

Annual Parish Meeting – WCC councillor's report

Winchester City Council approves balanced budget for 2026/27

Winchester City Council has approved a balanced budget for the upcoming year. At a meeting of the full council the district council element of the Council tax bill was set at an average increase of 2.99% (which relates to an increase of between £4.50 - £4.83 per year for an average band D property).

It also allows for an increase in the pressures from rises in utility costs and lays out plans for investments which will make it easier and faster for residents to contact the council by improving digital and online services, freeing up traditional contact for those who need it.

A total of £1.7m has also been set aside for essential structural repairs to the listed civic Guildhall building (an additional £3.3 million is allocated from the separate capital investment strategy), and £15,000 has been set aside to explore speed indicators in the town area.

Recognising the ongoing impact of the cost of living, the city council has also extended the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund into 2026/7. Additionally In light of the increase to universal credit, it was agreed that income bands for applying council tax reduction are revised so the majority of working age applicants continue to receive a similar level of support through 2026/27. While the scheme aims to protect vulnerable households and limit reductions in entitlement, additional safeguards remain in place for those experiencing exceptional hardship.

This budget also includes provision for preparing the council for the implementation of the Government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) plans which is expected to have a significant impact on council resources, so that usual services are not affected.

Winchester City Council adopts Local Plan

In a significant milestone for the district, the Winchester District Local Plan was formally adopted at a full Council meeting in March.

Winchester City Council progressed its Local Plan through the examination process, and on Wednesday 11 March it received confirmation from the Independent Planning Inspector, R Barrett MRTPI IHBC, that they found the plan, with the main modifications, to be sound, legally compliant and ready for adoption.

Following the examination hearings which took place last summer, the eight-week public consultation on the Main Modifications concluded earlier this year, which ensured the Winchester District Local Plan met all the legal requirements set by government. The Winchester District Local Plan was considered for adoption through the city council's democratic decision-making process, and was been debated at Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, prior to the final decision.

Read the report and all supporting information on our

website: <https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=4970>

The adopted plan and all associated documents can be viewed on the Council's dedicated local plan website: <https://www.localplan.winchester.gov.uk/local-plan-2020-2040>

Central Winchester Regeneration – Key milestones

The Central Winchester Regeneration project is progressing swiftly with further details released to the public during a series of events in spring 2026. According to Martin Tod, leader of WCC, "the council is aiming to sign off this summer, allowing (development partners Jigsaw) to make a planning application by the end of the year."

Jigsaw held drop-in public information events at the end of February to share the latest evolution of the plans. These provided residents and stakeholders with opportunities to contribute their views and ideas ahead of a planning application later this year. The information shared via the event display boards is still available to view at www.winchesterregeneration.co.uk/

Central Winchester Regeneration is set to unlock a new wave of potential for the city, creating a sustainable pedestrian-led quarter that reflects Winchester's distinctive character and heritage. The new creative quarter will offer flexible work and creative spaces, food and drink options, and plenty of public spaces. To support this emerging business community, the vision includes a wide variety of tenure-diverse homes suitable for people at all stages of life.

New River Park Pavilion to open in May 2026

The new pavilion at River Park in Winchester will be formally opened this May - ready for sporting action this summer.

River Park Pavilion is a community and sports facility for local residents and clubs, which is getting closer to full completion, and planned to be ready for community hire from next month. Construction began last year after Winchester City Council approved a total investment of £2.3M to deliver the project, including: capital funding from the city council: £1.5M from district Community Infrastructure Levy; and in contributions from the Town Forum, The Pavilion Project and grant funding from Hampshire County Council.

This latest investment forms part of the city council's commitment to increasing participation and opportunities for physical activity for all ages and abilities.

District-wide weekly food waste collection roll-out complete

Weekly food waste collections are now available to all homes across the Winchester district, following a staged roll out of the new service since October 2025. The Biffa crews are collecting around 60 tonnes of food waste per week, which creates enough energy to power six average homes for a year when turned into green energy at the anaerobic digestion plant.

Resident feedback has been positive: over ninety percent of those who responded to WCC's Recycling: Looking to the Future survey said it is a simple and convenient process.

The nine specialist vehicles for food waste collections are fuelled by hydrotreated vegetable oil instead of diesel, reducing carbon emissions by up to 94%.

Residents can find out more about the food waste recycling service and how their food waste is turned into green energy and soil improver at www.winchester.gov.uk/foodwaste

Community Governance Review: City Council moves forward with proposals for new parish councils

Winchester City Council's Licensing and Regulation Committee has agreed proposals, which could see the creation of new parish councils for Kings Barton and the Winchester town area from April 2027.

The decision was based on feedback presented in the Stage One Consultation Report, prior to agreeing the recommendations and approving the move to the next stage of the council's Community Governance Review, which requires further public consultation.

Last year, over 1400 residents, organisations and businesses responded to the city council's Stage One Community Governance Review consultation, and residents in the Winchester town area and Kings Barton confirmed their support for creating new parish councils where they live. Residents - including those in Badger Farm and Oliver's Battery ward - living in some neighbouring parishes close to the city centre we also asked whether they would support changes to their current parish arrangements.

Residents in the areas of Badger Farm, Oliver's Battery sought to retain their existing parish arrangements – a desire reflected in the decision to make no changes in these areas.

To learn more about the stage one consultation report and next steps, visit: www.winchester.gov.uk/cgr

District bucks national trend with dramatic decrease for fly-tips

District fly-tipping incidents in Winchester have dramatically decreased, according to the latest government figures. Statistics released by Defra for 2024/25 show that incidents in the Winchester district are at their lowest level for ten years, reducing from 2,120 in 2020/21 to 735 in 2024/5. The reduction represents a 65% drop in numbers of incidents - the fifth highest reduction out of over 300 councils in England, with the total number of incidents falling to just 34% of the 2020/21 figure.

The reduction is attributed in part to a robust approach to crack down on offences: So far in 2026, successful prosecutions by Winchester City Council regarding this environmental crime include four prosecutions in a single court day in January and February's conviction assisted by eye-witness evidence from a member of the public. Public support is vital and WCC is encouraging anyone who witnesses any incidents of fly-tipping in our district to report it via our website at www.winchester.gov.uk/report, or by calling 0300 300 0013.

Nature Improvement Plan 2025-2030 unveiled in November

Winchester City Council published its Nature Improvement Plan 2025-2030, outlining its strategy for halting the decline in nature and wildlife species across the district and working with nature to combat the climate crisis.

The council declared a nature emergency in 2023 to recognise the impact that climate change is having on the district's vital nature and wildlife habitats. It has created wildflower meadows, such as the ones at Chilcomb Recreation Ground and Topfield, Kings Worthy as valuable habitats for pollinators (including butterflies and moths), foraging birds, reptiles and bats. We have also improved the way we manage road verges and our church yards and cemeteries, including West Hill Cemetery, which provide a valuable, safe home for many species, especially slow worms.

The Nature Improvement Plan 2025-30 outlines our approach to conservation and sustainability projects, and the council's commitment to supporting volunteers and partnership groups.

You can find out more about how the council plans to tackle the nature emergency, view a short video that highlights this key area of work, and see the full plan available at www.winchester.gov.uk/nature-emergency.

Lifting of city's air quality zone marks successful step in reducing air pollution

The air quality in Winchester city centre has improved to the extent that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has confirmed it no longer needs to be monitored as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA.) In place since 2003, the Air Quality Management Area means that nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels are regularly monitored and recorded.

For the last three years, since 2022, the area has met the required standards for levels of nitrogen dioxide. Another harmful pollutant which is monitored – is known as particulate matter (PM₁₀) - this has been under the required level for 10 years – since 2015.

The city council has recently adopted a new Air Quality Strategy which sets targets to go above and beyond UK national air quality targets. The Strategy outlines the need to work collaboratively across the district and wider region to achieve cleaner air across the district by 2030. It looks at areas such as road traffic, indoor air quality, domestic and business heating and burning, and construction and new developments. To find out more about the recently adopted strategy, visit www.winchester.gov.uk/environment/air-quality

WCC rated a 'top performing' district council in the country for their work on the climate crisis

Climate Emergency UK has scored all UK councils on their performance in addressing the climate crisis, with Winchester City Council being awarded a score of 68% overall (an increase of 19% compared to the last score card in 2023.) It leads the way by far in Hampshire with a 22% higher score than the next highest performing council in the county.

The Climate Action Scorecard ranks councils on how they're tackling climate change, looking at areas including Building and heating, Transport, Planning and land use, Governance and finance, Biodiversity, Collaboration and engagement, and Waste reduction and food.

The City Council scored particularly highly in in the categories of Buildings & Heating and Planning & Land Use, reflecting both their work to increase the energy efficiency of their buildings and housing stock and the carbon reduction policies in their emerging local plan. WCC's Carbon Neutrality Action Plan sets out a series of actions that look to achieve a carbon neutral district by 2030. This includes measures to reduce the councils own carbon emissions, which has already resulted in a forecast 96% reduction.