District Councillors' Parish Update - November 2026

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Local Government Changes

Councillor Update

Cllr Malcolm Wallace and Cllr Danny Lee have recently resigned their membership of the Green Party. They continue to serve residents of Meon Valley with exactly the same commitment as before and, following their resignations, they now sit as Independent councillors on Winchester City Council.

They also remain members of the Independent & Green Group, the principal opposition group on Winchester City Council. This means they will continue to work closely with colleagues from across the Group to scrutinise decisions, challenge where necessary, and put forward constructive alternatives on behalf of local residents.

The focus from all three Central Meon Valley councillors remains unchanged: representing the interests of Meon Valley communities, supporting local services, protecting our environment, and ensuring residents' voices are heard in decisions affecting our area.

As always, if there is an issue we can help with, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Residents may have seen recent news about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Hampshire. Following a review by the Government, the timetable has changed, but the overall direction of travel remains the same.

The Government has confirmed that local government reorganisation will still proceed, with the aim of replacing Hampshire's current two-tier system of county and district councils with a smaller number of unitary authorities. Under a unitary model, a single council would provide all local government services in an area.

However, the Government has withdrawn its previous decision on the exact structure of the new councils and is now reconsidering the options. As a result, Hampshire's reorganisation programme has been delayed by approximately one year.

The current timetable is:

- Now - Existing councils, including Hampshire County Council and

Winchester City Council, continue operating as normal
- May 2027 - WCC local elections are expected to take place
- May 2028 - Elections to new "shadow" authorities
- April 2029 - New unitary councils expected to take over

The Government has indicated that it expects to announce its decision on Hampshire's future council structure during 2027. All previously submitted proposals remain under consideration.

In practical terms, there are no immediate changes to local services. Residents should continue to contact and work with their existing councils in the usual way.

The main question that remains unresolved is not whether reorganisation will happen, but what the final map of Hampshire's future councils will look like. The Government is currently reconsidering the various proposals before reaching a final decision.

Further news can be found on the dedicated LGR website: Future Hampshire

Hampshire & Solent Combined County Authority

The Hampshire & Solent Combined County Authority (HSCCA) continues to develop its governance arrangements following its formal establishment in July 2026. The Authority brings together Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council, and is responsible for overseeing devolved powers and long-term investment across the region.

The Government has recently confirmed that the first election for the Hampshire & Solent Mayor will take place in May 2028.

The future Mayor will have responsibilities covering areas such as transport, skills, housing, strategic planning and economic growth, and will help oversee the Authority's long-term investment programme.

The HSCCA Website remains the main public source of information during this period and includes further detail on the Authority's proposed responsibilities, governance arrangements and the future role of the Mayor.

Hampshire is also developing a statutory Local Growth Plan for the HSCCA area. In parallel, Hampshire's protected landscapes are preparing a joint prospectus to help ensure that environmental and landscape priorities are reflected in future strategic planning.

Cllr Lee has been working with partners including the Climate and Nature Action Network (CANN) and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to promote the recognition of nature as critical infrastructure alongside transport, energy, water and other essential services. A key objective is to ensure that nature recovery and climate resilience are fully considered as part of future growth, investment and infrastructure decisions across the region.

Planning

Next Winchester Local Plan 2026-2044

The City Council has now completed Gateway 1 of the preparation process for the next Winchester District Local Plan, which will cover the period from 2026 to 2044. Gateway 1 is a new requirement introduced by the Government and confirms that the Council has published the necessary notices and timetable, completed the initial scoping consultation, and has a project plan in place for the next stages of plan preparation. Once Gateway 1 is completed, the Council has 30 months to prepare and adopt the new Local Plan.

