

A newsletter from the Borough Councillors for the Test Valley Borough Ward of Mid-Test
Councillors Alison Johnston, Ian Jeffrey, and Stewart MacDonald



Funding package to accelerate Andover and Romsey regeneration projects approved



A funding strategy was approved at a full Council meeting on Thursday 29 February, to move ahead with priority regeneration projects in Andover and Romsey. Thanks to the strong financial position the council is in, a range of funds to drive forward the regeneration in both towns have been identified.

Local organisations get funding extended

Test Valley Borough Council has demonstrated its commitment to supporting local communities by approving the extension of funding for four local organisations for an additional year.

The funding aims to support and develop the community and voluntary sector, in order to increase the quality of life of residents in Test Valley, whilst also reducing demand on public services. Youth in Romsey, Age Concern, King Arthur's Way Community Association (KAWCA), and MIND will now each receive an additional year of funding from the Council to continue their important work.

Police and Crime Commissioner Pre-Election Period

Notice of the Police and Crime Commissioner election, which will take place on 2 May 2024, was published on 21 March 2024, meaning that the formal pre-election period will run between these dates. During this time, there are restrictions on the Council publishing any material which appears to be designed to support a political party.

How much Council Tax am I paying for 2024/25?

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on what Band the property is in, and where it is located.

You can find out what Council Tax band your property is in on the GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/council-tax-bands

For an average Band D property, the total bill for 2024/25 will be £2,041.45, excluding parish or town council charges.

This is collected by us and then distributed between the following organisations:

Hampshire County Council - £1,533.24, an increase of £72.99 from 2023/24 (5.0%)

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire - £261.46 an increase of £10.00 from 2023/24 (4.0%)

Test Valley Borough Council - £163.91, an increase of £5.00 from 2023/24 (3.1%)

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service - £82.84, an increase of £2.41 from 2023/24 (3.0%)

Public exhibitions on the Local Plan



The Council is preparing the next Local Plan for the Borough and is now seeking comments on its draft Local Plan. The consultation is your chance to get involved in shaping the future of the Borough.

The public consultation ends on 2 April. The documents are available on our website at www.testvalley.gov.uk/localplan2040

Pan Parish Forums

Over 150 people, including local councillors, river keepers, businesses and residents attended a peaceful protest, held at the Fullerton waste treatment plant on Monday 18th March, to raise awareness of the on-going pollution events on the River Test.

The recently formed Houghton Pan Parish forum have also been proactive in also raising the profile of the impact of such events on water quality, wildlife, recreational users and dogs. Through on-going engagement with Southern Water and local monitoring, it is hoped that there is a force for change. They also hope to encourage other southern parishes downstream to join in the movement.

Multiple fly-tips lead to fine for Andover man

An Andover man has been ordered to pay over £1,000 after being caught fly-tipping in the same location on more than one occasion.

Another fly-tipping prosecution

Test Valley Borough Council have successfully secured another prosecution for fly-tipping using the council's covert cameras. A man and a woman from Southampton have been ordered to pay a total of £1,200 after admitting to fly-tipping waste near North Baddesley.

On 10 May 2023, Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) received a report from about a number of black bags dumped on Misslebrook Lane. Eight large black bin bags containing plasterboard were found. Images showed two people emptying the boot of their vehicle, throwing it into the layby and then driving away.

A check of the registration plate led to Gurvinder Bhakar. He admitted to leaving the bags and identified the other person involved as his wife, Jyoti.

Appearing at Southampton Magistrates Court on Friday 23 February 2024, Mr Bhakar was given a fine of £400 and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £160 and costs of £400. Meanwhile a fine of £100, a victim surcharge of £40 and costs of £100 were given to Mrs Bhakar.

Aster Sewerage Charges

Aster has presented a plan for the resolution of sewerage treatment plant (STP) issues. They have divided their sites into six distinct areas. Those in Test Valley are divided into two different areas, one covering the southern sites and one covering the northern.

Aster will prepare and present a plan for the ongoing management of each STP. This will be costed and will also present a proposal for how residents can be involved in the ongoing management of each plant.

