



Meeting	Winchester Town Forum
Date and Time	Thursday, 11th September, 2025 at 6.30 pm.
Venue	Walton Suite, Winchester Guildhall and streamed live on YouTube at www.youtube.com/winchestercc

Note: This meeting is being held in person at the location specified above.
Members of the public should note that a live video feed of the meeting will be available from the council's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/winchestercc) during the meeting.

A limited number of seats will be made available at the above named location however attendance must be notified to the council at least 3 working days before the meeting. Please note that priority will be given to those wishing to attend and address the meeting over those wishing to attend and observe.

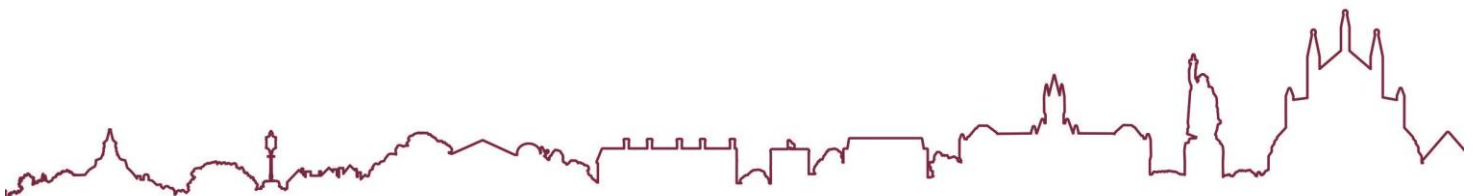
AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To record the names of apologies given
2. **Disclosures of Interests**
To receive any disclosure of interests from Councillors or Officers in matters to be discussed.

Note: Councillors are reminded of their obligations to declare disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs), other registerable interests (ORIs) and non-registerable interests (NRIs) in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.

If you require advice, please contact the appropriate Democratic Services Officer, prior to the meeting.

3. **Chairperson's Announcements**
4. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 June 2025** (Pages 5 - 14)
That the minutes of the meeting be signed as a correct record.



5. **Public Participation**

To receive and note the questions asked and statements made from members of the public on issues relating to the responsibility of this Forum.

Members of the public and visiting councillors may speak at the Forum, provided they have registered to speak three working days in advance. Please contact Democratic Services **by 5pm on Friday, 5 September 2025** via democracy@winchester.gov.uk or (01962) 848 264 to register to speak and for further details.

6. **Winchester Bus Services (Verbal Update)**

7. **Winchester Town Account Financial Planning 2025/26 (WTF340)** (Pages 15 - 24)

8. **Informal Groups - Verbal Update**

Optional: The Chairs of any of the informal groups may briefly update the Forum on any recent developments from their group.

9. **Work Programme 2025/26** (Pages 25 - 26)

To note the current version of the Work Programme for 2025/26.

Laura Taylor
Chief Executive

All of the Council's publicly available agendas, reports and minutes are available to view and download from the Council's [Website](#) and are also open to inspection at the offices of the council. As part of our drive to minimise our use of paper we do not provide paper copies of the full agenda pack at meetings. We do however, provide a number of copies of the agenda front sheet at the meeting which contains the QR Code opposite. Scanning this code enables members of the public to easily access all of the meeting papers on their own electronic device. Please hold your device's camera or QR code App over the QR Code so that it's clearly visible within your screen and you will be redirected to the agenda pack



3 September 2025

Agenda Contact: Claire Buchanan, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01962 848 438 Email: cbuchanan@winchester.gov.uk

**With the exception of exempt items, Agenda, reports and previous minutes are available on the Council's [Website](#)*

MEMBERSHIP

Chairperson: Westwood (Liberal Democrats)

Vice-Chairperson: Eve (Liberal Democrats)

Liberal Democrats

Aron
Batho
Becker
Learney
Morris
Murphy
Reach
Scott
Tippett-Cooper
Thompson
Tod
Wise

Conservatives

Greens

Quorum = 5 members

The two County Council Members representing the Winchester Town area are invited as observers.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public question and comment session is available at 6.30pm for a 15-minute period. There are a few limitations on the questions you can ask. These mainly relate to current applications (including grants), personal cases and confidential matters.

To reserve your place to speak, you are asked to register with Democratic Services three clear working days prior to the meeting –Please contact Democratic Services via democracy@winchester.gov.uk or (01962) 848 264 to register to speak and for further details.

VOTING

- apart from the Chairperson, every Member has one vote when a matter before the meeting requires a decision.
- in the event of an equality of votes, the Chairperson may exercise a casting vote and that vote may be exercised in any way seen fit.
- a Member may abstain from voting, or vote differently from how they may have indicated during the debate, without further explanation.

