Strategic Plan for Andover Town Council

2026 to 2036

A ten-year framework and a four-year delivery plan: serving Andover now, working collaboratively with partners, and building the capacity, governance and finances to take on local services and assets, whatever the outcome of local government reorganisation

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Prepared for Andover Town Council

Draft strategic discussion document, September 2026

Status: Revised draft (v5) for Council consideration and for engagement with Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC), Hampshire County Council (HCC) and residents before final adoption. Contains illustrative modelling for testing, not adopted budget figures.

Draft strategic discussion document for Council and committee consideration. This plan sets a ten-year framework, from 2026 to 2036, for Andover Town Council to build the capacity, governance and finances to take on local services and assets, and to work as a capable partner to the principal councils serving Andover. Within it sits a four-year delivery plan for 2027 to 2031, which replaces the Business Plan 2024 to 2027.

Local government reorganisation is on hold. In September 2026 the Government withdrew its March 2026 decision to create five unitary councils across Hampshire, following new legal advice, and began a review of the national programme. Councils have been asked to pause implementation work, and the May 2027 elections will go ahead on existing boundaries. The Government has said it remains committed to reorganisation but has given no timetable. This plan holds regardless: it prepares Andover Town Council for the day reorganisation restarts, and in the meantime shows that the Council is ready and able to work collaboratively with TVBC, HCC and other partners to bring the best together for Andover's residents.

A note on the figures. Staffing numbers, precept levels and budget figures beyond the Council's current, published position are illustrative. They are shaped by comparable town councils that have taken on local services and by national averages, scaled to Andover, so Members can see the order of magnitude and test the assumptions. They are not a budget. Each phase should be preceded by proper financial modelling, legal advice and consultation with the Responsible Finance Officer before any commitment is made.

Terms used in this plan

the Council: Andover Town Council

TVBC: Test Valley Borough Council, the borough (district) council for Andover

HCC: Hampshire County Council, the county council for Andover

LGR: local government reorganisation

the special expense: TVBC's Andover special expenses levy, charged to Andover households only

Foreword from the Town Mayor

Andover is changing. New homes are arriving on the edges of the town and the town centre is being reshaped. Earlier this year the Government decided that the councils that have served us for fifty years would be replaced by a single Mid Hampshire council. That decision has now been withdrawn while the Government reviews its programme, and nobody yet knows when, or in what form, reorganisation will return.

We do not intend to wait and see. Whatever happens, Andover Town Council will remain the council that belongs to Andover. Today we are small, debt free and close to the people we serve. Over the next ten years we want to become the trusted guardian of the town's civic life, working alongside TVBC, HCC and our community partners, and ready, where TVBC and HCC agree it would serve residents better, to look after more of the town's parks, halls and cemeteries with the care that only a local council can give.

The pause gives us time, and we will use it well. Other towns show that success comes from preparing early, building capacity in stages and never taking on an asset without the money to run it. It also comes from councils working with one another, not against one another. This plan sets out that journey honestly, including what it may cost. We make one promise above all: Andover households will not be asked to pay twice for the same service. The plan will be reviewed every year so residents can hold us to account.

I commend it to the Council and to the people of Andover.

Councillor Tony Burley, Town Mayor of Andover

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Executive summary

By 2036, Andover Town Council aims to be resourced and structured like other town councils that have taken on local services, holding a defined portfolio of parks, halls, cemeteries and community buildings, and recognised as a capable, collaborative partner by whichever principal authority serves Andover.

In March 2026 the Government decided that TVBC, which delivers most local services and owns almost all significant public land and buildings in Andover, would be abolished along with HCC and replaced by a Mid Hampshire unitary council from 1 April 2028. In September 2026 that decision was withdrawn pending a national review, so reorganisation in Hampshire is now on hold with no set timetable.

The case for this plan does not depend on that timetable. Elsewhere in England, reorganisation has been the moment at which town councils took on local services, a process often called "double devolution". But councils that succeeded did so because they were ready, and devolution can also happen within today's two-tier system through asset transfers, service agreements and joint working. A capable, well-prepared town council is valuable to Andover whether reorganisation restarts in two years, in five, or not at all.

Andover Town Council starts from a minimal base. In 2025/26 its Band D precept was £34.07, against an English average for precepting councils of £95.32. Andover households also pay TVBC a separate Andover special expense (£20.20 at Band D in 2025/26) for the town's burial grounds, sports grounds and playgrounds. It employs 5 FTE Officers across six posts and owns no significant estate beyond its allotments.

The evidence from councils that have taken on local services, and from national research, is consistent: councils that prepare deliberately, build capacity in stages, negotiate with clear intent and treat any reorganisation as the beginning of a multi-year process are the ones that succeed. Councils that wait for an offer usually do not.

The evidence is just as clear that devolution works only as a genuine partnership. Research by the Government Outcomes Lab at the University of Oxford found that successful collaborations share a vision that every partner owns, build trust by delivering things together, and explain honestly to residents what is changing and why. This plan is written in that spirit. It is an offer to TVBC and HCC, not a claim on their assets, and it responds directly to the long-running debate at TVBC about the Andover special expense.

The plan therefore runs on two strands:

- **Serving Andover now:** continuing to improve events, grants, allotments, youth engagement and the environment, so the Council earns residents' trust as it grows.
- **Building the council for 2036:** five phases, from Foundations (2026 to 2028) through Partnership, First Transfers and Scaling to Consolidation (2034 to 2036), each with staffing,

governance and financial milestones. The phases work with TVBC and HCC now, and adapt to a new unitary council if reorganisation restarts.

Three commitments that run through this plan

Partnership, not takeover. Nothing moves from TVBC or HCC unless both councils agree it will serve residents better. The Council does not seek any partner's income-generating commercial estate.

One charge, not two. Where a service moves, the money already raised for it moves too, including TVBC's Andover special expense, so Andover households are not charged twice and TVBC's wider budget is not left worse off.

Residents set the pace. No step change in the precept without public consultation first, showing the net effect on a household's total council tax bill.

