

North Somerset

CORPORATE PLAN 2020-24

Updated January 2022



An open, fairer, greener North Somerset



OUR VISION An open, fairer, greener North Somerset



Open

We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition for North Somerset.

Fair

We aim to reduce inequalities and promote fairness and opportunity for everyone.

Green

We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.

Our priorities

A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- To be a carbon neutral council and area by 2030
- A transport network which promotes active, accessible and low carbon travel
- An attractive and vibrant place for business investment and sustainable growth
- A broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability

A council which empowers and cares about people

- A commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities
- An approach which enables young people and adults to lead independent and fulfilling lives
- A focus on tackling inequalities and improving outcomes
- Partnerships which enhance skills, learning and employment opportunities
- A collaborative way of working with partners and families to support children achieve their full potential

An open and enabling organisation

- Engage with and empower our communities
- Empower our staff and encourage continuous improvement and innovation
- Manage our resources and invest wisely
- Embrace new and emerging technology
- Make the best use of our data and information
- Provide professional, efficient and effective services
- Collaborate with partners to deliver the best outcomes

Our values

We act with
INTEGRITY

We
RESPECT
each other

We
INNOVATE

We
CARE

We
COLLABORATE

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FOREWORD

BY COUNCILLOR DON DAVIES LEADER OF NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

We are living through a period of rapid change locally, nationally and across the world. Already the current decade has brought us a pandemic and the declaration of a 'code red' for our planet's climate crisis. And this has happened at a time of mixed fortunes in our local economy which continues to show evidence of inequalities. Many of our residents have seen a fall in their living standards and we have responded by targeting our reducing resources on our most vulnerable residents.

We have reached a tipping point in tackling climate change, which we are determined to address through our climate emergency strategy and action plan.

While technology is transforming how we live and work, we are also focusing on shaping our physical environment. Our high streets are changing and the need for housing and employment land is increasing.

We want to maximise the things which make North Somerset such a great place to live while tackling the big and urgent issues, like climate change, reducing inequalities and how we engage more effectively with our residents.



Since the last local elections in May 2019 an alliance of four political groups – Independents, Liberal Democrats, Labour and Greens – has worked across party boundaries for the benefit of our residents and businesses.

This is a new style of local government for North Somerset and it means working in new ways. We are determined to be more transparent about what we are doing and why, and to involve residents much more in tackling difficult issues together.

We are also strengthening our partnerships with local businesses, voluntary organisations, town and parish councils and other public services like health to improve outcomes despite tight budgets.

This plan sets out our shared vision for North Somerset together with an ambitious set of priorities backed by realistic action plans. It will help us to make the right choices over the next two years, and begin to tackle our long-term challenges.



ABOUT THE PLAN

The Corporate Plan is the council's overarching strategic document. It is the only plan which covers the full range of the council's responsibilities and is an important tool to help focus our effort and resources on the right things. This is even more important in the context of constrained budgets and rapid change.

By prioritising a clear set of commitments the Corporate Plan and its accompanying action plan also helps residents to hold the council to account for its performance and challenge it to improve.

The Corporate Plan informs other key strategies and plans, whether council documents or those of our partners. These documents vary widely in purpose, scope, and time horizon. The Corporate Plan does not replace these other documents but it should shape them whenever they are being updated.

Good strategic planning also means aligning financial and service planning. This plan has developed alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan, and signed off alongside the budget by the full Council.



CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The views of residents, staff and other stakeholders have been sought to help shape this Plan. The first phase of engagement included a series of focus groups for residents held in different locations around North Somerset, and internally a series of council staff engagement sessions.

These activities helped shape the draft plan which was published for consultation. The vast majority of responses were positive about the plan overall whilst making detailed comments and suggestions. Improvements have been made in light of these comments and going forwards, the newly formed Citizen's Panel will help to inform the development of other key strategies and plans.



BASELINE, OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

A good plan depends on a realistic appraisal of our starting point and a thorough analysis of the context. A wide ranging data analysis was conducted in preparing this plan. The headlines are set out below.

A more detailed summary of the key issues and evidence follows at the end of the plan.





OPPORTUNITIES

- **A great location** - strategically positioned close to Bristol and Bath and the M4 corridor, whilst enjoying the benefits of beautiful countryside and coast. North Somerset is well connected nationally and internationally with the airport, port, the M5 and direct trains to Paddington, South Wales, the Midlands and the South West
- **Weston-super-Mare** - our largest town is set to become the second biggest settlement in the West of England over the next decade. Opportunities include the University Centre, Enterprise Area, Food Works and the developing arts, culture and heritage scene.
- **Natural assets** - North Somerset has some wonderful natural assets including part of the Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 39 sites of Special Scientific Interest and 25 miles of coastline.
- **Learning and skills**: The area has a high proportion of good or outstanding Early Years settings (96% as of 2021) and good or outstanding schools (85% as of 2021), and an outstanding College providing further and higher education.
- **Communities** – North Somerset has a variety of different communities, ranging from large Towns to villages and rural settlements. There is a network of formal and informal community groups which together provide an enormous range of activities and services including North Somerset Together which was instrumental in North Somerset's pandemic response..
- **Digital revolution** – new and emerging technologies including green technology are bringing opportunities to rethink how services are provided and make better use of data.
- **Business investment** – attracting businesses to continue to invest in the area, to provide more and better paid local jobs, and promote sustainable growth in sectors like the green economy, food and drink and the visitor economy.
- **Innovative staff** – our staff have shown great resilience and creativity to maintain quality services. Tight resources will continue to spur innovation in how we manage demand and deliver and fund services.
- **Partnerships** – we have good relationships with our partners across the public, private and third sectors including as part of our Integrated Care System and as part of North Somerset Together.



CHALLENGES

- **The Covid-19 pandemic** – The ongoing global pandemic has resulted in severe social and economic disruption around the world and North Somerset is not immune to that.
- **Demographic change** – North Somerset's population is both growing and aging. In many ways that is good news but it does increase demand for health and social care services, school places and other services, and puts pressure on infrastructure.
- **Climate emergency** – the serious impact of global warming is already evident. Urgent action is needed to avoid temperatures increasing to dangerous levels, which would bring rising sea levels and increased flooding and extreme weather.
- **Inequalities** – North Somerset is a prosperous place but it has large inequalities in income, health and life chances and are likely to have been exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Housing** – there is a need for significantly more homes to meet the demand of our growing population and government targets, including affordable homes with the average house costing nine times average earnings. We also need to ensure we have sufficient employment land.
- **Balancing development and sustainability** – particularly in the context of the climate emergency and our wealth of natural and heritage assets will be an ongoing challenge.
- **Fragile care market** – locally and nationally care providers are under pressure and are likely to have been exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Local transport network** – despite good strategic links, getting around North Somerset by road or public transport is not always as easy due to congestion and a limited bus network. The pandemic has also changed how we work and this will affect how we use public transport.



- **Resource constraints** – after a decade of unprecedented reductions in government funding, resources are expected to remain constrained throughout the time frame of this plan.



OUR JOURNEY

Maximising our opportunities and overcoming our challenges will take time. We can't do everything at once and we know resources will remain tight for the foreseeable future.

But the longer the journey, the more important it is to be clear about the destination. We have a clear vision for North Somerset, one which sets out what we want both for the area, and for the council as an organisation.



OUR VISION IS FOR A MORE OPEN, FAIRER, GREENER NORTH SOMERSET

Open

We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition for North Somerset.

Fair

We aim to reduce inequalities and promote fairness and opportunity for everyone.

Green

We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.

AIMS AND PRIORITIES

The vision is ambitious and long term but we have started progressing towards it.

To help focus on the right things we have set ourselves three broad aims, each with a set of priorities. Achieving these priorities will help us to realise our vision.

Our aims are:

- A thriving and sustainable place

- A council which empowers and cares about people; and
- An open and enabling organisation

For each aim we have identified a set priorities which will guide our work and actions against them.

Our action plan shows the projects and success measures which will help to monitor our progress. These are included in our performance management framework.

EQUALITY COMMITMENTS

Public services rightly have equality duties. These include eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between groups.

The new vision reinforces the council's commitment to meeting these duties; promoting fairness and working openly for everyone. North Somerset is a diverse place and we want to make sure that people are able to live, work and enjoy North Somerset regardless of their background, needs or characteristics.

We will consider the diversity of our communities as we deliver the important equality duties we have committed to. This applies to all the priorities in this plan, but there are some commitments which are particularly relevant from an equalities perspective. These equality objectives are marked  in the action plan sections.



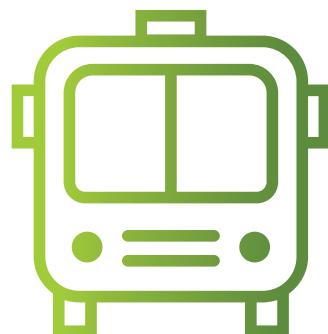
A THRIVING AND SUSTAINABLE PLACE

PRIORITIES

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming safe and clean neighbourhoods

- To be a carbon neutral council and area by 2030
- A transport network that promotes active, accessible and low carbon travel
- A broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability
- An attractive and vibrant place for business investment and sustainable growth

FACTS & FIGURES



- CO2 emissions per capita in North Somerset have fallen from 7.9 tonnes in 2005 to 5.4 tonnes in 2019.
- Passenger journeys by bus have increased in North Somerset from 4.4 million in 2009/10 to 5.3 million in 2019/20
- The number of enterprises (businesses) in North Somerset has increased by 26% from 2010 to 2021 (7,050 to 8,940).

CASE STUDY

MetroWest

MetroWest Phase 1 is a nationally significant scheme to improve transport links in the West of England region. MetroWest will see the Portishead Rail branch line re-open in 2024 as well as a series of vital improvements to passenger services along the Severn Beach and Bristol to Westbury railway Lines. Over £31m of funding has been allocated from the Department for Transport for this scheme and the Development Consent Order Examination was held from October 2020 to April 2021 by the Planning Inspectorate. Once launched the new line will connect over 50,000 people to the national rail network and it is anticipated that 0.4 million people a year will use it.

Action Plan

By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: a great place for people to live, work and visit

Planning policies that shape inclusive growth, attract investment and secure infrastructure for healthy, mixed and prosperous neighbourhoods in a way that helps tackle the climate emergency, the housing crisis and persistent socio-economic inequalities. 

- We will prepare a new Local Plan for consultation and examination.

A flourishing arts, culture and heritage sector supporting inclusive growth, placemaking and healthier communities.

- We will implement the North Somerset Cultural Strategy and deliver any in-year actions we have identified in the action plan such as the Heritage Action Zone enhancements and the development of Culture Weston.

North Somerset's natural environment playing a more instrumental role in our communities through improved health and wellbeing, helping our response to the climate emergency through rewilding and additional woodland, and supporting sustainable development and inclusive growth.

- We will develop and implement the North Somerset Green Infrastructure Strategy and deliver any in-year actions we have identified in the action plan such as the Great Lakes.

- We will develop and implement a flood risk management plan.

High-quality library and leisure services, accessible by all, that remain relevant to the changing needs of North Somerset residents. 

- We will implement the North Somerset Library Strategy and deliver any in-year actions we have identified in the action plan.

- We will develop and implement the North Somerset Leisure Strategy and deliver any in-year actions we have identified in the action plan.

North Somerset recognised as a key part of the regional visitor economy with places to visit across the year and throughout the day.

- We will deliver any in-year actions we have identified in the North Somerset Visitor Economy action plan.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods

All of our town centres and high streets to be places people choose to go to for fun, social and safe experiences. They will be able to attract people throughout the day. Supported by active participation by business groups and community networks and town and parish councils, they will be lively, safe and clean.

Crime and anti-social behaviour are reducing, and victims of crime and exploitation are supported effectively by the council and its partners. There is a coordinated strategy to reduce domestic abuse and the harm caused to the victims and their children. An integrated approach to neighbourhood enforcement is supported by a transformed control centre and camera network.

EO

Neighbourhood management is well coordinated, and delivered in partnership with local communities, with everyone playing their part and taking responsibility. EO

Priority: to be a carbon neutral council and area by 2030

To be well on our way to becoming a net zero carbon council and a net zero carbon place by 2030. Our North Somerset Plan will be shaping sustainable growth in the most accessible places. We'll be working with partners, business and residents to support them to make low carbon decisions. EO

- We will deliver a programme of activity within the Weston Placemaking Strategy.
- We will develop Placemaking Strategies for Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead.
- We will work in partnership to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and protect our communities and residents through projects such as safer streets, the violence reduction unit and the data accelerator fund.
- We will improve our approach to neighbourhood management and enforcement.



By 2024 we want:

Households are supported to minimise the waste they produce, and recycle what they do, with North Somerset having low residual waste volumes and high recycling rates.

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

- We will roll out and implement the North Somerset Environment company including a review of the service offer.
- We will develop and implement the Waste Strategy and deliver any in-year actions we have identified in the action plan.

Priority: a transport network that promotes active, accessible and low carbon travel

Passengers will soon be boarding trains in Portishead and Pill on the reopened rail line, reducing car use and traffic congestion.

- We will progress to onsite delivery of the MetroWest project, subject to Development Consent Order approval.
- We will develop the Highways Asset Management and Investment Strategy.
- We will deliver enhancements to the highway network to improve safety and encourage active travel.
- We will adopt the Active Travel Strategy and deliver any in-year actions in the action plan.
- We will continue to explore and consider options for residents parking schemes.
- We will update the Right of Way Improvement Plan and deliver improvements.
- We will maintain the existing highway network infrastructure.

More people using the bus network, and improvements in reliability and passenger satisfaction.

- We will develop and implement a bus improvement plan, working with public transport companies and the West of England Combined Authority.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: a broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability

The North Somerset Plan will be supporting a mix of housing types and tenures in sustainable locations in the area. Quality and affordable new homes will be built on the council's own land with infrastructure projects underway to unlock further delivery.

- We will ensure delivery of high-quality homes and commercial space through the delivery of the Development Programme of council owned land.
- We will increase the supply of affordable housing through direct delivery and working in partnership.
- We will launch the Housing Infrastructure Fund communication and engagement plans and submission of planning approvals.

The private rented sector in North Somerset will be improved through purpose built new development and action on existing accommodation. 

- We will improve housing conditions in the private rented sector through projects such as accreditation schemes and green homes grants.

Priority: an attractive and vibrant place for business investment and sustainable growth

North Somerset to be recognised as having a distinct commercial identity, attracting increased levels of investment which support wider Council priorities.

- We will develop our strategic employment sites to attract sustainable investment to deliver inclusive growth.
- We will grow North Somerset's green economy by working in partnership to support business and upskilling of residents.

The Junction 21 Enterprise Area will have a clear offer to investors in the West of England economy.

- We will directly invest and seek investment to help the creation of jobs in the J21 Enterprise Area.

Improved connectivity and speeds across North Somerset enabled by the latest technology.

- We will implement the Digital Strategy ensuring accessible and effective online services and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.



A COUNCIL WHICH EMPOWERS AND CARES ABOUT PEOPLE

PRIORITIES

- A commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities
- An approach which enables young people and adults to lead independent and fulfilling lives
- A focus on tackling inequalities, improving outcomes
- A collaborative way of working with partners and families to support children achieve their full potential
- Partnerships which enhance skills, learning and employment opportunities

FACTS & FIGURES



- An increase in Early Help episodes in North Somerset i.e. a robust early help offer with over 1,200 episodes in 2018/19



- An average of 1,700 adults supported in their own home through assistive technology



- Over 80% of adults in North Somerset with a level 2 qualification and 43% with a level 4, above the national average

CASE STUDY

Connecting Lives

The Connecting Lives service is the expansion of what was the Shared Lives service. The service continues to provide care for adults with disabilities and mental health challenges in a family and/or community setting.

The recent addition of an outreach service has enabled support to be delivered in a different location and has boosted recruitment of carers.

Action Plan

By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: a commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities

Safeguarding is seen as every one's business and partners work together to enable the people of North Somerset to live free from abuse and neglect.

- We will develop and implement across the partnerships an effective and impactful approach to contextual safeguarding.
- We will work with partners to embed an effective front door (including a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)).
- We will maximise the appropriate use of non-custodial programmes within the context of safeguarding young people and protecting the public.
- We will work together to ensure that safeguarding is seen as everyone's business and we realise the vision of the North Somerset Safeguarding Board.

Children and adults who need the most support consistently receive good quality services, which keep them safe and promote their wellbeing, whether provided by the council, other public services, voluntary organisations or private care providers. 

- We will operate a family wellbeing (early help) and children's social care locality-based model to better support our children and their families and strengthen relationships with partners and the voluntary sector, communities and local businesses.
- We will ensure robust and effective quality assurance and performance activity and monitoring is in place across children's services.
- We will ensure children, young people and their families are actively involved in service development, delivery and individual decisions in relation to their lives and life chances.
- We will ensure consistency of high-quality practice and performance for all children and families, ensuring that the voice of the child is central.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

- We will implement the SEND Strategy and deliver on any in-year actions we have identified in the action plan.
- We will embed the Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Framework.
- We will ensure people have more options for accessing assessments and support and can get the right response more quickly and conveniently, more efficient processes help meet demand.
- We will ensure people get the right social care support at the right time on discharge from hospital, through an integrated health led service.
- We will review and re-design the day care offer in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and learning from it.
- We will develop a successful in-house reviewing team to ensure that adult care and support plans are regularly reviewed to reflect changing needs.
- We will re-commission the Community Meals service, and expand the welfare offer.
- We will review the Occupational Therapy Strategy.
- We will review and update the Carers Strategy.



By 2024 we want:	Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:
Refugees resettled in North Somerset are welcomed and supported to make the area their home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will continue to participate in the national Resettlement Scheme, welcoming refugees, asylum seekers and their families to settle in North Somerset.
Respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and minimise the harm as far as possible for individuals, families and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will ensure a package of support for care homes and home care providers, including help accessing PPE, support to ensure all residents are tested before discharge from hospital, infection control and funding support. ● We will ensure financial support and relief is provided to local business, vulnerable residents and families as part of recovery and renewal. ● We will respond to the Covid-19 pandemic by implementing the Outbreak Management Plan ensuring the harm has been minimised as far as possible for individuals, families and communities.
Priority: an approach which enables young people and adults to lead independent and fulfilling lives	
More people are able to live independently in their own homes and communities. Young people with disabilities are well prepared for adulthood and have a smooth transition. North Somerset is recognised as a pioneer in the use of new technology to maximise independence. The Technology Enabled Care Strategy is addressing future social care challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will continue to improve transitional planning for all children and young people both across children's services and to adult services ensuring seamless transition and needs led support and services are provided. ● We will review and refresh the Market Position Statement in conjunction with BNSSG CCG and Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils. ● We will work towards greater independence, improved wellbeing and quality of life for people via reduced reliance on residential care. ● We will make the most of new and emerging technologies to help meet the needs of people safely and efficiently, and manage demand. ● We will develop an Intensive Positive Behaviour Support model with partners.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

- We will deliver the ConnectED partnership programme, in collaboration with Bristol Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol University.
- We will review the reablement and therapy service's welfare offer to maximise individual's independence.

Outcomes for Care Leavers are improving and young people who have been looked after are consistently well supported through to independence. 

- We will ensure the whole organisation is aware of its Corporate Parenting responsibilities and an effective Corporate Parenting Panel is in operation to support the corporate parenting role across the organisation.
- We will ensure sustained improvement of emotional wellbeing, education and employment outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Priority: a focus on tackling inequalities and improving outcomes

A range of strategies and initiatives are in place which together will reduce inequalities over the long term, including action plans for areas ranked in the 10% most deprived in England. Outcomes for those with the poorest life chances have begun to improve. 

- We will develop and implement the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and action plan to tackle inequalities, areas of deprivation and improve physical and mental wellbeing across North Somerset.
- We will refresh and publish the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to better understand the health and wellbeing needs of North Somerset.
- We will provide an easy to access, effective and supportive housing benefit and council tax service.
- We will continue to implement initiatives and projects to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: a collaborative way of working with partners and families to support children achieve their full potential

Families receive the right help and support to achieve the best for their children. Fewer children need to be looked after by North Somerset Council, and those that do have the right placement, which for the vast majority will be a local family placement. 

- We will further develop and implement the North Somerset Partnership early help offer ensuring Right help, Right time, Right place, Effective support across the continuum of need.
- We will strengthen commissioning activity across children's services to ensure sustainable, improved outcomes for children and families.

Priority: partnerships which enhance learning, skills and employment opportunities

Children and young people gain the knowledge and skills they need to flourish as adults. More children with special educational needs attend local schools. 

- We will develop and implement the Education Commissioning Strategy for education provision, to ensure there are sufficient school places.
- We will work with schools and academies to reduce the attainment gap between children entitled to free school meals or pupil premiums, and their peers.
- We will ensure we provide a comprehensive music education service to children, young people, their families and schools across North Somerset to encourage mental health and wellbeing, and ensure equality of opportunity.

North Somerset's residents enhance their skills and economic wellbeing, benefitting from economic growth, demonstrated by increased levels of economic resilience and inclusion in our communities. 

- We will implement the Employment and Skills Strategy and deliver any in year actions identified in the action plan.
- We will develop a Workplace Health Programme across North Somerset.



AN OPEN AND ENABLING ORGANISATION

PRIORITIES

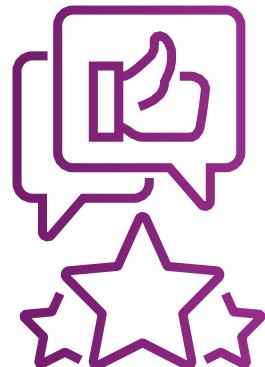
- Engage with and empower our communities
- Empower our staff and encourage continuous improvement and innovation

- Manage our resources and invest wisely
- Embrace new and emerging technology
- Make the best use of our data and information
- Provide professional, efficient and effective services
- Collaborate with partners to deliver the best outcomes

FACTS & FIGURES



- The Council now employs around 1300 people. This compares to over 2400 in 2006. These figures do not include school staff, illustrating the scale of change.



- 86% of customers satisfied with the service received in our gateways



- 98% of customers satisfied with the service received on the telephone

CASE STUDY

Using technology to increase access to library services

Embracing digital and self service technology has enabled libraries to reach new customers and extend access to library resources.

In 2020 North Somerset library customers downloaded over 26,000 library eBooks, 33,000 eaudiobooks, and 97,000 digital magazines (an increase of 60% compared to 2019). Libraries increased spending on digital resources during the pandemic to meet the demand when libraries were closed. 'Extended Access' technology is enabling increasing numbers of customers to use four libraries on a self-service basis 8am – 8pm across the week (11,770 visits in 2019-20). Self service kiosks, available in all libraries, typically perform 82% of routine book lending transactions and provide self service printing, releasing staff to focus on supporting in-depth customer enquiries.



Action Plan

By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: engage with and empower our communities

A menu of opportunities for residents and communities to engage at a level which suits them best. Wide-ranging informative and accessible communications with residents. Consistent, timely and good quality engagement in decisions, service design and financial planning. Best practice has become common practice. 

- We will develop and implement the North Somerset Consultation Strategy and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.

The upsurge in community support in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been sustained, strengthening communities and enriching lives. 

- We will ensure we communicate and engage with all our residents including those that are hard to reach by reviewing the Communications Strategy and action plan and developing a Community Engagement Strategy and toolkit.

Council services to be easily recognisable as such through clear and consistent branding which reflects the council's vision.

- We will implement the North Somerset Empowering Communities Strategy and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.

Residents are well informed about the things they can do to prepare for emergencies and to support one another when they occur. 

- We will ensure we communicate and engage with all our residents including those that are hard to reach by reviewing the Communications Strategy and action plan and developing a Community Engagement Strategy and toolkit.

- We will ensure we communicate and engage with all our residents including those that are hard to reach by reviewing the Communications Strategy and action plan and developing a Community Engagement Strategy and toolkit.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: empower our staff and support continuous improvement and innovation

The Council is recognised as a good employer. It gets the most from its staff and has the right people and skills to deliver its objectives. Plans are in place to address any workforce challenges. 

- We will develop the People Strategy in readiness for delivery in 2022/23.
- We will promote health and wellbeing across directorates, services and teams to ensure that we have equality of opportunity as we uphold our values to act with integrity, respect each other, innovate, care and collaborate.
- We will enhance emergency preparedness by ensuring all our services within the council have business continuity plans and are aware of their health and safety responsibilities.

It is easy for staff to work efficiently and seamlessly anywhere, reducing the need for office space and travel, whilst remaining accessible to residents and colleagues.

- We will deliver the in-year actions identified within our Accommodation Strategy.

Staff feel innovation is encouraged and recognised and see good ideas taken forward.

- We will implement a Programme Management Office to deliver a portfolio of well-designed and managed transformation projects.

Programmes and projects are well managed and delivering significant benefits including savings.

- We will implement a Programme Management Office to deliver a portfolio of well-designed and managed transformation projects.
- We will work together to develop and implement the in-year directorate transformation plans.
- We will develop and implement a transformation plan for the Planning Service following peer review.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: manage our resources and invest wisely

Resources well aligned to priorities and robust plans are in place to address budget pressures.

- We will create a robust Capital Strategy aligned to the Corporate Plan.
- We will maximise debt recovery and revenue collection across the organisation.
- We will deliver a portfolio of well-designed and managed capital projects supported by a Capital Programme Management Office.

A sustainable portfolio of buildings which support the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities.

- We will develop and deliver a new approach to our corporate landlord function.
- We will develop a programme of capital investment aligned to the Asset Management Strategy action plan and any service strategies.

Priority: embrace new and emerging technology

New and emerging technologies are harnessed effectively to deliver efficient and good quality services. The Council is well on the way to 'paperless' and 'cashless' operation and is beginning to make use of robotics and Artificial Intelligence.

- We will implement the IT Strategy across the seven key strategic themes and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.

More residents have basic digital skills and are able to take advantage of national programmes to improve broadband speeds and roll out 5G. 

- We will implement the Digital Strategy ensuring accessible and effective online services and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.



By 2024 we want:

Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:

Priority: make the best use of our data and information

The Council is using rich data sets to make evidence-based decisions and evaluate the impact of those decisions, whilst protecting resident's information and privacy. Council and partner data sets are combined where possible and consistent with information governance standards. Performance data is available for managers as and when needed. More council data is made open as part of our transparency agenda.

