

October 2025 Update to Frome Town Council **from cllr Adam Boyden, Somerset Councillor, Frome North**

A few things are going on:

Saxonvale

Somerset Council's Executive met in Frome on 23rd January and agreed to pursue the sale of the Saxonvale site to Mayday Saxonvale Development Ltd (Mayday), to support a community-led development vision and to generate a capital receipt to help address the Council's financial pressures, with a deadline to complete the sale before 31st March (see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-agrees-to-sell-saxonvale-site-in-frome/>). This was very welcome, and the Council then issued a draft contract of sale on 28th February. There has been several meetings between the two parties and prospective funders. As 'proof of funding' from Mayday 'to complete the purchase of the site has not been forthcoming', Somerset Council is now reconsidering its position.

A Somerset Council Extraordinary Executive meeting at Frome Town Hall on Friday 24th October will decide the way forward. The report considers alternative ways to dispose of the site, and recommends Executive approval to withdraw from the current exclusive agreement to sell the Saxonvale site to Mayday and to sell the site on the open market. See <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=213&MId=7835> (item 4).

The withdrawal of the offer and removal of exclusivity does not prevent Mayday from being part of the open market exercise. The report also states that a new alternative proposal has been received recently from Mayday, but there has not been enough time to properly consider this, and further work will be undertaken ahead of the meeting to provide an update.

Packsaddle fields development refused at appeal

The planning application for housing development at Packsaddle Way (74 homes and a children with disabilities home) has been dismissed at appeal by the Inspector, so the Council's refusal at Planning Committee in January has been upheld. The inquiry was held in August, and the decision was issued on 30th September – please see <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2025/09/30/packsaddle-fields-development-refused-at-appeal/#page-content>

Permission was refused because the Inspector found that the value attached to the recreational enjoyment of the existing open space by residents is such that the harm arising from the development would in this instance significantly and demonstrably outweigh the very significant benefits that it would deliver. This result is vindication for all the hard work everyone in the local community, particular the People for Packsaddle group, put into the campaign to save the fields from development. As one of the local Somerset councillors I objected to the proposals at Planning Committee and submitted statements to the Inspector. I attended the PFP tea and cake event last weekend to speak with the local community. Somerset Council as landowner and LiveWest have some decisions to make, and I will be working with the community to help shape what happens.

Frome Sports and Leisure Centre

I and cllr Denton recently met with Somerset Council officers and Fusion who have full responsibility for running the Frome Sports and Fitness Centre (and four other facilities) under a 50 year lease with Somerset Council. Fusion has recently downsized from 60 to 27 facilities across the UK, as some local

authorities have taken facilities in-house and Fusion has relinquished some sites, but they are planning to stay in Somerset. Several issues have delayed investment in Frome, but we should see some significant investment in the facility later this year, and improvements to maintenance and repairs. The 'Meet the Manager' sessions are an important way to keep in touch with the site manager and their plans, so I hope the Town Council can get involved with these.

Cost of living support for Somerset residents

Somerset Council is again distributing funds from the Government and working in partnership with local charities and community groups to offer a range of essential free support measures for local residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis this winter. Residents are encouraged to access the Household Support online, or via 0300 123 2224. Somerset Council's Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing and Exceptional Hardship payment schemes can also help reduce bills for low income households. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/cost-of-living-support-available-for-somerset-residents-this-winter/> and <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/cost-of-living-support-for-somerset-residents/>.

Citizens Advice raise Council Tax issue

Citizens Advice (CA) Somerset has recently advised that the Government's programme of managed migration of people claiming income-related Employment Support Allowance (irESA) onto Universal Credit, has led to some vulnerable people's Council Tax bills rising by over £100 a month although their income has not changed, only the name of their benefit, as this is treated differently under Somerset's Council Tax Reduction policy. I and other councillors are asking for a solution, which may take time while the Council gets all of Somerset's households onto one computer system, but in the meantime Somerset has increased the Exceptional Hardship Scheme (see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/benefits-and-payments/housing-benefit/claim-a-discretionary-award/>) in the expectation of new claims.

