

# Winchester City Council

A snapshot of the past year from your ward councillors.

## Supporting our communities

### Grants for community projects

During the year several organisations in the ward benefited from District Project Grants, District, Small Grants, and Green Grants. These provide support to local groups and organisations who may need new equipment, start-up assistance or help with events and activities in their communities. Recipients include a grant to Compton Football Club for new youth equipment, to Oliver's Battery Parish for a new thermal camera to support residents' home insulation efforts, a grant for new technology at Waltham Chase Pre-school, and funding to help provide more efficient glazing to Otterbourne Pavillion.

WCC continued to support many other district-wide projects benefitting residents from the Badger Farm and Oliver's Battery ward (e.g. a standout example is the £60,000 grant to support homelessness services for the district provided to homelessness charity Trinity).

Winchester City Council also worked to award funding to rural businesses and not-for-profit and community groups as part of the Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF). NB – this continues, with the next round of funding made open for applications in March 2024. The fund allows organisations to apply for between £15,000 and £40,000, with commercial businesses required to match fund their projects.

### Cost of Living Support

Throughout the year, WCC continued to offer support for those affected by the cost-of-living crisis. These measures included:

- £300,000 in emergency support for affected residents
- 318 council homes retrofitted to cut bills and carbon emissions
- Managing the cost of bills with the lowest council tax increase in Hampshire
- A dedicated Cost of Living Grant Scheme provided funding to organisations supporting residents in dealing with heightened costs of living.

### Winchester District Co-Mentor Scheme

To help boost local innovation and productivity in the district, WCC launched the Winchester District Co-Mentor Scheme for local businesses. The free scheme matched creative co-mentors with other business co-mentors so that both parties benefit from the co-mentoring relationship.

### Support for Ukraine

Our district has also continued to extend a hand of support further afield. In March 2024, Winchester City Council's Ukraine team was shortlisted for an award at the Local Government Chronicle Awards. The team, who work within the council's Housing and Communities services, have helped to support more than 280 Ukrainian families with settling down to life in the district by organising language and skills workshops, providing assistance with accommodation, promoting to access local services and more.

## **Going Greener Faster**

### **Taking urgent action on the climate emergency**

In September, the council cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to carbon neutrality by agreeing a new Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP) to support WCC's goals to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2024 and a carbon neutral district by 2030. Focus areas of the plan include transport; renewable energy generation; nature-based solutions for capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide (such as tree planting); and supporting the creation of local carbon credits. Measures identified as having the most impact include: energy saving in 800 homes; funding schemes for residents' energy saving; continued installation of EV charging points and PV solar panels; exploration of large scale renewable energy generation; decarbonising council fleet vehicles including Park & Ride; and improving cycling and walking opportunities across the district.

Focusing on Renewable Energy, WCC also held a series of Carbon Neutrality Open Forums to understand public views on the different types of renewable energy, their pros and cons, and the renewable energy choices they'd like to see made in the district.

In terms of results to date, WCC was proud to be named the fifth best council nationwide by Climate Emergency UK for its actions to achieving net zero. The results in the 2023 Council Climate Action Scorecards can be seen at <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/about/>

The council was also recognised for its efforts in training staff about the impacts of carbon and how day-to-day actions in their work and at home, can help reduce carbon emissions. The council is one of only 5 local authorities across the UK to be awarded the silver accreditation by the Carbon Literacy Trust.

### **Exploring renewable energy for Winchester**

The city council has plans to be a carbon neutral district by 2030 – renewable energy is likely to be one of the most effective ways to reduce our carbon footprint. Focusing on Renewable Energy, WCC held a series of Carbon Neutrality Open Forums to understand public views on the different types of renewable energy, their pros and cons, and the renewable energy choices they'd like to see made in the district.

## **Tackling Antisocial behaviour**

### **Fly-tipping prosecutions**

Winchester City Council is pursuing a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping by prosecuting offenders. It has recently reported a third successful fly-tipping prosecution in four months (following fly-tipping prosecutions have also been achieved by Winchester City Council in November 2023 and January 2024). By prosecuting in this way, offenders risk a prison sentence of up to five years and receive a criminal record.

### **Alcohol Control zone extended to 2026**

In September, WCC's licensing and regulation committee voted to support a 3-year extension of the existing alcohol consumption public spaces protection order (PSPO) to September 2026.

The city's PSPO, which also covers Badger Farm, isn't a ban on public drinking but aims to address antisocial behaviour in response to complaints by the public and gives police the power to confiscate alcohol from people drinking in public and to issue a FPN for non-compliance.

### **Expanding CCTV**

In the city, 40 additional CCTV cameras are being added to Chesil Street car park to provide additional reassurance for users and help deter anti-social behaviour. Winchester already has a network of 110 CCTV cameras across the city which are monitored from a local control room 24 hours a day. These additional cameras will bring the total to 150 and are a vital part of the city council's wider work with partners to ensure a safe and welcoming city.

