

REPORT TITLE: RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST OF WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM FOR A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

12 JUNE 2025

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

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WARD(S): TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

- 1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the recommendation presented within [Report WTF337](#) to the Winchester Town Forum on 23 January 2025 and the subsequent resolution of the Town Forum.
- 2 This report confirms the Council's decision to accept the request made by the Town Forum and consequently to initiate a Community Governance Review (CGR). The review will explore the options for establishing a Town Council for central Winchester, as requested. Furthermore, this report outlines the initial governance framework established to oversee and steer this important review process. This includes clarifying the responsibilities of the relevant Council committee and detailing the formation of a dedicated Members Task and Finish Group to provide focused oversight during the initial stages.
- 3 A presentation will be provided to members of the Town Forum to further elaborate on all of these matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Winchester Town Forum is asked to:

- 1 Note the contents of this report, specifically the agreement to undertake the requested Community Governance Review (CGR) for central Winchester area.
- 2 Note the governance arrangements established for the initial stages of the review, including the role of the Licensing and Regulation Committee (see paragraph 12.2) and the formation of the Members Task and Finish Group incorporating Town Forum representation (see paragraph 12.3).
- 3 Receive the presentation slides, attached as Appendix 1, which provide an initial briefing on the Community Governance Review process.

## IMPLICATIONS:

### 1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Council Plan 2025 – 2030 sets out 5 priorities including the priority “Listening and Learning”. Within this, the plan sets out a number of actions including one 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.

### 2 WINCHESTER VISION PRINCIPLE

- 2.1 Spatial: The City Made by Walking.
- a) The request for a Community Governance Review supports the 'City Made by Walking' principle by ensuring that the local governance structures for central Winchester are effective and convenient, enabling them to respond appropriately to the specific needs and infrastructure priorities of a walkable city centre community.
- 2.2 People Power: Establishing Mechanisms that Enable Communities
- a) The CGR aligns with the 'People Power' principle by reviewing whether current arrangements reflect community identities and interests. It explores mechanisms, such as the potential creation of a Town Council, which could enhance local democracy and empower the local community to have a stronger voice in its own governance.
- 2.3 Auditing and Sharing Resources: Creating and Sharing Data is Empowerment
- a) This review process involves gathering and sharing information through public consultation, making data about governance options accessible to residents and stakeholders, thereby empowering them in the decision-making process. Furthermore, exploring different governance models includes considering how local resources might be managed and allocated effectively at the most local level.

### 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Undertaking a Community Governance Review will require significant resources, legal support, and dedicated project management, with funding likely sourced from the Council's transitional reserves.
- 3.2 Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

### 4 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The CGR process will require adherence to complex legislative requirements, procurement of legal support and specialist advice, as well as drafting legal agreements for the transfer of assets and services to the new body. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided

at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 5 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The CGR process itself will require the dedication of officer time and resources to manage the review, conduct consultations, and analyse findings. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 6 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A key part of the Community Governance Review will involve identifying and transferring appropriate assets from Winchester City Council to a new town council, ensuring compliance with existing contracts and continuity of services. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 7 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 7.1 An effective consultation and communication strategy is crucial for the success of the Community Governance Review. The process will involve multiple rounds of consultation with residents, local councils, and other key stakeholders. Utilising various methods such as media releases, social media engagement, and public meetings will ensure broad participation and transparency. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 8 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Where appropriate, consideration of environmental impacts and sustainability initiatives will be integrated into the Community Governance Review to enhance local environmental efforts. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 9 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 9.1 The Council will ensure that the Community Governance Review process is inclusive and accessible, taking into account the Public Sector Equality Duty to consider the impact on different equality groups. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The Community Governance Review will involve collecting and processing personal data, necessitating advice from relevant officers. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the

meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 11 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 Risk management is vital for the CGR to proactively address potential issues such as stakeholder engagement, legal challenges, financial risks, and asset transfers. Further, detailed information regarding this will be set out in the presentation provided at the meeting and within the report to the Licensing & Regulation Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 12 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 12.1 The City Council formally acknowledges the request from the Town Forum following their consideration of [report WTF337](#), at their meeting on 23 January 2025. This report confirms the councils agreement to undertake a community governance review (CGR) for the central Winchester area. This review will explore options for future local governance arrangements, including the potential establishment of a Town Council for central Winchester, as requested by the Town Forum.
- 12.2 As detailed earlier in this report, responsibility for steering community governance reviews rests with the Licensing and Regulation committee. This committee will provide the formal oversight for the review. Its role includes receiving progress reports, considering evidence gathered through research and consultation, evaluating draft recommendations, and ensuring the review complies with statutory requirements. The committee will be responsible for formulating the final recommendations arising from the CGR, which will then be presented to the Full Council for ultimate determination.
- 12.3 To facilitate effective member engagement and provide detailed oversight during the crucial initial phases of the CGR, Winchester city council is establishing a cross-party members task and finish group.
- 12.4 The primary function of this group is to work closely with the officer project team. It will provide member-level scrutiny, input, challenge, and guidance specifically during the development of the draft terms of reference for the CGR, the formulation of the consultation strategy, and the initial analysis of potential governance options. The group will serve as an important conduit between the wider council membership, the Town Forum, and the officer team managing the review. It will help ensure the review remains focused and progresses effectively in its early stages, reporting as necessary to the licensing and regulation committee.
- 12.5 The task and finish group will have a politically balanced membership drawn from Winchester city council members. The composition will include two members from the Winchester Town Forum. This ensures the forum's perspective is integrated into the oversight process from the very beginning. Nominations for all positions on the group will be formally sought from political group leaders in the near future.
- 12.6 To accompany this report a set of presentation slides have been prepared. These slides provide an initial briefing specifically for members of the Winchester Town Forum. They outline the purpose of a CGR, the typical

stages involved based on statutory guidance and previous reviews , indicative high-level timelines, and key factors the council must consider during the review process (such as community identity, effective governance). These slides are provided for information and context at this early stage.

### 13 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

13.1 To not to proceed with a Community Governance Review at this time.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

##### Previous Committee Reports:-

[WTF337: Winchester Town Forum - REQUEST FOR GOVERNANCE REVIEW \(23 January 2025\)](#)

##### Other Background Documents:-

Presentation Slides that accompany this report.

Winchester City Council Constitution (specifically Part 3, Section 4 relating to Committee functions)

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (specifically Part 4)

English Devolution White Paper: power and partnership foundations for growth (16 December 2024)