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1. Andover and the Council today

Andover Town Council is well run and debt free, but it lacks the organisational machinery (staff, systems, a depot, financial headroom and a negotiating relationship) that councils taking on services have built first.

Measure	Andover Town Council today
Population served	About 50,900 (2024 estimate; 48,487 at the 2021 Census)
Councillors	16, across 7 wards
Band D precept	£38.27 in 2026/27 (£34.07 in 2025/26; English average £95.32)
Precept 2026/27	£669,105 on a tax base of 17,482 Band D equivalents
Staffing	6 posts, 5 FTE
Operational estate	Allotments: 533+ plots across 9 sites, new site approved at Picket Twenty; no depot, grounds team or major buildings
Core functions	Allotments; community events; planning responses (297 since March 2025); grants; youth programmes; 12 speed indicator device sites
Finances	Debt free; no external auditor concerns for 2024/25

Andover's size is a strength: with more than 50,000 residents, the fixed costs of any larger operation would be shared across more households.

1.1 Other pressures this plan responds to

- **Growth.** TVBC's draft Local Plan 2042 proposes thousands of new homes across the borough, much of it around Andover. New neighbourhoods such as Picket Twenty and Augusta Park need community infrastructure, not just houses. An Andover Neighbourhood Plan, prepared with TVBC's support, would give local priorities statutory weight in planning decisions.
- **Town centre change.** TVBC's Andover Town Centre Masterplan is reshaping the centre. The Town Council must champion the town's interests as delivery continues, and whatever council structure follows.
- **Financial pressure.** Every tier of local government faces tight budgets, and devolved services are rarely cost neutral. TVBC and HCC need partners who ease the pressure on them, not add to it.
- **The Andover special expense.** TVBC raises a special expense from Andover households only, to fund the town's burial grounds, sports grounds and playgrounds (£20.20 at Band D in 2025/26, raising about £351,000). It is paid on top of the Town Council precept, and how it is set has divided borough councillors at budget time. Several assets in this plan's transfer schedule are funded through it, so any devolution must be designed with TVBC to settle the question fairly, not to reopen it.

2. The changing landscape: reorganisation in Hampshire

Reorganisation in Hampshire is on hold. The plan therefore works under today's two-tier system while staying ready for a unitary council if the programme restarts.

2.1 What was decided, and what has changed

In March 2026 the Government decided that Hampshire's fifteen county, district, borough and unitary councils would be replaced by five unitary authorities, with Andover in Mid Hampshire.

Proposed authority	Areas covered
North Hampshire	Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor
Mid Hampshire	Test Valley, Winchester, New Forest, East Hampshire
South West Hampshire	Eastleigh, Southampton, plus Chilworth, Nursling, Rownhams and Valley Park from Test Valley
South East Hampshire	Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham
Isle of Wight	Remains a standalone unitary council

Shadow elections were due in May 2027 and vesting day on 1 April 2028. In September 2026, following new legal advice and legal challenges to the programme, the Government withdrew the Hampshire decision and began a review of reorganisation nationally. Councils have been asked to halt implementation work, and the May 2027 elections will take place on existing boundaries. The Government says it remains committed to reorganisation but has not said when the review will conclude.

For now, TVBC and HCC continue to deliver services and hold the assets in Andover. Had it gone ahead, Mid Hampshire would have covered four districts and more than half a million people (about 560,000 at the 2021 Census). Any future model is likely to be similarly large, which is why a strong, local town council matters in every scenario.

2.2 Why the plan holds in every scenario

Scenario	What it means for Andover	How this plan responds
Reorganisation restarts on a similar model	A new unitary council, with a vesting date a year or more after the decision	Phase 1 preparation is already done; the Council is the obvious, prepared partner from the shadow period onwards
Reorganisation restarts on a different model or boundary	Andover's principal authority changes, but not as first proposed	The plan is built on capability, not on a named authority, so only the partner changes

Scenario	What it means for Andover	How this plan responds
Reorganisation is delayed for several years	TVBC and HCC continue, under financial pressure	Devolution and joint working proceed with TVBC and HCC now, through asset transfers and service agreements
Reorganisation does not happen	The two-tier system continues	The Council still becomes a stronger, better-resourced partner, able to take on and improve local services for residents

New unitary councils spend their first years absorbing change and rarely prioritise place-based devolution in year one. The pause gives Andover Town Council time to build its capacity and relationships before that happens, and to prove what it can do in partnership now.

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3. Evidence base: what other councils' experience tells us

Five sources shape this plan, and they point the same way: prepare early, build capacity in stages, work as a genuine partner, and never accept a transfer without funding. The Council's LGR/Devolution Working Group has also studied Salisbury, Yeovil and Ludgershall.

3.1 Chippenham Town Council (Wiltshire, 2009 reorganisation)

Chippenham is the closest precedent. Serious talks with Wiltshire Council began in May 2017, eight years after the unitary was formed.

Date	Milestone
Jun 2020	Full transfer completed
Jun 2019	"Soft" transfer begins, with services delivered under contract
Nov 2018	Wiltshire Council adopts a Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy
Feb 2018	Joint working party established
May 2017	Initial discussions begin

- **What transferred:** clean and green services (litter, fly-tipping, grounds, trees, graffiti), cemetery upkeep, Monkton Park and other parks and play areas, the Neeld Community and Arts Centre, and the 14th-century Yelde Hall.
- **Staffing:** five extra staff in 2019 alone; by the mid-2020s close to 150 staff and 50 volunteers, under two directors and ten heads of service.
- **Funding:** precept up 37.5% in 2019/20 and 9.8% in 2020/21, adding about £550,000 to base spending. Precept now about £4.4 million, of which about £3.0 million is staff costs. About £180,000 invested in a depot and equipment before taking on grounds maintenance.
- **Governance:** led by a Deputy Chief Executive with delegated authority from the Strategy and Resources Committee, with external advisers; "clear about what we wanted, but willing to compromise", and willing to walk away.
- **Its own lessons:** approach the principal council proactively; engage councillors early; define objectives before negotiating; commission experienced advice; test precept assumptions rigorously; use the LGA's sector-led peer review where eligibility can be proved.

3.2 Somerset Council (2023 reorganisation)

Somerset shows devolution happening alongside reorganisation, closer to Andover's position. The new unitary opened a devolution offer to its 272 local councils from November 2023. By October 2025 more than sixty transfers were complete (including CCTV, parks and play areas), with fifty more in legal process from over eighty expressions of interest.

Arrangements varied: direct transfer, a local council paying the unitary to keep delivering, or joint delivery. Many devolutions increased local costs, staff anxiety needed managing directly, and in Somerset's words, "vesting day marks the beginning, not the end, of transformation."

3.3 National research (Society of Local Council Clerks)

- **A multi-year lag is normal.** One officer in a 2009 unitary area said local councils "waited for things to return to normal for six years".
- **Size and preparedness decide outcomes.** Larger councils gained on average 6.3 service areas and 4.33 FTE; smaller councils 1.4 services and 0.15 FTE. Larger councils accounted for 90% of asset devolution.
- **Passive councils are left out.** Almost half of local councils report no meaningful devolution engagement with their unitary.
- **Precepts rise where devolution happens.** Precepts in 2009 unitary areas rose 59.84% from 2010 to 2018, and 38.95% in 2019 unitary areas from 2019 to 2023, concentrated in larger councils.
- **Relationships dip before they improve** as the new authority stabilises.

3.4 The LGA framework

The LGA's framework for parish and town council service delivery is what any principal authority, now or after reorganisation, is likely to be encouraged to follow: a published statement of intent on localism; a listening approach that follows "the energy" in each community; transparent cost information; support for viability through grants, one-off "dowry" payments or tapered funding; and a structured process of expressions of interest and clear approval criteria.

3.5 Collaboration research (Government Outcomes Lab, University of Oxford)

The Government Outcomes Lab's study Are we rallying together? (Blavatnik School of Government, 2019) examined ten local collaborations across the UK, including Wigan, Oldham, Wirral and Plymouth. It is not about town councils, but its findings on how public bodies share responsibility apply directly to devolution in Andover.

- **Shared ownership, not one council's project.** Partnerships struggled where the collaboration was seen as "an initiative led by the organisation who started the process". Every successful case had a shared vision that all partners had agreed and owned.
- **Two levels of governance.** The strongest partnerships paired a strategic group of leaders, setting direction, with an operational group able to make delivery decisions, both drawn from all partners.

- **Trust is built by doing.** Partners gained ownership by delivering projects together. Without early joint successes, collaborative plans risked becoming "dusty strategic documents".
- **Give as well as ask.** One interviewee described real partnership as the point where "one party gives up sovereign territory into the collective good". Each partner has to bring something to the table.
- **Residents may suspect offloading.** Where budgets are tight, communities can see transfers as the public sector "trying to offload things". Councils must be open about costs, and keep transferred services accessible to all and democratically accountable.
- **Measure together and learn.** Shared, transparent measures and independent evaluation build the case for collaboration. Using data to blame partners undermines it.

3.6 Eight design principles for Andover

1. **Start now, whatever the timetable.** Internal preparation cannot wait for a decision on reorganisation.
2. **Treat any vesting period as consolidation, not transfer.** A new authority will be absorbing its own change; use the time before it to agree what can transfer with TVBC and HCC.
3. **Build capacity ahead of demand, in stages.** Staff, equipment and systems come before the asset.
4. **Be clear about what we offer and what we need, test every proposal for mutual benefit, and be willing to say and accept "not yet".**
5. **Money follows the service.** Agree fair transitional funding, not just the asset, so that neither TVBC's nor HCC's wider budget is left worse off and Andover households are not charged twice.
6. **Invest in governance and professional capability alongside operations:** peer review, external advice, member training and a named officer lead.
7. **Co-own the plan with partners.** Agree a shared vision and joint governance with TVBC and HCC, and bring something to the table ourselves, rather than presenting partners with a list of requests.
8. **Earn residents' consent at every step.** Explain openly what is changing, why, and what it costs each household, and consult before every step change in the precept.

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4. Vision, mission and values

Vision for 2036: Andover Town Council is the trusted, well-run guardian of Andover's civic and community life: a professionally staffed, financially sound council that, by agreement with its partners, looks after more of the town's parks, halls, cemeteries and community buildings on residents' behalf, works as a trusted and respected partner to TVBC, HCC or any future unitary council, and is ready to do more beyond 2036 where partners and residents want it to.

Mission: To be the council closest to Andover's residents: listening, acting locally, spending public money carefully and speaking up for the town.

4.1 Our values

These build on the principles in the Business Plan 2024 to 2027.

- **Welcoming and inclusive.** We serve all of Andover and meet our Public Sector Equality Duty in everything we do.
- **Listening.** We involve residents, young people and partners before we decide, not after.
- **Partnership first.** We plan with TVBC, HCC and community partners, share the credit for what we achieve together, and never surprise a partner with a proposal about its services or assets.
- **Value for money.** We keep the precept proportionate to what it delivers, show clearly what it buys, and never charge Andover households twice for the same service.
- **Open and accountable.** We decide in public, publish our performance and follow proper practice.
- **Civility and respect.** We uphold the Civility and Respect Pledge in how councillors, staff and the public treat one another.
- **A fair employer.** We invest in our staff, and treat anyone who joins us under TUPE, or otherwise, as fairly as our own.

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5. Strategic objectives

The plan has two strands. Strand A keeps improving what the Council does today, which builds the public trust that Strand B depends on. Strand B builds the organisation that can take on local services by 2036, working with today's principal councils and ready for a future one.

