

North Somerset Corporate Plan and budget 2024-2028 consultation

Have your say

The Corporate plan includes our vision, our ambitions and the commitments we have made to deliver on these. Now that we have published a DRAFT Corporate Plan and the supporting action plan we would like your views.

We have also used the feedback you gave us to inform our budget development. We have reviewed our initial approach to balancing the budget and we have updated our savings themes to reflect your feedback. We would like your views on these.

Q1 Here is the [DRAFT Corporate Plan](#). Do you have any comments that you would like to make?

Please see our previous submission to the last Corporate Plan consultation and various correspondence to NSC Councillors and officers, including presentation to the Executive Committee on the 6th December 2024.

It is unfortunate that Executive Committee members have been unable to schedule a meeting with me until next week, i.e. after this consultation has closed. I hope that any discussions at that meeting will be taken into consideration before this plan is finalised.

Although food is one of the government's 13 Critical Infrastructure Sectors, NSC Corporate and related policies do not appear to reflect this status, it is not a clear 'ambition'. Where is NSC's critical infrastructure 'Food Production and Security Strategy and Action Plan'? <https://www.npsa.gov.uk/critical-national-infrastructure-0>

DEFRA indicates that 39% of England's dairy herd is farmed in the South West, which will reduce if agricultural farms are closed, or switched to solar farms grazing sheep. What will happen to current levels of milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter, etc. needed for infants, elderly and unwell people? https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106562/AUK_Evidence_Pack_2021_Sept22.pdf

The UK Food Security Report states that, "*In meat, milk, and eggs, the UK produces roughly equivalent volume to what it consumes... over 50% of vegetables ... but only 16% of fruit.*" If the council's policies are supporting and encouraging farmland to be built on, or put out of action for 20-30 years (solar, BNG, housing, etc), or permanently (e.g. housing, roads, businesses, etc.) how will the Council ensure that current levels are maintained? Especially in light of current wars, the potential reduction in food imported and the resulting increase in food costs? <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources>

NSC's [Local Plan 2039](#) states that, "*The Local Plan vision is our aspiration as to what good development will look like in the future and reflects the corporate values of open, fair and green. This is then reflected in the council's strategic priorities*". Why is there not a Farming, Food Production & Food Security policy to protect this land? Why is a Rural Strategy not in place before, or being produced in tandem with, these Corporate policies? <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/NSLP2039PreSub/>

The UK Government Powering Up Britain Energy Security Plan 2023 (p38) states, "*We consider that meeting energy security and climate change goals is urgent and of critical importance to the country, and that these goals can be achieved together with maintaining food security for the UK. We encourage deployment of solar technology that delivers environmental benefits, with consideration for ongoing food production or environmental improvement.*" How is NSC also ensuring 'ongoing food production' in and across all of their policies? https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1148252/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf

The South West also has one of the smallest average farm size, so if small farms are encouraged to diversify away from farming, food production and security will be affected. Removing agriculture from our communities may also significantly impact on the rural economy. In 2020, the total income from farming in England was £3.6bn, with the South West contributing the most, at nearly a fifth. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106562/AUK_Evidence_Pack_2021_Sept22.pdf

OPEN, FAIR, GREEN NORTH SOMERSET

OPEN "... means listening to you and your views on the decisions we make. It means being accountable for how we spend your money and ensuring we provide the very best value we can"

- The open statement "Weston-super-Mare – our largest town is set to become the second biggest settlement in the West of England over the next decade" after Bristol (confirmed by Mike Bell 04OCT23), has been removed from this version of the Corporate Plan compared to the 2020-24 version, why?
- Large increases in development may affect agricultural land, food production and food security. Where has the analysis of the effect of the removal of farmland been published?

FAIR "... means listening to the views of all groups and acting on local issues. It means ensuring equity in access to services."

- Why haven't the rural community issues raised especially in regards to farming, food production and food security, including those made at the October public meeting, been addressed in this new proposed Corporate Plan? "Approximately 40% (15,490 hectares) of land in North Somerset is designated as Green Belt" with "30% of our population live in rural areas ... Continued below in 2.

