City Councillors' Report to Parishes March 2026

Winchester City Council approves balanced budget for 2026/27

Winchester City Council has approved a balanced budget for the upcoming year.

The budget, which was approved at the 26th February Council meeting, outlines continued investment in services and priorities outlined in the Council Plan 2025-30 including Healthy Communities, Efficient and Effective, and Greener Faster.

It also allows for an increase in the pressures from rises in utility costs and lays out plans for investments which will make it easier and faster for residents to contact the council by improving digital and online services, freeing up traditional contact for those who need it.

A total of £1.7m has also been set aside for essential structural repairs to the listed civic Guildhall building (an additional £3.3 million is allocated from the separate capital investment strategy), and £15,000 has been set aside to explore speed indicators in the town area.

Recognising the ongoing impact of the cost of living, the city council has also extended the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund into 2026/7. Additionally In light of the increase to universal credit, it was agreed that income bands for applying council tax reduction are revised so the majority of working age applicants continue to receive a similar level of support through 2026/27. While the scheme aims to protect vulnerable households and limit reductions in entitlement, additional safeguards remain in place for those experiencing exceptional hardship.

This budget also includes provision for preparing the council for the implementation of the Government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) plans which is expected to have a significant impact on council resources, so that usual services are not affected.

At the meeting the Winchester City Council element of the Council tax bill was set at an average increase of 2.99% (which relates to an increase of between £4.50 - £4.83 per year for an average band D property).

Speaking about the budget, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance Cllr Neil Cutler said:

'I'm very pleased that despite continued and increasing financial pressures, we are able to present not only a balanced budget, but one which continues to improve service delivery and protects residents on low incomes. Importantly it allows for responsible transition to a new unitary council as part of Local Government Reorganisation, and this budget demonstrates we can do that while continuing to maintain and improve the services our residents need.'

Works started to preserve and restore much-loved Buttercross

Planned works to clean and repair the iconic scheduled monument in the heart of Winchester city centre began today.

After a number of years of discussions with Historic England, and specialist consultants and contractors, the works on the Buttercross have now started and are expected to be completed early this summer.

Believed to have been commissioned by Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester from 1404 to 1447, The Buttercross is a holy cross – although, following its construction, the monument also served as a market cross, as butter, cheese and eggs were sold from the steps that surround it.

Councillor Martin Tod, Leader of Winchester City Council, said: "The Buttercross sits at the heart of our city and the heart of our community - and for hundreds of years the City Council and its predecessors have taken care of it. Now it falls to this generation - with the help of the best experts we can find - to repair, conserve and maintain it for the years to come. There will be scaffolding around it while this essential work is being done. I'd like to thank everyone - residents, visitors and businesses alike - for their understanding as these important works take place."

Winchester City Council received formal Scheduled Monument Consent for the restoration works, after the submission of a specialist commissioned report by Philip Hughes Associates to ensure the sensitivity of the programme.

Samir Khatri, from Philip Hughes Associates, said: The Buttercross is a wonderfully intricate and important structure dating from the 15th century. Significant repairs were carried out by George Gilbert Scott, the architect of St Pancras Hotel and the Albert Memorial, in the nineteenth century but it is now suffering from severe staining caused by pigeons and there are many repairs required to damaged or missing elements. We're delighted to be working with Winchester City Council and Stonewest to carry out the much-needed conservation of the Buttercross Monument."

Last year, Winchester City Council appointed award-winning specialist contractors *Stonewest* to carry out the sensitive repairs and conservation cleaning of this historic monument.

Russell Coombe, Project Manager at Stonewest, added: "It is a privilege for our team to conserve such a special monument for the local community - a wonderful opportunity to protect and safeguard a rare and important historical and architectural asset."

The proposed works include stonework repairs, the removal of moss and ingrained dirt and the installation of humane pigeon deterrents and are expected to take between 16-18 weeks to complete.

Kings Barton

The Kings Barton Forum was held on 2 nd March. The minutes for this should publish by early in April.

Occupations reported as 783, with a flow of new occupations after a lull in increases due to substantial increases in building work. Cala's report provided a welcome sense of momentum building towards the Neighbourhood centre, and we look forward to seeing on site work on the Community Building and we hope announcement of the supermarket brand signed up for the centre shops before the next Forum in July.

The Community Governance Review for Winchester and including Kings Barton, will deliver a paper to the Licencing & Regulation Committee on Tuesday 17th March. The paper should publish on Monday 10th March.

The Kings Barton community bus service now finally goes through Winchester Avenue and is piloting a new route to go pas Peter Symonds College, and into town via Stockbridge Road close to Westgate School, and past the station. We look forward to feedback through the Parish Council on these changes.

Food waste Recycling

The last phase of the roll out of the service for Food waste recycling is occurring during March. By end of March all 58,000 homes in the District should have a weekly collection available to them. Further information is available here:

https://www.winchester.gov.uk/waste-recycling/food-waste

Jackie Porter, Steve Cramoysan and Jane Rutter

8/3/26