



# Winchester

City Council

## COUNCIL MEETING – 19 March 2025

### Questions by Councillors under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question.
- If a questioner who has submitted a question is unable to be present, the Mayor may ask the question on their behalf, or invite another Councillor to do so, or indicate that a written reply will be given and published on the website following the meeting. or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with.
- Please note that following the response given by the Leader, a Cabinet Member or Committee Chair, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original reply.
- The **total** time allocated for Councillor questions will normally be limited to 40 minutes.
- Written answers will be published to questions submitted (but not supplementary questions) following the meeting.

	<b>From Cllr:</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Lee</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Lee</b>



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 19.1**

**QUESTION 1**

From: Councillor Lee

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management)

**Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) Governance Risks**

The MCCA is likely to be established in late 2025, followed by Mayoral elections in May 2026. Upper tier authorities (Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and IoW) will be providing 1-2 representatives each (probably the Leader & Deputy Leader) to help set-up the new Strategic Authority.

However, district councils will have limited involvement in early MCCA decisions as districts will not be constituent voting members, potentially leading to long-term sub-optimal consequences for wider Hampshire and the Solent areas before the Strategic Combined Authority (SCA) is fully operational with Unitary Authorities (UA).

**Does Cabinet recognize this risk, and if so, will Winchester push to become a voting constituent member of the transition MCCA with other district councils until optimal LGR single-tier governance arrangements with the SCA are fully in place?**

**Reply**

Yes. We believe there should be fuller representation of districts – but also believe the government's devolution plans allow for this.

We will be making this point in our response to the government's consultation.

The County Council's draft response to devolution appears to explicitly remove district councils from governance – and so I would ask our county councillors to consider challenging this at the county meeting tomorrow.



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**QUESTION 2**

From: Councillor Lee

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management)

**Improved democratic representation**

Local Government Reorganisation with a substantial reduction in elected councillors creates risks of weakening the connection between communities and their councillors who live and work within them. It is reported from other reorganised areas that Devo/LGR also creates remote bureaucratic and too often unresponsiveness or reduced responsiveness to local issues.

**How does Reorganisation support the claim of improved democratic representation and better local government?**

**Reply**

Taking the government's criteria at face value, it doesn't. Larger and more remote councils. Fewer representatives covering much larger areas.

If we don't make local responsiveness a huge priority going forward – people will feel worse represented because they will be worse represented.

The government also needs to seriously engage on the question of local government finance. If they don't, the impact of the rapidly increasing demand and cost of social care and children's services and homelessness on everything else that councils do - will mean that the most visible public services will get worse. Worse representation. Worse services.

That's why the paper we will be discussing this evening explicitly raises the question of scale and community representation – and explicitly raises the question of finance.



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But let's also not forget that Winchester was a unitary council – without a second tier – for most of its history. At various times, in addition to its current responsibilities, the City Council has run gas, water, sewage, primary schools, roads, libraries, police,

fire and the courts. County officials had no say at all in how we were run for most of our history. We all know the frustration when things get held up because we can't get the county to move at the same speed as the city. Unitarisation could be an opportunity – combining transport planning with development planning – combining homelessness services with social care – putting all the levers to create better places into one place.

The real frustration is that this could be good. But it will require the government to listen seriously to our challenges and respond. And if they don't listen and adjust – there's a very serious risk that this could be a complete fiasco.