Q2 Supporting the Corporate Plan is our action plan. This includes the actions we will take to help achieve the commitments and the outcomes we will expect. We will publish regular updates on how we are performing against these during this Corporate Plan period, 2024 to 2028.

Here is the [DRAFT action plan](#), do you you have any comments that you would like to make?

Continued from above in 1. ...

Corporate Plan pg 11 states, "... we will work with all our communities including our Town and Parish Councils to achieve the aims in our Climate Emergency Strategy action plan including how we will adapt to our changing environment" Where is NSC's critical infrastructure 'Food Production and Security Strategy and Action Plan'?

- Is it fair that rural agriculture communities, needing land for farming, producing nutritious food and food security for everyone are not mentioned or addressed? Especially as they may be significantly and negatively impacted by NSC's Corporate Plan, Local Plan 2039 and associated policies that use that land for other purposes
- When were Town & Parish Council and their residents asked whether NSC should commit to a Climate Emergency, & related actions and expenditure?

GREEN "... we do all we can to understand the impact our actions have on the environment and mitigate them where possible"

- Have NSC policies been assessed in regards to their impact on current and future farming, food production and food security? Especially in nutrient rich local food accessibility, costs for potential resulting imported food (e.g. in terms of costs, carbon, environment, animal care, pesticide use, etc), proposed land used by solar, wind, Biodiversity Net Gain, Nature Recovery, housing, roads, etc.
- What is the effect on farming, food production and security of the NSC aim to "Deliver the council's development programme to provide quality homes and jobs on council owned land". Where is this analysis published?

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"Andersons estimates that the number of full-time UK farm businesses will drop from about 54,000 in 2020 to just 42,300 by 2030 – a fall of 11,700 or about 20%." (Farmers Weekly 24JUN21 one of top farmers newspapers)

<https://www.fwi.co.uk/news/farm-policy/farmer-numbers-expected-to-plummet-as-bps-is-taken-away>

NSC Action Plan appears to add to the reduction and potential demise of farming throughout North Somerset. Current and future farmers need land to grow food and make us food secure. Removal of that land without proper consideration of the effects will put that at risk. Where will new young farmers learn & farm if there is no land? How will neighbouring farms work efficiently without their neighbours support? What will happen to the skills and related services (machinery, farm shops, harvesting, etc.) whilst land is put out of action? If solar encourages sheep farming, what will happen to dairy production, etc.? What will happen to current levels of milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter, etc. needed for infants, elderly and unwell people (as encouraged to eat by NHS and other health providers)?

<https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/planandbudget2024/consultationHome>

This action plan references food but with no reference as to where and how that food will be produced? If farmers and small farms are encouraged to diversify away from farming (DP54), food production & security will be negatively affected. For example, NSC Action Plan proposes:

- *“An increase in new homes on council-owned land, including affordable homes.*
- *An increase in identification of more areas of council land for re-wilding/ management for biodiversity.*
- *Increase the delivery of renewable energy on North Somerset land and buildings*
- *Land has been identified to secure the delivery of the required number of dwellings within North Somerset between 2024-2039.*
- *Land has been identified for business purposes across North Somerset to meet needs and aspirations across a range of economic sectors over the plan period, to contribute to sustainable patterns of development and commuting, and to provide a range of local employment opportunities.*
- *Deliver the council’s development programme to provide quality homes and jobs on council owned land.*
- *An increase in our carbon stores through increased tree planting and land management.”*

Where is NSC’s critical infrastructure ‘Food Production and Security Strategy and Action Plan’?

Q3 How would you like to be kept up to date on how we are performing against our action plan?

North Somerset Life - Y

Life Digital Digest - Y

Social media – facebook - Y

Social media – X/Twitter - Y

Social media - other

Online live sessions - Y

Public engagement sessions - Y

Other - Add in other - Website

Q4 How often would you like to be kept up to date?