The way each Member voted will not be recorded in the minutes, unless a motion to have a Recorded Vote has been passed.

Disabled Access

Disabled access is normally available, but please phone Democratic Services on 01962 848 264 or email democracy@winchester.gov.uk three clear working days prior to the meeting to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place.

FILMING AND BROADCAST NOTIFICATION

This meeting will be recorded and broadcast live from the Council's YouTube channel. The meeting may also be recorded and broadcast by the press and members of the public – please see the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution for further information, which is available to view on the [Council's website](#). Please note that the video recording is subtitled, but you may have to enable your device to see them (advice on how to do this is on the meeting page).

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Thursday, 12 June 2025

Attendance:

Councillors

Westwood (Chairperson)

Aron
Batho
Becker
Eve
Learney
Morris

Reach
Scott
Thompson (from Item 8)
Tod (from Item 8)
Tippett-Cooper
Wise

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Murphy

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Horrill

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Laming

[Full video recording](#)

1. **APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON FOR THE 2025/26 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Westwood be elected Chairperson and
Councillor Eve be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2025/26
municipal year

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Murphy. Apologies for lateness were also received from Councillors Thompson and Tod.

3. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures made at this meeting.

4. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements made at this meeting.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2025**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 January 2025 be approved and adopted

6. **TO NOTE THE DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM AS SET OUT BELOW:**

RESOLVED:

That the date of future meetings for 2025/26, as set out on the agenda, be noted.

7. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Five members of the public/groups and one visiting councillor addressed the Forum.

Ian Tait, Richard Spalding, Kate Needham and Stephanie Danby and Jo Ashwell on behalf of Chesil Theatre spoke during public participation. A summary of their comments are set out below.

In addition, Patrick Davies and Councillor Horrill spoke during item 8 (Response to the request of Winchester Town Forum for a CGR) and a summary of their comments are set out under the relevant minute below.

Ian Tait

Raised concerns regarding the Winchester River Park redevelopment and the former River Park Leisure Centre site, highlighting the following points:

- Stated that he was reminded during the Winchester Park Run of a land transaction considered by Cabinet on 9th March 2022 regarding the River Park Leisure Centre and Southampton University, whereby he had spoken in support of the proposals and welcomed the link to the University.
- Mr Tait recalled that at the time the Leader had welcomed his support and explained it was not appropriate to delay the decision, emphasising that future extensive collaboration consultation would be undertaken by the University.
- Mr Tait then referred to the recent statement of the Leader dated 20 March 2025 which confirmed that the University was not going head and were considering their options.
- Mr Tait made reference to feedback he had received from several people at the University and questioned the dialogue that had taken place with them.

He asserted that consultation could only achieve so much but action was now critical given the disgraceful state of the old leisure centre building.

- He reported that information on the public notice board regarding the site was four years out of date and he had been unable to find information from the council.
- He made referenced to the successful Laundry Art Project which drew residents and visitors to Winchester.
- In conclusion, Mr Tait stated that in 2022 solicitors had offered assurance that the covenant on the land had been looked at in detail but three years later nothing had been done which he deemed unacceptable.

In response, Councillor Becker thanked Mr Tait for raising this matter in a timely manner as the council were imminently due to be issuing a press release inviting people to a public engagement session on 26th June, at 3pm to 7pm in the Courtyard, Winchester Guildhall. The session would seek public opinion and ideas regarding a planned process for the future of the site and would be widely advertised via regular channels, including the council's website once information was released on 13 June.

Richard Spalding (on behalf of Winchester Rotary)

- Mr Spalding sought approval to install a peace pole in the soroptimist garden at the back of Abbey House.
- He made reference to the history of peace poles around the world, with the initiative originating in Japan in 1954, with few in existence in the UK.
- He highlighted the standard wording contained on the peace pole which was written in seven languages.
- It was hoped that Winchester could be the first city in the South of England to erect a peace pole, with Abbey Gardens considered to be the best location as Winchester promotes peace, was a City of Mayors for peace, had the longest-serving mayoralty outside London, and was a City of Sanctuary.
- Mr Spalding stated that Abbey Gardens was the mayor's garden, and the soroptimists had agreed to the installation in their garden behind the house. A location which would provide an appropriately serene and discreet, yet visible and tangible, focus for Winchester's goal to support peace.
- Other benefits included helping to spread the culture of peace, especially to children, who along with schools, could visit to initiate conversations and undertake projects on peace. International visitors could also enjoy this with its seven languages, which would promote Winchester.
- Mr Spalding suggested that the next Mayors for Peace commemoration in early August would be a highly appropriate target for its installation and had shared images of what the pole might look like in the soroptimist garden upon installation.

