

2026 - 2030

# Winchester District Thriving and Resilient Communities Strategy





# Opening words from **Councillor Kathleen Becker**

Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities



I am delighted to introduce the Winchester District Thriving and Resilient Communities Strategy 2026–2030. This strategy marks an important step in our commitment to supporting the wellbeing of all who live, work and volunteer across our district. It sets out how we will work alongside communities—large and small, urban and rural—to build places where people feel connected, confident and able to thrive.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, ongoing cost-of-living pressures, growing inequalities, and the effects of a changing climate, the people of Winchester district have continually demonstrated compassion, creativity and resilience. From neighbourhood support groups and volunteer-led services to faith organisations, charities, community centres, and informal networks — our communities are rich with strength and determination. This strategy builds on those foundations.

We recognise the diverse nature of our district — its market towns, rural villages, new developments, and the historic city — and the different pressures each faces. By listening to local voices and focusing on areas where inequalities are greatest, this strategy provides a shared framework for action that responds to these challenge and real need.

We have sets out five pathways that will guide our work. These pathways reflect what residents, community organisations and partners told us they value most, and where the council can play a meaningful role. Our ambition is to support communities, so they feel empowered to lead local solutions, build strong networks and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

By 2030, we want to see communities that are more connected, more confident and more resilient — places where people feel a sense of belonging, where local assets flourish, and where residents can live healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed their experiences, insights and expertise to help shape this strategy. Your voices have made it stronger.

Our vision is the together, we can build a more vibrant, inclusive and resilient Winchester district for all.

# Why this **strategy** is important

Our goal is to build local capacity, enhance belonging, and enable residents and community groups to lead the activity that matters most to them. We will do this by drawing on the strengths and assets of our existing communities, and new communities, for example through major housing developments or refugees displaced because of war or conflict.

We know our residents and communities have faced unprecedented challenges in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis and an accelerating climate crisis.

By fostering an environment where communities can grow, evolve and solve their own challenges, greater resilience will be achieved. Through both place-shaping and capacity building activity, our efforts will help to deliver the council's priorities for Healthy Communities and Thriving Places.

This Thriving and Resilient Communities Strategy sets out our approach for creating stronger, more resilient communities across the district through to 2030 working alongside our diverse communities. By delivering this strategy, we aim to create the conditions in which our local places and people can thrive — socially, economically, culturally and environmentally.





# What do we mean by **community**

We asked a range of stakeholders **“what ‘community’ means to me”**

Community Friendly Connectivity  
Volunteering Connect Strong  
Welcome Belonging Inclusion Cohesion  
Social Support Identity People  
Friendship Engagement Collaboration

Community means different things to different people but, for the purposes of this strategy, we have defined it as follows:

*“A group of people connected by shared place, identity, or interest, who experience a sense of belonging and engage in mutual support or collective action.”*

Communities are resilient and able to thrive when they are inclusive, connected, resilient, and full of opportunities, where people feel they belong, can influence decisions, support one another, enjoy good quality of life and are able to fulfil their potential.

We have defined resilience, in the context of our communities, as:

*“The capacity of individuals and communities to respond to and overcome shocks or challenges, underpinned by personal and community wellbeing”.*

Winchester district’s communities have consistently demonstrated their ability to come together, support their most vulnerable members and create positive change. The strategy builds on these foundations and explores how we can support the community structures and social relationships with friends, family or the wider community that can serve as support networks.

# What helps **communities thrive** and **be resilient**

No one community is the same and we are blessed with diverse places and people across the district; from urban to rural, historic to new, small to large.

However, whatever the form and nature of our communities, there are factors common to all that enable them to thrive and be resilient. These factors fall within two main areas:

## Enabling infrastructure

- Housing
- Income
- Transport
- Crime
- Employment
- Education
- Physical health
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Environment quality and access to green space

## Support networks

- Participation in community groups:
  - recreational, community, sport or other groups
- Access to support from outside your household:
  - networks of family, friends, colleagues and others; and
- Neighbourly and community relations:
  - relationships with those in a geographical proximity.

The data tells us that, where there is the greatest inequality, the health outcomes for people are worse. The same areas often show weaker social networks, less volunteering and fewer community groups and activities.

This gives us a clear steer as to the areas where we should focus and prioritise our support and will help inform the sort of programmes and activities we enable, commission or deliver.



## FACTOR

## FOCUS – PLACES AND PEOPLE MOST IN NEED

### Housing

Housing affordability ratio significantly higher than both Hampshire and England/Wales.

Most obvious in areas with high levels of social housing and higher rates of poor self-reported health e.g. St Luke ward.

### Income

Median weekly resident pay exceeds both the Hampshire average and most neighbouring districts.

Data shows St Luke and St Bartholomew wards as most challenged areas.

The South Hampshire Urban Areas show moderate Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index scores compared to other geographies.

### Transport

Significant gaps exist in transport options across the district, particularly in the rural areas.

Disabled residents particularly emphasised transport's role in accessing essential services.

### Crime and Community Safety

Total recorded offences (56.09 per 1,000) substantially below the Southeast average.

Specific concerns about safety affecting service access, particularly for women and vulnerable groups.

Young students express safety fears when walking between university to their accommodation after dark.

### Employment

Overall economic inactivity rates are lower than the national average.

Economic activity rates are generally lower in the urban areas.

### Education

Strong formal educational attainment, significantly exceeding the national average, with most schools achieving Good or Outstanding Ofsted ratings.

The Market Towns and Rural Area face challenges in accessing further education and skill development opportunities.

### Physical Health

Average life expectancy exceeds the national average.