Disabled Facilities Grant process

A local resident contacted me recently as a loved one has sadly been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and has asked Somerset Council for help in arranging a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for essential adaptations to her home so she can have a better quality of life. But the DFG process is currently too slow here with a waiting list of around 18 months, so for some MND sufferers that will be too late. The MND Association are campaigning for a fast-track DFG process for people with MND and other rapidly advancing conditions, and some other councils have already done so, after 2022 Government DFG delivery guidance suggested this. I am asking Somerset Council to introduce this here, as other councils have done, and Anna Sabine MP is also working on this.

Listed buildings and double glazing

A recent appeal decision (Planning Inspectorate decision 3359789 and 3359195, no. 2 Barwick House, Yeovil, Somerset planning ref. 24/02562/LBC) allowed the installation of heritage-sympathetic double glazing in a grade 2 listed building (to replace existing unsympathetic double glazing which did not have permission), overturning Somerset officers' refusal. As a result, I understand Somerset Council will now be much more flexible in its approach to replacement fenestration in listed buildings. I welcome this change, and hope that it allows occupiers of listed buildings to minimise the waste of energy, reducing costs and greenhouse gas emissions, while protecting the special interests and significance of their historic assets.

Frome Bypass AI Cameras Target Dangerous Driving to Improve Road Safety and Save Lives

'AI' cameras are being tested on the A361 Frome Bypass by Somerset Council and the Police to reduce serious collisions, which have caused 6 fatalities in five years. These cameras can identify unsafe driving behaviours like mobile phone use and careless driving. Initially, offenders will receive warning letters and educational materials. The initiative supports the [Fatal Five campaign](#), targeting speeding, distraction, seatbelt use, drink-driving, and careless driving. Recent safety improvements include road markings and signage upgrades, with longer-term plans to review the junction's safety.

Planning Service emergency measures

Somerset Council's 12 week action plan to reduce the significant backlog in planning applications, launched on 28th July, is coming to an end next week. The temporary measures announced in July (see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-takes-action-to-tackle-planning-application-backlog/>), included limiting updates on applications, reducing non-essential meetings and site visits, and introducing a triage system to speed up decisions. This is having an effect, reducing the number of 'live' applications to 1,400, but the issue will be discussed at *Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee* on 23rd October (see item 6 at [Agenda for Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place on 23rd October](#)).

Vale of Frome Local Community Network

Somerset Council's *Vale of Frome Local Community Network* is a local forum for parish and town councils, public sector bodies and community groups to come together with Somerset Council to agree local priorities for action. The last (AGM) meeting in July in Frome had a discussion on the purpose of the LCN, a presentation on the consultation on the Local Transport Plan, and a report from the highways working group. Frome Town Councillor Max Wide was re-elected Chair, and I am Vice Chair again. There was a follow-up drop in session on the Local Transport Plan later that week.

The next LCN meeting is currently in **Rode Memorial Hall** at 7.00-9.00pm on **Thursday 23rd October**, with a draft agenda to include:

- Health and social care, including Frome Community Hospital beds
- Integrated Care Board reorganisation
- Local Transport Plan, and a Frome Movement Strategy (FTC)
- Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy consultation

Also the LCN Link Officer James Moore (email james.moore@somerset.gov.uk) has helped facilitate Buckland Dinham Parish Council's bid for funds for a cycle and footpath, so that is good news.

Q&A on Frome Community Hospital

Following the campaign against cuts to beds at Frome Community Hospital, and the launch of the NHS Somerset 'Big Conversation' ([see here](#)), I have received answers to my questions to NHS Somerset about the implications for Frome, relating to the nature of the changes and implications for staff, the potential for replacement ambulatory care services to replace the 8 lost bed spaces, the costs of care, and public consultation and engagement. Please see here <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2025/10/12/qa-on-frome-community-hospital/>.

