

Winchester City Council: Report to 2026 Liberal Democrats AGM

This report has to start with a huge **thank you** to everyone who worked so hard in this year's elections – candidates, councillors, volunteers and party staff – to build on the achievements of the council since we took control in 2019 and give us the largest majority achieved by any political party in the 52-year history of the current city council with 80% of the seats. And a huge thank you to the voters across Winchester district who recognised our achievements, responded to our campaign and chose to put their trust in us.

We have tried to make the most of this opportunity to make real progress in our area. A few examples:

Going Greener Faster

- By the time of May's elections, we had completed the roll-out of food waste collections, invested to cut pollutants in local water, and retrofitted of more than 1,000 council houses. We had become a top 5 council for cutting fly-tipping – down 65% in 5 years. And had cut our Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 96%. We had also agreed a new Local Plan that is now being used as an exemplar in other areas across the country for its ambitious approach to energy standards and nature recovery.
- Since then, we haven't stopped. We have started on a self-funded and self-funding programme of installing batteries and solar panels on council houses – enabling the council's tenants to cut carbon and cut bills. And have already retrofitted more than 100 of them. Watch this space for more.

Healthy Communities:

- Similarly, in May, we celebrated our investment in GP surgeries – enabling them to hire more GPs and cut waiting times, our new sports pavilions and pitches, the improvements we have delivered to water and air quality, and our support for the City of Sanctuary.
- And we aren't stopping there either and have since agreed to support the building a new Lido on the site of the former leisure centre at River Park.

Thriving Places

- In May, we reported the agreement to a new Local Plan. This ensures that all development goes where it's needed with the infrastructure that's needed – and to the highest achievable environmental standards. By then, we had built and bought 478 new council homes across the district. And invested in our High Streets with refurbished public toilets, bike parking and bins.
- And we've kept going. We have since agreed to progress the regeneration of Central Winchester, with construction to start in 2027 – and have agreed plans to build 44 new council homes at St Peter's Car Park. We are also refurbishing the Butter Cross and will be refurbishing the Guildhall!

Keeping it local

- The council has, inevitably, invested a huge amount of time and effort in Local Government Reorganisation since the process began in February 2025. In March, the Government chose a 5-council model – not our preferred version – and we began work at pace to prepare for reorganisation in 2028. Then, this September, they withdrew their decision – and have told us we would have an update on the way forward 'after the conference recess' – which probably means the 28th or 29th of this month.
- There are two potential ways forward:
 - If there's a delay, we will take the time to drive ahead with our agenda locally – with new initiatives on carbon and nature, delivering our regeneration plans, continuing to add to our stock of council homes and making sure a new Lido happens. But times are difficult, and we will also be working to keep costs down and support those who need it with the cost of living.
 - And if there isn't and shadow elections proceed in 2027, we will work with our neighbouring parties to ensure that any new unitary builds on the ambitions we have had here in Winchester.
- And whatever happens, whatever configuration of local government we have, we won't stop working for local people and local communities – campaigning locally and working with our volunteers to bring our values to life and make sure that local voices are heard and placed at the heart of our decision-making.