In response, the Chairperson thanked Mr Spalding for attending and presenting the proposal, noting the support from both past and present Mayors, and acknowledging previous discussions with officers and councillors.

It was agreed that the Town Forum's Climate and Open Space Informal Group, which monitors and makes recommendations about open spaces within the town

area, would progress the matter and aimed to provide a proposal for the next meeting.

Kate Needham

- She expressed concern regarding urban tree and hedgerow management, specifically highlighting the removal and cutting of hedgerow along the footpath between Priors Dean Road and Andover Road.
- It was noted that the hedgerow had been removed during peak bird nesting season.
- She emphasised that urban hedgerows were extremely important as they supported a multitude of wildlife, helped to mitigate climate change, clean the air, and prevent localised flooding and she wished to prevent similar incidents.
- It was highlighted that the council responded to concerns by stating that overhanging branches had been reported by members of the public and that the work may have been necessary for safety reasons. If this was the case, the offending branches could have been identified and removed, or cut back a little along a 'wide path'.
- A bird survey was reportedly carried by the contractor. She stated that local people familiar with the path and had seen nesting birds, were not content with the reasons for the cutting and removal of hedgerow and believed that if a robust procedure had been followed, involving the council's natural environment team, this habitat would have been protected.
- In conclusion, Mrs Needham added that she had written to IdVerde 12 days prior but had received no reply and questioned the policies and procedures that were in place to justify the action taken, instead of protecting important urban habitats and suggested that a performance review be undertaken.

In response, Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for the Climate and Nature Emergency) highlighted the importance the council placed on protecting hedges and trees, but acknowledged that on rare occasion, works were deemed necessary. The path in question was frequently used by pedestrians and cyclists accessing Henry Beaufort Secondary School, Kings Barton and Harestock Primary School, thus works needed to be carried out during school holidays to minimise disruption and avoid lengthy detours for regular users.

It was reported that contractors had carried out nesting bird activity checks in the weeks prior to and on the morning of the works commencing, with work log evidence being taken throughout, indicating no bird activity in the areas that were cutback which had been further confirmed by professional ecologists.

In conclusion, Councillor Learney stated that the council were content that necessary checks had been undertaken and the works were justified but agreed that a more formal procedure should be investigated in respect of allowing works during this time of year.

Stephanie Danby (Chairman of Chesil Theatre), with Jo Ashwell (Co-Trustee of Chesil Theatre) also in attendance

- The Chesil Theatre was an entirely voluntary community theatre run as a charity, producing up to eight productions per year. In addition, they conducted "Chesil Outreach Out," where they take drama out to community

groups in churches and similar venues and "Community Outreach In," where they bring groups, such as Hampshire County Council children in care, into the theatre to spend a day learning about their work.

- The theatre has a vibrant youth theatre. They run the Chesil Take Creative Writing Competition, which, although national, involved large numbers of people across the Winchester district, with the aim to do more of what they do really well.
- The planning consent received for their extension in November 2024 was welcomed. The theatre now owned the freehold of the church location and had acquired the freehold of the land next door, which was currently a derelict house.
- Reference was made to planned improvements including, improving audience amenities, a performance studio/community room for community use and a new planned entrance. It was also hoped they could address other issues such as making facilities wheelchair accessible and improvements to separate dressing rooms for children in performance
- Project costs were estimated at £2.1m, with over £1m raised to date, a further £1.1m required. Stephanie thanked the council for its support and the grant funding of £90,000. Once built the theatre would operate sustainably without revenue grants and was financially well managed, making a surplus year on year.
- The work of the youth theatre was highlighted and details of the fundraising capital campaign that commenced in March were shared.
- In conclusion, forum members were invited to contact Stephanie Danby if they wished to attend a guided tour of the theatre.

The Chairperson thanked Stephanie Danby and Jo Ashwell for attending and providing the opportunity for a guided tour. The forum supported and acknowledged Chesil Theatre as a valued asset in the city and as a fantastic facility offering a fun, diverse and interesting programme to many people across the Winchester district.

The Chairperson conveyed the forum's support to help raise funds for the build of the new development proposed and acknowledged the continued support of the ward members for St Michael.