River Frome water quality

I and other local councillors attend the regular meetings of the Environment Agency's Steering Group for the Farleigh Hungerford Bathing Water site on the River Frome downstream north of Frome. The EA (see [Bathing water profile](#)) and Wessex Water (see [Farleigh Hungerford Dashboard](#)) monitor the river for bacteria during the bathing season, and report back on progress. At the meeting in July we also discussed discharges from Beckington sewage treatment works. I then arranged a meeting with Wessex Water's Director of Infrastructure Development Matt Whealdon and other councillors in July to discuss their emerging plans to improve discharges from Rode, Beckington and Frome sewage treatment works (STW) and from combined sewer overflows, and Matt also emphasised the need to stop rainwater entering sewers in the first place. The latest Steering Group meeting was on Weds 15th October.

Although monitoring of bacteria showed good water quality up to the summer, in dry weather, we wait the DEFRA classification in a few weeks, and the site may fail its Bathing Water quality standard again this year. Because of the Bathing Water designation, the main discharges into the river upstream will require a higher standard of treatment, to meet Bathing Water standards, than before. The EA and Wessex Water are now researching the sources and apportionment of pollution, in order to be able to decide where is best to invest. Rode STW (the closest main discharge to Farleigh) will see additional storage and UV treatment in this 5 year period, but other potential investments at Beckington and Frome await the results of investigations.

Wessex Water are happy to meet councillors at STWs and they also have a community drop-in session in Frome Library on Friday 7th November (10am-12 and 1-2pm).

Road closure and diversion in Beckington

Bath Road through Beckington is closed to traffic north of the Woolpack Inn until 5th December, to allow Wales & West to work on the gas main. The road diversion is via the Warminster Road and A36. Thanks to discussions between Somerset Council, Somerset Bus Partnership and the bus operators, the D2 Frome-Bath bus is using the diversion, but Faresaver's Frome-Trowbridge/Chippenham X34 service cannot, as double decker buses cannot get under overhanging tree branches.

All planned roadworks in Somerset can also be found at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roadworks-and-travel/>.

Supporting Businesses to Go Green

Somerset Council is offering £170,000 in grants to help small and medium businesses reduce energy use and carbon emissions. Grants range from £2,000 to £15,000, with match-funding required. The scheme is funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Local Growth Fund, and includes practical advice such as energy audits and sustainability plans through the Go Green scheme. For details and how to apply please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-supports-businesses-to-go-green/> and contact: greenbusinesssupport@somerset.gov.uk.

Somerset Council's plan to protect services and achieve savings

In July, Somerset Council's Executive approved the next phase of the Council's Transformation Plan to safeguard public services, 'Inspiring Innovation', which builds upon the work undertaken over the past 2 years which has focused on stabilisation through a £34m reduction in the Council's pay bill. Like many other councils across the country, Somerset Council's financial position remains critical due to the broken system of funding for local councils which has not accounted for rising demand

and costs for core services like social care. In 2025/26 it is estimated that some 66% of the Council's budget will be spent on children and adults in every local community who need our care. The Inspiring Innovation plan will help Somerset address the budget gap of £190m over the next five years and achieve financial sustainability. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/executive-approves-next-phase-of-plans-for-somerset-councils-transformation-to-protect-public-services/>.

In September, Somerset Council appointed Newton Consulting as a strategic partner to help deliver the *Inspiring Innovation* transformation programme, to improve services and achieve savings. This partnership approach (instead of outsourcing) aims to maintain control and achieve value for money and staff development, and support the council's focus on modernising and strengthening public services in very challenging financial times. The first phase will cost up to £1.5m, with the total contract value capped at £20m over the full term, with any further phases subject to future decisions. In line with best practice, the contract is expected to return between £2.50 to £3 for every £1 invested. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-council-appoints-strategic-partner-to-protect-and-improve-public-services/>.