This will go into detail about the management and maintenance carried out over the last 15 years and will set the actual maintenance against any reports on condition and recommended works.

Customer Complaints and Actions detailing the technical information for each plant and the detail of any commercial transactions associated with their maintenance will be listed, and where their management has not been up to the standard required to maintain and prolong the life of the plants Aster will be providing refunds of payments already made. This principle will also apply to the cost of replacement/refurbishment of the plants in the future.

The re-procurement of the maintenance contract by Aster will be completed by September.

Budget letters for 2024/5 have been sent to all homeowners connected to the Sewerage Treatment Plants, but they take no account of any under-payment against the actual costs from 2023/4. Aster has accepted this point but does not concede that the new budget amounts should not be paid.

Test Valley Dormouse Project Landowner Event



Running since 2016 the Test Valley Dormouse Project provides a unique opportunity to work with landowners to learn more about the presence of dormice and encourage and support sustainable hedgerow and woodland management techniques in the North of Test Valley.

The collaborative project between Test Valley Borough Council, People's Trust for Endangered Species and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Dormouse Group is being delivered by FWAG South East (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group).

On Thursday 29 February the project hosted a landowner event for farmers and landowners in the Wessex Farm Cluster, which saw a number of demonstrations on sustainable hedgerow management techniques including hedge laying, coppicing and relaxed flailing techniques.

The event also gave landowners the opportunity to help to identify future opportunities for the project to further survey for dormice using footprint tunnels, as well as opportunities for future planting of new hedges or improved management of existing hedges.

The event was attended by 30 people and will assist in furthering our understanding of dormouse distribution across northern Test Valley. For more information about the project please contact Charlotte Rimmer, Senior Countryside Officer on ex 8811 or visit [https://fwagsoutheast.co.uk/test-valley-dormouse/Test Valley Dormouse Project landowner event](https://fwagsoutheast.co.uk/test-valley-dormouse/Test-Valley-Dormouse-Project-landowner-event)

OTHER NEWS

TARCA Watercress Bed Maintenance

On Sunday 25 February The Anton River Conservation Association (TARCA) were out at Anton Lakes conducting watercress bed maintenance on the reserve. The 18 volunteers dug out a channel in the beds to improve flow and increase light levels as well as clearing vegetation around the beds to improve light levels. The team also conducted a large litter pick where many bags were collected.

Rights of Way Volunteers: Hampshire Countryside Services

HCC do some great work around the county keeping our footpaths clear and repairing and improving them where they can. They are assisted by some brilliant volunteers, who most recently thanks to help from Romsey Ramblers Group helped replace stiles with access gates on footpaths around Michelmersh and Timsbury.

The team are always looking for new volunteers to help out, and for projects to consider. Do get in touch if you can help. You can report issues with Rights of Way via the Hampshire County Council web reporting service here:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landp.../rightsofway/reportaproblem>

Energy Efficiency Support for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations

The government has just rolled out a £25.5m funding package aimed at boosting energy efficiency across various organisations. Capital grants will be available to implement energy-saving measures. The current funding round is open until August 2024. For capital work grants, Round 1 is now closed, but more rounds will take place in mid-April and early July 2024.

Mottisfont/Dunbridge & Broughton Community Bus

The bus has been a great success, having been made possible with the help of the Councillor Community Grant and Broughton & Mottisfont and Dunbridge Parish Councils putting in the last third of the amount.

The bus has been used to transport locals to various events including for example, the Warm Hub cinema showings in Kings Somborne and the Village Halls Week in Mottisfont and Dunbridge Village Hall (as shown below).



Mottisfont and Dunbridge Village Hall

A meeting was held at Mottisfont and Dunbridge Village Hall as part of Village Halls Week 2024, which centred around showcasing and celebrating the local village halls we have, which are so often the heart of our villages.

The Community Bus was on hand to take locals to and from both villages.

The meeting was well attended by many locals and others who had travelled to visit and find out more about the use and activities offered at the hall. Those offering their services were the local WI, who made the cakes and served free tea and coffee, the local Cricket Club, Whist group, Art Club, and there was an Easter trail for the children.

