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

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## Changes to National Planning Targets

You might have noticed publicity about new housing targets for councils announced by Angela Rayner last autumn. Test Valley's housing target is to be increased by a staggering 75%. Rather than planning for 524 new homes a year, we should instead prepare a Local Plan that delivers 921 dwellings per annum. This despite solid delivery over the past decade with new developments around Andover, Romsey, and across the borough. We're all in favour of new housing but new homes must be built in the right place, preserving local gaps; planned in consultation with local people; and crucially include high levels of local infrastructure.

As a planning authority, TVBC is obliged to provide a 5-year housing land supply. This means we need to show that we have a plan to deliver the next five years of housing meeting the Government's target. So if our target is suddenly increased then we are unlikely to be able to meet it immediately and if we don't, there is a huge risk of developers getting permission for speculative plans, which are unlikely to include the significant amount of new infrastructure we are demanding through the Local Plan process.

Of most concern is the fact that these new targets, introduced across both the county and the country, enormously increase the amount of housing rural areas must deliver. Yet the numbers to be delivered by London and cities outside of the capital largely decrease. So much for the new Government's insistence that new development should be delivered on brownfield and greyfield sites first!

## Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Just before Christmas the government published a White Paper setting out their plans for devolution and wholesale local government reorganisation right across the country.

In most cases, devolution means having an elected Mayor and moving some powers with the money to enact them from central government to a new Mayoral Combined Authority such as strategic transport, economic development and skills.

Local government reorganisation means creating new unitary authorities that are responsible for most local services. In Hampshire, we currently have a two-tier system,

where the County Council is responsible for adult social care, children's services, schools, roads, libraries & the tips and the Districts and Boroughs, like Test Valley, are responsible for waste collection, planning, housing, leisure, licensing, parks and open spaces.

Whilst we broadly welcome devolution as a mechanism for attracting more inward investment both from government and the private sector, we worry about local government reorganisation. Specifically, we run the risk that new larger authorities (serving a population of around 500,000 people rather than 130,000 in TVBC currently) will be more remote and less agile than the current districts and boroughs, which may will make for poorer local services and less local decision making. While not without its challenges, we remain confident that the best way forward will be found to ensure that local government in Test Valley, and Hampshire more broadly, continues to deliver for its residents.

## Test Valley takes a step closer to introducing food waste collections this year



The council is one step closer to bringing in kerbside food waste collections for households across the borough later this year.

On Wednesday 15 January, the council's cabinet recommended launching food waste collections on 13 October 2025.

Following the government's changes to the Environment Act 2021, all councils will need to have food waste collections in place by 1 April 2026.

But TVBC is pushing to introduce the collections five months early, in a positive step towards transforming recycling in the area.

The new weekly service will see kerbside food waste caddies collected from households across the borough, by a new fleet of specialist collection vehicles.

Residents who live in flats or other accommodation with shared bins will also be provided with communal food waste bins. And every household will be given a smaller kitchen caddy to help with the collection of food waste and scraps in the home.

Once collected, the food waste will be taken to an anaerobic digestion facility where microorganisms break it down in a tank without oxygen. The methane-rich biogas generated

during this process can be used as a fuel and the remaining product can be used as a nutrient-rich fertiliser.

The government has confirmed that the ongoing service costs will be covered by New Burdens funding, but it will only be available from 1 April 2026. Rolling out the service earlier than the mandated date would cost the council in the region of £390,000, therefore the final decision to cover these costs will be made by full council on 29 January 2025.

Environmental portfolio holder, Councillor David Drew, said: "The council is committed to the delivery of waste service changes as required by the Environment Act. We agreed to the introduction of '1,2,3 Weekly', a new waste and recycling collection system. This would allow residents to recycle more at the kerbside, including a wider variety of plastics including pots, tubs and trays, cartons, aluminium foil and glass bottles and jars.

"Having made this decision in 2022, we began to plan for our service changes, with funding for vehicles, bins and caddies approved in April 2023. However, in October 2023, and then again in November 2024, the government made significant policy announcements, including the introduction of 'Simpler Recycling'. These national policy announcements were unexpected, conflicting in policy direction, and ultimately impacted our ability to continue with our approved plans. The latest requirements for Simpler Recycling mean that, once again, we need to work with all our Hampshire partners, including the County Council, to agree a waste collection and disposal system that meets the requirements and the needs of our residents. In the meantime, subject to the agreement of full Council, we hope to be able to proceed with introducing our food waste collection service which we know will be eagerly anticipated by residents across the borough."

## Charity and council team up to launch free domestic abuse awareness training



The Council has joined forces with the Andover-based charity, 'Finding Freedom from Abuse', to run free training sessions for hairdressers and beauticians to enable them to spot the signs of domestic abuse and support those who may be affected.

Statistics shared by the women and children's domestic violence charity, Refuge, show that one in four women in England and Wales will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. And, on average, one woman is killed by an abusive partner or ex every five days.