8. **RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST OF WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM FOR A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW (REPORT WTF339 AND PRESENTATION)**

Patrick Davies addressed the Forum on this item. His comments are summarised below:

- He expressed that the proposals presented were expensive, confusing and at the wrong time. He considered the costs outlined in the presentation slides to be "potentially devastating" for people living in the Winchester town area. If established, a town council precept charge could significantly increase to potentially £400 per annum from £90 per annum (for a Band D property).
- He suggested a new level of bureaucracy, involving paid staff and offices for the new setup would bring confusion, which would contradict the stated

purpose of local government reform, meant to "clarify and streamline local government services".

- The reform aims to achieve this clarification and streamlining with one unitary authority in place of the current county and district councils. The timing of this particular exercise he deemed "absurd".
- Mr Davies stated that although the January meeting initiated the current exercise, there had been silence for five months. The report claimed that the full council had decided to accept the forum's request, but he stated that this had never been to full council.
- He considered that there was a need for clarity on how local government services in a new unitary authority covering Winchester would be settled, which was currently unclear.
- He stated that the forward plan going to the next week's Cabinet indicated that the council's "first and final submission" would go to their meeting on 25th September. However, there was nothing until then apart from a brief oral update from the Leader at the last Cabinet meeting.
- Mr Davies believed it was premature to proceed in the way suggested in the report until the shape and size of the new unitary council was known and that this should be the council's priority.
- In conclusion, Mr Davies considered that proceeding as recommended would cause hopeless confusion amongst the public and at significant expense.

Councillor Horrill addressed the Forum on this item. In summary, Councillor Horrill made reference to the following points:

- Councillor Horrill questioned why the current presentation suggested a governance review beyond the scope of the forum's earlier request and noted the same matter on the agenda at the Licensing and Regulation Committee next week, specifically referencing item 11.2 in the papers.
- She expressed concern that the devolution and local government reform process, as indicated in the papers, could create a divergence in local governance within the Winchester district.
- She stated that such inconsistency could lead to disparities in service delivery, the level of community representation, and the overall sense of local identity between parished and unparished parts of the district.
- Councillor Horrill acknowledged the message that those not currently parished wished to become parished and ultimately form a town council, but stated that it was not clear what benefits an extended geography for the town council would bring to new residents or the parished areas intended for inclusion.
- She cited examples from other authorities where similar processes had led to significant increases in resident precepts.
- She questioned if the proposal was "a land grab for a larger town area" or politically motivated to ensure the city's voice was still heard in a larger unitary authority
- Councillor Horrill stated that if it was a genuine concern for the residents of the district, the papers needed to be enhanced significantly, and it was hoped that the officer team would ensure a level playing field as the process continued.

- She believed that those being asked to consider joining the extended Winchester area were not being given anything of meaning to assess that offer and questioned if they even wanted to consider it.
- In conclusion, Councillor Horrill stated that there was a lack of understanding at parish council's of what the changes would mean on top of devolution and local government reform.

In response to the points raised by Patrick Davies and Councillor Horrill, Councillor Becker (Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities) reminded the forum that this was the beginning of a process to decide if a new town council should be established. She clarified the significant range of precepts within the district which varied greatly and set out the Community Governance Review process; the timing of which had been determined by the Government, with the town forum impacted by local government reorganisation.

Councillor Becker introduced the report emphasising that the review process was consultative and provided the opportunity for residents to express how they wished to be governed; it was not a land grab, nor political. The process would engage with communities regarding the historic boundaries of the town to determine if they wished to join a new town council or remain within their current parish area, such as Kings Barton.

Furthermore, Councillor Becker stated that the review would comprise of many detailed engagement opportunities with residents and parishes to enable involvement in the process, including the draft and final terms of reference, as well as various committee meetings and parish briefings.

The Director (Legal) gave a presentation following the request of the forum at its last meeting on 23 January 2025, to consider a Community Governance Review (CGR) with a view to establishing a town council for central Winchester. The presentation highlighted key areas including, governance arrangements and the areas under review, consultation and engagement, finances, funding and assets, the Winchester City status, mayoralty and coat of arms, the initial next steps and proposed action plan.

In addition, the report set out the framework to steer the CGR process noting that within the constitution, the duties and functions relating to CGR's under the Local Government Public Health Act 2007, are the responsibility of the Licensing and Regulation Committee, with the exception of the making of the final order which would be subject to Full Council decision. At its meeting on 16 June 2025, the Licensing and Regulation Committee would initially be asked to acknowledge the potential for a CGR and establish a cross-party member working group to oversee the process, with additional committee meetings to be scheduled as the process progressed.

The forum proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by the Cabinet Member, Director (Legal) and relevant officers, as summarised below.

- (a) The pathway for the forum's continued engagement in the Community Governance Review (CGR) process.