5.1 Strand A: Serving Andover now

A1. A thriving and welcoming town

1. Grow a year-round programme of civic and community events that brings people into the town centre.
2. Champion Andover's interests in the Town Centre Masterplan and in the economic plans of TVBC, HCC and any future council.
3. Support the town's heritage and cultural offer, including Andover Museum.
4. Prepare an Andover Neighbourhood Plan with TVBC's support, building on the Andover policies of the Local Plan 2042, so that local priorities are protected in planning decisions and a greater share of Community Infrastructure Levy is spent in the town.

A2. Strong and connected communities

1. Target grant funding at local need through a transparent, outcome-based grants programme.
2. Give young people a real voice through a youth forum and the Youth Engagement Working Group.
3. Help new neighbourhoods such as Picket Twenty and Augusta Park become connected communities.
4. Expand on existing initiatives in the Community like the U-Choose Card and Community Chef.

A3. Green, safe and well cared for places

1. Expand allotment provision, delivering the Picket Twenty site and continue replacing fencing on all sites where needed.
2. Act on the Environmental and Biodiversity Policy: tree planting, pollinator planting and lower Council emissions.
3. Work with the police, highways and partners on community safety, including speed indicator devices.

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5.2 Strand B: Building the council for 2036

1. **Governance and organisational capacity.** Build staffing, systems, financial management and member capability in funded stages, always slightly ahead of what each phase of transfer requires.
2. **A trusted, collaborative partner.** Build a proactive, evidence-led relationship with TVBC, HCC and other partners now, and with any successor council, founded on a shared vision and joint governance, so the Council is the obvious, prepared partner whenever devolution opens.
3. **Phased, sequenced asset and service transfer.** Take on a prioritised portfolio in tranches matched to growing capacity, from lower-complexity quick wins to larger assets.
4. **Sustainable, transparent finance.** Fund growth fairly: money already raised for a service, including TVBC's Andover special expense, follows it on transfer, supported by agreed transitional funding, phased precept increases after consultation, prudent borrowing, reserves and trading income, all tested yearly against actual cost.
5. **A workforce and community that come with the Council.** Recruit and retain a motivated team, support staff transferring under TUPE, and keep residents and community groups engaged throughout.

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6. The ten-year roadmap

Strand B runs in five two-year phases. Timings are planning assumptions, not fixed dependencies. Phases 1 and 2 go ahead whatever happens to reorganisation; later phases will be re-timed if a new unitary council is created, to allow for its consolidation period.

Phase	Period	Focus
1. Foundations	2026/27 to 2027/28	Build the internal case, relationships and professional infrastructure before any transfer talk
2. Partnership	2028/29 to 2029/30	Formalise devolution partnership with TVBC and HCC; if reorganisation restarts, navigate the transition
3. First Transfers	2030/31 to 2031/32	First tranche of lower-risk assets and the operational capability to run them
4. Scaling	2032/33 to 2033/34	Higher-value assets and a multi-service management structure
5. Consolidation	2034/35 to 2035/36	Complete the agreed programme, decide on the highest-risk assets, plan the next decade

6.1 Phase 1: Foundations (2026/27 to 2027/28)

- Adopt this plan as the Council's strategic framework, reviewed annually.
- Designate a Devolution and Partnerships lead within the existing team.
- Commission an LGA sector-led peer review of governance and capacity, if eligibility can be proved.
- Share this plan with TVBC and HCC in draft, before final adoption, invite their comments, and open formal dialogue on joint working and devolution (and with any shadow authority if reorganisation restarts).
- Agree with TVBC a shared baseline of the assets and services it provides in Andover (buildings, land, leases, running costs and how each is funded, including through the Andover special expense), built jointly from information TVBC already holds.
- Offer practical help to partners now, such as Town Council grant funding and events capacity aligned with TVBC's and HCC's priorities for Andover, so the relationship is built on delivery in both directions.
- Build capability through low-risk steps: more allotments, formal grants and events functions, and any small transfers TVBC or HCC will make now, such as a small open space or a public convenience.
- Ask TVBC to support the Council in preparing an Andover Neighbourhood Plan, starting with designation of the neighbourhood area, and align it with the Andover policies of the emerging Local Plan 2042.

- Monitor the Government's review of reorganisation and report the outcome to Full Council, with any changes needed to this plan.
- Strengthen finances: build reserves, adopt multi-year budgeting and model borrowing capacity, including Public Works Loan Board access.

6.2 Phase 2: Partnership (2028/29 to 2029/30)

- Establish an Andover Partnership Board of Town, Borough and County leaders, supported by a joint officer group, to own a shared vision for Andover and oversee any transfer.
- Agree a Statement of Intent or Memorandum of Understanding with TVBC (and HCC where relevant) setting out principles, sequencing and funding for devolution, including how the Andover special expense changes as services move so that no household is charged twice.
- If reorganisation has restarted, maintain continuity through any shadow period and vesting day, and carry the agreement over to the new council.
- Agree an Andover community asset protocol with TVBC, under which each council gives the other early notice before any disposal or change of use of a community asset in the town while discussions continue.
- Recruit an Estates and Partnerships Officer to lead due diligence and negotiation.
- Ask TVBC, which leads the process, to consider a Community Governance Review of boundary, warding and councillor numbers.
- Begin feasibility work (condition surveys, running costs) on Tier 1 assets.

6.3 Phase 3: First Transfers (2030/31 to 2031/32)

- Complete agreed transfers of Tier 1 assets, with the funding already raised for them moving across and agreed transitional funding to bridge the gap to precept-funded sustainability.
- Acquire or lease a depot and initial equipment, funded by prudent borrowing, capital receipts and reserves.
- Build the first operational team under a new Head of Operations.
- Review Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the scheme of delegation for a larger operational role.

6.4 Phase 4: Scaling (2032/33 to 2033/34)

- Complete agreed transfers of Tier 2 assets (cemeteries, larger parks and priority community buildings), with TVBC reducing or ending the Andover special expense as the services it funds move to the Town Council.

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- Appoint an Estates and Assets Manager and establish a Head of Community Services.
- Explore a wholly owned trading company or charitable trust to diversify income, without competing with TVBC's own commercial services.
- Hold a formal mid-plan review in 2033 and reset the remaining phases.