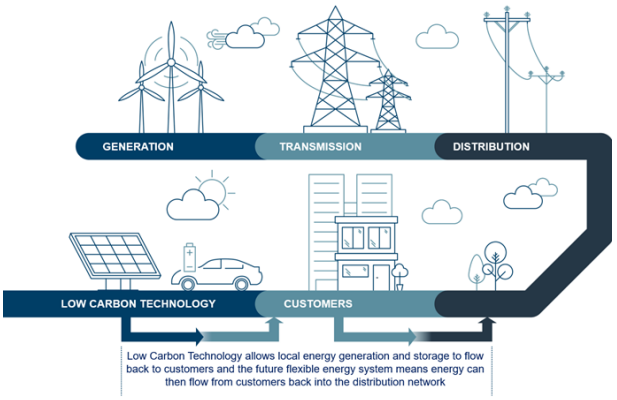
The recently completed scoping consultation was the first stage of the process. It sought views on the issues that the new Local Plan should address, including housing, the environment, transport, infrastructure and climate change. At this stage, the Council was not consulting on specific development sites.

The next major stage is expected to begin in March 2027, when the Council will undertake a consultation on proposed Local Plan content and supporting evidence. This will provide further opportunities for residents, parish councils and community organisations to help shape the future of planning policy across the district.

The current Winchester District Local Plan, adopted earlier this year, remains the basis for determining planning applications across the district while work on the new plan continues.

Further information, including the project timetable and consultation documents, can be found on the dedicated Local Plan website.

Local Area Energy Plan - Planning for Winchester's Future Energy Needs



Winchester City Council has recently published its new Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), a long-term strategy setting out how the district could transition to a low-carbon energy system and support the journey towards net zero. The plan considers how energy is used across homes, businesses, transport and public infrastructure, and identifies the most cost-effective pathways for reducing carbon emissions over coming decades.

The LAEP has been developed in partnership with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) using detailed mapping and energy modelling tools. It examines issues such as building insulation, low-carbon heating, renewable energy generation, battery storage, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and

electricity network capacity.

Importantly, the plan is not a policy or planning document in its own right. Instead, it provides an evidence base to help guide future investment and decision-making by the Council, energy providers, businesses, community organisations and residents. The Council is now developing a delivery plan to identify priorities and consider how the recommendations can be put into practice.

For parish councils and local communities, the LAEP has practical value beyond its strategic role. It can help identify future energy demands, potential pressures on the electricity network, and opportunities for local energy generation, energy efficiency improvements and community-led projects. It should also help communities consider how best to improve resilience as energy systems continue to evolve.

The LAEP is also expected to form an important part of the evidence base for the next Winchester District Local Plan 2026-2044, helping to ensure that future development is supported by appropriate and sustainable energy infrastructure.

We intend to provide parish councils with a short summary and suggested action checklist to help communities understand the opportunities and challenges identified within the plan and consider how they may be reflected in local priorities and community planning.

Further information, including the full Local Area Energy Plan and supporting documents, is available on the Winchester City Council website.

Home Energy Efficiency

Council Solar Program Reaches 100 Homes



A Winchester City Council project to install solar panels and battery storage on council homes has reached an important milestone, with 100 properties now benefiting from the scheme. A further 179 installations are planned as part of the current phase of the programme.

The success of the initial phase has also led to plans for a significant expansion of the programme. UPOWA, the contractor delivering the installations, has announced a new three-year contract that could enable solar panels and battery storage to be installed on up to 500 council homes per year.

The project has its origins in a motion brought to Full Council in February 2025 by Meon Valley councillors Malcolm Wallace and Suzanne White, asking the Council to investigate whether solar panels could be installed more widely across its housing stock. Following approval of that motion, a feasibility study was undertaken to explore

how a larger-scale programme could be delivered.

The scheme aims to help council tenants reduce their energy bills while also lowering carbon emissions from council housing. The installations are being delivered by UPOWA, a solar energy company based in Whiteley.

Importantly, the programme is funded through the Council's Housing Revenue Account, which is separate from the Council's main budget and is funded by council housing income rather than the General Fund used to provide wider council services.

This is a good example of how an idea raised by councillors can progress through investigation, approval and delivery to achieve practical benefits for residents while supporting the Council's environmental objectives. Many people have contributed to the success of the project, including council officers, Cabinet members, tenants and installation contractors.

My Home Made Better



An initiative launched by the Hampshire Environment Centre My Home Made Better aims to inspire residents with one-to-one advice, case studies, videos, online resources, open homes, events and webinars, all designed to help individuals make more informed decisions about their properties.

