



Dear Parish Clerk & Councillors,

I am writing to update you on a motion put forward by the Conservative Opposition Group at Somerset Council's Full Council meeting on 25th September.

Our motion sought to require the Executive to publish a clear **Planning Service Recovery Plan** following the introduction of emergency measures in July which, as you know, have restricted both parish and councillor engagement in planning matters.

The motion specifically called for this Recovery Plan to include:

- **Measurable targets** to reduce the backlog of applications and restore timely determinations.
- **Restoring parish and councillor engagement** to pre-July levels, including removal of the "single email point" restriction.
- **A plan to tackle enforcement backlogs** and to fill vacant posts with permanent staff.
- **Quarterly performance reporting** for 12 months after the emergency period ends.
- **Direct engagement with parishes, councillors, and agents** to establish a "good practice charter" for the planning service going forward.

We believe these steps are important to ensure that parish councils and residents are not left voiceless, and that transparency and accountability are properly restored.

Unfortunately, instead of supporting these practical measures, the Liberal Democrat administration chose to **refer the motion to the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee** - the longest of all possible "grasses."

This referral means no immediate action, and it risks further delay given that this particular Scrutiny Committee has already been cancelled two out of the last three times it was due to meet. The earliest date now set to debate our proposals at Scrutiny is 23rd October.

We want you to be aware that we pressed for action to assist parishes and residents, but the majority chose to delay. We will keep you updated on progress as this goes through Scrutiny.

Thank you

Diogo Rodrigues - Leader of the Conservative Opposition on Somerset Council

John Cook-Woodman - Opposition Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets