

Winchester City Council report September 2026

LGR plans paused by government

Government ministers have placed plans to merge our local councils on hold, withdrawing the decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) decisions for Hampshire. The government intends to conduct a review of their plans - asking all councils to pause work on implementation.

Instead of voting for the new authority in May 2027, we now expect that City Council Elections will proceed as per the status quo.

NB - the government's project to reorganise Local Government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has not ended. Commenting on the government's decision, Winchester Council Leader, Martin Tod said: "This is obviously hugely frustrating. Although the specific plan approved by government for the four unitary authorities was not one we supported here in Winchester, a huge amount of work was done by councillors and officers to deliver on the government's decision. Rather than a clear way forward, we now have more uncertainty."

"However, this is just one part of the government's plans, which also included a parallel project for devolution - and the creation of a combined Mayoral authority for Hampshire and Solent. This is not on hold and as Liberal Democrat candidate, I will be redoubling my efforts to win. The chaos we are seeing from national government clearly demonstrates that we need a coherent vision and a stronger voice for our region."

Central Winchester Regeneration

Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) continues to progress as a significant milestone was agreed at by cabinet. The updated CWR business case was agreed at the city council's cabinet meeting, the, which will now allow the council's development partner - Jigsaw by Partnerships and Places - to submit its planning application by the end of this year.

Central Winchester Regeneration presents a landmark opportunity to transform and reinvigorate the rundown areas of the city into a vibrant mixed-use area, which will provide over 200 new homes, over 3500 square metres of commercial space and 6,600 square metres of new public squares, streets and routes, creating vibrant public spaces, new and enhanced bus infrastructure and a greener, more accessible city centre.

River Park site update

On 9th September WCC's Cabinet will consider the bids for redevelopment of the River Park site. A preferred bidder, lido operator Sea Lanes, has been recommended by officers in the report to cabinet:

Following the evaluation process, it is considered that the Sea Lanes bid which will provide:

- *Outdoor pool*

- *Three outdoor padel courts*
- *Sauna*
- *A publicly accessible dry-side space, including a cafe/restaurant*
- *Integrated landscape improvements*
- *A fully accessible free to use splash pad*

offers the best consideration to the Council. It is therefore recommended that the Council disposes of the long lease to Sea Lanes, subject to the satisfaction of specified conditions, including compliance with the policies of the Winchester District Local Plan 2020-2040, adopted by Winchester City Council on 24 March 2026.

WCC held a drop-in information event on the future of the former leisure centre with the information presented now available at <https://www.winchester.gov.uk/regeneration/32907/former-leisure-centre-site>

District Small Grant Scheme for 26/27

The Winchester District small grant scheme is designed to provide small-scale, one-off grants of up to £700 to local voluntary/not for profit groups and organisations.

The funding is aimed at activities which require one-off expenditure or initial set up/pump priming costs. The grants are available for one-off pieces of expenditure on projects, equipment and other items which will help your organisation to do more, to reach more people, to provide better services or to try something different. Examples of eligible costs include new or start-up equipment, set up costs for new groups, special events and activities.

The fund closes to applications on midday 31 January 2027 – or sooner if the fund is fully allocated.

To learn more or to apply, please visit: <https://www.winchester.gov.uk/grants-for-not-for-profit-organisations/small-grant-scheme>

Your district councillors for Badger Farm and Oliver's Battery

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