th March – [please see here](#). I have asked for a review of road safety in this area.

### **Frome walking and cycling plan adopted:**

Frome Town Council have approved the Frome Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, at the last meeting in April ([see here](#)). The Plan aims to make walking and cycling easier, and bring about reduced speed limits in Fromefield and elsewhere, by setting out carefully researched recommendations as priorities that can attract funding – [see here](#). I have asked for an Action Plan and a timescale for the short-term priorities to be implemented.

### **Bus use is rising:**

Figures show more people in Somerset are choosing to 'Bus It' following the introduction of lower fares and evening buses as part of Somerset Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). After the introduction of the £2 fare for a single journey in Somerset, funded by the Government, along with the Somerset Council and Somerset Bus Partnership 'Bus It' campaign, passenger numbers have increased by around 14 per cent across the county. The Government has also officially announced its intention to continue the £2 fare across the country until 30 June. Somerset Council and the Somerset Bus Partnership launched the 'Bus It' campaign last summer to try and encourage more people to 'Bus It'. You can find out more about it [here](#). The new First Bus express D2X between Frome and Bath includes some double decker buses which has great views from the top floor ([see here](#), and [here](#)).

### **Truespeed broadband:**

Broadband provider Truespeed is proposing to bring ultra fast broadband to Frome, Beckington and Norton St Philip this spring and summer – [see here](#). However, as well as any cabling underground, this will involve installing telegraph poles in some areas, including in Laburnam Close, Ashtree Road and elsewhere in Stonebridge in Frome, as signs recently erected show, and some local residents are concerned about the visual effect of these outside their homes. Frome Town Council and I have asked for a meeting with Truespeed, and I will report back. Please let me know if any poles are being proposed in your street.

### **Flexible plastic recycling:**

Following the success of expanded Recycle More collections, Somerset Council is now part of a national trial to recycle flexible soft plastics as part of household recycling collections. The small-

scale pilot trial collections will be start at the end of May, for around 3,600 homes in Frome, with households being invited to take part by letter. This will pick-up a wide range of plastic bags and wrapping, including carrier bags, bread bags, confectionery wrappers, crisp packets, food wrapping and cling film – [see here](#) for details.

In Defra’s recently published league tables, Somerset’s 2021-2022 recycling rate of 56.2% ranks it 28 out of 228 local authorities – putting it in the top 15% and top 30 – see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset-recycling-goes-top-30/>

### **Green Spaces Fund open – deadline 12th May:**

A new fund is open to bids from charities and voluntary groups – the Green Spaces Community Matters Fund, run by National Grid – is supporting charities and grassroots organisations to enhance their local environment and encourage more people to make the most of their green spaces. National Grid are offering grants of up to £10,000 to registered charities and eligible non-profit organisations, and unregistered charity organisations can apply for up to £2,000, for projects that will bring communities together, encourage more wildlife and biodiversity, improve air quality and reduce noise, as well as delivering health benefits, and creating employment and volunteering opportunities – please [see here](#).

### **Deadline approaches for two energy payments:**

Householders can apply for Government payments to help towards the costs of heating their homes, but deadlines are approaching. One is for people who heat their homes with an alternative fuel such as wood pellets, LPG or oil, as many do in rural areas; the second scheme is for households that have not received a £400 discount on their energy bills from an electricity supplier (in six instalments from Oct 2022 to March 2023) – so please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/deadline-approaches-for-two-alternative-fund-energy-payments/> if you might be eligible.

### **Greener homes project wins crucial grant funding:**

Somerset Climate Action Network (SomersetCAN) has won a grant to set up a not-for-profit service (Retrofit Somerset) promoting and supporting ‘retrofitting’ to Somerset homes to help reduce energy bills and greenhouse gas emissions, in collaboration with Somerset Council and Frome, Glastonbury, and Bruton Town Councils – [see here](#).

### **Meetings:**

Meetings I have been to (online\* or in person) since mid-April include:

- 18 April: Somerset Council briefing on Local Community Networks\*.
- 19 April: Frome Town Council meeting – [see here](#), which dealt with the Frome Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the football club, a review of open spaces and a new ‘oversight committee’. I caught up with it on Youtube ([see here](#)) as I was away.
- 22 April: meeting with Farleigh & District Swimming Club to visit club site and discuss future application for formal Bathing Water status for their stretch of the River Frome (see above).
- 24 April: met Fusion Lifestyle’s regional manager at Frome Sports Centre.
- 26 April: met residents in Rudge concerned about unauthorised developments.
- 27 April: met Frome Town Council team and bidding play contractors at Old Showfield play area.
- [2 May: Somerset Council [Planning Committee East](#) – missed due to birthday and school strike]

- [3 May: Berkley Parish Council meeting – attended by cllr Dawn Denton for Frome North]

Meetings in the near future include:

- 9 May: Beckington Parish Council: 7.15pm; Rode PC: 7.30pm
- Somerset Council meetings:
  - 10<sup>th</sup> May - Executive;
  - 16<sup>th</sup> May - Corporate & Resources Scrutiny;
  - 17 May: 10am Climate & Place Scrutiny Committee: phosphates mitigation, electric vehicle charging, the highways service, and the new approach to scrutiny
  - 18 May – Strategic Planning Committee;
  - 24<sup>th</sup> May – AGM Full Council;
  - 31<sup>st</sup> May – Adults & Health Scrutiny
- 15 May: Tellisford Parish Meeting, 7.00pm: AGM, at The House, Woolverton
- 17 May, 7pm: Frome Town Council: Annual Town Council
- 24 May: Norton St Philip PC Annual Council and Annual Parish meetings

There are plenty of other issues going on that cannot yet be reported. Please get in touch if you have any concerns or questions. I hope you find this useful. Most of this newsletter is also posted online at <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2023/04/30/frome-north-news-may/#page-content>

*Best wishes,*

*Adam*

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