

REPORT TITLE: NOTICE OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION UPDATE

30 JUNE 2026

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Jackie Porter, Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan

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WARD(S): ALL (TO EXTENT THAT THEY ARE NOT WITHIN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update and seek Cabinet approval on a revised Winchester City Council approach to commencing preparation of a new Local Plan or Local Plans for the LPA area under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 in the context of Local Government Reorganisation, proposed local authority boundary changes and emerging devolution arrangements across Hampshire and the Solent.

This follows on the Cabinet's decision on 18 March 2026 to begin work on a Winchester-only Local Plan, which was before the Government's announcement on Local Government Reorganisation and was before there had been opportunity to properly consider and seek external legal advice on the implications of the Government's Local Government Reorganisation proposals with the new legislation requiring Local Plans to be prepared within 30 months, with the notice of intention to commence plan making to be issued by 30 June 2026.

The timetables for Local Government Reorganisation and the new Local Plan process are currently not consistent. In a recent Parliamentary Answer, the Government itself recognises "the challenges posed to plan making by local authority re-organisation and are developing transitional arrangements to address these". However, the arrangements are not yet available.

The intention of the council is still to ensure that a positive Local Plan is put in place on the quickest timing that ensures development in the Winchester district and its successor authorities happens on a planned basis that positively meets the needs of the area rather than through by planning by appeal.

In order to be legally compliant at this time the report recommends that the Council continues to publish a Notice of Intention to Commence Plan Making by 30 June 2026 as previously agreed with Cabinet in March 2026. However, to reflect the desire to produce a joint Local Plan Officers will also use the upcoming period to explore opportunities for collaborative plan-making across the proposed Mid Hampshire geography whilst continuing engagement with Government regarding future transitional planning arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to:

1. **Note** the Government's requirements for commencement of Local Plan preparation under the new plan making system introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, specifically the letter from Government to the Chief Executive on January 15, 2026 and the Government guidance on the 'Roll out of the new plan-making process' updated on March 6, 2026.
2. **Note** the proposed Local Government Reorganisation arrangements for Hampshire, including the proposed Mid Hampshire unitary authority, the transfer of the Parish of Newlands to the proposed South-East Hampshire unitary authority announced on March 26, 2026, and emerging arrangements for devolution and strategic planning across Hampshire and the Solent.
3. **Agree** in the absence of Government guidance on transitional arrangements for authorities affected by Local Government Reorganisation and to be legally compliant, that Winchester City Council will continue to publish a Notice of Intention to Commence Plan Preparation by 30 June 2026 on the current administrative boundary.
4. **Authorise** the Strategic Director (Place) to engage with other Mid Hampshire authorities to explore opportunities for collaborative or joint plan-making and shared evidence gathering for the proposed Mid Hampshire geography.
5. **Authorise** the Strategic Director (Place) to engage with other South-East Hampshire authorities to explore how we can support an appropriate plan-making process to include Newlands Parish as part of South-East Hampshire.
6. **Authorise** the Strategic Director (Place) to continue engagement with Government regarding plan making requirements, transitional arrangements and future strategic planning responsibilities arising from Local Government Reorganisation and devolution.
7. **Delegate** authority to the Strategic Director (Place), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan and the Director of Legal to amend the above timetable where necessary should the Government issue revised guidance, transitional arrangements or legislation relating to the Local Government Reorganisation and plan making.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1 Greener Faster

1.2 Future Local Plans play a critical role in delivering the Council's climate ambitions through policies relating to sustainable development, energy efficiency, biodiversity, green infrastructure, transport and climate resilience. The recommendations within this report seek to ensure that future plan-making is undertaken across the most appropriate geography and is capable of addressing environmental challenges strategically across the proposed Mid Hampshire area.

1.3 Thriving Places

1.4 The recommendations support the creation of thriving places by ensuring that future planning activity continues to provide a framework for economic growth, infrastructure investment, employment opportunities and place-making. Exploring opportunities for collaborative plan-making across the proposed Mid Hampshire geography provides the opportunity to consider strategic growth, infrastructure and investment needs across a wider area that better reflects future local government arrangements.

