

Community Governance Review- Winchester town area

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a way to make changes to local council arrangements so communities are suitably represented. The review can consider a number of issues, such as creating or merging parish or town council boundaries.

A CGR is a legal process that gives residents and organisations an opportunity to share their views on what they feel is the most suitable way for their community to be represented.

Why do a Community Governance Review now?

In December 2024, the Government announced a major programme of reform for Local Government as part of their English Devolution White Paper. It included the request for local government reorganisation to create **new unitary councils with populations of at least 500,000**. It will replace the current two-tier structure of councils (where you have services provided by both Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council). If proposals are approved, new larger councils will be formed replacing the current council arrangements. The new unitary council would cover a much larger area than just the Winchester district, so without a parish council in place, the most local representation would be reduced.

In light of local government reorganisation, earlier this year Winchester Town Forum requested that Winchester City Council carries out a Community Governance Review for the Winchester Town area- which is currently 'unparished', meaning its residents are not currently represented by a parish council or parish meeting, unlike everywhere else across the Winchester district.

The Terms of Reference and Timeline for this Community Governance Review were agreed at Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 29 September 2025.

What is the Winchester Town Forum?

The Winchester Town Forum is a consultative and advisory body which deals with issues affecting the unparished Winchester town area. Its membership is made up of the city councillors who represent the unparished area and it is not a parish council. However, it does have a budget and residents currently living within the Winchester town area pay a 'Special Expenses' annual fee, which replaces the precept paid to a parish council and this year was approximately £90.08. This money is ring-fenced to provide services and events in the Winchester town area. You can read more about the Winchester Town Forum: <https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=159>

If a new parish council isn't created for the Winchester town area, could the Winchester Town Forum continue as it is – even if Local Government Reorganisation across Hampshire goes ahead as planned?

If no new parish council is created, the Winchester Town Forum would continue to exist only until the creation of the new unitary authorities proposed under local government

reorganisation, anticipated to be in 2028. Creating the parish council now would help strengthen local voice for the Winchester town area as it would also become a statutory consultee in local planning applications, under the new unitary authority, for example.

What do town and parish councils do?

Town and parish councils have an important role in community empowerment and provide services like play areas, parks and allotments.

They are the most local tier of local government and are made up of local people who have been elected to represent the interests of their community. They can be the voice of the local community and work with other tiers of government and external organisations to coordinate and provide services which work to improve the quality of life of people living in the area.

Find out more about parish councils and the services they can provide:

www.nalc.gov.uk/about/parish-and-town-councils.html

What are the benefits of having a parish council?

Having a parish or town council could benefit a community by enhancing local representation and improving services.

Some of the benefits set out by National Association of Local Councils (NALC) include:

- **Community representation** – they can give residents a stronger voice on local issues, particularly in light of Local Government Reorganisation. The creation of a unitary council, covering a much larger area than just the Winchester district, will reduce local representation without a parish council.
- **Project delivery**- they can drive community projects and initiatives tailored to local needs, which could enhance residents' wellbeing, such as creating and maintaining greenspaces and organising cultural events.
- **Economic advantages** - they can attract funding and grants unavailable to larger councils and deliver new initiatives and events, to help boost the local economy.
- **Greater accountability** - they are by their nature, closer to their residents- leading to more local accountability and transparency in decision-making.

How are parish councils funded?

Parish councils are primarily funded through a sum of money called a precept. This is a separate charge which is added to and collected at the same time as your existing council tax. Parish councils set their own precept based on what services and facilities are provided for the local community.

How much will any new precept be?

A parish council determines what services, if any, it wishes to provide, and sets its own budget requirements. After deducting any other income, like grants, fees / charges, the

council will calculate the precept requirement. The precept forms a relatively small proportion of your council tax charge each year.

We understand residents would like to know the likely cost of a new parish or town council or an existing one subject to boundary changes. It is not possible to say at this stage, as the budget would only be established when the new council comes into existence.

Residents in the Winchester town area already pay a yearly 'special expenses' charge of £90.08 per year (£7.50 per month) for the local parish level services provided by the city council, in the absence of a parish council for the area. It is worth bearing in mind that any new parish council would have additional costs, such as employing a parish clerk and venue to be based in.

Across the district, the parish precept varies from parish to parish depending on what services are provided. These currently range from £58.40 - £232.49 per year across the district

If a decision is made to set up new parish councils, then it would be up to that new council to set its precept and this would be determined on what and how many services it provides.

What assets would transfer from Winchester City Council to a new parish or town council?

Although there is no obligation for the city council to transfer assets (with the exception of allotments*) any assets proposed for transfer, should a new parish council be agreed, would be agreed at a full council meeting. For example, assets are things like street furniture, parks and open spaces, buildings, cemeteries.

*If there are allotments in a parish council area, the land must be transferred to the parish council, as set out by law. This does not necessarily affect existing arrangements of who manages them.

Although simpler to do it during the review, if assets are not transferred during the review process, they could still be transferred once the new parish council was formed – again this would be subject to agreement between the new parish council and the city council (or its successor unitary council).

Are councillors of parish councils paid an allowance?

Most parish councils do not pay allowances to parish councillors but may reimburse appropriate expenses incurred.

How many parish councils are there in the Winchester district?

