



Winchester Councillors' Report February 2026

Recycling Survey

Winchester City Council is preparing for future changes in recycling and has released a survey asking for residents' views. The short survey will help the council understand residents' current knowledge about recycling and how much more they're likely to recycle in the future, when more options are available.

At the moment Winchester City Council is responsible for collection, with Hampshire being responsible for disposal. Due to the limited facilities that Hampshire County Council has to process materials, WCC plans to recycle more have always been curtailed.

Hampshire County Council are building a new Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) that will allow the city council to be able to collect a wider range of materials for recycling – such as plastic tubs, pots and trays. It is expected that this will be up and running in 2028.

Going greener faster is a priority for this council, and we want to make sure residents are able to recycle as much as possible. We are keen to hear from people living in all types of accommodation, including flats and shared housing, as well as from residents of all ages over 18. Your views will help us understand both the opportunities and the challenges of expanding recycling.

Residents can complete the survey at www.winchester.gov.uk/recycling-future to provide their feedback on recycling across the Winchester district. The survey is available until midnight on Sunday 8 March.

Food Waste Recycling

The roll out of the food waste collection will be complete by the end of March. The Alresford and Itchen Valley ward should have all received theirs. If your caddy and bin hasn't turned up, please contact your councillors. For those that have had them for some time, don't forget to buy new compostable bags for the kitchen caddy. Nine specialist food waste collection vehicles have been purchased, fuelled by hydrotreated vegetable oil instead of diesel.

One resident suggested all this was a whim of the Liberal Democrat administration, this is not the case: It is the result of a policy established by the last Government and from April 2026, new government regulations will require councils to provide food waste recycling collections. To help with the cost of this, the UK Government is giving the council funding to set up and run the service. This money is specifically for food waste collections and cannot be used for anything else. The exact amount to be paid by the Government is still unknown.

The Food Waste Process

Your food waste will be sent to an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility. AD is a natural process where plant and animal materials (biomass) are broken down by micro-organisms in the absence of air. The AD process begins when biomass is put inside a sealed tank or digester.

This produces a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide, known as biogas, which is then upgraded for use as a source of heat, electricity, or transport fuel. The remaining material from the digestion process (digestate) is rich in nutrients, so it can be used as a fertiliser by local farmers. This option would seem to most people infinitely preferable to the previous options of burning in an incinerator or burying in a landfill.

Developing Budget for 2026 to 2027

The budget for next year is currently under preparation and discussion. The budget will be submitted for approval at the Full Council on February 26th. The budget paper will have proposals for additional savings, spending and investment for the year ahead.

The Projections set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy paper published in November have now been updated and this shows that, although the council's financial position to 2029 is stable, there are increasing forecast deficits in the longer term.

There are likely to be deficits from 2029/30 largely due to the impact of the Government's funding settlement. Some of this includes their long-promised full baseline reset of business rates. Strong business growth in the district over the last decade has mean the area has benefitted from retaining a greater proportion of business rates locally. The reset will see much of this growth shared nationally rather than being retained. This would mean a significant reduction in revenue.

Unknowns to be allowed for include:

- The implementation cost to Winchester of Local Government Reorganisation will not be known until the Government decides the final configuration in March 2026.
- The studies initiated by WCC and other county districts in the county suggest costs for the LGR for the entire Hampshire & Isle of Wight area of between £128m and £132m.)
- The food waste payment was budgeted at 80% of the full cost, as government confirmation of full funding was still pending.
- Although on the plus side, income from extended producer responsibility came in at £1.6 million, which was higher than the budgeted figure of £800,000.

The budget options paper showed a balanced budget for the next two years, with a relatively small deficit in the years that followed. So despite all the unknowns very similar to many previous years.

What does this mean for the council tax payer?

If the budget recommendations are accepted on February 26th, the level of Council Tax at Band D for City Council services for 2026/27 be increased to £168.49 per annum, an increase of £4.83 per annum.

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