1.5 Healthy Communities

1.6 Planning plays an important role in creating healthy communities through the provision of accessible services, green spaces, active travel opportunities and community infrastructure. The recommendations seek to ensure that future planning policies are developed in a way that supports the long-term needs of existing and future communities across the successor authority area.

1.7 Good Homes for All

1.8 The Council remains committed to supporting the delivery of high-quality homes that meet local needs. The adopted Winchester District Local Plan 2040 continues to provide the statutory planning framework for housing delivery across the district. The recommendations within this report relate to the commencement of preparation of the next Local Plan and seek to ensure that future housing policies and requirements are considered within the context of future local government structures and planning responsibilities.

1.9 Efficient and Effective

1.10 The recommendations support the Council's commitment to delivering services efficiently and making best use of public resources. Exploring opportunities for collaborative plan-making and shared evidence gathering has the potential to reduce duplication, improve value for money and ensure that future investment in plan-making activity contributes directly to the

planning framework that will ultimately be delivered by the successor authority.

1.11 Listening and Learning

- 1.12 The recommendations reflect the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with Government, neighbouring authorities, stakeholders and communities to identify the most effective approach to future plan-making. The proposed approach allows the Council to respond to changing circumstances, consider new information as it emerges and ensure that future decisions are informed by engagement, evidence and partnership working.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The Winchester District Local Plan 2040 was adopted in March 2026 and remains the statutory development plan for the district. The recommendations within this report do not affect the status of the adopted Local Plan and do not create any immediate additional financial commitments beyond existing Planning Policy budgets.
- 2.2 Preparation of a new Local Plan requires significant investment in officer resources, specialist consultancy support, evidence gathering, environmental assessments, viability testing, transport modelling and public consultation. These costs are typically incurred over a number of years throughout the plan making process.
- 2.3 The City Council has already received funding (£108,000) from the Government to commence work on a new 30 month Local Plan on the basis that it would publish the Notice of Intention to commence plan preparation by 30th June 2026 and Gateway 1 by the end of October 2026.
- 2.4 A budget has already been agreed for the Local Plan 2044 and these resources would be available for the preparation of either a Winchester only basis Local Plan or a joint Local Plan based on a Mid Hampshire geography.
- 2.5 The proposed Local Government Reorganisation and associated boundary changes create a risk that evidence commissioned and work undertaken solely on a Winchester City Council basis may require substantial amendment, supplementation or duplication in order to reflect the geography, priorities and responsibilities of the successor authority.
- 2.6 The recommendations within this report seek to reduce that risk by enabling the Council to explore opportunities for collaborative plan-making and shared evidence gathering across the proposed Mid Hampshire geography before committing to a specific plan making route.
- 2.7 A collaborative approach has the potential to improve value for money through shared commissioning, reduced duplication of evidence and more

efficient use of specialist resources. However, no commitment is being sought at this stage regarding the funding of any Joint Local Plan arrangements.

- 2.8 Any future financial commitments arising from joint working arrangements, shared evidence commissions or the preparation of a Joint Local Plan will be subject to separate governance and approval processes and will be reported to Members as appropriate.
- 2.9 The recommendations are therefore considered to represent a prudent approach to managing future plan making expenditure during a period of significant change to local government structures and planning responsibilities.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 In March 2026, Cabinet considered the implications of the Government's new plan-making system and agreed that Winchester City Council should commence preparation of a new Local Plan in accordance with the new 30-month timetable. This included the letter to the City Council's Chief Executive on 15 January 2026 requiring Winchester City Council to publish a Notice of Intention to commence local plan preparation by 30 June 2026. The recommendations within this report do not alter the Council's commitment to maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan but seek to address the implications of subsequent Local Government Reorganisation proposals and associated boundary changes on how that plan-making process should proceed. In considering this report, it is important to note that technically the Government has the ability to direct, step in and take control of the Local Plan-making process if the City Council does not comply with regulatory requirements.
- 3.2 The Council has sought specialist legal advice regarding the implications of Local Government Reorganisation for future plan-making.
- 3.3 In the absence of any transitional arrangements provided by Government, the advice confirms that there is significant uncertainty within the current legislative framework regarding the interaction between the new plan-making system and local government reorganisation.
- 3.4 A particular issue relates to the Parish of Newlands. Under the current reorganisation proposals Newlands will transfer to the proposed South East Hampshire authority and will not form part of the successor Local Planning Authority covering the remainder of Winchester district. However, for the time being until a structural change order has been published and in the absence of transitional arrangements, the Parish of Newlands will be included in the Notice of Intention to commence plan preparation.
- 3.5 This raises wider questions regarding how plan-making should proceed where existing local authority boundaries do not align with future Local Planning Authority boundaries.

