

# Hampshire County Councillor Update – February 2026

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## Devolution Update – Hampshire and the Solent

Hampshire and Solent mayoral elections for the new Mayoral Strategic Authority have been deferred to 2028. A foundational authority will now be created, bringing together Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, with limited initial funding to begin preparatory work—such as early collaboration with Homes England to expand social and affordable housing and support local growth.

The [Government statement](#) announced an annual allocation of £44.6 million to Hampshire and the Solent mayoral authority. Each new Mayoral Strategic Authority will also receive additional start-up support, including £1 million when the legislation is laid (anticipated summer 2026) and £3 million over the first three years to help establish the new bodies.

📄 For general information and future updates, visit: [Devolution | Hampshire County Council](#)

## Local Government Reorganisation

Consultation on Hampshire and the Solent's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has closed. Councils are now being asked for early views on how the transition should be managed. This includes the structure of interim committees, arrangements for the first elections to the new councils, and practical matters such as naming the authorities.

The Government is likely to make its formal announcement in March, with transition planning taking place over the following two years before new councils come into effect in April 2028. Elections to a Unitary Authority are expected in May 2027, after which the shadow authority will lead the transition.

📄 For more information, visit: [Local Government Reorganisation | Hampshire County Council](#)

## Local Elections in Hampshire & Winchester to Proceed as Planned



The Government has confirmed that while some councils involved in Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will have their 2026 elections postponed, most will still go ahead, including those in Hampshire and Winchester.

Neither Hampshire County Council nor Winchester City Council sought a delay, and both fall within the group of authorities where elections are expected to take place in May 2026.

For local residents, this means a normal election cycle this spring, ensuring continuity of representation while work continues in the background on future unitary council arrangements.

## **M27 Reopens Early After Major Engineering Works**

Hampshire County Council has confirmed that the M27 between Junctions 9 and 11 reopened 24 hours ahead of schedule, following the successful completion of a complex engineering operation. The motorway reopened at 4am on Saturday 3 January, instead of the originally planned 4am on Sunday 4 January.

The closure, which began on Christmas Eve, allowed engineers to install a new underpass at Junction 10 using an innovative “box-slide” technique — only used a handful of times in the UK. A 60-metre pre-built concrete structure, weighing around 8,500 tonnes, was slid into position before the motorway surface was reinstated. This approach avoided months of lane restrictions and overnight works.



Over the 10-day closure, around 130 workers operated around the clock, completing roughly 10,000 hours of construction. Completion of this phase paves the way for the new “all-moves” Junction 10, due to open later this year, supporting access to the Welborne Garden Village.

## **Highways Update from Cllr Lulu Bowerman, Executive Member for Highways**

“Since Christmas, wintry and wet weather has hit our highway network particularly hard. The impacts of regular freeze–thaw cycles and persistent rain have accelerated road deterioration, leading to a significant surge in pothole reports and repair requests. This level of degradation is consistent with what our highways officers would expect to see at this time of year, which can lead to weakened road surfaces and failure of the underlying layers.



As an aside, since the start of the financial year, the Highways Team have already repaired more than 62,000 defects, including potholes and other surface damage.

To tackle the damage and spike in demand, the Highways Team, working closely with M Group, have successfully secured extra supply-chain resources - and they have managed this despite a significant rise in demand for frontline resources nationally from other highway authorities!

Highways have extra Jet/Dragon Patchers already out on the Hampshire network with more due soon. In addition, extra carriageway patching gangs started on 12 January, and more are expected to join by the end of this month. Further resource increases are likely over the coming weeks.

While dealing with potholes will remain the main focus over the coming months, the winter weather is also placing pressure on other parts of the network, especially drainage assets. To help manage the increase in flooding, there are also additional jetting machines available to respond to issues related to piped drainage systems. A team is also available to tackle other localised flooding problems.

In addition, an extra white lining team is now on the network addressing small, localised sites where markings have deteriorated.

In light of the increased demand, it is inevitable that some reported defects will need to be temporarily infilled to ensure road safety. Whilst permanent first-time repairs are always preferred, the level of demand is currently so high across Hampshire that infill repairs will need to be considered as a quick-fix while longer term permanent repairs are scheduled.

I would strongly encourage residents to report any highway issues via our website or via the Our Hants app. This still remains the most effective way for our teams to prioritise work. Clear descriptions of the location and photographs of the pothole are always appreciated - though not essential - and greatly assist in ensuring a timely response."

## **More Specialist SEND School Places Approved Across Hampshire**

Hampshire County Council has approved a major expansion of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, creating 157 new specialist school places across the county. This follows a steep rise in the number of children requiring Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), which climbed to 20,555 by December 2025 – up from 17,234 the previous autumn.



New investment includes autism and SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) resourced provision in both primary and secondary settings, refurbishments to increase specialist teaching space, and new modular buildings to support pupils with more complex needs. Schools benefiting from approved projects include Hamble School, Wyvern College, Wavell School, and Hamble Primary School, with works set to open in phases from September 2026.

The Council is also launching statutory consultations on further expansions, including a satellite site for The Waterloo School and new autism-specific spaces at schools in Fareham, Eastleigh and the New Forest. If approved, these would add a further 70 SEMH places from 2027.

This programme contributes to Hampshire's goal of delivering 1,000 new specialist places by 2030, ensuring more children can access the support they need closer to home.

## **Record Seizure of Illegal Vapes by Hampshire Trading Standards**

Hampshire County Council's Trading Standards team has reported a record year in tackling illegal vape and tobacco sales, seizing 116,000 unlawful products worth around £138,000 during 2025. This forms part of their ongoing work to protect residents from unsafe goods and to support responsible local retailers.



Officers have been carrying out regular inspections—often alongside Hampshire Police—as well as test-purchasing exercises using young volunteers to identify outlets selling to under-18s or stocking counterfeit items. Illegal vapes often contain unknown ingredients or excessive nicotine levels, posing real risks to public health

Residents are encouraged to stay alert for suspicious products, such as poor-quality packaging, missing health warnings or absent safety markings, and to report concerns directly to Trading Standards. Tackling these illegal sales helps protect young people and prevents dangerous products from circulating in local communities.

## **Hampshire County Councillor Grants Open!**

The County Councillor grant scheme is now open for 2025-26. Groups and organisations can apply for funding for both revenue (one-off) and minor capital projects. Revenue grants should generally be used to support short term project related costs.

More details are available on the County Council website: [County Councillor grants | Hampshire County Council](#). The 2025/26 County Councillor grant scheme is open until 28 February 2026.

## Free Advice to Reduce Your Home Energy Bills

The Environment Centre has launched a ground-breaking service to make our homes warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

It's called ***My Home Made Better***, and it offers free and impartial advice on everything from insulation and heating upgrades, to switching to new energy-efficient technologies.

Experienced energy advisers will simplify complex information and dispel myths to guide you through your options and help you find the best ways to keep the heat in, lower your energy bills, and make your home more comfortable.



This is how it works:

1. You call 0800 804 8601 (or email) to chat with one of the friendly advisers. Lines are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.
2. You'll be asked about your property and circumstances, following which you will receive tailormade recommendations and your own personalised plan. This will comprise a summary of everything discussed, including recommendations and things to consider before taking your next step.
3. When you're ready, search the independent directory to find local suppliers and installers.

For more information go to **[myhomemadebetter.org](http://myhomemadebetter.org)**