

REPORT TITLE: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW: WINCHESTER TOWN AREA

16 JUNE 2025

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

Contact Officer: Gareth John, Director (Legal) Tel No: 01962 848135 Email gjohn@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL WARDS

PURPOSE

This report provides the Committee with an overview of the proposal to conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) for the Winchester Town area.

This report aims to inform the Committee about the context, process, and potential implications associated with such a review. Specifically, this report addresses the request from the Winchester Town Forum, which resolved at its meeting on [23 January 2025](#) “to make a request to Winchester City Council to consider undertaking a community governance review with a view to establishing a town council covering the unparished area of Winchester”.

The purpose of undertaking a Community Governance Review is to ensure that local governance arrangements effectively serve the community's needs. This involves a commitment to improving community engagement, fostering closer relationships among residents, and strengthening local democracy. Ultimately, it aims to deliver local services more effectively and conveniently.

In line with the [council's constitution \(Part 3.3, Para 2.2\)](#), this committee is responsible for all duties and functions relating to Community Governance Reviews under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (other than the making of an Order giving effect to recommendations under S86 of this Act which is reserved to Full Council).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This initial report is intended to provide the Licensing and Regulation Committee (LRC) with an overview of the proposal for a Community Governance Review.

The following recommendations are put forward for the Committee's consideration:

1. That the Licensing and Regulation Committee note the contents of this report, acknowledging the potential for a Community Governance Review in the Winchester town area and the broad implications associated with such a review.
2. That the Licensing and Regulatory Committee agree to establish a Task and Finish group of 6 members. The committee considers the officer's recommendation that this group be formed of 2 members of the Town Forum plus 4 other members to include representation from all 3 political groups. . This group will be responsible for providing member oversight and guidance during the initial stages of the Community Governance Review, working closely with the officer project team.

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 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Undertaking a Community Governance Review is a resource-intensive process that will necessitate the allocation of both financial and human resources. Furthermore, the process will likely require the procurement of legal support to navigate the legislative framework, specialist advice on novel civic and heraldic matters, officer involvement regarding asset management and dedicated project management support to ensure the review progresses efficiently and effectively. It is anticipated that the funding for these activities will be drawn from the Council's transitional reserves.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The primary legal framework governing Community Governance Reviews is Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This legislation devolves the authority to make decisions regarding community governance to principal councils, outlining the specific procedures that must be followed when undertaking a review. This includes requirements around consultation, the criteria that recommendations must meet (reflecting local identities and interests and ensuring effective and convenient governance), and the process for implementing any changes. The guidance issued under this Act further clarifies these requirements and provides best practices for conducting CGRs.
- 3.2 As the CGR progresses, it is anticipated that the Council will need to procure legal support regarding the complex legislative requirements and specialist advice on the novel civic and heraldic issues that may arise, particularly concerning the preservation of Winchester's city status and mayoralty. Furthermore, the potential transfer of assets and services to a newly formed town council will have significant procurement implications. This process will involve the drafting of legal agreements to facilitate the transfer of ownership and responsibilities, as well as ensuring that any existing contracts related to these assets and services are compliant and can be effectively transitioned to the new town council. Adherence to the Council's procurement regulations and relevant public contract law will be essential throughout this stage to ensure transparency and value for money.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The consideration of a Community Governance Review and the potential for local government restructuring may have implications for the Council's workforce. The CGR process itself will require the dedication of officer time and resources to manage the review, conduct consultations, and analyse findings.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A crucial aspect of the Community Governance Review will be the identification of property and assets that may need to be transferred from Winchester City Council to any newly formed town council. This process will require a thorough scoping exercise to determine which assets are located within the defined area of the new town council and are appropriate for transfer to ensure its operational viability. Consideration will need to be given to any long-standing contracts that currently cover these assets to ensure compliance with transfer terms and the continuity of essential services. Assets commonly transferred as part of a CGR can include; open spaces, community buildings, play areas, and potentially other local amenities. The Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 provide the legal framework for such transfers.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 A comprehensive and well-executed consultation and communication strategy will be paramount to the success of the Community Governance Review. The process will necessitate multiple rounds of consultation involving a wide range of stakeholders. This will include, most importantly, the residents within the Winchester town area, existing parish and town councils within the broader district, local business groups, and residents' associations.
- 6.2 Furthermore, it will be essential to engage with other key stakeholders such as health bodies, and voluntary organisations to gather their views.
- 6.3 A variety of consultation methods will be employed to ensure broad participation and reach diverse segments of the community. These methods may include press releases to local media outlets, councillor briefings, active engagement on social media platforms, dissemination of information through Council and parish newsletters and notice boards, and direct written communication with identified stakeholder groups. Examples from other councils that have undertaken CGRs show the importance of utilising multiple channels and potentially holding public meetings or workshops to facilitate dialogue and gather feedback. A clear and transparent communication plan will be essential to keep all stakeholders informed about the progress of the review, the opportunities to provide input, and the potential outcomes.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 While the primary focus of the CGR is on governance structures, the potential impact of any changes on the local environment should be considered. Furthermore, parish and town councils have a recognised role in promoting environmental sustainability within their communities. The CGR for Winchester Town should consider how the establishment of a new town council could contribute to the Council's broader "Greener Faster" outcome, potentially through local environmental initiatives and the management of green spaces.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 Winchester City Council is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, throughout the Community Governance Review process, it will be essential to consider the potential impact of any proposed changes on different equality groups within the Winchester town area. The consultation process should be inclusive and accessible to all members of the community to ensure their voices are heard.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The Community Governance Review process will involve the collection and processing of personal data, particularly through consultations with residents and other stakeholders. Advice from the relevant officers will be required at this point.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 Effective risk management will be a critical component of the Community Governance Review. Throughout the CGR process, it will be necessary to identify, assess, and manage various risks that could potentially impede the successful completion of the review or the effective implementation of its outcomes. These risks could include challenges in engaging with all relevant stakeholders during the consultation, potential legal challenges to the review process or its recommendations, financial risks associated with the costs of the review or the establishment of a new town council, and risks related to the transfer of assets, services, and staff. A robust risk management framework will allow the Council to proactively address potential issues.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure		
Exposure to challenge. A failure to complete the exercise in the required timescale could bring legal challenges.	Ensure resource and critical deadlines are adhered to.	To conclude the CGR effectively and efficiently, having listened and engaged with residents.
Innovation		
Reputation	Ensure resources, timescales are available and realistic.	A well-completed CGR could overall enhance governance arrangements of the Town area.
Achievement of outcome		
Property		
Community Support If not completed within the timescales and/or if the consultation is not inclusive the City Council could be considered to have not supported the local community.	Ensure resource and critical deadlines are adhered to.	