It was noted the forum would appoint members to the working group that was to be established by the Licensing and Regulation Committee. In addition, it was within the remit of the forum to establish its own informal group to discuss issues pertinent to the process.

- (b) It was suggested that CGR could become a standing item on the agenda for future meetings to receive progress updates. It was agreed that the method for this engagement needed to be discussed further to ensure an appropriate process was in place.
- (c) The potential relationship between a future town council and the Winchester BID (Business Improvement District) and its potential was raised, considering that the BID was funded through business rates and not expected to be part of the town council's funding.

It was reported that the BID process would not necessarily be affected by the creation of a town council, as it was not funded via the precept. No changes or implications from this process were envisaged. The BID would have the opportunity to participate in CGR to ensure its voice was heard as part of the consideration.

- (d) Could any recommendation or outcome reached by this council through the established process for the CGR be overturned or "unpicked" by government intervention?

In response, it was noted that the government could ultimately create legislation to prevent the formation of any new parish or town councils, as this was within their authority, although this outcome was considered unlikely.

- (e) If a town council for Winchester were not established, would all services, otherwise handled by a town council, then become the responsibility of a new unitary council, potentially with councillors who lived outside of Winchester with limited knowledge of the area?

It was confirmed that the default position would be that everything would transfer to the new unitary authority. This situation would still necessitate resolving issues related to the mayoralty and city status, possibly through a charter trustee position, which was described as a holding arrangement for the heraldic assets of the city.

It was highlighted that residents of the city's unparished areas would face a democratic deficit with no local representation comparable to parished areas.

- (f) Members recognised the fundamental purpose of the CGR was to ensure that residents living in the five unparished parts of the city of Winchester received the same level of representation as all other residents in the district and considered that this needed to be addressed.

During debate, the forum made reference to a number of points including:

- (i) Precept charges – these would be dependent on the services a town council would choose to deliver.
- (ii) Special expense charges that would apply should a town council not be established.
- (iii) The opportunity to review boundary anomalies.
- (iv) The need to expedite matters with the risk that the decision-making powers of the council may end prior to the completion of the CGR process.
- (v) The scope of public consultation, respecting the views of residents and the importance of including existing parished areas in the consultation process.
- (vi) The principle of devolution.
- (vii) The right to equal representation
- (viii) The preservation of the Mayoralty and City Status.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report, specifically the agreement to undertake the requested Community Governance Review (CGR) for the central Winchester area, be noted.
- 2. That the governance arrangements established for the initial stages of the review, including the role of the Licensing and Regulation Committee and the formation of the Members Task and Finish Group, incorporating Town Forum representation, be noted; and
- 3. That the presentation be received, and the comments raised by the committee, as summarised above, be noted.

9. **INFORMAL GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Chairperson announced that due to the start of the municipal year and changes to the position of Chair and memberships of the Informal Groups, there were no verbal updates at this time. However, these would resume at the next meeting in September.

10. **TOWN FORUM INFORMAL GROUP APPOINTMENTS AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2025/26 (WTF338)**

The Forum considered the work programme and its appointments to the Winchester Town Informal Groups for 2025/26, as set out in the report and its appendices.

RESOLVED:

1. That the items listed in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report be noted, the 2025/26 work programme be approved and authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Chairperson, to further set the detailed work programme for the municipal year.
2. That the informal groups, as set out in paragraph 11.2 of the report, be re-appointed for 2025/26.
3. That an additional informal group, namely 'Winchester Town Forum (Community Governance Review) Informal Group', be established for 2025/26.
4. That the membership of the Forum's informal groups for 2025/26 be approved as stated above, and appointed as set out below:
 - (i) Winchester Town Forum (Streets and Spaces) Informal Group
Cllrs: Murphy (Ch), Aron, Batho, Eve, Tod, Thompson and Westwood
Lead Officer: C Williams
 - (ii) Winchester Town Forum (Climate and Open Space) Informal Group
Cllrs: Eve (Ch), Batho, Murphy and Learney
Lead Officer: R Smith
 - (iii) Winchester Town Forum (Account) Informal Group
Cllrs Learney (Ch), Aron, Batho and Morris
Lead Officer: D Kennedy
 - (iv) Winchester Town Forum (Culture) Informal Group
Cllrs: Tippet-Cooper (Ch), Eve, Morris and Thompson
Lead Officer: A Gostelow
 - (v) Winchester Town Forum (Grants and Community Empowerment) Informal Group
Cllrs: Aron (Ch), Batho, Becker, Eve and Wise
Lead Officer: S Lincoln
 - (vi) Winchester Town Forum (Community Governance Review) Informal Group (new group established for 2025/26)
Cllrs: Batho, Eve, Morris and Thompson (Chair tbc)
Lead Officer: G John