The 'DOVE Champion Training', run by Finding Freedom from Abuse, aims to equip participants with the knowledge and tools to identify warning signs of abuse, provide appropriate support, and connect individuals to essential resources."

## Partnership strengthened with Employment and Skills framework



The council and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) are pleased to announce the strengthening of their partnership through the implementation of CITB's revamped Employment and Skills Plans framework. The partnership was formalised with the agreement of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations in

September 2024. This collaboration aims to enhance employment opportunities and skill development in construction in the Test Valley area, particularly for large planning developments.

TVBC wants to ensure that employment and skills plans are agreed upon and monitored by their economic development team. These plans require developers to take on apprentices, offer work experience, and meet benchmark targets set by CITB's framework for different sizes of development.

## Andover Theatre

Since adopting the Andover Town Centre Masterplan in 2020, the Council has been progressing plans to deliver on the aspirations of the community and are moving ahead with creating a new home for The Lights theatre in the heart of the town. The new venue will be located at the entrance to the Chantry Centre, in the former Poundstretcher unit. The Council recently submitted a planning application to demolish the existing unit and will soon be submitting a second planning application to build the new theatre.

The state-of-the-art venue will continue to support community and theatre groups with a range of improved facilities. Increased capacity in the auditorium will offer more opportunities for audiences to attend a variety of shows and the theatre's new location will help to support town centre businesses.

Work has been taking place with specialist architects to develop designs for the new venue and councillors are invited to a presentation by Burrell Foley Fischer architects who will talk through the proposed designs.

## Mayor update

The Mayor and Mayoress enjoyed a busy December with over 40 engagements visiting groups and organisations throughout the borough.

Some statistics' - the Mayor and Mayoress attended:

- four Christmas fayres,
- nine carol services and concerts,
- eight nursing homes,
- ate four Christmas meals and were offered an unknown number of mince pies!

The Mayor hosted a Christmas Reception for staff and councillors in Beech Hurst which was a fabulous opportunity for staff and councillors to have a catch up. He also joined Environmental Staff for breakfast at Portway and Bourne House to thank officers for their hard work through-out the year.

Councillor Jeffrey also joined in the Appleshaw Community Santa Dash dressed as a Father Christmas, and shared one of the Romsey Young Carers Christmas Party sessions.

The Mayor and Mayoress enjoyed all their engagements over the festive period but in particular felt that The Countess of Brecknock Hospice Light up a Life service was a most reflective occasion for people and the charity Christmas lights switch-on in Charlton was a wonderful example of how local people make great efforts to support charities.

The Mayor and Mayoress visited seven of the Test Valley Business Award winners in the borough to see their business in action and to meet staff which was really insightful, and a great opportunity to congratulate them and find out a bit more about what they do.

Deputy Mayor, Cllr Linda Lashbrook, attended a number of engagements including the Nativity Service in Romsey Abbey and the George's Trust Christmas Concert to represent the mayoralty during this busy period.





## Join the movement towards a Smokefree Hampshire

Smoking remains a significant health challenge in Hampshire, with approximately 118,000 smokers contributing to an estimated £988 million in lost productivity and social and healthcare costs. To combat this, Hampshire County Council has set an ambitious goal to become a Smokefree County by 2030. Central to this initiative is Smokefree Hampshire, a free and highly effective quit-smoking service available to all residents and those working in the county.



Smokefree Hampshire offers free, personalised support tailored to your needs, increasing your chances of quitting successfully. By joining this movement, you're not only taking a significant step towards improving your health but also contributing to a healthier community.

Inspired to quit? Text I QUIT to 66777 for your free quit kit.

## Community art celebrates stories of Andover Community art at the Chantry Centre



Hannah Cantellow, an artist working with Chapel Arts Studios, led the 'Art of Belonging' workshops which saw more than 50 Andover residents, aged between three and 70 years, exchange stories about Andover, its people and heritage through words, drawings and sketches. Their contributions helped to

shape two large banners, which have been themed around nature and culture, and mythology and imagination.

Participants were able to improve their artistic skills and several individuals reported feeling a deeper sense of belonging within their local community, a new-found connection with people from different cultural backgrounds and a sense of pride from contributing to the public art project.

The banners were first displayed at the World Street Party event, which took place on Andover High Street last August. They will now be placed in the Chantry Centre to encourage residents to take a look at the artwork and discover a little more about the people in their local community.

This project was funded by Hampshire County Council through Test Valley Arts Foundation, with support from Test Valley Borough Council.

The banners will remain on display until the end of February.

## 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.

Ashley Farm (available 24 hours)

Broughton - Village Hall, Doctor's surgery, Sports Pavilion.

Dunbridge - outside Mills Arms pub.

Mottisfont- outside Mottisfont Social Club in centre of village.

Houghton - outside the village hall.



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.



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