Pronounced inequalities within Winchester Town, with St Luke ward recording the lowest life expectancy.

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health of young people emerged as a particular concern - evidence showing elevated self-harm rates in urban wards including St Michael, St Paul, and St Bartholomew.

### Environmental quality and access to green space

Winchester Town wards like St Luke and St Paul have smaller private outdoor spaces and Town wards show greater deficits in public open space.

Denmead shows a notable public space deficit.

# Our work to date

We have a long history of working with and supporting our communities across the district. This includes for example supporting the City of Sanctuary movement and our programme to create Places of Sanctuary, a partner to the Armed Forces Covenant, our Social Inclusion Partnership, the Health & Wellbeing Partnership, Stanmore Network and many more projects and partnerships.

We also seek to positively contribute to place making through our policies and strategies. Many of these relate directly to addressing deficits in the infrastructure factors that affect communities.

## Council Strategy

- Winchester District Local Plan
- Housing Strategy (2023–2028)
- Green Economic Development Strategy (GEDS)
- The Winchester District Transport Statement
- Winchester Movement Strategy
- Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plans
- Community Safety Partnership District Strategic Assessment
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Health Priorities Statement
- Cultural Strategy
- Open Spaces Assessment
- Nature Improvement Plan

# Our focus and commitment

With the clear link between social connections and life satisfaction we believe that investment in local community networks will have a significant impact on improving the ability of communities to be resilient and to thrive. Forms of investment can range from supporting new social networks to form in new developments to maintaining existing community facilities, especially in the places where they serve as important local hubs for people to come together and connect.

To guide and give focus to our work in supporting social networks we will use a series of pathways and principles.





## Social connection, inclusion and belonging

We want residents to experience stronger social ties, reduced isolation, and a greater sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods.

We will help them to...

- Promote and celebrate local identity and pride in place
- Celebrate diversity and promote inclusion
- Secure, protect, support and promote the use of key community assets

## Community capacity and local leadership

We want communities to feel confident, skilled and supported to lead local activity, shape decisions, and mobilise resources.

For example, through...

- An effective network of parish and town councils
- Voluntary sector representation as a strategic partner
- Local involvement in emergency response
- Working with communities to build skills and participation in local projects

## Strong community networks and partnerships

We want to see a well-connected voluntary, community and social enterprise ecosystem that collaborates effectively and shares resources.

To bring this about, we will encourage...

- Networking and collaboration
- Sharing of information, data and intelligence
- Measuring and demonstrating the impact of community initiatives

## Access to community assets, services and opportunities

We want people to easily engage in activities that support their wellbeing, culture, skills and social participation.

To achieve this, we recognise the importance of...

- Grant funding and other support
- Promotion and encouragement for volunteering
- Collaboration with other stakeholders
- activating and utilising under-used public spaces, such as schools or churches, for wider community activity

## Supporting people facing the toughest circumstances

We want individuals and families with long-term vulnerabilities to feel supported, connected and able to participate in community life.

To make this possible, we will...

- React and respond to changing circumstances
- Target effort to maximise impact
- Show compassion

# How we will **work alongside our communities**

The council takes on a variety of different roles, depending on the context and the needs of our communities.



## Enabler

We create the conditions for community organisations and the voluntary sector to succeed.



## Facilitator

We bring people and organisations together to collaborate, share resources, and solve problems.



## Provider

We directly deliver services to residents, or purchase services from external providers to meet community needs.



## Advocate

We represent the interests of residents at regional or national levels.



## Guardian

We look after public assets and community wellbeing.



# Key actions include



**Providing funding or grants** and supporting a local charities and community organisations to provide services and facilities. Using Community Infrastructure Levy funding to invest in new and improved local community, health and travel infrastructure.



**Delivering council-run cultural, health and sport activity programmes** for example, commissioning operators to run our facilities, sports and leisure centres. Encouraging the co-production of services.



**Removing barriers** to community involvement, hosting forums or partnerships meeting, bring stakeholders together and convening a multi-agency group to tackle issues in an area.



**Managing public spaces and heritage**, ensuring long-term environmental sustainability, maintaining our parks or public spaces.



**Campaigning for action and improvements**, or supporting bids for funding, from regional or national bodies.



# Our Partners

We recognise that it will take the effort, commitment, and action of a wide group of individuals, groups and organisations to achieve the outcomes this strategy is seeking. We will work alongside and with these partners to maximise the resources and opportunities they provide. They include but are certainly not limited to:

- Statutory partners such as the police, health, education.
- Providers of key services such public health, adult and social care, children services.
- Voluntary sector support organisations and agencies like Citizens Advice, Youth Options, Home Start.
- Parish Councils, community centres and local groups servicing their local communities.
- Partnerships that come together to address and positively contribute to making better certain areas of interest or concern for example older people, dementia, inclusion, climate, culture.
- Advocates and individuals who are local leaders and champions for change in their community.

This is at the heart of our vision and values as a council. We will listen to and work alongside the people of Winchester district in tackling the challenges we face.





## How we will **measure success**

Our success will be evidenced by measurable growth in community-led action, deeper participation, stronger local networks, increased access to local opportunities, and improved wellbeing — particularly for those facing the toughest circumstances. Over time, communities will become more confident, better connected and more self-sustaining, reducing dependency on reactive support and enabling a shared culture of collective responsibility, pride and everyday resilience.

The impact of this strategy will be seen and felt in daily life: more people taking part, more places open and welcoming, stronger neighbourhood identity, and a voluntary sector that is confident, collaborative and equipped for the future.

For more information and detail, please see our full technical report.



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City Council

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