- We will implement the North Somerset open data platform for residents and stakeholders.
- We will implement the Information Management Strategy and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.
- We will ensure IT systems and data drive performance and ensure strong outcomes.

Priority: provide professional, efficient and effective services

A strong and consistent customer focus evident across the organisation. 

- We will ensure a strong customer services culture across the organisation by developing and implementing a Customer Services Strategy to enhance the customer offer and delivering any in-year actions within the action plan.

Priority: collaborate with partners to deliver the best outcomes

A strong partnership with West of England neighbours helps deliver better outcomes for North Somerset. By sharing with other local authorities and public services we provide better quality or value for money for North Somerset residents than if we acted alone.

- We will engage in regional partnerships to ensure maximum impact across the West of England to grow businesses, protect and create jobs.
- We will work with West of England partners to ensure a joint approach to spatial transport planning.



By 2024 we want:	Commitments we have made in 2021/22 to help achieve this:
Delivering priorities through town and parish councils and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations (VCSE) where appropriate. EO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will implement the North Somerset Empowering Communities Strategy and deliver any in-year actions within the action plan.
More effective, sustainable and integrated health and social care services. EO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will re-evaluate current service delivery to ensure alignment with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. ● We will ensure successful re-procurement of Children's Public Health Nursing Service. ● We will develop and implement a new digital platform for North Somerset's health improvement services, ensuring that residents and communities can easily access services.
Joint Projects with the police and other partners reduce crime and the fear of crime. EO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will work in partnership to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and protect our communities and residents through projects such as safer streets, the violence reduction unit and the data accelerator fund. ● We will improve our approach to neighbourhood management and enforcement.



OUR VALUES

Our organisational values are important because they help guide us in how we work and provide services for our residents.

In developing this Plan we have taken the opportunity to refresh and restate our values, producing them with our staff. These five values form a strong ethos which will help us to deliver our ambitious agenda, working in partnership across the council and beyond:



We act with
INTEGRITY

We
RESPECT
each other

We
INNOVATE

We
CARE

We
COLLABORATE



ISSUES AND EVIDENCE



GROWING AND AGING

The population of North Somerset is both growing and aging and is projected to continue to do so faster than the national or regional average.



The population of North Somerset is expected to rise from 211,500 in 2016 to 251,700 by 2041ⁱⁱ. This continues a long term trend and would represent an increase of 16%, compared to a projected increase of 12% for England as a whole.



The number of children and young people aged under 20 is expected to increase by 12%, but the number of people aged 85 plus is expected to more than double: from 7,000 people in 2016 to 15,000 by 2041. In the period covered by this plan, the number of people aged 85 plus in North Somerset is expected to increase by 10.8%.

This is good news, but brings challenges.

The population is growing because people want to live in North Somerset, and most of us want to live longer, so long as we can be in good health. However a bigger population does increase demand for housing and services, and it puts pressure on infrastructure like schools and transport. Healthy lifestyles and staying connected to our communities and social networks can keep us independent for longer but once we reach our late eighties we are far more likely to need health or social care services.

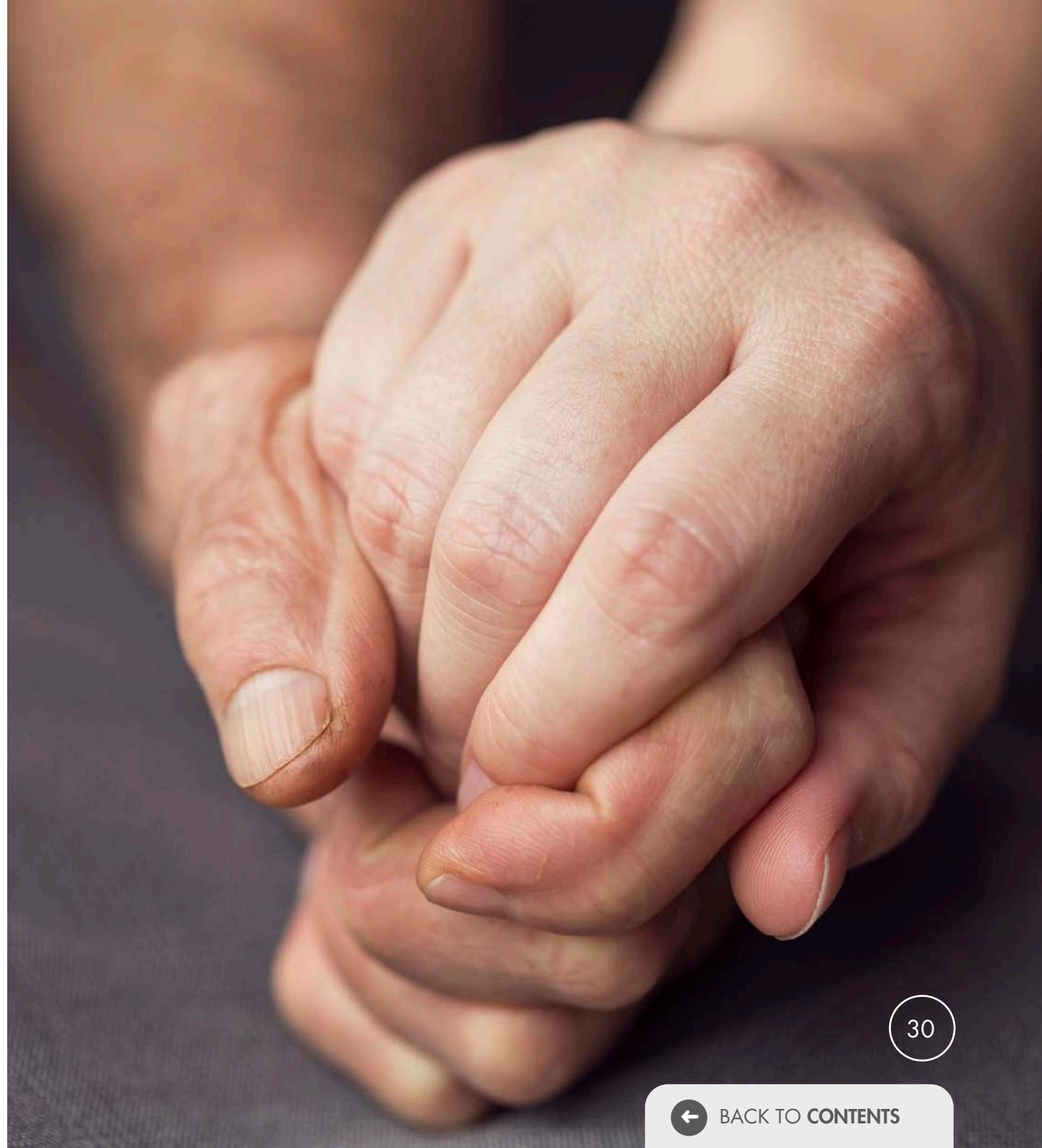
According to the Alzheimer's Society there are around 850,000 people in the UK with dementia. One in 14 people over 65 will develop dementia, and the condition affects 1 in 6 people over 80.