- 3.6 Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 enables two or more local planning authorities to prepare a joint Local Plan. In this context, a collaborative approach would provide the opportunity to commission shared evidence, make more efficient use of specialist resources and address strategic cross boundary issues from the outset. The proposed recommendations seek to ensure that the Council continues to discharge its plan making responsibilities whilst responding to the implications of Local Government Reorganisation and proposed boundary changes.
- 3.7 The report proposes continued engagement with Government, neighbouring authorities and relevant stakeholders to establish a legally robust and effective approach to future plan-making arrangements. Any future decision to prepare a joint Local Plan, enter into formal governance arrangements, or delegate plan-making functions would be subject to separate reports, legal review and decision-making processes.
- 3.8 The preparation of a new 30 month Local Plan will require the commissioning of technical evidence and specialist support. Any procurement activity arising from the recommendations in this report will continue to be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Procurement Act 2023 requirements and any other relevant legislative obligations. Where opportunities exist to commission evidence jointly with neighbouring authorities, appropriate governance and procurement arrangements will be established to ensure compliance and achieve value for money.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The recommendations contained within this report do not have any immediate implications for staffing structures, terms and conditions, or workforce numbers.
- 4.2 The preparation of a new 30 month Local Plan involves a significant programme of work requiring specialist planning, policy, technical and project management expertise over a number of years. Winchester City Council has an established Planning Policy team and existing capacity to commence the plan-making process in line with Government requirements.
- 4.3 Should a collaborative approach to plan-making be pursued with neighbouring authorities, there may be opportunities to share expertise, jointly commission technical evidence, and align resources to support the efficient delivery of plan-making activities.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 The preparation of this report has involved discussions with Planning Policy officers, Legal Services and senior officers across neighbouring authorities affected by Local Government Reorganisation proposals.
- 6.2 The report also reflects emerging discussions taking place regarding future planning arrangements and the potential opportunities for collaboration between authorities transitioning into the same successor Mid Hampshire unitary authority.
- 6.3 Subject to approval of the recommendations, the Council will continue engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), neighbouring authorities, statutory partners and other relevant stakeholders to seek clarity on the operation of the new plan-making system in areas affected by Local Government Reorganisation.
- 6.4 Appropriate communication will be maintained with Members throughout the process to ensure that emerging Government guidance, legal considerations and opportunities for collaboration are understood and can inform future decision-making.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Local Plan must comply with the requirements of the relevant legislation and the need to deliver sustainable development which encompasses all considerations in relation to the built and natural environment. The council's declaration of climate and nature emergency are defining issues that have informed the adoption of the Local Plan 2040. The Plan is able to support the objective of dramatically cutting the district's emissions and the district being carbon neutral by 2030.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is a key part of preparing a 'sound' Local Plan. The Local Plan making process needs to ensure that the issues and options that are considered do not lead to unlawful discrimination (direct and indirect), against the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010. Any proposals should advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those with a 'protected characteristic' (race, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy or maternity) and all others.
- 8.2 Consultants have been appointed (AECOM) by the council to undertake an EqIA and a Health Impact Assessment, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations Assessment cited above, under the umbrella of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which was undertaken alongside key stages of the Plan-making process.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Any comments that are submitted as part of the Local Plan-making process will be taken into account provided they include people's name and contact details. Similar to the process that was undertaken when officers were preparing the Local Plan 2040, the council will publish names and associated representations on its Local Plan examination website, but it will not publish other personal information such as telephone numbers, full postal addresses or email addresses.
- 9.2 A Programme Officer will need to be employed by the Council who will report directly to the Local Plan Inspector who will be appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct the Local Plan Examination.
- 9.3 In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) information will only be kept for as long as it is required. The council's privacy policy can be viewed on the website [Privacy Policy - Winchester City Council](#)

