

Cllr Lindsay MacDougal report – September 2020

Here is my report for September:

To start with some good news, Somerset County Council (SCC) is providing £1million for climate emergency initiatives for Districts and Parishes/towns. Mendip District Council (MDC) intends to initially address its civic sites and Mendip-owned land to aim to achieve carbon neutral status by 2030, by following the 13.3% reduction per annum as recommended by the Tyndall Centre-Paris Carbon Budgets for Local Authorities, and also a tree-planting programme that would in itself ensure carbon neutrality, for which SCC funds will be very useful. This will be followed by future measures to be announced re advising and encouraging the wider community to change behaviours, seek investment in renewables, etc.

The Unitary discussions continue with a number of briefings and meetings re SCC's preferred option, One Somerset (a single unitary to replace all four district councils and county), and MDC'S recommended Stronger Somerset (2 unitaries based on an East/West split). Councils are effectively being forced to choose a unitary model or receive no growth funds from central government.

At Planning Board the complexity of the housing crisis was reflected by the refusal of a large proposed housing estate in Coleford. The answer is not as simple as development companies identifying green fields outside of the Development Zone and holding councils to the new (early this year) requirement from central government to build hundreds more houses. MDC has now appointed a Housing Officer dedicated to addressing the needs of roadside dwellers in response to their roadside-dwellers survey conducted early in the year, which will begin to address this issue.