Somerset Council adopts Mendip Local Plan update

At the last full council meeting in September, Somerset Council agreed to adopt the *Mendip Local Plan Part 2 Limited Update with the Main Modifications*, in line with the conclusions of the examination Inspector's report. This follows the successful Judicial Review brought by Norton St Philip Parish Council against the Local Plan Part 2 which had its five site allocations removed, and consultation and examination of the subsequent Limited Update.

The adopted Limited Update has 9 new site allocations capable of delivering 569 dwellings by the end of the Mendip Local Plan Period in 2029 – these are in Frome (18 dwellings at North Parade Car Park), Glastonbury, Street, Wells, Midsomer Norton/ Westfield and Coleford. Please see item 8 here <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=214&MId=7597> and <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/?district=Mendip>.

Somerset-wide Local Plan update

The Somerset-wide Local Plan is progressing, and will cover a 20 year period up to 2045, replacing the existing local plans in the four former districts of Somerset. A briefing was provided to Somerset Councillors recently. I can update as follows:

- The number of homes the Local Plan is required to include by the Government's formula is 74,000 new homes over 20 years, minus existing commitments, which means land for 36,200 new homes needs to be found. Somerset Council considers this excessive and is pushing back, but this would be something like a 32% increase to every settlement in the county.
- The evidence base is being gathered (see [Evidence gathering and early engagement](#) - many more documents are due soon but a few reports have been completed, including a [Town Centre Health Check](#) report (which reports on **Frome** in pp99-105 - please do check this as TSB has since closed and no Post Office is within the town centre).
- After the 'Call for Sites' over 1600 sites are being assessed for their potential suitability/ availability and achievability, and a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) will be published in December 2025 (this will identify potential suitability for allocation, but will not infer any site has any status in the future Local Plan).
- Detailed assessments of potentially suitable sites, and a draft spatial strategy, will then be drafted, and a Draft Local Plan is currently scheduled to be released for public consultation in April 2026, although this is likely to be delayed further.

- A range of *spatial strategy options* is being considered for how housing should be distributed across different types and sizes of settlements (and open countryside) around the county, as well as how public transport and accessibility, job opportunities, past housing growth, and climate change and flood risks, should be taken into account.

An update on progress, programme, work done and work ahead was reported as item 6 at the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-committee on October 8th - see <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=934&MId=7627>.

Please also see further updates on the Local Plan webpage - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/>.

Have Your Say: Somerset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Somerset Council has launched a public consultation on its draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This aims to protect and restore wildlife and habitats and reverse habitat decline across the county, guiding long-term environmental action. The consultation runs until **31st October**. Please see <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/climate-and-environment/local-nature-recovery-strategy/>.

The Strategy:

- Outlines opportunities and priorities for what, where and how we can protect and grow nature;
- Maps a series of specific actions that can be delivered now to have the most impact for nature across the region; and
- Lays out the journey for realising the long-term recovery and growth of nature across the region.

Residents, landowners, and businesses are encouraged to share ideas on priorities and actions to support nature recovery in your area. In Section 5.5 of the draft Strategy, Parish and Town councils are encouraged to use the Strategy to support sustainable local development, protect biodiversity, and enhance green spaces, shape the positive management of their local green spaces for nature and people, help to inform environmental and land use policies and Neighbourhood Development Plans. Parish Councils also now have an enhanced duty under the Environment Act 2021 to 'maintain and enhance' biodiversity, and may wish to consider creating a Local Nature Action Plan (LNAP), informed by the Strategy. The interactive map also shows the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

Have your say: Transforming support for Somerset's children and families

A public consultation has been launched to help shape future children's services and keep families safely together in Somerset. This follows national proposals to transform children's social care in which the Government's goal is to have families and practitioners from social work, police, health, education and beyond working together to promote the wellbeing of children and keep them safe from harm. Somerset Council's public consultation runs until **27th November** aims to gain insights into what's working well and what changes and improvements are needed to support families to stay together and thrive, increasing the number of children that can stay safely at home. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/transforming-support-for-somersets-children-and-families-have-your-say/>.

Funding for Electric vehicle charging in Somerset

Somerset Council has secured £3.78m from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund to expand Electric vehicle charging points across the county, including in on-street locations in both urban and rural areas. The Council is in the process of appointing a contractor, and will be soon be asking the public (and Parish, City and Town Councils) for suggestions on chargepoint locations via its website. It would be helpful for parish councils to give this some early thought beforehand. See <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/milestone-for-electric-vehicle-charging-network/>.

Sunday parking charges

A public consultation on new and revised Sunday parking charges in Somerset Council car parks ran until **20th October**. Currently, charging varies across the county's car parks, with some charging on Sundays and others not. The proposal aims to create consistency across Somerset and ensure the parking service remains fully self-funded. Somerset Council car parks in Frome currently charge a flat rate, and this would be replaced by the hourly rates that apply the rest of the week (so, if you park for less than 3 hours on a Sunday you would save money in future). Final decisions would only be made after further consultation, with any changes made in 2026. Please see <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/parking/copy-of-consultation/>.

Mental Health survey

In September, Anna Sabine MP launched a town-wide 'Hackathon' aimed at addressing the growing challenge of mental health in children and young people, with events and a young people's mental health survey which is still 'live'. There are two surveys, one for children and young people to share their experiences, and one for adults who would like to share their understanding or concerns around young people in their life. Please see and share - <https://www.anna4fes.uk/campaigns/mental-health-hackathon>.

Council urges people to report rough sleeping

Friday 19th October was World Homelessness Day, and Somerset Council is encouraging residents to report rough sleeping when they see it, via the **Streetlink** service - <https://thestreetlink.org.uk/>. Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, including sleeping outside but also other places unsuitable for sleeping such as an empty building or a car. Outreach workers from the Council and its partners go around the county regularly to identify people who are sleeping rough with the aim to support them to find permanent accommodation. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/council-urges-residents-to-report-rough-sleeping-when-they-see-it-worldhomelessnessday/>.

Council leader condemns attacks on faith buildings

Somerset Council Leader Bill Revans has strongly condemned recent attacks on faith buildings in Somerset, emphasising that hate has no place in the county. During a Full Council meeting in Bridgwater, he pledged to promote unity and safety across all communities. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/hate-has-no-home-in-somerset-council-leader/>.

Somerset Increases Local Recycling

Somerset Council reports a rise in recycling processed within the county, with 99% of plastics recycled in the UK and a 57% reduction in landfill waste. These results reflect the Council's (and residents') commitment to sustainability and transparency. The figures emphasise the importance of

recycling everyday items like shampoo bottles, foil, and toothpaste tubes, which are now being diverted from waste to proper reprocessing. You can explore the full report on the Council's Recycling tracker page at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/recycling-tracker/>.

Autumn/winter hours at Recycling Centres

Please remember that all 16 recycling sites in Somerset, including Frome, have now moved to autumn/winter opening hours, so are now open every Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 4pm. Monday to Friday, recycling sites including Frome are open from 9am to 5pm. Sites return to summer opening hours in April.

Somerset Council launches 20-year economic plan

Somerset Council has published its *Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045* – aiming to make Somerset a leader in energy, aerospace, manufacturing, and digital sectors. Key goals include increasing skills and productivity, lifting 10,000 people out of economic inactivity, transforming deprived communities, and achieving net-zero emissions. The strategy builds on £4 billion investment in the Gravity Enterprise Zone and the £5.3 billion spending from Hinkley Point C, with plans to develop tidal energy and enhance innovation. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/somerset-economic-prosperity-strategy-2025-2045/>.

Somerset Council commits to increasing social housing

Somerset Council will use an underspend of £3.3m in its Housing Revenue Account to buy additional council housing. This aims to provide short-term emergency accommodation and help reduce long waiting lists for social housing. Around 15 properties are expected to be purchased, with locations chosen based on demand. The move supports both immediate needs and longer-term housing sustainability, ensuring better quality and control compared to temporary placements like B&Bs. Please see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-council-bolsters-social-housing-stock-to-support-local-needs/>.