Borough Councillor for Mid-Test Councillor Alison Johnston was present along with Test Valley Borough Council Community Engagement Officers and Parish Councillors Julia and Peter Barnett, who brought along a thermal imaging camera demonstrating how it can be used to identify where energy savings can be made.



Garden for the Mind

At the end of February, Councillor Ali Johnston attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the Garden for Mind project.

This collaborative initiative, led by Andover Mind in partnership with Sparsholt College, and the Waitrose & Partners Leckford Estate, aims to promote mental wellbeing while raising awareness about climate change challenges and biodiversity loss. The garden will be open by the end of the year

Broughton Community Shop

The horrific incident at the shop earlier this month has been widely reported. It was an act of vandalism against their village, their facilities and the countryside and wildlife around them.

However, the strong sense of community spirit and the resilience of volunteer teams and wider community proved that they will not be intimidated. Rural crime is often hidden and under-reported and we all need to be more vigilant to ensure that the countryside is not an easy place for this type of vandalism.

Veterans card rolled out to streamline access to services

Thousands of Armed Forces veterans can now apply for their HM Armed Forces Veteran Card following the launch of the service.

The Veteran Card will provide veterans with a clear recognition of service, a tangible link to the Armed Forces, and allow them to easily verify their veteran status to access support and services from government, charities, and local authorities.

- Veteran Cards application service opens today
- Thousands who left the forces before December 2018 eligible to apply
- Cards confirm veteran status and simplify access to support services

Veterans who left the Armed Forces before December 2018 can verify their veteran status online with a new digital application service to receive a Veteran Card through the post. A paper-based application process is also available as an alternative to the digital system.

Veterans are urged to apply for their Veteran Card, and use it to access the services, such as Veteran Railcards and specialist healthcare, they are entitled to.

These Veteran Cards illustrate our gratitude and appreciation for those who have proudly served this country, and the incredible sacrifices they have made.

Councillor grant supports Easter film matinee

Somborne Community Cinema screened a matinee of Peter Rabbit 2 for the King's Somborne Pre-school children and Reception class at King's Somborne Primary school. The event, which was jointly funded by the Test Valley councillor grant and the Somborne Community Cinema, was a great success and enjoyed by the children and adults alike.



The cinema is proving to be very popular in the community. As well as regular film screenings twice a month, the Warm Hub daytime cinema is a wonderful addition of support for the community. The screening of the Coronation last year was a particular highlight.

Grateful thanks go to the generous help from volunteers, Roger and Avis Stephens and their team of loyal supporters for the screening and refreshments.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no issue of Mid-Test Matters next month

A Defibrillator Near You

Defibrillators for public use are located at:

- Stockbridge Fire Station (available 24 hours)
- Longstock Village Hall (available 24 hours)
- Leckford Estate Office (restricted hours)
- Leckford Farm Shop (restricted hours)
- Up Somborne Rookley Farm (24 hours)
- King’s Somborne Village Hall
- King’s Somborne - The Crown Inn (available 24 hours on front wall of pub)
- Over Wallop - the White Hart pub, Pinchbecks Garage and the Army Flying Museum.
- Nether Wallop -Village Hall and the Pavilion on the playing fields.



Instructions for use are given when the device is commandeered but for anyone who would like prior understanding of how to use one, see:

<https://www.aeddonate.org.uk/events/>

In the event of an emergency, after dialling 999 to report the incident, the phone operative should give the access code for the cabinet, to the person/first aider using the device.

Contact

If there are any issues in this copy that you would like to discuss, or any items of news that you would like to be considered in a future copy please contact any of the Borough councillors.



**Councillor
Alison Johnston**
01794 500610
cllrajohnston@testvalley.gov.uk



**Councillor
Ian Jeffrey**
01794 388872
cllrjjeffrey@testvalley.gov.uk



**Councillor
Stewart MacDonald**
07803 594872
cllrsmacdonald@testvalley.gov.uk