

Council Plan - Stakeholder Feedback Summary Report

To gather feedback, a simple online questionnaire was created for key stakeholders. A copy of the latest draft Council Plan was made available as a key document within the questionnaire.

This engagement opened on Wednesday 4th January 2023 and closed on Wednesday 18th January 2023. A gentle reminder was also sent on Thursday, 12th January 2023.

The feedback received, as summarised below, is to be considered by the Leader and Deputy Leader before taking a finalised version of this Plan to Councillors in February 2023.

Engagement Summary

We sent the engagement questionnaire to **85** key stakeholders, in addition to senior leadership teams at each District and County Council. Out of those **11%** responded to the online questionnaire, and **2%** provided feedback in the form of an email response. The percentages are based on the online questionnaire returns. However, the emailed feedback is captured in this summarised report.

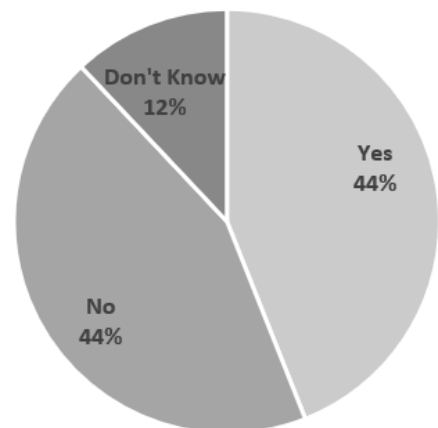
All online responders advised they had read the draft Council Plan and feel that both the vision and priorities will improve the lives of people living in Somerset.

One feedback stated, **'The Council Plan seems to be co-creative, balanced, and a breath of fresh air.'**

Summary of the Vision

44% of online responders agreed the vision – **"The new Somerset Council will build a fairer, greener, more flourishing, Somerset that cares for the most vulnerable and listens to you."** was correct for Somerset Council to work towards. However, this was equal to the percentage of online responders saying it wasn't quite the right vision.

Of those who didn't feel the vision was quite right, or selected don't know, the reasons for this were.



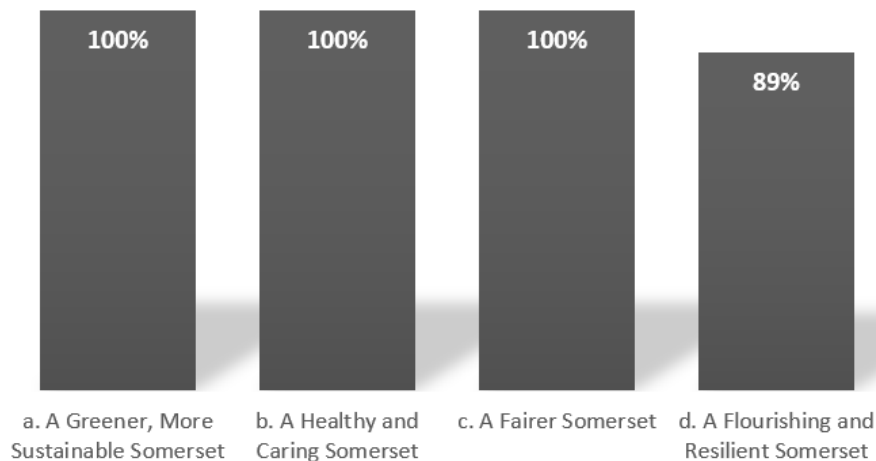
- No mention of safeguarding and crime
- I think by omitting the word resilience from the Vision statement, we miss an opportunity to make the case for that holistic approach to resilience. Also, it ties nicely into the CE Strategy title "Towards a Climate **Resilient** Somerset."

- The word 'resilient' is an important addition, in terms of climate but also for communities and prosperity
- I would like that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents and cares for the most vulnerable.
- The priority for the council must be the most effective delivery of essential public services.

Summary of the Priority Themes

For each priority theme, we asked whether this should be a priority area for Somerset Council to focus on. Bar Graph 1.0, below, indicates most of the online responders agree these are the correct priorities for Somerset Council to focus on.

Bar Graph 1.0



In regard to the 11% (1 responder) advising priority d. A Flouring and Resilient Somerset isn't quite right the reason was;

- prosperity, economic development, and jobs are important. I don't disagree as a priority but shouldn't protecting residents from abuse and crime feature more highly

And, a further comment was made in regard to all the priorities.

- All are worthy themes. Effective delivery of the public service should take priority. Do these themes all have equal merit and are they really interdependent.

Enhancements or omissions to the Council Plan

The main themes that the responders feel is omitted from the Council Plan, or feel could be enhanced, are listed in Table 1.0 below.

Table 1.0

Enhancements or omissions	Themes
crime, disorder, homelessness, drug addiction, abuse, safeguarding, safety	Community Services
Somerset outstanding and nationally designated landscapes (AONBs and Exmoor National Park) underpinned by all the elements that make up a rich and resilient landscape, including nature recovery, appropriate land management that stores carbon, resilient catchments, and vibrant communities.	Climate and Ecological Emergency
When talking about the climate and ecological emergency it is important to add the word adaptation in at some point. Adaptation will become increasingly important as the emergency worsens.	Climate and Ecological Emergency
We suggest that the Plan adds a link back to greener Somerset in relation to the health & well-being benefits that the Protected Landscapes & natural environment provide.	Health and Wellbeing
The reference to improving connectivity needs to recognise Protected Landscapes and the need for sensitive solutions in or within the setting of National Parks and AONBs.	Climate and Ecological Emergency
Farming & land management seem absent – maybe needs a reference in relation to tackling many of the issues facing a rural county in terms of future of farming / forestry?	Climate and Ecological Emergency
We welcome the intent to improve sustainable transport; would it be possible to reference the needs of visitors as well as residents – visitor travel to & around the National Park is one of the big issues identified in our ENP carbon footprint work.	Travel
To enhance the wording around business development.	Business
The Corporate Plan does not say the council will work as quickly as possible towards carbon neutrality	Climate and Ecological Emergency

Renewable energy is missing, it is a key requirement for carbon neutrality that significantly contributes to outcomes in other areas, such as transport and the built environment.	Climate and Ecological Emergency
We should be seeking green and sustainable development that accepts and takes accounts of environmental limits. Rather than a trade-off between the economy and the environment.	Climate and Ecological Emergency
We will be a council that is there whenever our residents need us.” That’s a bold commitment to deliver. I applaud the aspiration/ ambition but doubt the deliverability in each and every circumstance.	Commitment
I can’t see an explicit reference for the need to unlock the key strategic economic sites, to help drive the economy, provide new higher paid employment opportunity, and set Somerset on the map as a leader in Clean and Green Growth, either in the Greener and more Sustainable Priority or the Flourishing and Resilient Priority. This would seem to me to be an omission.	Economy - Growth
Should we not refer to working with/ supporting developers and the need to introduce local policies which support responsible sustainable development?	Planning

Positive Feedback

There was also a lot of positive feedback, such as;

- It is concise and clear and is written in readily understandable layman’s language
- I like the overall “tone” of the document
- I was very encouraged that the Council Plan seems to put climate and the environment at the heart of decision making and recognises its importance in supporting vibrant and flourishing communities and economy.
- Fairer Somerset – we are pleased to see the reference to the particular issues faced by remote rural areas.
- Flourishing Somerset – good to recognise the importance of high-quality jobs in retaining young people. The low wage economy and the need for affordable housing both need to be tackled.

- It is a challenging (given fiscal constraints) plan but one likely to be worthwhile and reap public health and wellbeing benefits enabling residents to feel more empowered to cope with the challenges they face.