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.00 pm

Chairperson

REPORT TITLE: WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT FINANCIAL PLANNING
2025/26 (INITIAL DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS AND
ASSUMPTIONS FOR 2025/26 TO 2029/30)

11 SEPTEMBER 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Kelsie Learney, Cabinet Member for Climate
and Nature Emergency

Contact Officer: Darren Kennedy Tel No: 01962 848464 Email
dkennedy@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

To provide an update of the current financial position of the Winchester Town Account and financial projections over the medium and long term. This supports the development of a refreshed financial strategy and final budget recommendations in January 2026.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Town Forum notes the financial projections in Appendix 1, and agrees the budget timetable for 2026/27.

IMPLICATIONS:1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The responsibilities of the Town Forum are delivered within wider goals of the Council Plan. The Town Forum focuses on the themes in the plan by delivering targeted services.

2 WINCHESTER VISION PRINCIPLE

- 2.1 Any budget proposals will be assessed against the Winchester Vision.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Identifying and analysing the financial risks and pressures helps to ensure the effective prioritisation of resources in order to deliver the Council Strategy and maintain a balanced budget.

4 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This is an update report and as such there are no identified legal or procurement implications.

5 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any workforce implications are likely to form part of the Transformation Challenge – TC25 project. No additional resources have been identified at this stage of scoping the work except for the grants review programme which has a district budget allocated as part of the wider district review of the grants programme.

6 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Where any projects have an impact on property or assets the impact will be identified and presented to the Forum in the next set of reports at project level.

7 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 7.1 Each project will have a consultation and communication plan where appropriate.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Each project will have a consultation and communication plan where appropriate.

9 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 9.1 None at the time of writing this report. Each project will have a consultation and communication plan where appropriate.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 No personal data was used in the preparation of this budget paper.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT

11.1 The main source of funding for baseline recurring expenditure is the town precept. As a stable source of funding overall financial risk is therefore relatively low but consideration must be taken of the requirement for the town to keep within government referendum limits (a restriction not currently applicable to parish councils).

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>Failure to set a balanced budget over the medium term.</i>	<i>Financial projections are shown up until 2029/30 and the scenario planning highlights the potential sensitivities. Planning over a longer period will help to ensure understanding of the scale of the financial challenges and early planning enables enough lead in time for the implementation of the budget options.</i>	<i>Long term strategic planning. Innovative funding streams. Transformational efficiency savings.</i>
<i>Council's service priorities are not reflected in the budget.</i>	<i>The budget planning process, including the process of outcome based budgeting and the informal account group meetings which review the detailed budgets and strategy.</i>	<i>Ensure the prioritisation of resources to best meet the outcomes of the authority.</i>
<i>High levels of contractual inflation and the continuation of current precept referendum limits.</i>	<i>Medium term financial planning and sensitivity analysis highlighting the challenges posed by high inflation.</i>	<i>Transformational efficiency savings.</i>

12 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background

12.1 A revision of the terms of reference for the Winchester Town Forum (WTF) in 2007 gave the Forum a greater role in developing the Town Account Budget. To help it fulfil this role, the Town Forum set up an informal member group to give early consideration to budget setting issues.

- 12.2 The overall aim of the Medium-Term Financial Plan is to provide the Town Forum with early consideration of the current financial projections, any possible impacts from Government consultations, and any other possible financial implications in respect of the Town Account Budget.
- 12.3 The Medium-Term Financial projections will be influenced by actions within the Council's control and external factors. A sensitivity analysis, showing a range of possible scenarios is included for consideration.
- 12.4 The district budget setting process is currently underway and any resulting options will be included for consideration within the Town budget setting process.
- 12.5 The core budget timetable remains in line with previous years, with initial budget proposals considered at November Town Forum and final recommendations made at January Town Forum.
- 12.6 In accordance with Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 – "Special Expenses" are levied by the Council to cover the costs of local services in the Winchester Town area which elsewhere would be dealt with by parish councils, as there is no parish council for the Town area of Winchester.
- 12.7 In January 2024 the town forum recognised that the financial risks associated with the town account supported an increase to the target reserve level from 10% to 15% of net baseline expenditure. In order to support this increase and budget pressures highlighted during the budget setting process, the precept was recommended to increase by 5.5% in 2025/26. This was supported by Council in February 2025.
- 12.8 During the 2024/25 budget process the town forum identified four key budget review areas to be brought forward to help address this and WTF319, presented to June 2023 Town Forum, gave a timetable for how these reviews would be presented back to the town forum for decisions. There is one review which has been carried into the 2026/27 budget process: the review of Cemeteries.
- 12.9 A corporate governance review has commenced in order to determine whether to set up a Town Council from April 2027. The budget projections shown in Appendix 1 are based on the current town account which will remain in place for 2026/27 budget setting.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 12.10 The closing town CIL reserve balance stood at £827k at the end of March 2025, representing all billed income less expenditure.
- 12.11 The following budgets and commitments are currently planned to be funded from Town CIL, totalling £553k and leaving £274k of CIL remaining to be allocated:

- a) North Walls Pavilion £495k
- b) Abbots Barton and Hyde Scouts Facility £50k
- c) KGV Park Plan £8k

12.12 The principles for spending the Winchester Town Forum's share of CIL were approved in November 2016 (see WTF245), in order to provide for the community led improvement of the environment and infrastructure in the Winchester Town.

12.13 Based on historic receipts around £150k to £200k of town CIL is expected per annum. There are risks around relying on this funding as reductions in development in the town area or changes to the CIL scheme could significantly impact on future receipts. As such this future forecast is used for planning purposes but is not to be committed to schemes as certain funding.

Updated Medium Term Forecasts

12.14 The town accounts group met in August to review the latest forecasts and to start planning the focus of budget preparations.

12.15 The budget forecast shown in Appendix 1 has been updated to reflect:

- a) The latest inflation forecast of 3% per annum from 2026/27.
- b) The final precept increase of 5.5% for 2025/26, up from a budgeted 3%.
- c) Forecasts now reflect the 2024/25 outturn and revised capital programme profiling/timing.

12.16 The refreshed forecasts show that based on current estimates the target reserve balance of 15% of net expenditure can now be met. However, it is noted that this is before any additional expenditure pressures.

Identifying Resources

12.17 **Winchester Town Precept** – The 2025/26 tax base is 15,142.60 with a precept of £90.08.

- The Council Tax Referendum limits for 2026/27 will be announced alongside the settlement. For modelling purposes it is currently anticipated that this will remain at up to 3% for lower tier authorities.
- Referendum limits prevent the Council increasing Council Tax above the Government's advised level, except with a referendum. Whilst parish tax amounts are currently excluded from these calculations the Winchester Town tax is included.
- Appendix 1 shows the financial projections up until 2029/30, including illustrative increases in the precept of 3% per annum.

12.18 **Fees and Charges** are reviewed on an annual basis and feed into the budget setting process. The key existing fees and charges relating to the Town Account are:

- Cemeteries – an income budget of just under £150k supports annual expenditure of just over £245k.
- Open Spaces (including sports pitches and tennis courts) – expenditure of c£1.1m per annum is supported by income of just under £150k.

12.19 The following central case assumptions have been used in the financial forecast shown in Appendix 1:

	2026/2027 Forecast	2027/2028 Forecast	2028/2029 Forecast	2029/2030 Forecast
<u>Assumptions:</u>				
Contract inflation	3%	3%	3%	3%
Percentage increase in tax	3%	3%	3%	3%
Tax Base	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%

12.20 The sensitivity of the above assumptions is as follows:

- a) Contract Inflation is around £7k per 1%. If inflation were 4% for 2026/27 then this would cost an additional £7k per annum. If inflation remained higher than forecasts for longer than one year then the impact would be cumulative, so 4% inflation in 2026/27 and 2027/28 would give a cumulative cost increase of £14k by the end of 2027/28 (£7k in 2026/27 and £14k in 2027/28).
- b) A 1% precept increase generates additional funding of c£1k per annum.
- c) A 1.2% tax base increase generates additional funding of c£16k per annum. Whilst 1.2% is a reasonable long term forecast increase per annum, there can be significant year-on-year deviations to this average.

Capital Expenditure

12.21 Capital expenditure is either funded directly from the Town Account Earmarked Reserve, external funding such as CIL, or through the General Fund and repaid over the life of the asset (along with interest).

12.22 In January 2017 (WTF250) the Town Forum approved a strategy to fund the long term requirements of the play area refurbishment from the Town Account Earmarked Reserve. Play area refurbishments in the town make up the largest proportion of town capital expenditure.

12.23 The following budgets are currently included within the capital programme:

- i. Changing Pavilion North Walls - funded by Town CIL of £495k and S106 Open Space funding of £179k.

- ii. Play Area Refurbishments - £460k from 2025/26 to 2029/30.
- iii. CIL project budgets for KGV Park Plan, with £8k of budget remaining for 2025/26.

