

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD – PARISH UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2026

Elections

We now have clarity that the following elections will go ahead on Thursday 7 May 2026: Hampshire County Council elections for all Divisions, including Meon Valley and Bishops Waltham; Winchester City Council elections for the 1/3rd of Ward seats that would normally fall vacant in the first year of the 'standard' three-year cycle – ie one seat in Upper Meon Valley Ward. The County Councillors elected this coming May will likely serve a maximum of 2 years. There will be elections in May 2027 for members of the new unitary authorities, initially serving in a 'shadow' authority until the new Councils go 'live' in May 2028. The following elections to the unitary authorities will be in May 2031. On current plans, the first Hampshire Solent Mayor will be elected for a 4-year term in May 2028, with the following election being in May 2032

The important point for Parish Councils is that if their electoral cycle does not match that of the new unitary authorities or the Mayor then, if their elections are contested, they will need to foot the bill for the expense of running an election in an 'off year'. As New Alresford Town Council found last year, the cost of even a by-election can run well into four figures. We have yet to see what options might be available for aligning the cycles to prevent this. Meanwhile, we still wait to hear from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government their preferred solution for the establishment of Unitary Authorities in Hampshire Solent.

Planning – Provision of a 5-year supply of sites for Gypsy and Traveller Communities

Both Winchester City and the South Downs Planning Authorities are currently unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of these sites, as required by central government. The result of this is that applications for new Gypsy and Traveller sites on what would otherwise be classed as 'countryside' are increasingly being recommended for approval, since refusal would likely lead to a successful appeal through the so-called 'tilted balance' principle, where a need has to be weighed against environmental considerations. Identification of new candidate sites to satisfy the 5 year supply is therefore now being given some greater priority by both Local Planning Authorities.

South Downs Plans

The new South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan is now live on the website here:

<https://partnership-management-plan.southdowns.gov.uk>

It is an ambitious plan and will require the active input of partner authorities, statutory bodies, organisations and, above all, communities throughout the park to ensure success. It is well worth a read and is likely to be the focus of the next Parish engagement event.

Meanwhile, the Reg 19 draft of the South Downs Local Plan Review will be published with the papers for the 12th February convening of the South Downs Planning Committee, and be put before the Full Authority meeting on 19th March. The formal Reg 19 consultation will commence in early May, with the Inspection in Public likely to take place in the second half of the year.

Food Waste Collection

The roll-out of the Food Waste Collection programme is nearly complete and has not been without a few minor teething troubles – unsurprising given that it requires a new fleet of vehicles and many new operators to work. We are following up some of the localised issues but would emphasise to all that the larger, kerb-side grey bins should be left out for collection with their handles in the LOCKED position.

Neil Bolton
Jerry Pett

2 February 2026