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 Undertaking a Local Plan has involved bringing together a number of different workstreams and a wide range of studies. This work has been undertaken alongside numerous changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on how Local Plans need to be prepared. The project management of the Local Plan has its own risk assessment which is closely monitored on a regular basis by the Strategic Planning Manager and is reported regularly to the Planning Advisory Committee/Cabinet.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure		
Exposure to challenge Potential legal challenge arising from uncertainty over Local Government Reorganisation. There is also technically the risk of Government intervention if the City Council does not progress with work on the Local Plan in accordance with the regulatory requirements generally. .	Continue to obtain specialist legal advice, during the LGR process where required and seek formal Government clarification before significant plan-making decisions are taken.	Provides an opportunity to establish a clear and legally robust framework for plan-making during local government reorganisation.

Innovation	Ensuring that Officers in the Strategic Planning team continue to look at creative ways that engages with as many people as possible and reaching out to hard to reach groups is a key part of the Local Plan process. Publicity and the methods of Local Plan engagement are a key component of this.	There is the opportunity to consider the presentation of the Local Plan to make it more appealing and interesting to a wide range of audiences and how we engage people. The stand alone Local Plan website is kept under review building upon the earlier success of the adopted Local Plan 2040.
Reputation	The Local Plan websites are both kept up to-date in order to ensure that the council communicates when people can get involved and provide feedback on the Local Plan.	Developing a new Local Plan and engaging with the local community is a real opportunity as it will clearly set out the council vision for the district up to 2044 bringing with it certainty, stability and investment to the area.
Achievement of outcome		
Divergence in approach between neighbouring authorities could result in fragmented plan-making and inconsistent evidence bases.	Continue officer and member engagement across affected authorities and explore opportunities for collaboration.	Opportunity to establish stronger cross-boundary relationships and create a coordinated approach to future growth and infrastructure planning.
Delays to future plan-making could affect the Council's ability to maintain an up-to-date development plan and influence future growth.	Continue progressing preparatory work and maintain engagement with Government on transition arrangements.	Opportunity to create a plan that better reflects future administrative boundaries and long-term strategic priorities.
Delays to plan-making could impact future housing, employment and infrastructure delivery across the area.	Continue evidence gathering and strategic planning discussions whilst resolving	Opportunity to align future growth, infrastructure investment and service planning with the emerging unitary authority geography and Strategic

	governance and boundary issues.	Development Strategy requirements.
Property None		
Community Support – Lack of clarity on future governance arrangements may create uncertainty for communities, developers, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders.	Maintain clear communication with Members, Government, neighbouring authorities and key stakeholders.	Opportunity to provide leadership across the Hampshire and Solent area and influence emerging arrangements.
Timescales – Failure to meet Government plan-making milestones, including the requirement to commence plan-making under the new 30-month system and issue the Notice of Intention to commence plan preparation by the 30 th June 2026.	Maintain progress on plan preparation, governance arrangements and project planning whilst seeking Government clarification.	Demonstrates Winchester's commitment to proactive plan-making and ensures the Council remains well-positioned regardless of future Government direction.
Project capacity- Significant officer time and financial resources could be invested in work that later requires amendment due to LGR decisions or Government guidance.	Focus on evidence gathering and activities that are likely to remain relevant regardless of future governance arrangements. Seek opportunities for joint commissioning where appropriate.	Shared evidence bases and collaborative working could reduce duplication and improve value for money across future unitary areas.
Local Government Reorganisation -		

Uncertainty arising from Local Government Reorganisation and proposed boundary changes creates ambiguity over the appropriate geography for future plan-making.	Seek early clarification from MHCLG, continue legal engagement and work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to establish an agreed approach.	Opportunity to shape a planning framework that better reflects the geography and priorities of the future unitary authority.
Other		