This is a great first stop for anyone considering making improvements to their home energy efficiency.

Other Home Energy Efficiency Opportunities

The following offers advice and support, but please carefully check eligibility for grants as they will depend on the type of home and your circumstances.

- The Energy Saving Trust . Guidance for the type of insulation for properties
- Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme - supports energy efficiency measures for homes in fuel poverty.

Note there is currently a higher grant (up to £9,000) for switching to Air Source Heat Pumps for homes currently using oil or LPG heating. This uplift is targeted at rural/off-grid homes, where switching costs are higher. More info at: What does the UK government's heat pump grant mean for oil-using households' bills? | Nesta

Grant Funding Opportunities



District Small Grant Scheme - Open

To provide small-scale, one-off grants of up to £700 to local voluntary/not for profit groups and organisations. [District Small Grant Scheme]

CIL Funding - Winchester

The funds are aimed at community led schemes with allocations between £10k and £200k. The following types of infrastructure and facilities are eligible for CIL funding:

- Education facilities
- Healthcare facilities
- Energy and carbon reduction schemes / climate change mitigation
- Open space provision
- Built facilities, indoor / outdoor sport, recreational and informal leisure and social facilities
- Green and blue infrastructure
- Community and cultural facilities
- Active travel and movement infrastructure

Next bidding window opens in November 2026. Find more details on the Winchester City Council website: [Grants for Not for Profit Organisations]

CIL Funding - SDNP

The 2025-26 SDNPA CIL bidding window is closed. SDNPA funding decisions for this round will not be made before Autumn 2026.

The dates for the annual 'call for projects' for 2026-27 have not yet been announced. When the 2026–27 bidding window opens, expressions of interest must be submitted online via the [Projects for the South Downs] portal. The authority will prioritize infrastructure projects that align with its core corporate plan priorities: *Nature Recovery*, *Climate Action*, and *A National Park for All*

Hampshire Forest Partnership Funding

Now open for applications for tree planting projects taking place during the Winter 2026/27 planting season.

Whether you are planning to establish new wooded areas (up to 0.5 hectares), hedgerows, community orchards, disease-resistant elms, or black poplars, you are encouraged to apply for funding. To apply, please complete the [Winter 2026/27 application form]

Community

Winchester Health and Well-Being Forum

Community organisations, voluntary groups and local partners are invited to join the Winchester Health & Wellbeing Forum, a space for those with an interest in improving public health and wellbeing across the district.

The forum provides an opportunity to share insights, build new partnerships and work collaboratively on key health priorities. It's a great way to connect with like-minded organisations, learn about local initiatives and explore how we can work together to create healthier, more connected communities while helping to reduce health inequalities.

Upcoming sessions:Tuesday 22 September 2026 – Home & Ageing Well
Tuesday 12 January 2027 – Physical Activity and 2026 Review

Contact the Communities team for more information communities@winchester.gov.uk

Winchester City Council Community Hubs

Join us for a FREE cuppa and a bite to eat at one of our Community Hub at Wickham or Winchester. Have a friendly chat with our officers about any issues relating to benefits, housing, and wellbeing. For informal guidance, information and signposting for anyone looking for support around the cost of living.

- *Alresford:* Every 3rd Wednesday of the month 10:00 – 12.00pm at St Gregory's Church, Grange Rd, Alresford SO24 9HB.
- *Wickham:* Every 1st Monday of the month | 2.30pm - 4.30 pm. Wickham Community Centre, Mill Lane, Wickham, Fareham PO17 5AL.
- *Winchester:* Every 3rd Thursday of the month |10.30am - 12.30pm. Unit 12 Community Food Pantry, Winnall Valley Rd, Winchester SO23 0LD.
- *Winchester:* Every 3rd Monday of the month | 10.00am - 12pm. The Carroll Centre, Somers Close, Stanmore, Winchester SO22 4EJ.

Meon Valley Community Bus



The Meon Valley Community Bus Association website has all the current timetables and information regarding private hire: https://meonvalleybus.co.uk/

They are also producing information leaflets for residents in the area covered by the bus.

To find out more or apply to volunteer, contact Steve Houlding at mvcba1985@gmail.com