An update quarterly - Y

An update twice yearly

An annual update

Other

Add in other – Annual Report

Q5 The Executive will consider two reports on the budget at their meeting on 6 December, one looking at the position for the current financial year and one looking at the four years of the Corporate Plan period, which will include full details of our savings proposals.

In advance of that and following your feedback, we have updated our saving themes for our proposed budget are as follows:

- Adult's transformation: Initiatives designed to supports adults within the community to maximise their independence and to manage demand through focusing on those who need services the most, expanding reablement and preventative services, and also increasing alternative types of provision. Review how we deliver services and ensure that they are efficient and fit for purpose and make the best use of resources.
- Children's transformation: Implementation of a transformation programme designed to improve outcomes for children and young people and manage the increasing demand for council services by reviewing our approach to service delivery and focusing resources on those who need them most. This will include changes to how we deliver services in the future, working with partners, being more efficient, and considering alternative provision where appropriate.
- Waste services transformation: Implementation of a transformation programme that supports the council's Waste Strategy which will firstly ensure that services are efficient and deliver value for money. The programme will also review policies and service delivery models that help us to deliver carbon reduction targets through initiatives that support increased recycling and reduced waste.
- The way we work: Looking at how we work in the future to deliver services to local communities, making more efficient use of council assets land and buildings, and changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working.
- Services we provide to the community: These proposals will focus on areas of the council's spending where there is some choice or discretion in terms of providing the service at all, or in the scope, scale and delivery model involved, any of which could be reviewed or changed in the future.
- Income generation: These proposals will ensure that customers contribute a realistic price through any fees and charges that they may be required to pay each year which recognises the increased costs that the council has had to absorb to deliver services or hold assets. It means that we do not subsidise discretionary services through the budget and resources can be focused on delivering other priorities.

Do you have any feedback on these savings themes?

Whilst reducing waste and preventing plastic pollution is a good thing, what is NSC spending on green initiatives, carbon reduction and environmental related initiatives and how much is this purported to save over what timeframe? Where are these projects and figures itemised and published? How will this be monitored and proven and over what timeframe?

Q6 How would you like to engage with us on the budget in future?

North Somerset Life - Y
Life Digital Digest -Y
Social media – facebook -Y
Social media – X/Twitter - Y
Social media – other - Y
Online live sessions -Y
Public engagement sessions -Y
Other - Add in other - Website

Q7 How often would you like to engage with us in the future about the budget?

A quarterly update - Y

A twice yearly update

A annual update

Other - Add in other – Annual Report

Q8 [Budget Qs]

- How much is spent on the Green Agenda? Rewilding & Tree planting? Decarbonisation? Energy efficiency? Heating, heat source pumps, lighting? Green education/ indoctrination? How much is this purporting to save? Over what timeframe?
- How was the £50million deficit over 4 years reduced to £13million? ([28NOV23](#)) How much NSC agricultural land was sold?
- How is the remaining £13million deficit over the next 4 years proposed to be paid?
- How much is spent in relation to actual food production out of the "3% helping people keep well and stay health", rather than food packages and education?
- How much is spent on migration and migrants?
- [Budget Info1](#) and [Budget Info2 \(06DEC23\)](#)
 - RURAL FINANCING
 - REPF - Grants to Rural Business £106,229 in 2023/24 and £159,342 in 2024/25
 - REPF - Grants to Rural Communities £70,817 in 2023/24 and £106,229 in 2024/25
 - Addition - Rural England Prosperity Fund - DP566 £177K in 2023/24 and £266K in 2024/25
- How have rural communities accessed this funding, how has it been spent?
- What has been allocated to Bleadon?
- Where is this published?

9 Thank you for engaging with us on the development of the Corporate Plan and the budget. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Thank you for consulting the public. Please can NSC consider how the public can be made more aware of these consultations as the majority of people I speak to are unaware.
Please can you also consider an easier process to enable groups of councillors, the public's representatives, to review these proposals and associated appendices (some of which are hundreds of pages long) to better engage them too.

Before you leave, please consider signing up to our Citizen's Panel. The panel will form a key part of our engagement programme in the coming years.