

Winchester City Council March parish report

Devolution Consultation - Closes 13th Apr 2025

On Monday (17 February) the Government launched its Devolution consultation and is asking for views on the formation of a Mayoral Combined Authority for Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight.

You can read more on the Government's website at:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/hampshire-and-the-solent-devolution-consultation/>

Or can answer the consultation using their online form at this page.

The Government is understood to also be considering in-person drop-in events, but these haven't been confirmed yet – WCC will share more details as we get them.

Local enforcement – Additional funding and consultation

During Full Council on 27th February, councillors voted in favour of the 2025/26 Budget, which included a commitment of £200,000 to invest one-off resources into planning enforcement.

WCC is also seeking views on its updated Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) in a consultation that runs to 20th March. The Local Enforcement Plan sets out our approach to planning enforcement, including how alleged cases of unauthorised development and breaches of planning control will be investigated, the basis for planning enforcement decisions, and our approach to proactive monitoring.

WCC has prepared the revised LEP, last updated in July 2020, as part of our commitment to deliver an efficient and effective planning enforcement service in line with the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The plan emphasises the importance of protecting the district's communities, heritage and natural environment from unauthorised development and the harm it causes.

Head over to Citizen Space to have your say at

<https://winchester.citizenspace.com/development-management/enforcement-local-plan/>

Community Grants

WCC has just closed the application process for its District Small Grant and Winchester City Community Grant schemes (closed Feb 28th).

There are no current open grants but check for updates at

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/grants-for-not-for-profit-organisations>

Winchester City Council Approves Budget for 2025/26

Winchester City Council has approved a balanced budget for the upcoming year, which supports vulnerable people, addresses the climate emergency, improves recycling and protects our environment.

The budget sets out a commitment to the roll out of weekly food waste recycling collections to all households later this year with £595,000 allocated this year (£460,000 as one-off funding).

It has a strong emphasis on supporting vulnerable people, with additional funding to help prevent homelessness (an additional £300,000) and a revision of income bands for the council tax reduction scheme – ensuring that support continues to be received after the changes to the DWP's universal credit scheme. Recognising the ongoing impact of the cost of living, the council has also extended the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund into 2025/6.

The budget also allocates funding to increase capacity for planning enforcement cases, to help protect the district's communities, its heritage and the natural environment from harmful unauthorised development.

The budget has been aligned to help achieve the council's priorities following approval of the new council plan, which was developed following public consultation. The Plan's priorities include:

- Going Greener Faster
- Thriving Places
- Healthy Communities
- Good homes for all

The full council meeting also approved an average council tax increase of 2.7%. For a Band D property, the City Council's share of the council tax bill will be £163.66 per year (an increase of £4.30 per year).

The council's immediate financial position is stable. However, as with many local authorities, it faces increasing budget pressure long term, which it is addressing through its transformation programme, focusing on reviewing contracts, creating an effective and efficient digital service and generating more income.