SOCIAL CARE

The system for funding adult social care is widely recognised as no longer fit for purpose with a national solution for sustainable funding being essential. Care markets locally and nationally are challenged by rising costs, staff shortages and the ongoing need to maintain quality.

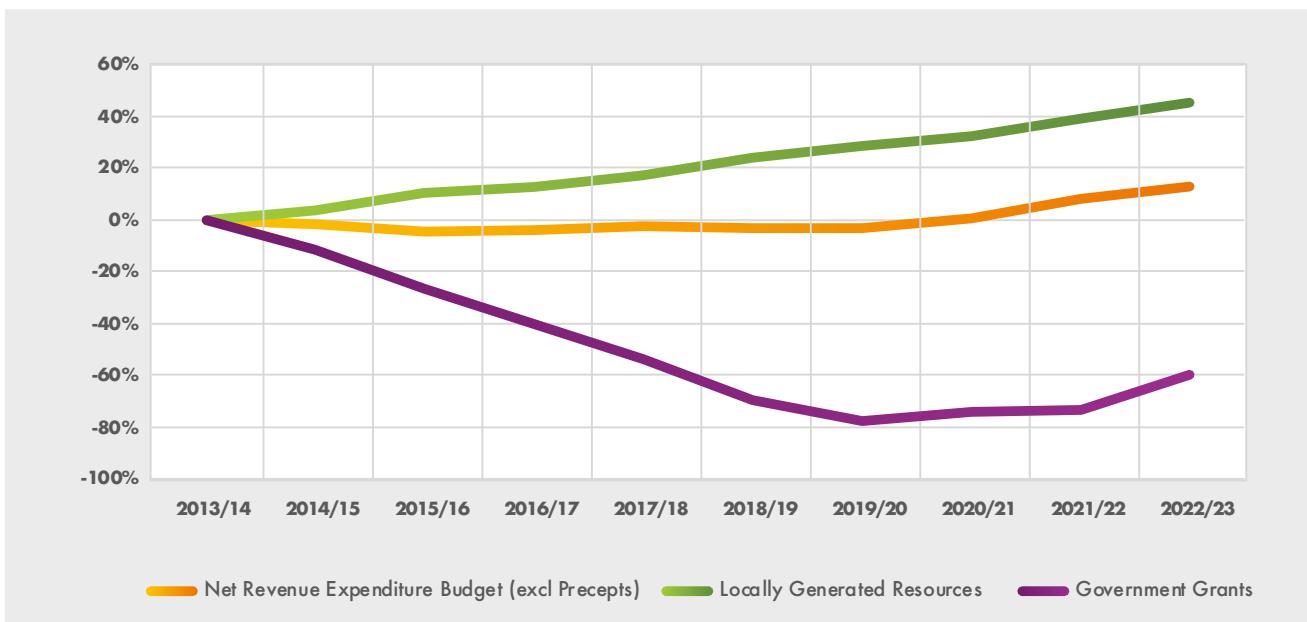
As demand for these services increase in line with an aging population, so does the cost to the council, coinciding with almost a decade of reducing government funding for local authorities.



GOVERNMENT FUNDING

There has been a sustained reduction in general government grants for core services, partially mitigated by permission to raise more money locally, through Council Tax and Business Rates.

North Somerset UA - Revenue Spending Power, Government Funding and Local Taxation



Between 2013/14 and 2019/20, central government grants to North Somerset Council fell from £45 million to £10 million, a decrease of over 70% although, in recent years the Government has recognised the severe pressures faced by councils providing Adult Social Care services and has started to allocate specific funding to help pay for rising costs.

Between 2013/14 and 2019/20, the net 'spending power' of North Somerset Council remained broadly the same even though demand grew for services provided to adult and children, however in recent years the Council has needed to spend more money to deliver all of the services needed by residents. In order to meet this pressure, while meeting the needs of a growing population and unavoidable costs e.g. the national minimum wage, the council has made over £70 million in savings since 2013.

Against this background it is unsurprising that there are significant strains on capacity and budgets. Apart from adult social care, some of the biggest pressures are in children's services, particularly placements for looked after children and services for children with special educational needs, including home to school transport. New legal responsibilities in terms of special educational needs together with radical changes in the educational landscape, with more academies and a diminished role for the local authority have added to these pressures.

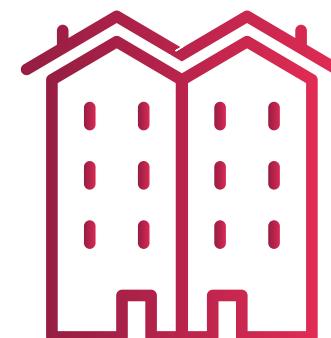
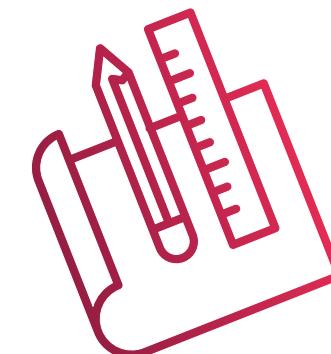
The government was expected to publish a four-year spending review in 2019, together with proposals for a new approach to funding social care. Instead, only single year spending settlements have been announced and the impacts of social care funding for local authorities has largely been deferred until 2023/24. Whilst the single year spending settlement has provided increases in funding for 2022/23, it does not provide a sound basis for long term planning and more significantly, some of the monies that have been given are one-off and will not continue into the future.





HOUSING DEMAND

Demand for housing outstrips supply both nationally and locally. This is partly due to our increasing population but also reflects increasing numbers of households.



The number of households in the UK increased by over 1 million between 2011 and 2018, including an additional 347,000 one person households^{iv}.

There are also significant issues about supply and affordability. Developers understandably do not want to build homes faster than they can sell them.

In 2018 sites that could accommodate up to 8,000 homes had planning consent in place. During that year, 863 homes were built, of which 155 were affordable.

Affordability is a major issue with the average home costing 9 times average earnings in North Somerset compared to a national figure of 7.8 times earnings.



Balancing the pressing need for housing, infrastructure and local employment, with the imperatives of tackling the climate emergency, persistent inequalities and preserving our beautiful natural environment and built heritage remains one of our greatest challenges.

Work has begun on a new North Somerset Plan which will set the framework for investment and growth in homes, infrastructure and space for business through to 2036.

The proposed West of England Joint Spatial Plan will not now be taken forward, but North Somerset will continue to work closely with Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils.

HOMELESSNESS

Recent years have seen an increase in homelessness.