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 The request from the Winchester Town Forum should be set within the broader context of potential local government restructuring within Hampshire and the Solent, a development driven by the Government's English Devolution White Paper and the region's acceptance into the devolution priority program.
- 11.2 This potential restructuring could result in a single tier of local government for the currently unparished Winchester town wards. This scenario would create a divergence in local governance within the Winchester district, as the remaining areas outside the town wards already operate under parish or town council arrangements. Such inconsistency could lead to disparities in how services are delivered, the level of community representation, and the overall sense of local identity between the parished and unparished parts of the district.
- 11.3 The Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007 (LGPIH Act) devolved power to carry out a CGR from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to principal councils. When undertaking a CGR a principal council must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission. However, subject to this, it is for the council to decide how to undertake the review.

- 11.4 Section 93 of the LGPIH Act requires the council to ensure that the community governance within the area under review will be;
- a) Reflective of the identities and interests of the community cohesion; and
 - b) Is effective and convenient.
- 11.5 In carrying out the review the council must also consider
- a) The impact of arrangements on community cohesion; and
 - b) The size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish
- 11.6 A review typically involves the following stages.
- a) Establishing the terms of reference of the CGR.
 - b) Publishing the terms of reference.
 - c) Consultation must take place with local government electors, appropriate local authorities and other relevant persons including political parties and local community interest groups. Any representations received as a result of the initial consultation response must be taken into account.
 - d) Prepare and publish draft proposals,
 - e) Undertake consultation on the draft proposals with electors in the affected area(s) as well as other bodies with interest, including any affected local council.
 - f) Consider any representations received as a result of the consultation stage.
 - g) Make and publish recommendations; and
 - h) Make an order to bring into effect any decision arising from the review
- 11.7 To effectively undertake the Community Governance Review, several key pieces of supporting information will be required. This includes up-to-date population data for the Winchester town area to accurately reflect the current demographics. Detailed mapping of the Winchester town area and the surrounding parishes will be essential to define potential boundaries for a new Town council.
- 11.8 The areas likely to be under review include the five WCC wards that currently comprise the Winchester Town Forum area (St Bartholomew, St Paul, St Barnabas, St Luke, and St Michael), as well as a part of St Barnabas ward that falls within the Littleton and Harestock Parish Council's area. The Kings Barton area, currently part of Headbourne Worthy Parish Council's area, and potentially other built-up areas adjoining WCC town wards that share a strong identity with Winchester, along with any existing anomalies identified during the mapping process, may also be considered.

- 11.9 The preservation of Winchester's ancient city status and mayoralty is a significant consideration. The process for preserving or transferring these civic honours to a successor body, potentially involving petitions to the King will need to be carefully examined. Specialist advice on the novel civic and heraldic issues associated with this will be required. Similarly, the potential transfer of the city's coat of arms to a successor body will need to be considered.
- 11.10 The initial steps already undertaken and immediate next steps in considering a Community Governance Review for the Winchester town area are as follows:
- a) Formation of an officer project team. April 2025.
 - b) Member briefings and a meeting of the Licensing and Regulation Committee to advise of the CGR. June 2025.
 - c) Scoping and identification of assets that may be subject to transfer. May to September 2025.
 - d) Preparation of draft Terms of Reference for the CGR, to be approved at a further meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee. September 2025.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 To not undertake a Community Governance Review at this stage

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[WTF339 - Response to the request of Winchester Town Forum for CGR.pdf](#)

[WTF337 - Request for Governance Review.pdf](#)

Other Background Documents:-

1. Community governance reviews: guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-governance-reviews-guidance>
2. Guidance on community governance reviews
<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/community-governance-review-guidance.pdf>
3. Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/28/part/4/chapter/3>

APPENDICES:

None.