There are 48 existing Parish Councils / Parish Meetings across the district as set out below:

1. Badger Farm

25. Kings Worthy

2. Beauworth (Parish Meeting)

26. Littleton & Harestock

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| 3. Brighton | 27. Micheldever |
| 4. Bishop's Waltham | 28. New Alresford Town Council |
| 5. Bishops Sutton | 29. Newlands |
| 6. Boarhunt | 30. Northington |
| 7. Bramdean & Hinton Ampner | 31. Old Alresford |
| 8. Cheriton | 32. Oliver's Battery |
| 9. Chilcomb (Parish Meeting) | 33. Otterbourne |
| 10. Colden Common | 34. Owslebury |
| 11. Compton & Shawford | 35. Shedfield |
| 12. Corhampton & Meonstoke | 36. Soberton |
| 13. Crawley | 37. South Wonston |
| 14. Curdridge | 38. Southwick & Widley |
| 15. Denmead | 39. Sparsholt |
| 16. Droxford | 40. Swanmore |
| 17. Durley | 41. Tichborne |
| 18. Exton (Parish Meeting) | 42. Twyford |
| 19. Hambledon | 43. Upham |
| 20. Headbourne Worthy | 44. Warnford (Parish Meeting) |
| 21. Hursley | 45. West Meon |
| 22. Itchen Stoke & Ovington | 46. Whiteley Town Council |
| 23. Itchen Valley | 47. Wickham and Knowle |
| 24. Kilmeston | 48. Wonston |

Why are you asking residents living in some neighbouring areas their views on the creation of a new council, when they are already in a parished area?

The main focus of this review is the unparished parts of Winchester town. However, current parish boundaries have been in place for some time and local areas have changed in that time with new developments and homes. Our focus is in the unparished area, but it is an opportunity to ask neighbouring communities if they are happy with their current arrangements at the same time. For example, some residents living close to the city centre may feel a stronger sense of community with the Winchester town area, than their current parish council area. This CGR gives the opportunity to ask those questions too.

It is an opportunity to confirm that all nearby arrangements are still effective and make sense to residents, particularly those living in: Harestock, Kings Barton, and the parishes of Badger Farm and Oliver's Battery.

Why has 'Land west of Courtenay Road' – known as 'W4 in the Winchester District Local Plan- been included in the consultation?

This area has been allocated for housing development in the Local Plan, however there is currently nobody living in this designated area.

This stage one consultation gives people, particularly those living close to W4 – land west of Courtenay Road, the chance to give their views on whether this site should form part of a new parish council for the Winchester town area or not.

Why are there different stages of consultation in this Community Governance Review process?

A Community Governance Review has more than one stage of consultation. This staged approach allows for a structured process where residents' initial thoughts shape potential solutions, which are then presented for more detailed public consultation.

Why should I respond?

You can use this opportunity to really influence the future of where you live. Local governance is important because it can impact local decision making and representation. This consultation is not a referendum, but it will help inform the council's decision making, which is why we want to hear from local residents and organisations to ensure that we get this right for the benefit of those living in, and close to, the Winchester town area.

What about the Mayor of Winchester and Winchester's city status going into the future?

Winchester City Council wants to protect Winchester's historic city status, Mayoralty and Coat of Arms. Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire means new councils will be created – they will replace the current district council and county council two tier arrangements and will be new unitary authorities serving populations of around 500,000 people

We know that Winchester's historic city status and the mayor is important to our residents. One way to ensure this continues after local government reorganisation and the formation of the new larger unitary councils, could involve transferring these elements to a new parish council covering the city area. We want to ensure that City status is not lost during Local Government Reorganisation. For example, Rochester lost its historic city status in 1998 following Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and has never regained it. Winchester City Council is committed to ensuring this doesn't happen to Winchester.

Alternatively, in England and Wales, Charter Trustees can be set up to maintain the continuity of a town charter or city charter when the new unitary councils are created (replacing the city council and county council arrangements).

Are other councils undertaking, or currently planning, a Community Governance Review now?

Although this information is not centrally collated and published, it seems that a number of other councils, under the lens of Local Government Reorganisation, will be reviewing their community governance arrangements locally.

In Hampshire, for example, a number of district councils have all recently published their Terms of Reference that triggered a community governance review in areas that include towns without a parish or town council, such as Aldershot and Farnborough. A similar exercise in 2009 saw Salisbury City Council created as a parish-level authority following local government reorganisation in Wiltshire.

How can I respond?

You can:

- Complete our **online consultation questionnaire**: www.winchester.gov.uk/CGR
- Complete a **paper survey**, which can be collected from 10am – 3pm from The City Offices, Winchester City Council, Colebrook Street, Winchester, SO23 9LJ
- Send a written submission to: Community Governance Review, Winchester City Council, Colebrook Street, Winchester, SO23 9LJ

Everyone is also invited to come along to one of our drop-in public engagement sessions to ask your questions and find out more:

- Wednesday 12 November; Guildhall Winchester; 3.00-7.00pm
- Tuesday 18 November; Badger Farm Community Centre; 3.00-7.00pm
- Wednesday 26 November; Henry Beaufort School; 5.00-8.00pm
- Saturday 29 November; Guildhall Winchester; 10.00am-2.00pm

If you need help or support in completing this survey, you can email us at cgr@winchester.gov.uk or telephone **0800 865 4898** and request a call back. The team at Public Perspectives, an independent research organisation who are supporting Winchester City Council with this consultation, will be very happy to help you take part in this consultation over the phone.

When does the consultation close?

This consultation closes at 23:59 on Monday 22 December 2025.

We are a local business/community group/organisation in the Winchester town area and we'd like to know more and to keep our members updated- how can we arrange this?

If you have any questions or would like someone to come and speak to your organisation or group, please email cgr@winchester.gov.uk

What happens next?

Once the consultation closes, the feedback we received will be analysed and evaluated by an independent organisation. This feedback and analysis will inform draft proposals, and we will then consult on these in spring/summer 2026.

How can I keep up to date with the progress of the review?

You can keep up to date with the review by checking our webpage dedicated to the review at: www.winchester.gov.uk/cgr. We will publish up to date information, council reports and any recommendations throughout the process on our website.

When would any changes come into force?

If any new parish council is established, these will most likely be established in April 2027, with a first election held in May 2027.