



## Winchester Councillors' Report September 2026

**Anything but a quiet month!**

Usually, councillors can be confident August will be a quiet month with not many meetings. Generally, parish councils too have a quiet few weeks. Not this year though. The reality of the changes to be brought about by the Local Government Re-organisation are looming up ever more quickly.
The governance of Winchester itself needs to be brought in line with other parts of the district. Without the City Council, the city would be missing out on the lower tier of local government, the parish/town council leaving only the new Mid-Hants District covering the middle third of Hampshire. To fill this missing tier the four inner wards of the city are to become 'parished' raising their own precept and spending this on their own perceived needs.
Work is going on in the Scrutiny committee on a way forward for the future of the old River Park Leisure Centre and its site in North Walls park. There are three options open, each of which carries differing potential advantages and risks.

**Future of Winchester as a City and the Mayoralty**
An issue is developing on the status of Winchester as a city and of the mayoralty. The ending of the City Council casts a shadow on the future status of Winchester as a city, which it has been, without question for much longer than most government organisations. (There is written evidence that Winchester has had a mayor since 1200 and probably since 1190.) The original Royal Charter was mislaid, sadly as the city would have no doubt paid King John handsomely for it at the time. There is a system whereby a charter trustees can be used to maintain city status with trustees drawn from local councillors and can undertake duties such as electing a mayor. Legally convoluted and an additional expense. The ancient privileges should not in our view, be discarded lightly.

**Central Winchester Regeneration**

The first phase of the regeneration has been approved by the Cabinet to be submitted by Jigsaw, the city's development partner, for planning permission early next year. Much of the urban design quality developed in the Supplementary Planning Document as approved in 2018 has been included, although some elements have become outdated. It has been a major effort to reach this stage against what is a severe economic headwind and, in an age, racked by deep economic uncertainties. The fact that Winchester is perceived by the Government as a prosperous area cuts it off from sources of funding. High interest rates reduce the viability of re-development and make some elements impossible to achieve. Inflation in construction costs has had a severe impact too. In many parts of the country the plans for city re-generation schemes have been folded away and put on a high shelf. Despite all this WCC is still moving ahead.

Time is very much not on our side. Once the Winchester district is subsumed into a large authority CWR will become just one of many problems and it may be Andover, Petersfield or wherever are seen as requiring attention. The newly 'parished' town administration of Winchester (see previous paragraph) are not going to be in a position to move this forward. Certain voices have been raised suggesting the project needs to be reviewed again. To re-think the whole project is in many councillors' opinion is in effect to stop the re-development perhaps for decades.

**Food waste Recycling**

The recycling rate in the district is now at 47.3% which is a rise form the 40.4% in the previous reporting period. This rise is attributable to the introduction of food water collection, now complete across the district. This is a significant rise and a step reduction in the residual (grey bin) waste that is sent to incinerators. Instead of being burnt the food waste is used to produce compost for agriculture, thereby reducing the need for imported fertilisers and methane to feed into the national gas grid system.

Margot Power 01962 734167
Russell Gordon -Smith 01962 733219
Clare Pinniger 07790 032349