Nationally, the number of households in temporary accommodation increased from 64,710 in 2015 to 84,740 in 2019, an increase of 31%.

Locally we have seen increases, with the average number of households in temporary accommodation increasing. We have also seen an increase in length of stay due to lack of move on accommodation both in the social and private rented sector.

Annual rough sleeper counts recorded 4,677 people in 2018, more than twice the number in 2010. In North Somerset 11 people were recorded sleeping rough in 2018 compared to 2 in 2010.

This increase is partly due to changes in the benefit system, including restrictions on housing benefit, exacerbated by the wider issues in the housing market.





CLIMATE CHANGE

The UK is legally committed under the Paris Climate Agreement to limiting global warming to well below 2°C and if possible to 1.5°C.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that even warming of 1.5°C will have significant impacts including rising sea levels, increased likelihood of extreme weather events, threats to food and water supply and loss of biodiversity, and that limiting warming to this level requires unprecedented "rapid and far reaching" changes in all aspects of society, including a need to reach 'net zero' by around 2050.

As a result the UK amended the Climate Change Act to include a binding target of net zero by that date. This will require a combination of dramatic reductions in emissions and removal of carbon from the atmosphere, both through natural processes, such as tree planting, and technological solutions which are still being developed. Whilst government, both local and national can lead this change, the public has a huge role to play.



Published data shows an overall downward trend in emissions in North Somerset (a 25% reduction between 2005 and 2016 in local authority influenceable emissions).

Progress is encouraging but sustaining and accelerating this trend will be challenging as most of the early reductions were achieved through the switch away from coal fired power generation, now largely complete. Furthermore these figures do not include emissions from national transport infrastructure such as the airport and the M5 Motorway.

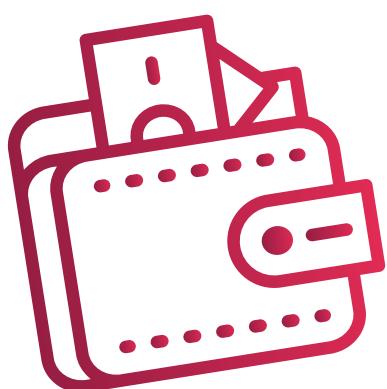
In February 2019, North Somerset Council became one of the first local authorities to declare a climate emergency, recognising that only immediate and urgent action, requiring changes in all our behaviour, will now be sufficient to avoid an increase of more than 2°C.

PROSPERITY AND INEQUALITIES

Overall, North Somerset is a prosperous area.

Average earnings are close to the national average, and well above the regional average: Unemployment, at 3.1% is below the national average.^v

Average weekly earnings for residents of North Somerset are £585 compared to £587 for Great Britain and £561 for the South West ^{vi}, but the average earnings of someone who works in North Somerset, (who may or may not be a resident), are £522.^{vii}

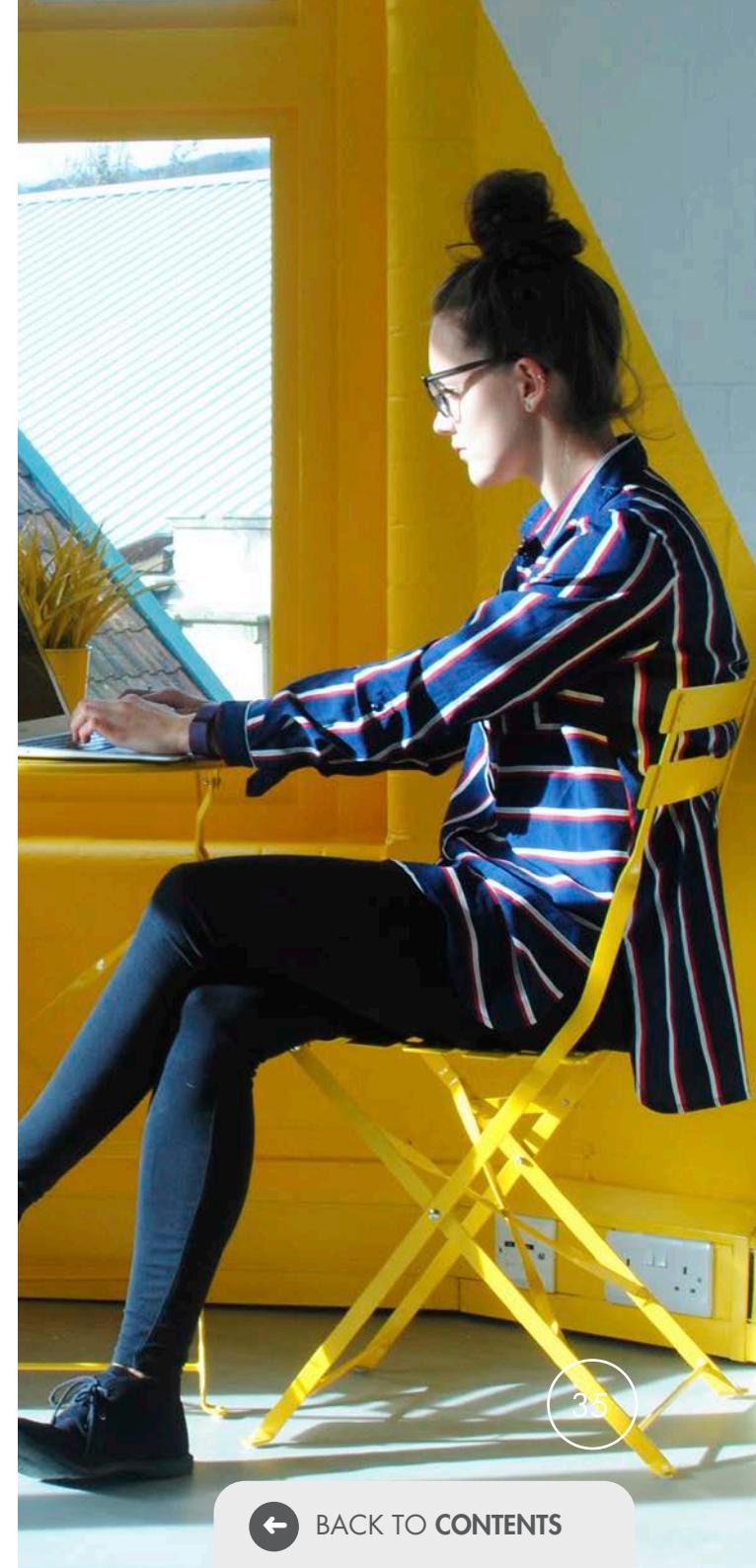


Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are above the national average for both men and women. However this positive overall picture masks some key challenges.

Firstly there is a big difference between the earnings of people who live in North Somerset and those whose jobs are here. This is because many of the better paid jobs are in Bristol, pushing up average earnings, particularly in the north of the area.

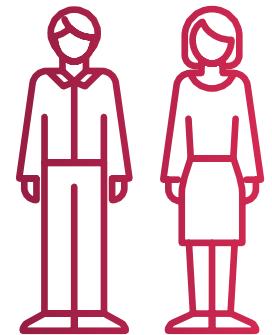
This reflects the fact that there are fewer high paid jobs in North Somerset and more jobs in relatively low paid sectors, including care and tourism. Secondly there are significant contrasts between areas and individuals.

Average earnings in the North Somerset parliamentary constituency are the second highest in the South West of England, (£660) whereas those in the Weston-super-Mare constituency are amongst the lowest (joint 48th out of 55 constituencies at £510).^{viii}





Similarly there are contrasts in health and wellbeing.



Men in the least deprived areas of North Somerset can expect to live on average 9.6 years longer than those in the most deprived areas. For women the figure is 8.8 years and in both cases the gaps are bigger than for England as a whole, reflecting the fact that North Somerset has areas at both extremes in terms of deprivation. Deprivation is associated with both lower life expectancy and lower healthy life expectancy.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation brings together a range of indicators of deprivation for small geographical areas. These are called lower super output areas and each has a population of about 1500 people. The latest iteration, published in October 2019 showed that while North Somerset as a whole was not ranked highly for deprivation, (128 out of 151 local authority areas where 1 is the most deprived), the most deprived small area in North Somerset ranked 156 out of 32,844 areas in England, and the least deprived 32,733. In other words there are areas in both the 1% most deprived and the 1% least deprived in England.



OTHER CHALLENGES

Transport and connectivity also present challenges. Whilst North Somerset is well connected to the rest of the country and beyond, local transport links and services, particularly in rural areas, or at evenings and weekends are patchy.

The council works closely with public sector partners, voluntary and community organisations, Town and Parish Councils and businesses on behalf of residents. Relationships are generally very good, but the partnership landscape has changed significantly in recent years, with major changes in health and schools. These changes have many positive aspects but they often present a challenge in progressing partnership initiatives.

OPPORTUNITIES

Whilst it is important to understand the challenges we face it is just as important to recognise the opportunities which will help us to meet them.

North Somerset is well positioned geographically, close to Bristol and with good communications links, including an international airport, the royal Portbury docks, which has the largest entrance lock of any port in the UK, and the M5, linking to the Midlands, the South West and the M4 corridor, and the Severn crossings which are now toll-free. There are five railway stations and direct trains to London Paddington.

We are part of a dynamic West of England regional economy, with total economic activity valued at £33.5 billion (Gross Value added or 'GVA').

In terms of value per head, GVA was £29,352, compared with £27,555 for UK as a whole.^{ix}



North Somerset also benefits from a skilled workforce and some outstanding education providers.

The proportion of working age residents qualified to the equivalent of degree level or above (NVQ4) is higher than the national or regional average: 43.1% for North Somerset compared to 39.3% for Great Britain as a whole and 38.7% for the South West. Conversely there are fewer people with no qualifications: 3.9% in North Somerset, compared to 7.8% for Great Britain and 5.3% for the South West.



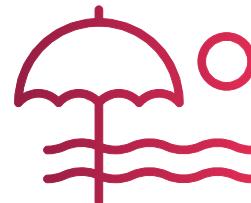
The area has a high proportion of good or outstanding schools (85% as at 2021), and an outstanding College providing further and higher education.



We have wonderful environmental assets, including part of the Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 39 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and 25 miles of coastline.

The area also has a rich history and important heritage assets including archaeologically important iron-age hillforts, the National Trust properties of Tyntesfield and Clevedon Court and the birth place of world-famous philosopher John Locke. Architectural gems include Clevedon Pier, the only grade 1 listed pier in the country which can be visited, and the magnificent buildings of local architect Hans Price. Historic England have designated two Heritage Action Zones in Weston-Super-Mare, in recognition of the importance and potential of the town's heritage assets.

The area hosts an estimated 7.8 million day visit trips and over 500,000 staying visitor trips a year, with a total visitor spend estimated at £328 million a year (2017 data).



North Somerset has an active, skilled and caring volunteer community. People regularly give their time and energy to a wide range of organisations, clubs, causes and groups. This helps people of all ages to stay connected and enjoy life, and contribute to their communities.

Digital technologies are bringing change to every aspect of life at a breath taking speed. Whilst the pace of change is often disconcerting, digital technologies have huge potential to facilitate communication and collaboration, make it easier for citizens and customers to get things done at times which suit them, and for businesses and public services to increase efficiency and provide better data to drive continuous improvement.

It is becoming easier for people to work flexibly from wherever they need to, reducing the need for travel and bringing environmental benefits. Technology enabled care is developing rapidly and offers new ways to deliver care at the right time. For example North Somerset is working with care homes and technology firms to pilot innovative technology to check that residents are properly hydrated, and alert staff to any problems. More residents are becoming confident in using digital technologies, but there is still a need to promote digital inclusion and ensure that other channels remain for people unable to use digital methods.

The transition to a low carbon economy also brings opportunities. Britain is already a leader in some fields, such as wind turbines, and there are many fields in which technology needs to be developed or scaled up, including electric vehicles and carbon capture and storage. There are opportunities in the region including, exploiting the tidal potential of the Bristol Channel.

The most recent ONS survey of the low carbon and renewable energy economy, found that in 2017, businesses active in the sector generated £44.5 billion in turnover and employed an estimated 209,500 full-time equivalent employees. This was an increase of 6.8% and 0.6% respectively when compared with 2016.

The reductions in local authority funding over the decade have been a spur to innovation. Many services have been redesigned and new technology used to mitigate reductions in spend. Our staff have shown tremendous adaptability, resilience, commitment and creativity. There have had to be cuts in services and increases in charges but the extent of these has been much reduced by successful innovation.

Financial challenges are shared by other local authorities and by other public services. There are therefore opportunities for further collaboration and partnership working, such as shared services and shared buildings.



There is also an opportunity to reset the council's relationship with residents and communities, by empowering people to do more for themselves and each other. This requires trust which can only be built through transparency and genuine dialogue.



REFERENCES

- i UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2017. These are the most recent official statistics available at local authority level. The figure excludes national and international transport infrastructure such as the M5 motorway.
- ii All demographic data comes from the Office for National Statistics mid-year population projections (2016 based)
- iii National Audit Office
- iv Office for National Statistics
- v Office for National Statistics Annual Survey, July 2019-June 2019 data reported in the North Somerset local authority Labour Market Profile on nomisweb.co.uk
- vi Office for National Statistics annual survey of earnings 2018
- vii 2018 figures rounded to the nearest pound
- viii House of Commons Library statistics
- ix West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, 2017 Data



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