

Hampshire County Councillor Update – February 2025

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Devolution

The Government is expected to announce in the coming days whether our area has been accepted onto the devolution priority programme. If accepted, elections for our regional Mayor would be held in May 2026, and County Council elections, due this May, will be postponed for 12 months.

With a combined population of over two million residents, home to 90,000 businesses and an economy that generates around £80 billion a year, our region is a powerhouse of economic activity and a significant asset for the wider UK economy. The Mayor will have a key role in promoting the interests of our region to central Government, and will also take on some decision-making powers that are currently held by central government.

Alongside devolution, the County Council has committed to progress with developing proposals for local government reorganisation in the area. Reorganisation will completely change the landscape of Hampshire's local councils by replacing the current two-tier council system, which is in place across most of the region, with a number of new unitary (all-purpose) councils. Proposals for local government reorganisation need to be submitted to Government by Autumn 2025.

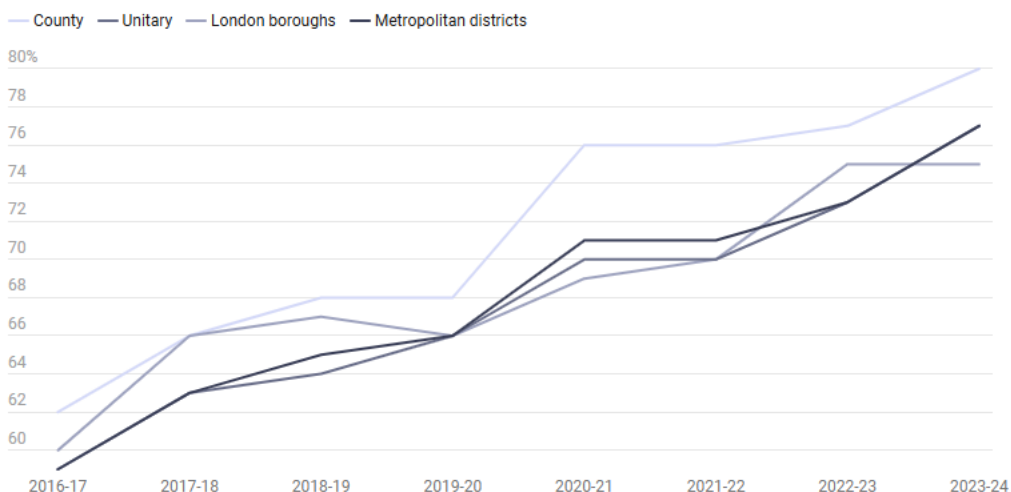
Hampshire County Council Funding

The County Council has written to Government requesting that it is allowed to increase council tax by up to 15% in 2025/26 to help address the on-going budget issues. Normally any increase above the limit set by Government (5% for 2025/26) would require a local referendum. However, the Council has requested an exception under Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) rules.

Currently, Hampshire has the second lowest council tax of all counties nationally. Increasing council tax by 15% would generate an extra £84m, which would help to address some of the budgetary issues.

It is important to note that part of the reason that Hampshire is in this position is because the administration chose to freeze council tax for five years (from 2011/12 to 2015/16). Another key issue is the ongoing increase in social care costs. Across all County Councils, average social care expenditure as a proportion of total council spend has increased from 62% in 2016-17 to 80% in 2023-24. Until a long-term solution to social care funding is put in place by the Government, all local authorities responsible for social care are fighting a losing battle.

Average social care expenditure as a proportion of NRE



Source: CIPFA - Get the data - Created with Datawrapper

'Lane Rental' Scheme

Hampshire County Council has set out proposals for the introduction of a new disruption charge scheme designed to reduce delays on the county's busiest roads, at the busiest times. The plan would incentivise any companies or agencies needing to carry out work on busier parts of the public highway to improve their planning, work outside of peak times wherever possible, and reduce the duration of their work.

This would be achieved by charging a daily fee for the duration of the work, including any delays. Part of the surplus revenues received over and above the basic scheme operation costs would be used for funding innovative projects to reduce traffic disruption, and part re-invested back into highway maintenance.

The aim is for the scheme to become operational in 2026. Charges can only be applied on the most congested, strategically important local roads across Hampshire. The County Council would be able to apply a 'rental' charge of up to £2,500 per day.

Botley Bypass Update

Work will start next month on the final phase of the Botley Bypass following approval by Hampshire County Council. The County Council has appointed contractor, Milestone Infrastructure (part of M Group Services' Transport Division), to deliver this scheme which is expected to be completed in late summer 2027.



The final element of the Botley Bypass scheme will create a new single-carriageway road running eastwards from Winchester Street, a new bridge crossing the River Hamble and a new roundabout at the A334 junction with the A3051. New and improved pedestrian and cycle routes will also be provided as part of the project, encouraging people to travel more actively, by walking and cycling for their local journeys.

Site clearance will begin in February 2025 with the main works commencing in May 2025. A public information event with the contractor will be held in advance of the main works starting.