6.5 Phase 5: Consolidation (2034/35 to 2035/36)

- Complete remaining Tier 2 and any agreed Tier 3 transfers, subject to the financial and risk tests in this plan.
- Move to a director-level senior structure if the scale of operations justifies it.
- Publish a ten-year review and set the framework for 2036 to 2046.
- Confirm long-term financial sustainability: reserves, borrowing headroom and trading income.

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7. Delivery plan

Both strands are turned into dated actions below, covering Phases 1 and 2 and the start of Phase 3: ten immediate steps for 2026/27, then a four-year delivery plan for 2027 to 2031. Lead committee names should be checked against the current Standing Orders and Terms of Reference.

7.1 Immediate next steps: 2026/27

Action	Lead	Target
Consider and, if content, approve this plan as a draft framework for engagement with partners and residents, for final adoption by March 2027	Full Council	Autumn 2026
Designate a Devolution and Partnerships lead within the current team	Town Clerk	Autumn 2026
Share the draft plan with TVBC and HCC, invite comment, and open formal, structured dialogue on a shared ambition for Andover	Town Clerk / Town Mayor	By end of 2026
Brief Andover's borough and county councillors on the draft plan and invite their views	Town Clerk / Town Mayor	Autumn 2026
Establish quarterly structured liaison with TVBC and HCC	Town Clerk	From late 2026
Report the outcome of the Government's reorganisation review to Full Council, with any changes to this plan	Town Clerk	Within one meeting cycle of the announcement
Commission an LGA sector-led peer review of governance and capacity if eligibility can be proved. If not a peer review by a leading Town Clerk from a larger authority.	Town Clerk / Policy and Resources	Late 2026 to early 2027
Review the reserves policy and begin multi-year budgeting for Phases 1 and 2	RFO / Policy and Resources	Budget cycle, early 2027
Agree with TVBC a joint baseline of Andover assets, services and funding, including the Andover special expense	Town Clerk / TVBC officers	2026/27
Identify one or two low-risk Tier 1 assets as an early test of the approach	Town Clerk / relevant committee	2026/27

7.2 Delivery plan 2027 to 2031

Ref	Action	Lead	Timescale	Measure of success
A1.1	Adopt a four-year events programme with a costed annual calendar	Community and Events	2027/28	Programme adopted; attendance and satisfaction reported yearly

Ref	Action	Lead	Timescale	Measure of success
A1.2	Respond to every Masterplan and major town centre consultation	Planning	Ongoing	Responses submitted on time
A1.3	Agree a funding framework for heritage and culture partners, including Andover Museum	Policy and Resources	2027/28	Framework adopted; outcomes reported yearly
A1.4	Prepare an Andover Neighbourhood Plan with TVBC's support: designate the neighbourhood area, consult residents, then examination and referendum	Planning / Full Council	2027/28 to 2029/30	Plan made; neighbourhood share of CIL rises from 15% to 25%
A2.1	Review the grants programme against local needs data and publish outcomes	Grants	2027/28, then yearly	Annual grants impact report
A2.2	Establish a youth forum meeting at least four times a year	Community and Events	2027/28	Forum active; one youth-led project a year
A2.3	Map community facilities in new neighbourhoods and lobby for gaps through planning obligations	Planning	2028/29	Gap map published; raised in S106/CIL responses
A2.4	Evaluate the U-Choose card and Community Chef pilots	Community and Events	2027/28	Evaluation reports to committee after each delivery.
A3.1	Open the Picket Twenty allotments and complete Old Winton Road fencing, and move on to the next fencing project at Mylen.	Policy and Resources	2027/28	Plots let; waiting list reduced
A3.2	Deliver an annual biodiversity action list	Community and Events	Yearly	Actions delivered; Council carbon footprint falling
A3.3	Review speed indicator device sites with the police and highways	Policy and Resources	Yearly	Sites reviewed; data shared
B1.1	Complete the peer review and act on its recommendations	Full Council	2027/28	Action plan adopted and reported
B1.2	Complete a staffing and accommodation review; recruit a Grants and Communications Officer	Policy and Resources	2027/28	Structure agreed; post filled
B1.3	Agree an Andover community asset protocol with TVBC; use the Community Right to Bid for privately owned community assets	Policy and Resources	2027/28	Protocol agreed

Ref	Action	Lead	Timescale	Measure of success
B2.1	Agree a Statement of Intent or MoU on devolution with TVBC, including a no double taxation principle for the Andover special expense, carried over to any successor council	Full Council (LGR/Devolution Working Group)	2028/29	MoU signed
B2.2	Recruit an Estates and Partnerships Officer and an Assistant Clerk	Policy and Resources	2028/29	Posts filled
B2.3	Ask TVBC to carry out a Community Governance Review of boundary, warding and councillor numbers	Full Council	2028/29 to 2029/30	Review concluded
B2.4	Complete condition surveys and running-cost analysis for Tier 1 assets	Policy and Resources	2029/30	Business case for each Tier 1 asset
B2.5	Establish an Andover Partnership Board and joint officer group with TVBC and HCC	Full Council	2027/28	Board meeting; shared vision agreed
B2.6	Report jointly with partners each year on shared measures for Andover	Policy and Resources	Yearly from 2028/29	Joint report published; independent evaluation at mid-plan review
B3.1	Secure a depot and agree the first Tier 1 transfers with transitional funding	Full Council	2030/31	First transfer completed with agreed funding
B4.1	Achieve Local Council Award Scheme Quality, then Quality Gold	Full Council	2028/29 to 2030/31	Award accredited
B4.2	Run an annual residents' survey and budget consultation	Policy and Resources	Yearly	Results published and used in precept setting
B4.3	Publish a household bill statement with each precept, showing the Town Council precept and the Andover special expense together	Policy and Resources	Yearly	Statement published with the precept

8. Organisational structure and staffing

The staff team grows slightly ahead of the assets it takes on, because a depot, equipment and trained staff must exist before a transfer completes, not after. The trajectory below is illustrative, based on the structures of town councils that have taken on similar services, proportioned to Andover and a more gradual sequence.

