



Winchester Councillors' Report March 2026

Central Winchester Regeneration

City Councillors were given on Wednesday a useful briefing on progress of the Central Winchester Regeneration. There has been very considerable work on moving this difficult and very complex project forward. There were public consultations and exhibitions in the Guildhall and at the Nutshell Theatre which were very well attended. The information panels of plans and architects perspectives are now on the website: www.winchesterregeneration.co.uk/

Please look at the plans and ideas contained within them and leave your comments.

The City Council's vision for Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR), is for a mixed-use, sustainable, pedestrian-friendly quarter that reflects the distinctive character of the city centre, set within attractive open spaces. Working with our development partner, Jigsaw – Partnerships and Places, the council is proposing to deliver a wider choice of shops, an hotel, restaurants, cafés, and office and creative spaces across the centre of Winchester alongside new homes, community, cultural spaces.

There is an imaginative approach to creating really good public spaces. The regeneration site includes Kings Walk, Friarsgate and the bus station. The regeneration of this area of Winchester would increase footfall in the city centre as a whole and attract shoppers, whilst boosting Winchester's reputation both in the UK and globally, allowing the city and wider district to become a more powerful destination and a hub for people and businesses across the South of England.

New housing within the city centre will help to meet demand for homes across the district. The development will include homes designed to encourage young people and graduates of our universities and colleges to stay in the city, adding to our economy and – in particular – driving innovation and entrepreneurial businesses.

The planning and design are part of the story, but the mention must be made of the successful work undertaken to attract the £120 million investment to actually carry out the construction. All this in a time of distinctly pessimistic economics.

Selection criteria for extending wild verges

Some parishes, and residents have asked if they could be part of the wild verges program. We are looking to extent this next year. If you are aware of any particular verges that could possibly be included in the project (close to existing wildflower verges for ease of transporting the cut and collect machine, large enough to be viable, no highways safety concerns and good potential seedbank etc.) we are happy to take a look at them for inclusion.

Budget Agreement

The Winchester budget is now agreed. Two amendments were tabled during the debate. One proposed to spend £130,000 of reserves on a river catchment partnership officer. This proposal lacked clear outcomes and ignored the difficulties of recruiting in this field, furthermore it would duplicate work already being done by other organisations; we were unable to support this. The other amendment proposed spending £1 m of reserves on a one year only support for restaurants, bars and pubs. The distribution would be according to the amount of business rates paid. Hence the vast majority any such funding would go to those companies with the biggest rates bills, Nando's and Mc Donalds for example rather than struggling rural pubs. There was no detail on the methodology of how this would be achieved; it did not have general support from councillors.

It is worth explaining that the development of the budget takes some months and during scrutiny meetings (several) and the Cabinet meeting there is plenty of time for budget amendments and serious economic ideas to be incorporated. In our view a better way to proceed than to submit cobbled together ideas at the last moment that actually have unintended and indeed harmful consequences.

Improvements to Waste Recycling

HCC have confirmed that they will be building a new Materials Recovery Facility to accommodate the full suite of Simpler Recycling materials, which includes plastic pots, tubs, tray, cartons, co-mingled glass and recycling, and separated paper and card. The Project team have started working on a delivery timetable to accommodate these changes by Spring/Summer 2028 when the new MRF is expected to become operational.

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