

REPORT TITLE: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW: WINCHESTER TOWN AREA – DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

29 SEPTEMBER 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Councillor Kathleen Becker, Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities

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WARD(S): ALL WARDS

PURPOSE

1. This report presents the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Community Governance Review (CGR) of the Winchester Town Area for consideration and approval by the Licensing and Regulation Committee.
2. This follows the Committee's resolution on 16 June 2025 (Report LR594) to proceed with a CGR and to establish a cross-party Member Working Group to provide oversight and guidance during the initial stages.
3. The Working Group has now met on two occasions to consider the scope and content of the ToR. This report presents the draft ToR, as endorsed by the Working Group.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Licensing and Regulation Committee:

1. Approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review of the Winchester Town Area, as set out in Appendix 1.
2. Approve the indicative timetable for the review, as outlined within the Terms of Reference.
3. Delegate authority to the Director (Legal) to make any minor amendments to the Terms of Reference prior to publication, to determine the specific date of its publication and to initiate the first stage of public consultation.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Council Plan 2025 – 2030 sets out a priority for "Listening and Learning". An action within this priority is to undertake a "Community Governance Review to ensure a strong network of parish and town councils across the entire district – capable of operating in any new local government structures". This review directly delivers on that commitment.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 As noted in report LR594, undertaking a CGR is a resource-intensive process. The approval of the Terms of Reference and timetable moves the review into its first active phase of public consultation. Costs associated with consultation activities (such as mailings, venue hire for events, and online survey platforms) and ongoing project management will be met from the Council's transitional reserves.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The CGR process is governed by Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and associated guidance. The publication of formal Terms of Reference is a statutory requirement and marks the official commencement of the review. The subsequent consultation process must be conducted in line with the principles set out in the ToR to ensure the review is robust and legally compliant. Any legal or specialist advice required, particularly regarding the preservation of Winchester's city status, will be procured in line with the Council's contract procedure rules.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The officer project team is established and has supported the Member Working Group in developing the draft ToR. The approval to proceed to consultation will require dedicated officer time from Legal, Democratic Services, Communications, and other services to manage the consultation process, analyse responses, and prepare subsequent reports for the Committee.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The draft Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) confirms that the CGR will include consideration of the transfer of assets and services to any new council. An initial high-level scoping exercise of assets within the review area is underway. A detailed schedule of assets for potential transfer would be developed and consulted upon as part of the draft recommendations stage of the review.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 Approval of the ToR will trigger the first formal stage of public consultation, which is scheduled to run from October to December 2025. The consultation strategy, outlined within the ToR, is designed to be comprehensive and inclusive, utilising a mix of online and offline methods to reach all segments of the community and key stakeholders within the review area.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Parish and town councils can play a significant role in promoting local environmental initiatives. The establishment of a new town council for Winchester could provide a new platform for delivering on local environmental priorities and contributing to the Council's "Greener Faster" ambitions. This is a key theme that residents and stakeholders can comment on during the consultation.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 The consultation process outlined in the draft ToR has been designed to be inclusive and accessible to all members of the community, thereby ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. An initial Equality Impact Assessment will be developed alongside the consultation materials to ensure any potential impacts on different groups are considered.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The consultation will involve the collection and processing of personal data from respondents. All data will be handled in accordance with GDPR and the Council's data protection policies. The project team will ensure all necessary measures are in place to protect individual privacy.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	Financial matters will be reviewed as the review develops to identify and mitigate any potential cost pressures.	
Exposure to challenge Failure to conduct a legally compliant consultation process could lead to legal challenge.	The process is guided by the approved ToR (Appendix 1) and a clear timetable. The project team includes legal and democratic services expertise.	A well-managed, transparent, and comprehensive CGR process builds public trust and delivers a robust and defensible outcome.
Innovation		
Reputation The consultation could be perceived as a 'done deal', leading to poor engagement or negative feedback.	The ToR and consultation materials are framed around open questions about the future of governance, not a pre-determined outcome. The cross-party Working Group ensures political consensus.	Successfully concluding the CGR will enhance the Council's reputation for listening to and empowering its communities, strengthening local democracy.
Achievement of outcome. That the review does not conclude within the anticipated timeline.	The timeline and plan will be subject to constant review.	
Community Support If the consultation is not sufficiently inclusive, the outcome may not be seen to have the support of the local community.	A multi-channel communication and consultation plan is detailed in the ToR, targeting residents, businesses, and community groups through various means to maximise participation.	High levels of engagement will ensure the final recommendations are genuinely reflective of the community's identity and interests, leading to greater buy-in.

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 On 16 June 2025, this Committee considered report LR594 and resolved to acknowledge the potential for a Community Governance Review in the Winchester town area and the broad implications associated with such a review. The Committee also agreed to the formation of a cross-party Member Working Group to work with officers on the initial stages, including the development of the draft Terms of Reference (ToR).
- 11.2 The Working Group has since met on two occasions. Its primary function has been to provide member-level scrutiny and input into the scope of the review, the areas to be included, and the plan for consultation.
- 11.3 The key output from the Group's work is the draft Terms of Reference, presented for approval in Appendix 1. This document formally sets out the purpose and scope of the CGR. It specifies the legislative basis for the review, the matters under consideration, and outlines the comprehensive consultation process that will be followed.
- 11.4 The proposed areas for the review are also detailed in the ToR and shown on the map included. It includes the five Winchester town wards (St Bartholomew, St Paul, St Barnabas, St Luke, and St Michael) and also adjoining areas such as the Kings Barton development and the part of St Barnabas ward currently within Littleton and Harestock Parish. The initial consultation will allow residents in all affected areas to comment on these proposals.
- 11.5 The ToR contains an indicative timetable for the CGR. It has been designed in order to complete the review within 12 months of publishing the ToR, while allowing adequate time for two rounds of meaningful consultation and consideration of responses.
- 11.6 The Committee's approval of the recommendations in this report will enable the CGR to proceed to its first crucial stage of public engagement, in line with the agreed plan and statutory requirements.
- 11.7 WCC also seeks to protect Winchester's historic city status, Mayoralty and Coat of Arms during the process. A convenient and relatively straightforward approach for achieving this could involve transferring these elements to a new parish/town council covering the city area.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 To not approve the Terms of Reference: This would halt the CGR process, contradicting the Committee's resolution of 16 June 2025, the formal request from the Winchester Town Forum, and the commitment made in the Council Plan. This option is not recommended.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

1. LR594 - Community Governance Review: Winchester Town Area (16 June 2025)
2. WTF339 - Response to the request of Winchester Town Forum for CGR (12 June 2025)
3. WTF337 - Request for Governance Review (23 January 2025)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Draft Terms of Reference