Lib Dem motion calls for urgent housing reform in Somerset

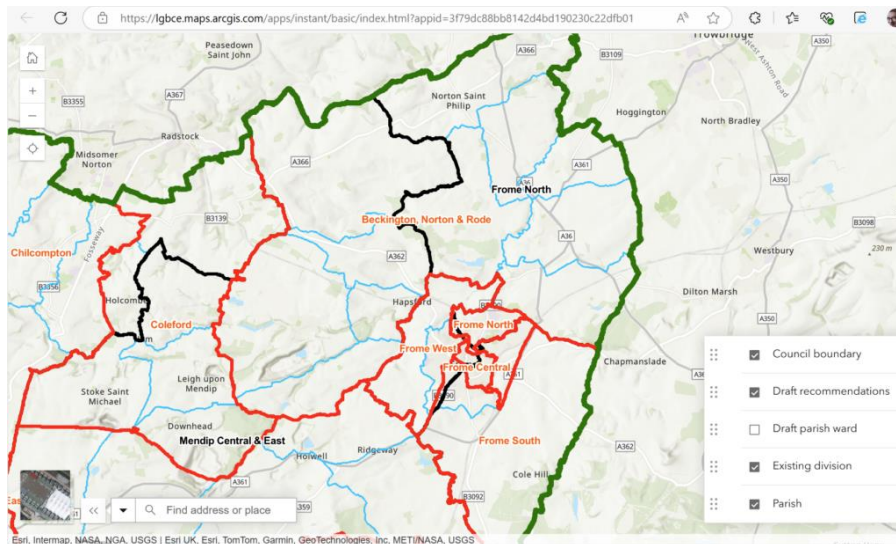
Liberal Democrat councillors have proposed a Council motion urging the government to grant councils stronger powers and long-term funding to build more affordable homes. The motion, at the September Full Council meeting, highlights decades of underinvestment, declining social housing, and the need for practical measures to accelerate the development of greener, affordable homes for families. Despite over 2,600 new homes built in the past year in Somerset, councillors warned that demand far exceeds supply and call on the government for urgent action to prevent more families from facing homelessness. Please see item 11 here [Agenda for Full Council / https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=214&MIId=7597](https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=214&MIId=7597).

Encouraging Volunteer Groups to Pursue Prestigious Recognition

Charities and volunteer groups in Somerset are encouraged to apply for the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS), the highest national recognition for voluntary groups. The application period is open until **1st December 2025**. The award celebrates outstanding volunteer efforts benefiting local communities across a wide range of causes, from health and social care to arts and the environment. In the last round, 11 groups from Somerset were nominated. Applications can be made through a simple process detailed on the KAV website <https://kavs.dcms.gov.uk/>.

New Council ward boundaries proposed

The Boundary Commission has proposed changes to Somerset Council's ward boundaries from 2027, including 5 wards for Frome, and a large rural ward to the north and west (see red boundaries below), in place of the three two-member Frome divisions (I previously proposed the continuation of these two-member wards for Frome but this was dismissed in the Commission's report). The consultation closed in August and the Commission's final report of their recommendations will be published in early December, before being taken through Parliament – please see <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>.



Report a problem to Somerset Council

For handy links to report problems to Somerset Council on the road, pavement, parking, lights, waste and recycling. or to order more recycling boxes or bags, please see <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/2025/05/16/reporting-a-problem/#page-content> or call **0300 123 2224**.

Somerset Council news can all be found at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/newsroom/>.

Somerset Council Consultations are all at [Somerset Council - Citizen Space - Consultations](#).

Please let me know if you have any questions or issues that need dealing with.

*Best wishes,
Adam Boyden*

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Web: see the latest news at <https://adamboyden.mycouncillor.org.uk/>