

# Hampshire County Councillor Update – March 2025

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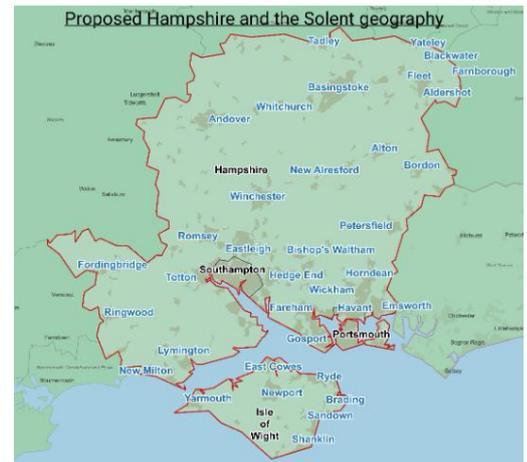


## Devolution

Hampshire County Council has been accepted onto the Government's fast-track Devolution Priority Programme. A public consultation on the proposed new Strategic Authority for Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight is open from now until 13 April at: [Hampshire and the Solent devolution consultation - GOV.UK](#)

Elections for Mayor of the new Strategic Authority are planned to be held in May 2026. As well as promoting the interests of the wider region to central Government, the Mayor will work with local council leaders to make strategic decisions for our region in areas such as transport, skills and employment support, housing and planning, and tackling climate change.

Due to selection for the Devolution Priority Programme, the Government has also determined that the County Council's elections, originally scheduled for May this year, should be postponed for 12 months. Any by-elections, if required during this period, would continue to go ahead as normal.



## Local Government Reorganisation

Alongside devolution, the County Council has committed to progress with developing proposals for local government reorganisation in the area. Reorganisation will completely change the landscape of Hampshire's local councils by replacing the current two-tier council system, with a number of new unitary (all-purpose) councils.

Interim plans for reorganisation of Hampshire & the Solent region are required to be submitted to the Government by 21 Mar 2025 and final proposals for new Unitary Authorities by 26 Sep 2025.

Following submittal of the plans, there will be a public consultation. If the new Unitary Authority organisation is agreed, elections for new, Unitary Authorities Councillors are anticipated to be held in May 2027. Elections are held one year before the new Unitary Councils come into force so that councillors can help with setting-up the new authorities. It's anticipated that existing County and District councils will be dissolved and replaced by the new Unitary Authorities in April 2028.

More details on both devolution and reorganisation can be found at:

[Devolution and local government reorganisation | About the Council | Hampshire County Council](#)



## Hampshire County Council Funding

At the meeting of the full County Council, a 4.995% increase in Hampshire's portion of the council tax was approved from April this year alongside further savings proposals needed to help move the Authority towards delivering its core purpose and help address ongoing budget pressures in the years to come. The increase will generate an extra £50 million of vital revenue income towards the delivery of crucial services to the people of Hampshire in 2025/26 and still means that Hampshire has one of the lowest council tax precepts of any county in England.

As raised previously, increasing social care support needs are key cost drivers for the council:

- Every month in Hampshire there is a net increase of 30 people living in care homes who become reliant upon the County Council to pay their costs - even at the most basic level of care these 360 people add a further £18.7 million of cost to our budget each year.
- Every month there are an extra 200 applications for Education Health and Care Plans - the first step for children to register for Special Educational Needs (SEN) support. That exponential rise is the reason the budget for Home to School Transport (for which SEN children qualify for free) has increased from £24 million per year at the end of the pandemic to £105 million in 2025/26.

Therefore, even with the council tax increase, the Council will have to use even more reserves to help plug this year's budget gap. Repeatedly having to use our reserves to balance the budget is not a sustainable position. They can only be spent once, then they're gone. Over £700 million has been cut from the Council budgets in the last ten years, and whilst the Council is continuing to look for further savings, there is little left to find, and by 2026/27 reserves will be exhausted.

## Advertising and the Climate Emergency

Encouraging the consumption of high-carbon goods and services by allowing corporate polluters to promote their products or greenwash their image, whether on billboards, in the media or via sports or cultural institutions, is simply not compatible with the need to urgently reduce CO2 emissions. The UK House of Lords, the UN Environment Programme and the World Health Organisation have all flagged the need to address high-carbon advertising to promote sustainable behaviour change, protect public health and ensure a habitable planet.

At the full council meeting on 13-Feb, Hampshire County Council took a huge step towards banning high carbon products from the county's advertising platforms by supporting my motion on low carbon advertising. Another small, but important, step forward.

## Saab Campus Opening

On 4-Feb, Saab celebrated the opening of their new advanced UK manufacturing facility. The site, in Segensworth North business park, is developing, manufacturing, and supporting Saab's radar systems and market-leading underwater robotics portfolio.



The radar systems developed here help protect our Armed Forces. Whilst the underwater vehicles are transforming operations using innovative electrical technology in uncrewed robotic vessels. These underwater vehicles are used in a variety of applications, and so the technology needs to be flexible to the varying demands and the punishing operating environment.

The site supports up to 400 skilled jobs and provides local opportunities for apprenticeships. The site opening was a great opportunity to meet with the site leaders, members of the teams who are working to develop these world-leading technologies, and with representatives from the Armed Forces who operate the radar systems in the field.

## Key Month for new North Whiteley Secondary School

Funding approval of £46.7 million for the new 900-place secondary school in North Whiteley is due to be confirmed at the Hampshire County Council Decision Day on Friday, 7 March.