Phase	Indicative FTE	Structure added
Today (2025/26)	5	Town Clerk (RFO), Deputy Clerk, Allotments Officer, Community and Events Officer, Committee Officer, Community and Events/Allotments Assistant
1 (2026/27 to 2027/28)	6 to 7	Devolution and Partnerships lead (designated, later a dedicated post); Grants and Communications Officer
2 (2028/29 to 2029/30)	8 to 10	Estates and Partnerships Officer; Assistant Clerk
3 (2030/31 to 2031/32)	14 to 18	Head of Operations; 4 to 6 grounds and facilities operatives; depot supervisor
4 (2032/33 to 2033/34)	24 to 30	Estates and Assets Manager; Cemeteries Officer; more operatives; Head of Community Services; bookings and venues officers
5 (2034/35 to 2035/36)	36 to 45	Deputy Chief Executive or director-level posts; community centre and any leisure staffing

Three principles apply throughout:

- **Professional capacity before operational capacity.** Devolution and estates functions come before large operational teams, so transfers are costed and negotiated, not accepted reactively.
- **TUPE readiness.** Where TVBC, HCC or successor council staff already deliver a service the Council takes on, the default is that they transfer under TUPE, protecting continuity, knowledge and livelihoods. This is built into every negotiation from Phase 2.
- **Posts follow agreed funding.** No post in Phases 3 to 5 is created until the transfer that funds it has been agreed. Where TVBC or HCC staff transfer, these are existing public service roles moving closer to residents, not new layers of cost.

Continued investment in qualifications (CiLCA, finance and sector training) keeps the Council eligible for the General Power of Competence and resilient to staff turnover.

9. Financial strategy and precept trajectory

Growth must be funded honestly: devolved services are rarely free, and precepts in unitary areas have risen 40 to 60% in the decade after reorganisation where councils took on services. The same applies to transfers agreed within a two-tier system. The Council will combine six sources: the funding already raised for each service (including the Andover special expense), agreed transitional funding at each transfer, phased precept increases after consultation, prudent borrowing (including the Public Works Loan Board) for a depot and equipment, reserves built in Phase 1, and trading income from Phase 4.

Phase	Indicative Band D precept ceiling (only if transfers are agreed)	Indicative precept yield at today's tax base	Main funding shift
2026/27 (actual)	£38.27	£669,105	Precept only
1 (to 2027/28)	£38 to £45	£0.66m to £0.79m	Precept growth funds capacity building; reserves build up
2 (2028/29 to 2029/30)	£48 to £58	£0.84m to £1.01m	Continued growth; borrowing capacity assessed
3 (2030/31 to 2031/32)	£65 to £85	£1.14m to £1.49m	Step change at first transfers; funding follows the service; PWLB borrowing for depot
4 (2032/33 to 2033/34)	£100 to £130	£1.75m to £2.27m	Second step change; trading income introduced
5 (2034/35 to 2035/36)	£140 to £175	£2.45m to £3.06m	Full cost of transferred portfolio; trading income matures

Yields are Band D multiplied by the 2026/27 tax base of 17,482; housing growth will raise the tax base and the yield. Even at the top of the range, the 2036 precept (about £3.1 million) stays below that of larger town councils running a full portfolio of services, reflecting a less asset-heavy end state, particularly the cautious approach to leisure centres. These are ceilings, not targets: each step is reached only if the transfers behind it are agreed, and the net change for households will be lower wherever the Andover special expense falls away. Every figure must be re-tested yearly against real transfer terms, running costs and asset valuations.

Funding principle: money follows the service. No asset or service transfer is accepted without an agreed funding package (the funding already raised for it, a one-off dowry, tapered transitional funding, a capital contribution, or a combination), tested against a realistic, independently reviewed cost model agreed by both councils before terms are settled. The

package should leave neither council's wider budget worse off and no Andover household paying twice.

9.1 One charge, not two: the Andover special expense

Andover households currently pay for local services through two separate charges: the Town Council precept (£38.27 at Band D in 2026/27) and TVBC's Andover special expense, which funds the town's burial grounds, sports grounds and playgrounds (£20.20 at Band D in 2025/26). Under section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, TVBC decides which of its costs are charged to Andover alone.

As services funded by the special expense move to the Town Council, the Council will ask TVBC to reduce the special expense by the same amount, so that the money residents already pay follows the service. For residents, the test of this plan is the combined figure: what an Andover household pays for local services in total, not the Town Council precept alone. For TVBC, the arrangement is designed to be neutral to its wider budget while removing running costs and liabilities and settling a charge that has divided its members.

Where TVBC funds Andover assets from its general budget, such as halls and community buildings, the Council will seek agreed transitional funding on the LGA model, tapered over time, recognising that Andover households also contribute to TVBC's borough-wide council tax. The aim is a settlement that is fair to Andover and to the rest of the borough alike.

9.2 Financial principles

1. **Prudent reserves.** General reserves at three to six months of net revenue expenditure, in line with the Practitioners' Guide. Earmarked reserves ring-fenced for named projects, including a devolution and transition reserve that stays in place while reorganisation is on hold.
2. **Multi-year planning.** A rolling three-year medium term financial plan reported to Policy and Resources each autumn, ahead of precept setting.
3. **Borrowing only for capital.** Any PWLB borrowing needs Secretary of State borrowing approval and a clear repayment plan.
4. **Grow other income.** External funding, sponsorship, fees, the higher neighbourhood share of Community Infrastructure Levy once a Neighbourhood Plan is made, and later trading income, where they fit the Council's aims.
5. **Public consent for step changes.** Before any step change in the precept, the Council will consult residents on a household bill statement showing the net change once any reduction in the Andover special expense is counted.