Reserves

- 12.24 The Winchester Town Account earmarked reserve is available to support planned one-off expenditure over the medium term as well as a contingency balance of 15% of the total annual net expenditure which is set aside to deal with any urgent / unexpected requirements.
- 12.25 Many of the capital budget forecasts listed in 11.22 above, particularly the significant programme of play area refurbishments are planned to be funded from the Town reserve. It is therefore important that long term planning ensures funding is in place to support these projects.
- 12.26 It should be noted that the forecast reserve balance shown in Appendix 1 does fluctuate on a year-by-year basis and individual end of year balances are impacted by 'lumpy' one-off expenditure such as the play area refurbishments.

13 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 13.1 Other options were considered in last year's budget process leading to the focus on four key budget review areas. This paper gives a progress update and refresh of the medium-term financial forecasts. Alternative options will be considered and noted in this year's budget consultation process, with an options paper due at November Town Forum meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

Winchester Town Account Budget for 2025/26 - January 2025

Winchester Town Account Medium Term Financial Position (Budget Options) – November 2024

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Projections

This page is intentionally left blank

WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT - Budget 2025/26

	2025/2026 Forecast	2026/2027 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast	2028/29 Forecast	2029/30 Forecast
<u>Assumptions:</u>					
Contract inflation	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Utilities	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Percentage increase in tax	5.5%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Tax Base	15,143	15,324	15,508	15,694	15,883
	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Cost of Services</u>					
<u>Recurring Budgets:</u>					
Allotments	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)
Bus Shelter Cleaning / Maintenance / New Provision					
Cemeteries	91,199	95,886	100,719	105,704	110,845
Christmas Lights	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
Neighbourhood Service Officers (Contribution)	45,000	45,000	45,000	45,000	45,000
Footway Lighting	32,607	33,536	34,513	35,538	36,614
Grants and Vision Delivery	60,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Support Costs for Grant Scheme	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Maintenance Work to Council Owned Bridges	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500
Night Bus Contribution	3,500				
Public Conveniences (Contribution)	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Recreation Grounds & Open Spaces	920,651	956,624	983,086	1,010,052	1,037,539
Tennis Court Improvements	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000
Town Forum Support	17,500	17,500	17,500	17,500	17,500
<u>One-off Budgets:</u>					
Additional grant 2025/26	2,500				
Total Recurring Budgets	1,242,957	1,268,546	1,300,818	1,333,794	1,367,498
Total Cost of Services	1,242,957	1,268,546	1,300,818	1,333,794	1,367,498
<u>Taxation and Non-specific grant income</u>					
Council Tax Income	(1,364,045)	(1,421,636)	(1,481,654)	(1,544,319)	(1,609,546)
Interest on Balances	(6,444)	(6,970)	(8,171)	(12,342)	(16,328)
Total Taxation and Non-specific grant income	(1,370,489)	(1,428,606)	(1,489,825)	(1,556,661)	(1,625,874)
<u>Transfers to/(from) Earmarked reserves</u>					
Reserves	(127,532)	(160,060)	(189,007)	(222,867)	(258,375)
Capital Expenditure funded by Town Reserve	110,000	120,000	50,000	90,000	90,000
Reserve					
Opening Reserve Balance (at 1st April)	(214,785)	(232,317)	(272,377)	(411,384)	(544,251)
Closing Reserve Balance (carried forward)	(232,317)	(272,377)	(411,384)	(544,251)	(712,626)
Closing Reserves forecast as % of net expenditure	19%	21%	32%	41%	52%

This page is intentionally left blank

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM – SCHEDULED ITEMS OF BUSINESS ETC

11 SEPTEMBER 2025					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
			Original	Revised	
	Winchester Bus Services	Campbell Williams/Dan Massey	11 September 2025		Verbal Update (stagecoach)
	Winchester Town Account Financial Planning 2025/26 (Initial draft Medium Term Financial Projections and assumptions for 2025/26 to 2029/30)	Darren Kennedy	11 September 2025		WTF340
10 NOVEMBER 2025					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
			Original	Revised	
	Town Forum Grant Programme Update	Melissa Fletcher/Jane Chuhan	10 November 2025		TBC
	Winchester Town Account Medium Term Financial Position (Draft budget options)	Darren Kennedy	10 November 2025		

22 JANUARY 2026					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
	Winchester Town Account Budget for 2026/27 (to be recommended to Cabinet)	Darren Kennedy	22 January 2026		
9 MARCH 2026					
	BUSINESS	LEAD OFFICER	COMMITTEE DATE		STATUS/COMMENT
	No items at present				