The site for the new school was secured as part of wider approvals for the development of North Whiteley. The new school, anticipated to open in 2027, is intended to meet the predicted demand for secondary school places across Whiteley, with scope to expand to a 1200-place school if needed, in the future.



Plans for the new school include a three-storey main building providing classrooms, drama studio, and assembly and dining halls, with a separate two-storey sports block featuring a four-court sports hall and multi-use activity studio. The main building will also include a Resourced Provision for 15 children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This type of provision is a specialist environment within a mainstream school for children with SEND.

Outside, the site will provide two all-weather sports pitches, grass playing fields and a multi-use games area. The school's sports facilities and assembly hall will be available for community use outside school hours.

The site will include a range of measures to reduce carbon emissions and ensure resilience to climate change, as well as improvements to the local footpath and cycle network to encourage families and staff to walk and cycle to school.

The request to approve the spend for the project follows an earlier four-week public consultation seeking feedback on the school building plans. This took place in September 2024, ahead of a planning application being submitted. A planning decision is expected in spring 2025; subject to this, work is anticipated to begin on site this summer and to complete in summer 2027.

Full details of the [plans for the new school building](#) are available on the County Council website.



## New Special Needs School for Whiteley

More children with severe learning difficulties are set to benefit from specialist school places following confirmation from Government that dedicated funding is to be made available for a new special school in Whiteley, to be called Windmill Academy.

Over recent years, the demand for SEND provision has significantly increased, placing immense pressure on resources. The new special school is being developed in partnership with Solent Academies Trust. Windmill Academy will teach 135 pupils aged 4 to 19 and is planned to open in September 2028.

The £18 million project will be funded by the Department for Education as part of its national drive to increase special needs places. Planning approval for the new school is needed before construction can begin.

## Whiteley-Segensworth Walking and Cycling Improvements

Approval to progress the A27 Segensworth Walking/Cycling Link scheme is due on Monday 3 March. The main objective of the scheme is to complete a north-south pedestrian and cycle route over the M27 to connect Whiteley and Segensworth, and thereby reducing the level of severance created by the motorway and providing better accessibility between these two regionally significant employment areas by active modes

The plans for the scheme include:

- New section of shared-use path adjacent to the southbound A27 Segensworth Link
- Provision of 100m long ramp down from the A27 to the existing shared-use path beneath the A27, and realignment of the 'junction' between the ramp and path to improve visibility
- Length of new retaining wall at the toe of the existing A27 embankment along approximately half the length of the new ramp
- Replacement bridge parapet (provision of temporary parapet agreed with National Rail in the event that delivery of the permanent parapet is delayed by the approvals process)



The £3 million cost of the scheme is being funded from grants (Active Travel England), developer contributions and Hampshire County Council integrated transport funding. Construction is anticipated to start in early 2026, and complete in autumn 2026.

## Botley Bypass Event

Work has now started on the final phase of the Botley Bypass following approval by Hampshire County Council. The County Council has appointed contractor, Milestone Infrastructure (part of M Group Services' Transport Division), to deliver this scheme which is expected to be completed in late summer 2027.

A 'Meet the Contractor' information event is being held on Thursday 13 March. Hampshire County Council along with Milestone Infrastructure will be present to address any questions. This event aims to provide comprehensive information about the Botley Bypass scheme, including an overview of the phasing plan, ecological and environmental considerations, and objectives for delivering the project.

### Event Details:

- *Date:* Thursday, 13 March
- *Time:* 4:30 PM - 7:00 PM
- *Location:* Deer Park School Community Hall Sports Centre, Sika Avenue, Hedge End, SO30 2HT



To book your place go to: [Botley Bypass Meet The Contractor Event Tickets, Thu 13 Mar 2025 at 16:30 | Eventbrite](#)

Regular updates are provided on the scheme webpages: [Botley Bypass | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council](#)

## Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) Chalk Stream Campaign

Nearly half of Britain's biodiversity has been lost since the industrial revolution, and the UK is now ranked as one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. However, we still retain some fantastic natural assets such as our globally rare chalk streams. 85% of these precious habitats are found only in England and they contain some of the most biodiverse and ecologically significant freshwater ecosystems in the world.

The Meon River is one of those key chalk streams, but it is under threat. Whilst local volunteers are working hard to maintain this habitat, Government action is needed to protect and enhance these precious streams for future generations and to protect the rare biodiversity which depends on them.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has joined forces with 215 local councillors to send a powerful open letter to Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP and Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP, urging the Government to strengthen protections for the UK's chalk streams within planning policy.

## Home Energy Efficiency Opportunities

The following offers advice and support. But please carefully check eligibility for grants as they will depend on the type of home and your circumstances.

- [Energy Saving Trust](#) – Guidance for the type of insulation for properties
- [Great British Insulation Scheme](#) – Eligible if the property has an energy performance certificate (EPC) of D to G and is in Council Tax bands A-D in England
- [Warmer Homes](#) – Warmer Homes provides fully funded insulation, solar panels and other energy efficiency measures for owner-occupiers and private renters living in low-income, off-gas households. The scheme is available until March 2025.



### ***Thermal Imaging Cameras***

A thermal imaging camera, under the right conditions, can reveal where heat is being lost from your home. Your local Community Action Group (for example, SWaCS – Sustainable Waltham Chase and Swanmore) may have one you can borrow. If not, you can reach out to Winchester Action on the Climate Crisis (WinACC) at [homes@winacc.org.uk](mailto:homes@winacc.org.uk) to find out more.