## **An Evolving District**

### **Central Winchester Regeneration ongoing**

Winchester City Council's is undertaking a regeneration of a circa four-acre area of the city with a wide-ranging mix of uses (e.g. including flexible work and creative spaces, food and drink offerings, a hotel and new high-quality public spaces). The proposals also include new homes to suit people of all life-stages, with a range of tenures available including private sale, homes for rent and affordable housing.

The project was included in WCC's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) after extensive public engagement and community consultation.

In March 2023, WCC announced the appointment of Jigsaw Consortium trading as Partnerships & Places to bring forward the Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) project. During the past year, Jigsaw held a series of meet and greet events to gather public views to shape proposals for the site.

Work is now ongoing with key recent developments including the refurbishment of the Kings Walk area and the demolition of the Friarsgate Medical Centre. This area will be redeveloped in the interim ("meanwhile use" as an open space, ahead of the comprehensive programme of redevelopment).

Concurrently, work is well advanced on the construction of the new St Clements Surgery in Middle Brook Street supported by WCC.

### **Local plan revised timetable**

In August, the Cabinet Committee for the Local plan agreed to extend the timetable for producing a Local Plan, citing the complexity of national nutrient neutrality legislation and the value of first completing ongoing Strategic Transport assessments and studies into the local economy – all factors that could influence the emerging Local Plan.

The revised timetable means that Regulation 19 consultation will take place in Summer/Autumn 2024, with adoption of the plan in 2025.

## **Bushfield Camp – Clarifying the anticipated timeframe**

Following consultation on Bushfield Camp during autumn-winter 2023, the process was delayed after National Highways requested more time to consider the impact of the proposals. At the full council session on 17<sup>th</sup> January, Cllrs Warwick and Brophy both asked questions to Cllr Jackie Porter, the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan, to clarify the impact of the delay and likely timeframe.

These questions and answers are included in full below, given the local interest in this issue:

From: Cllr Warwick - “Public consultation for the Bushfield Camp planning application opened on 27<sup>th</sup> October and closed on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023. When will the application be heard by the planning committee and how many residents will be allowed to address the committee?”

Reply from Cllr Porter

“It’s become clear as the process has continued, that concerns about the highways impact of Bushfield are particularly important for residents – and so the Council is absolutely committed to ensuring that National Highways and Hampshire County Council take the time they need to properly and thoroughly assess the impact of the applications.

*As a result, based on the timetable they have given us, it is likely that the Bushfield application will not be able to come to committee before May or June – possibly later.*

*The decision as to how it will be handled is – as was agreed in the new Constitution last month – is a matter for the Planning Committee itself and not for the administration.*

If you look at page 67 of the Constitution - Part 3.3, section 1.8a – it makes clear that the Planning Committee decides their own public speaking arrangements and are also able to determine specific arrangements for public speaking on certain applications.

My hope is that the Committee will look to run a process that allows a full range of residents and affected organisations – including Parish Councils to have their say. I have spoken to the Chair of the Committee, Councillor Rutter, and this is her intention as well.”

From: Cllr Brophy - “Given the request by National Highways to have more time to assess the traffic impacts of the proposed development at Bushfield Camp, can the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan outline how this will affect the timeline for decision making?”

Reply from Cllr Porter

“I know how concerned local residents are about the traffic and transport implications of the Bushfield planning application.

I am reassured therefore, that National Highways have sought more time to work through the highway implications of the application with the developer.

The outcome of the National Highways’ discussions with the applicant will then be reconsidered by Hampshire Highways who will be given the opportunity to resubmit their comments too.

*Once those comments have been received, it will be important for the public to have their say as well – particularly if there is significant new information. And, if this is the case, we will allow time in the process for this to happen.*

*The combined effect of this is likely to mean that determination will not be possible before May or June this year – possibly later.”*

## **Regeneration of Station Approach**

A regeneration of Station Approach area in Winchester was also progressed. In summer 2023, officers recommend to the cabinet that a concept masterplan should be produced for Station Approach in order to allow residents and stakeholders to determine the vision for the whole area - setting out the priorities and defining the transport hub and public realm strategy.

## Looking ahead – The council budget for 2024/2025

Councillors approved a balanced budget for Winchester City Council at a council meeting on 22 February. The approved budget reflects continued investment in the Council Plan priorities, a below inflation increase in council tax and plans to improve online access for customers as part of a wider transformation programme.

Key highlights include:

- A below inflation rise in Council Tax for city council services (an increase of £4.07 per year for a Band D property, or 2.6%.)
- Investment in the council plan priority of 'Greener Faster' – This includes expanding recycling and introducing doorstep food waste collections and reducing carbon emissions in the waste vehicle fleet.
- Recognising the ongoing cost of living pressures for residents, budget has been set aside for a council tax support fund and the extension of the exceptional hardship fund.
- Investment in the Council Plan priority of Homes for All, providing additional support for the council's homelessness prevention strategy.
- Over half a million pounds of **investment to refurbish Winchester's public toilets.**

At the full council where the budget was approved, it was acknowledged that (as with the rest of the country) the financial landscape is particularly challenging for local government with uncertainty about future funding. A transformation programme (TC25), which has already identified immediate savings, has been launched to address a future funding gap challenge. Included within it are plans to improve customers' access to the council by improving the council's online services.