

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD – PARISH UPDATE – APRIL 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

As you will have seen in the media, the Government's proposal for reorganising local government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was announced in a letter from Steve Read, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to council leaders in the area on 25th March 2026. He prefaced his decision by stating that:

“Reorganisation must also respect local identity, and the distinctive nature of the rural, urban and coastal communities across our country. We want to see councils that are connected to their local residents and communities; councils that mean something to the people they serve.”

The option selected is one of those proposed by Eastleigh, Fareham, Hart, Havant and Rushmoor borough and district councils and Portsmouth and Southampton city councils. Aside from the Isle of Wight remaining unchanged as a unitary authority, the option creates:

- A north Hampshire authority, comprising the present areas of Basingstoke & Deane, Hart and Rushmoor district councils;
- A south-east Hampshire authority, comprising the present areas of Portsmouth city, Fareham, Gosport and Havant boroughs, together with Newlands parish (currently in Winchester) and Horndean, Rowlands Castle and Clanfield parishes (currently in East Hampshire);
- A south-west Hampshire authority, comprising the present areas of Southampton city and Eastleigh borough, together with Totton & Ealing, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley parishes (currently in New Forest district) and Nursling & Rowqnhams, Valley Park and Chilworth parishes (currently in Test Valley district);
- A mid-Hampshire authority, comprising the present areas of East Hampshire, Winchester, Test Valley and New Forest districts, less those parishes passing to the SE and SW authorities.

Whether this ‘slicing and dicing’ meets the objective quoted above we leave to you to debate.

There will be elections next year for the new authority, which will act as a ‘shadow authority’ until formally vested in 2028. We are told that this year’s elections will be the last for both the City and County Councils, suggesting that those City Council members in wards that would have had elections in normal course in 2027 will now run on through the final year of that authority.

Each of the four new authorities will be granted at least £900k in transition funding. This is in addition to the announced £17.8M to be released to the shadow Hampshire and Solent Combined County Authority in the two years prior to the Mayoral elections in 2028. The full delegation to the Mayor will be £1.3Bn over 30 years.

It is simply too early to say how our area will be represented in the new authority; this will form part of the not inconsiderable work that officers now have in train for the transition and we will, of course, continue to keep you informed as best we can.

Planning

The new Winchester District Local Plan was adopted by the full council on 25th March 2026, albeit that it covers only small parts of Upham, Owslebury, Tichborne and Cheriton parishes and is therefore now in force.

The final draft of the revised South Downs Local Plan before it is examined in public by an Inspector (known as the 'Reg 19 draft') was agreed by the SDNPA on 20th March 2026 and will be released for public consultation in early May. Contrary to earlier expectation that this would be a relatively light-touch review of the extant plan most of the policies have been revised in the light of comments received in the 'Reg 18 draft' consultation and is therefore worth a further review by parishes when it goes 'live' on the SDNPA website.

Registration, Postal and Proxy Votes

A final reminder of the deadlines for registering to vote and applying for postal or proxy votes in this year's May elections:

- Registering to vote: 2359 on 20th April
- Requesting a Postal Vote: 1700 on 21st April
- Requesting a Proxy Vote: 1700 on 28th April.

Guidance for all of these is available on the gov.uk website.

Neil Bolton
Jerry Pett

1 April 2026 (but after 1200!)