9.3 Open questions for the budget working group

- Current general and earmarked reserve balances, to set the baseline for principle 1.
- The 2026/27 Andover special expense, the assets it funds and their running costs, confirmed with TVBC's Section 151 Officer.
- Whether the Government will extend council tax referendum limits to larger town councils.
- What funding, if any, TVBC, HCC or a future unitary council will attach to devolved assets.

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10. Priority asset and service transfer schedule

TVBC's asset register lists a substantial estate in Andover, which stays with TVBC while reorganisation is on hold. This schedule is not a list of demands. It identifies where local management might serve residents better, for discussion with TVBC and HCC, and nothing on it moves unless both councils agree. The candidates fall into three tiers by complexity, cost and risk, to be refined once the joint baseline is complete.

Tier	Assets and services	Rationale	Target phase
1. Quick wins	Small open spaces, pocket parks and play areas; public conveniences; town centre public realm such as planters, benches and noticeboards; more allotments	Low running cost and risk; tests operational readiness before larger commitments	Phases 1 to 3
2. Core civic and community estate	Guildhall; King Arthurs Hall; St Anns Hall; Andover and Charlton cemeteries; Foxcotte Park; Saxon Fields; Picket Twenty and Burghclere Down community centres	The heart of civic life and a natural town council role; moderate running costs; high community value	Phases 3 to 4
3. High value, high complexity	Andover Leisure Centre; Charlton Sports and Leisure Centre; Portway Football Stadium	Major capital liabilities, specialist operation and demand risk; many town councils have chosen not to take these on	Assess in Phases 4 to 5; transfer only with a robust business case and risk sharing

Tier 3 is a decision point, not a default destination. The Council will commission independent options appraisals in Phase 4 before deciding whether to seek transfer, support delivery by a leisure trust or operator, or leave the asset with the principal authority. Charlton Lakes and Leisure Grounds also need to be placed in a tier once the joint baseline is complete. The Council does not seek TVBC's commercial and business park holdings, which support TVBC's budget for the whole borough.

HCC. HCC's services in Andover are mainly strategic (highways, education, and adult and children's social care) and are not candidates for transfer. The Council will instead offer HCC practical local partnership where HCC wishes, for example on verge and hedge maintenance, bus shelters, community resilience planning or support for local library services, under agency or grant arrangements that HCC controls.

11. Governance, partnership and community engagement

Three governance strands run through the whole plan.

11.1 Internal governance

Committee structure, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the scheme of delegation are reviewed at the start of each phase for an organisation of this size. A Community Governance Review of boundary, warding and councillor numbers is sought in Phase 2; TVBC, as principal council, can carry one out now. Member training scales accordingly, particularly for committee chairs overseeing operational services for the first time.

11.2 Relationship with principal authorities and partners

The Council will work collaboratively with TVBC and HCC now, and with any successor council. One senior named contact manages these relationships throughout: initially the Town Clerk, later the Devolution and Partnerships lead. Experience elsewhere shows that a dedicated relationship holder on each side is one of the strongest predictors of success. Structured engagement, at least quarterly, starts in Phase 1. The Council will also seek formal local engagement arrangements, such as a parish charter or an Andover area forum, and will work with the police, health, voluntary and business partners to bring the best together for residents. This could initially be achieved with Andover Vision and TVBC.

Drawing on the Government Outcomes Lab research, the Council will propose two-level joint governance from Phase 2: an Andover Partnership Board of Town, Borough and County leaders, with Andover's borough and county councillors invited, to agree a shared vision and oversee any transfer; and a joint officer group to plan and deliver. The Council will also invite TVBC and HCC to nominate observers to its LGR/Devolution Working Group, so partners see the Council's thinking as it develops, and will report jointly with partners on shared measures, with independent evaluation at the mid-plan review.

HALC and NALC will be engaged throughout for peer support, templates and intelligence, including plans by other Test Valley councils. Cluster approaches, shared back-office arrangements and joint negotiation may strengthen the Council's position and reduce cost.

11.3 Communications and community engagement

This plan could mean significant precept increases in later phases if transfers are agreed, so honest communication with residents is essential from the start: what is being taken on, why, what it costs each household once any reduction in the Andover special expense is counted, and what residents will see in return. Research shows residents can suspect that transfers are councils offloading costs. The answer is openness, visible improvements at each phase, and keeping every transferred service accessible to all and accountable to elected councillors. Sports clubs, allotment societies,

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hall user groups and others who use or care for the assets in the schedule will be engaged as partners in transfer planning, not informed after the fact.

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12. Risk register

The biggest risks are taking on assets without the money or capacity to run them, and residents not accepting the precept rises that devolution requires. These risks should be added to the corporate risk register and reviewed at least yearly.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Reorganisation stays on hold for a long period, or returns in a different form	High	Medium	Plan built on capability, not a named authority; pursue devolution with TVBC and HCC now; review annually and within one cycle of the Government's decision
TVBC, HCC or a successor council is unwilling or unable to devolve on the Council's timescale	Medium to high	High	Build relationships from Phase 1; align the ask with the LGA framework; accept a slower or different sequence rather than force the timetable
TVBC or HCC see the plan as a claim on their assets or income	Medium	High	Share the draft before adoption; nothing moves without agreement; commercial estate excluded; shared vision and joint governance
Residents see devolution as double taxation or as councils offloading costs	Medium to high	High	Money follows the service; household bill statement with each precept; consultation before step changes; visible improvements at each phase
Momentum and member support fade while reorganisation is on hold	Medium	Medium	Strand A delivers visible results now; the plan's value is not tied to reorganisation; six-monthly reporting
Precept increases face political or public resistance	Medium to high	High	Phase increases gradually and tie them to visible services; annual consultation; benchmark against comparators
Assets carry hidden liabilities (maintenance backlog, contamination, leases, contracts)	Medium	High	No transfer without independent condition survey and legal due diligence; contingency in every dowry
A transferred asset, particularly Tier 3, proves financially unsustainable	Medium	High	Independent options appraisal; prefer trust or risk-sharing models; keep the option not to proceed
Loss of local influence if decisions move to a larger unitary council	Medium	High	Establish engagement arrangements with TVBC now; seek a parish charter or area forum early in any shadow period; quarterly liaison
The Council cannot recruit or retain specialist staff	Medium	Medium to high	Build posts ahead of need; shared or interim arrangements early on; benchmark pay

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Staff capacity stretched by devolution and partnership work alongside business as usual	High	Medium	Designated lead; prioritise through this plan; HALC and NALC support
Staff transferring under TUPE face uncertainty or low morale	Medium	Medium	Commit to TUPE principles early; communicate directly; involve recognised unions
Plan becomes outdated over ten years	High	Medium	Annual review and a substantive mid-plan review in 2033. Treat as a living document and amend as necessary if landscape or needs change.
Change of political direction after elections	Medium	Medium	Annual review; cross-party ownership through committees
Governance or compliance failure during a period of change	Low	High	Internal audit, policy review cycle, Standing Orders review each phase; staff training

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13. Monitoring and review

Full Council owns the plan and reviews it every year alongside budget setting; committees deliver the actions in their remit and report twice a year.

- **Six-monthly progress reports** to each lead committee, rating each action on track, at risk or off track.
- **Annual review** by Full Council, updating the delivery plan and aligning it with the budget and precept.
- **Review on the Government's reorganisation decision**, reported to Full Council within one meeting cycle, re-timing later phases if needed.
- **Mid-plan review in 2033**, with authority to revise sequencing, staffing, financial assumptions and Tier 3 decisions.
- **Public reporting** through the Annual Report and the Annual Town Meeting.

13.1 Headline indicators

- Services and assets transferred against the schedule.
- FTE staff against the staffing trajectory.
- Band D precept and the combined Andover local charge (Town Council precept plus TVBC's Andover special expense), against the financial trajectory and comparator councils.
- Reserves position and borrowing headroom.
- Continued delivery of Strand A actions and resident satisfaction.
- The health of partnerships with TVBC, HCC and any successor council, assessed jointly.

13.2 Next steps to adoption

☐ Town and Deputy Mayor, Chair and Vice of P&R workshop to test the ambition, phasing and Strand A priorities, by 1 October 2026

☐ Full Council considers the plan as a draft framework for partner and public engagement, 8 October 2026

☐ Draft shared with TVBC and HCC leaders and officers, and Andover's borough and county councillors briefed, October to December 2026

☐ Residents consulted on the ambition and its precept implications, including the combined effect with the Andover special expense, beginning of 2027

☐ Year-one delivery actions confirmed with the 2027/28 budget and precept, 13 January 2027

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☐ Final plan adopted by Full Council, reflecting partner and resident feedback, by March 2027 and before the pre-election period

☐ Publish on the Council website

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Appendix: Sources

Figures and policy positions should be re-checked against these or successor documents before adoption, as the position on reorganisation may change.

Council and local sources

- Andover Town Council Annual Report 2025/26
- Full Council, January 2026: Precept considerations
- Business Plan 2024 to 2027 (January 2024)
- LGR/Devolution Working Group report, December 2025
- Andover Town Council, Ten-Year Strategic Plan draft, version 1 (1 September 2026)
- Test Valley Borough Council: LGR decision announced, March 2026
- Test Valley Borough Council: Draft Local Plan 2042
- Test Valley Borough Council: Andover town centre regeneration
- Test Valley Borough Council: Revenue Budget and Council Tax Proposals 2025/26 (Andover special expenses levy)
- Andover Advertiser: Andover tax divides Test Valley vote on council tax and revenue budget
- Test Valley Borough Council, List of Assets (April 2024)
- Hampshire County Council, "Government announces new model for councils across Hampshire and the Solent" (25 March 2026)
- Capsticks: Local government reorganisation, Government pauses programme and reviews decisions following legal advice (September 2026)
- Polimapper: LGR on hold as government launches review (September 2026)
- Portsmouth News: Controversial council shake-up on hold, what happens next? (September 2026)
- GOV.UK, "Proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton"

Evidence base

- Chippenham Town Council, "Devolution agreed by Wiltshire Council", and devolution journey case study (via Cotswold District Council)
- The MJ, "Thinking big and delivering locally" (interview with Chippenham Chief Executive Mark Smith)
- Wiltshire Council, Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy

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- Local Government Association, "Service devolution to city, town and parish councils in Somerset against the backdrop of LGR"
- Local Government Association, "Local service delivery and place-shaping: a framework to support parish and town councils"
- Society of Local Council Clerks, "Impact of Unitary Authority Creation on Town and Parish Councils"
- Blundell, J., Rosenbach, F., Hameed, T. and FitzGerald, C. (2019), "Are we rallying together? Collaboration and public sector reform", Government Outcomes Lab, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford
- City Population, population data for Andover and Chippenham (2021 Census and 2024 estimates)

Appendix: Potential consultees

This list is not exhaustive and may be added to as the engagement process develops.

Principal authorities

- Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC): Leader, Chief Executive and relevant portfolio holders
- Hampshire County Council (HCC): Leader, Chief Executive and relevant officers
- TVBC ward councillors for Andover
- HCC county councillors for the Andover divisions

Neighbouring parish councils

Peer town councils

- Romsey Town Council
- Chippenham Town Council

Local partnerships and business

- Andover Vision
- Andover Business Improvement District (BID)
- Local businesses and town centre traders

Public services

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service
- NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board
- Registered housing providers operating in Andover

Community, voluntary and cultural organisations

- Unity (Test Valley's council for voluntary service)
- Hampshire Cultural Trust (Andover Museum)
- Sports clubs, hall user groups and allotment associations
- Faith groups and residents' associations
- Schools, Andover College and youth organisations, including the Youth Engagement Working Group

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Sector bodies

- Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC)
- National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
- Local Government Association (LGA)

Others

- The Member of Parliament for North West Hampshire
- Andover Town Council staff and recognised trade unions
- Residents of Andover

Further consultees

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