Regular updates are provided on the scheme webpages including information about upcoming community information events: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/transportchemes/botleybypass>

M27 Junction 10 Update

The M27 Junction 10 project involves the provision of three new slip roads to facilitate an 'all moves' arrangement, along with a new motorway underpass to the west of the existing motorway junction and the construction of a new dual carriageway to link the new slip roads to the existing road network. These highway changes are being implemented to support the development of Welborne, a new community of up to 6000 homes between Wickham and Fareham.

In recent months, the footprint of the scheme has rapidly taken shape. The focus of work on site is on the construction of a large concrete underpass next to the motorway which will be slid into position over the Christmas period 2025.

However, to support the current phase of the scheme, several full and partial overnight closures on the M27 will be necessary in late March and early April, which will reduce the number of lanes on the motorway at this section from four to three for the duration of the works. Information on the exact dates of the overnight closures will be published on the scheme web page and on social media shortly.

Flooding

Flood water can come from rivers or the sea, surface water or groundwater, or more usually, a combination of the different sources. Weather patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable with summer downpours often having more severe impacts than the winter rainfall. Groundwater levels are also reacting with wetter summers leaving aquifers (natural underground water storage) at a higher level before the winter recharge season begins.

While those involved in flood risk management can and will undertake a variety of actions in relation to their remits, flooding is almost never due to a single source or factor, and it can be extremely complicated to understand how and why it occurs. There is an increasing need for multiple bodies, including the community, to work together in understanding and managing the risk.

With so many different parties involved in the different types and mechanisms of flooding, Hampshire County Council have prepared a community toolkit to help provide clarity on the most appropriate support available:

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/flood-water-management/managing-risk/hcc-community-toolkit.pdf>.

The new community toolkit is designed to provide communities, parish and town councils, householders, landowners and businesses with information on flooding and where to find advice and support, plus where to report flooding for assistance. Reporting incidents of flooding also helps organisations to develop measures to reduce the flooding in high-risk areas.



Solar Showcase for Community Buildings Wed 26 Feb at 2pm, Denmead Community Centre, School Lane, Denmead PO7 6LU

Do you run a community building (such as a community centre, sports building, scout hut, faith building etc) in Winchester District and have been thinking about having solar panels installed?



Denmead Community Centre installed 59 solar panels and 10kWh battery storage in July last year – and it's already provided considerable savings on their energy bills and their carbon footprint. This event is an opportunity to hear from the Community Centre trustees who led on the installation project – what they learnt, how they raised the funding, how they dealt with the challenges and the benefits they've gained.

The trustees were given free support from the Winchester District Community Solar Support Scheme, delivered by local charity Winchester Action on the Climate Crisis (WinACC). The scheme provides free help with all aspects of having solar panels installed – technical advice, a feasibility study, support to develop an implement a fundraising plan and template tenders for installer quotes – find out more and see case studies at <https://www.winacc.org.uk/community-solar-support-scheme>.

Stuart Mills, WinACC Project Manager, will also be speaking at the Solar Showcase event about how to access the scheme. To book a free place, email solar@winacc.org.uk

Climate Future: Take the quick survey today!

You are invited to complete a short survey on climate change. Your feedback will help HCC understand how to better support residents in tackling climate change and meeting our carbon-neutral targets by 2050. The survey should take less than 10 minutes. Thank you.

[Share Your Views](#)

Home Energy Efficiency Opportunities

The following offers advice and support. But please carefully check eligibility for grants as they will depend on the type of home and your circumstances.

- [Energy Saving Trust](#) – Guidance for the type of insulation for properties
- [Great British Insulation Scheme](#) – Eligible if the property has an energy performance certificate (EPC) of D to G and is in Council Tax bands A-D in England
- [Warmer Homes](#) – Warmer Homes provides fully funded insulation, solar panels and other energy efficiency measures for owner-occupiers and private renters living in low-income, off-gas households. The scheme is available until March 2025.



Thermal Imaging Cameras

A thermal imaging camera, under the right conditions, can reveal where heat is being lost from your home. Your local Community Action Group (for example, SWaCS – Sustainable Waltham Chase and Swanmore) may have one you can borrow. If not, you can reach out to Winchester Action on the Climate Crisis (WinACC) at homes@winacc.org.uk to find out more.

Upcoming Events

- *Warmer Homes Retrofit Advice Surgery*, Hambledon, Saturday 22-Feb, 10am-1pm – Hambledon Greening are holding a Warmer Homes Retrofit Advice surgery in Hambledon Village Hall. If you know anyone you think would benefit from a FREE 20-minute session (or 40 if you book 2 sessions!) with an expert, then please go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/homes-retrofit-advice-surgery-tickets-1152080536899>
- *Sustainability Event Barn Farm*, Whiteley, Saturday 01-Mar, 10am-12pm – Kick-off event for the Whiteley group covering Sustainable Energy, Sustainable Gardening & Sustainable Consumption.