WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD – PARISH UPDATE – OCTOBER 2026

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

During September, the Government confirmed it was pausing local government reorganisation in many areas and 'withdrawing' its plans for Hampshire and three other counties where requests for Judicial Review had been submitted. With councils, organisations and political parties preparing for many months for the effects of LGR this is a very unwelcome u-turn which may result in yet another change of heart in the future. The previous proposal would have seen the Winchester District become part of a new Mid Hampshire Unitary, alongside Test Valley, East Hampshire and parts of the New Forest. The existing councils will consequently continue as normal and importantly the May 2027 Winchester City Council elections will take place on the existing council boundaries; one of the Upper Meon Valley seats will be contested, together with any Parish Councils that were previously due to be elected in the 2027 cycle.

Winchester District Local Plan 2026-2044

Of relevance to the small areas of the ward that are outside the National Park, the Winchester District Local Plan was adopted in March and the Council are now preparing the next Local Plan. The Government has changed the timeline and process for the new Local Plan which now requires them to be prepared with a 30-month timescale. The first stage is a Scoping Consultation. The consultation is seeking views on the main issues the plan addresses such as housing, environment, infrastructure, and climate change.
Search: Winchester Local Plan 2044 Scoping Consultation.

New South Downs Local Plan

The Regulation 19 consultation received more than 2,700 representations from around 1,300 respondents. Officers are currently reviewing all consultation responses and supporting documents and summary, and any proposed modifications will be considered by the Planning Committee on 12 November 2026 and by the full Authority on 8 December 2026, when a decision will be made on whether to submit the Local Plan for independent examination. Subject to the Authority's decision in December, the Local Plan is expected to be submitted for examination before the end of 2026. The Authority has been told that the Planning Inspectorate is expecting a high number of Local Plan submissions before the December deadline, so there may be some delay before examinations begin.

Droxford Fire Station

We have been working closely with Councillors in Central Meon Valley, Danny Chambers MP and meeting members of the fire service management, to secure the long-term future of Droxford Fire Station. The station building fabric is rapidly deteriorating and will shortly require a complete rebuild to make it safe and suitable for the crew based there. There is a risk that as a result of cost cutting pressures in the fire service, that Droxford would close and its operations distributed between Wickham and Bishops Waltham. We held a rally recently attended by over 100 concerned local residents and representatives, to seek assurances from fire service senior officers that the funding for the rebuild of the station will be formally ringfenced and the future of the station publicly confirmed.

Rural Buses

We have engaged with the HCC Public Transport team with a view to improving the utility of the 63 bus that serves Owslebury two days a week. Ideas being explored are for the morning journeys to run direct to Winchester from Morestead, giving residents longer in Winchester before the early afternoon return journey. This would allow the vehicle to also do two return runs from Winchester to Oliver's Battery during the morning.

We have also learned that the current contract for the 67 bus, Winchester to Petersfield via Cheriton, Bramdean and West Meon, will remain in place at least until the end of July next year and is likely to be further extended to end July 2029. We will similarly continue to work for improvements to the schedule within the tight constraints of the current contract.

Jerry Pett
David Ablitt
Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley