



Winchester City Council February 2025

Devolution Confirmed!

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will become a Strategic Authority

Elections for the Mayor will be held in May 2026. Elections for Hampshire County Councillors that were due in May 2025 will be deferred.

District Councils are required to submit plans for Unitary Authorities to cover Hampshire and Isle of Wight are required by Autumn 2025. The geographical areas of each Unitary are unknown, but the number of parishes to each Unitary Councillor will be about equivalent to 6 -7 current parishes, but the number of voters will be the determining factor, as with any other boundary realignment.

Current thinking is that Unitaries would be centred on an economic centre, e.g. Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester, Rushmoor Basingstoke corridor. The Isle of Wight remaining special and separate. Current district boundaries would be disregarded, which would remove many anomalies.

Meantime!

Winchester Council will continue business as usual, despite the pressure on resources necessary to be at the table on devolution matters. All approved matters will be taken forward, the only plans that need to be re-examined as a result of this change are those relating the transformation of our business processes. A good example would be the planning system where significant investment would be necessary. Infrastructure. To invest in a system that may be redundant following the creation of unitaries may be unwise.

The amount of unallocated CIL funds are about £11 m., it looks likely that this will remain attached to the current area of WCC, but allocating those funds will become more difficult as unitarisation approaches, requiring sign off by the Secretary of State.

A Cautionary Note.

The pressure on budgets arising from Social Care and Children's Services are not removed by devolution. It is likely that any discretionary spending by local authorities will be vulnerable. An example would be public lavatories. WCC are receptive to transferring such assets to more local authorities.

Whence Parish & Town Councils?

No directive has been given by HMG, but we can see that the current system should be reviewed, and WCC has set aside funds for consultation around this matter, titled Governance Review.. If you are invited to such meetings please attend. The Unitary model will leave a big gap between parishes and your unitary councillor.

Martin Tod, leader of WCC and Chairman of the District Councils Leaders Group has offered to attend parish meetings if it would help, given the number of parishes that we expect to take up this offer it may be another member of cabinet, or parishes may wish to meet with him as a group.



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Winchester Town Forum as already asked to become a Town Council and those of our parishes that are Winchester facing may choose to join them.

You may find this definition of the area covered from some ago time of interest, from the Hampshire Records Office catalogue.

‘Alresford Rural District Council formed 1894, dissolved 1932, responsibilities transferred to Winchester Rural District Council, 1974-date.

Alresford Rural District comprises parishes as follows: New Alresford, Old Alresford, Beauworth, Bighton, Bramdean, Brown Candover, Chilton Candover, Cheriton, Godsfield, Hinton Ampner, Itchen Stoke, Kilmiston, Northington, Ovington, Ropley, Bishops Sutton, Swarraton, Tichborne, West Tisted.’

Looks a bit big to us.

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