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background

- 11.1 On 24 March 2026 Winchester City Council adopted the Winchester District Local Plan 2040. The adoption of the Local Plan represented the culmination of several years of evidence gathering, consultation, examination and decision making and provides an up-to-date development plan for the district.
- 11.2 There have been two significant national policy developments which have implications for future plan making across Hampshire. The first is the Government's introduction of a new plan-making system under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The second is the Government's programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which will replace the existing two-tier structure across Hampshire with a number of new unitary authorities.
- 11.3 Whilst each reform individually presents significant change, their interaction creates an added challenge for authorities such as Winchester that are expected to commence preparation of a new 30 month Local Plan whilst simultaneously preparing for substantial boundary and governance changes.

The New 30 month Planning Framework

- 11.4 In March 2026 Cabinet received a report outlining the Government's new plan-making requirements and the implications for Winchester City Council. The Government has introduced a new 30 month plan making process that is intended to accelerate the preparation and adoption of Local Plans.
- 11.5 Winchester City Council's Local Plan 2040 was submitted for examination in November 2024 under the transitional arrangements in the National Planning Policy Framework. As the Local Plan 2040 was submitted for examination before the 12 March 2025 and the housing requirement meets less than 80 per cent of local housing need (using the standard method published in 2024), the City Council is required following a letter from Government advice to meet

two key deadlines this year which were set out in the March 2026 Cabinet Report:

- Publish a Notice of Intention to Start Plan-making by 30 June 2026; and
- Reach Gateway 1 by 31 October 2026.

- 11.6 To be legally compliant the Council is required to issue a Notice of Intention to start plan preparation by the 30 June 2026. This confirmed in the transitional provisions in Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 for certain Councils meeting the relevant criteria which includes Winchester City Council.

Local Government Reorganisation

- 11.7 Shortly after Cabinet considered the new planning framework, the Government announced the detailed proposals for Local Government Reorganisation across Hampshire.
- 11.8 Under the current proposals, Winchester City Council will cease to exist as a standalone authority and the district will be divided between successor unitary authorities. The majority of the district will form part of the proposed Mid Hampshire authority, whilst the Parish of Newlands will transfer into the proposed South East Hampshire authority.
- 11.9 The proposed reorganisation means that whilst Winchester City Council remains the Local Planning Authority until vesting day, any Local Plan commenced under the new planning system is unlikely to be adopted until after successor authorities have been established. This creates uncertainty regarding the geography of future plans, the treatment of areas transferring between authorities and the extent to which work undertaken by predecessor councils can be relied upon by successor authorities.

The Challenge for Winchester

- 11.10 The interaction between the new planning framework and Local Government Reorganisation creates a significant challenge for Winchester City Council.
- 11.11 On the one hand, the Council has a legal requirement set by Government to commence preparation of a new Local Plan and meet two key deadlines this year. On the other hand, the Council is preparing for a future where its current administrative boundary will no longer form the basis of local planning responsibilities as it will be part of a much wider Mid Hampshire Authority.
- 11.12 The issue for the Council is therefore not whether plan-making should commence, but how it should commence in a way that reflects future governance arrangements, protects the Council's legal position, avoids unnecessary duplication of work and achieves value for money.

- 11.13 Whilst it may appear logical to defer plan-making until successor authorities are established, current Government guidance provides no exemption or accommodation from the requirements of the new planning system for authorities affected by Local Government Reorganisation. The Government advice is very clear; Local Planning Authorities should not delay the development of Local Plans whilst LGR is happening.
- 11.14 A decision to pause plan-making entirely could create uncertainty regarding compliance with Government's Regulatory requirement to produce a Local Plan and it would delay future plan preparation. It could also result in lost time in establishing evidence bases, commissioning technical studies and developing the strategic relationships that will be required to support future planning across successor authority areas. It is important to note that all Local Planning Authorities not progressing a 'legacy' Local Plan, are required to meet the Government's submission deadline of the 31st December 2026 to the Planning Inspectorate for examination will be operating to a 30 month timetable.
- 11.15 Officers therefore consider that the Council should continue to prepare for plan-making through exploring joint working whilst seeking clarity from Government on how the new planning framework is intended to operate during the transition to unitary local government.

Engagement with Government

- 11.16 Given the significance of these issues, officers have already written to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government seeking clarification on a number of matters on 5 June 2026.
- 11.17 These include whether authorities affected by Local Government Reorganisation should continue preparing plans based on existing boundaries, the treatment of areas transferring between successor authorities, the status of evidence, consultation and work on identifying suitable sites for development undertaken by predecessor councils and the extent to which collaborative approaches may be supported by Government.
- 11.18 At the time of writing, a formal response has not been received despite officers chasing for a response through a number of different channels.

Strategic Opportunities

- 11.19 Whilst much of the discussion surrounding Local Government Reorganisation has understandably focused on governance and boundaries, it also presents an opportunity to reshape strategic planning across Hampshire.
- 11.20 The future Mid Hampshire authority will inherit a diverse geography and will be required to plan for housing growth, economic development, infrastructure provision, environmental protection and community wellbeing across a much larger area than any of the existing constituent councils.

- 11.21 There is therefore a strong case for authorities expected to form part of the future Mid Hampshire authority to begin exploring opportunities for collaboration. This could include joint commissioning of technical evidence, alignment of methodologies and the development of a shared understanding of future growth and infrastructure requirements.
- 11.22 Such an approach could reduce duplication, improve value for money and create a stronger evidence base capable of supporting future Local Plan and emerging Strategic Development Strategy requirements.

Winchester's Position

- 11.23 Winchester City Council is in a comparatively strong position to respond to these challenges.
- 11.24 Having adopted the Winchester District Local Plan 2040 in March 2026, the Council benefits from an up-to-date development plan and has currently a 5 year Housing Land Supply. The Council also has an established Planning Policy team and has already undertaken preparatory work associated with the introduction of the new plan-making system
- 11.25 This provides the Council with a degree of flexibility whilst Government clarifies how plan-making is expected to operate during Local Government Reorganisation. It also places Winchester in a strong position to contribute positively to discussions regarding future planning arrangements across Hampshire.

Next Steps

- 11.26 Subject to Cabinet approval, officers will continue engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to seek clarification on the matters outlined within this report.
- 11.27 Officers will also continue discussions with neighbouring authorities affected by Local Government Reorganisation to identify opportunities for collaboration and better understand emerging approaches to future plan-making.
- 11.28 In parallel, preparatory work associated with the commencement of plan-making will continue, including project planning, governance arrangements and evidence gathering activities with the intention of being in position to issue a Notice of Intention to commence a joint Local Plan as procedurally appropriate.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 Officers have considered a number of potential approaches.
- 12.2 The first option would be to continue with a Winchester-only Local Plan. Whilst this would provide certainty in the short term, there is a risk that

significant work would subsequently need to be revisited or amended following Local Government Reorganisation.

- 12.3 The second option would be to pause plan-making until successor authorities are established. Whilst this may reduce the risk of duplication, the Council would not be meeting Government's legal requirement to commence work on a 30 month Local Plan by 30 June 2026 and it will delay future plan preparation.
- 12.4 The third option would be to continue progressing the requirements of the new planning system and issue the Notice of Intention to commence plan preparation whilst exploring opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring authorities expected to form part of the future Mid Hampshire authority. This would enable work to commence in accordance with the legal requirement whilst recognising future governance arrangements and reducing the risk of duplication.

Recommended Approach

- 12.5 Officers consider that the third option represents the most pragmatic approach.
- 12.6 Continuing to progress plan-making activity whilst seeking Government clarification protects the Council's position, allows evidence gathering and project planning to commence and reduces the risk of future delay.
- 12.7 It also provides flexibility to respond to any future Government guidance whilst ensuring that work undertaken now can continue to support successor authorities following Local Government Reorganisation.
- 12.8 Any future decisions regarding formal joint plans, governance arrangements, shared evidence bases or delegated responsibilities would be brought back to Members through separate reports.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[CL177 Cabinet Report 18th March 2026](#)

Other Background Documents:- None.

APPENDICES: None.