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



Local Government Reorganisation

As many of you may know, the government remains committed on reorganising local government. As such, Test Valley Borough Council will be combined with other district councils. We expect to hear from the government in the next few weeks the form that such reorganisation will take, and the other districts Test Valley will be merged with.

While this reorganisation is not something we would have chosen, we have worked constructively to find the best possible solution for our residents. Test Valley Borough Council, along with others, advocated a Mid Hampshire council, encompassing the New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire.

Council approves balanced budget for 2026/27

Following a council meeting on 27 February 2026, Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) has approved a balanced budget for 2026/27.

The decision means the local authority can keep delivering the services that people rely on every day, while continuing to plan for the future and invest in communities. The budget sets the Band D council tax at £173.91 for the year ahead, a 2.96% increase from 2025/26 that remains below inflation and keeps their council tax among the lowest in the country.

Councillors also approved the continuation of the council tax support scheme, which helps households who struggle to pay their council tax bill.

The budget includes funding to support regeneration in Andover and Romsey, invest in rural communities, progress priority projects across the borough from the Corporate Plan and prepare for the ongoing process of local government reorganisation.

Leader of TVBC, councillor Phil North, added: "This budget reflects our long-term ambitions for the borough, while protecting our residents at a time of significant national change. It is a budget

for now, and one that invests in and prepares for the future – supporting projects in our rural areas as well as the regeneration of our towns. And as we look ahead to local government reorganisation, it means we can hand over Test Valley to the new unitary in the most sustainable way”.

Test Valley Community Resilience Forum

The Test Valley Community Resilience Forum is in its twelfth year, since its inception in 2014, and continues to be a space for community representatives to come together to share knowledge and build relationships with other local partners and groups. As we look ahead to changes in Local Government over the coming years, strengthening communities remains one of our key priorities. Building resilient communities will play an important role in shaping the future ways of working for the new authority. We want to do this in partnership with you and your communities, supporting local priorities and needs.

At the upcoming forum, we welcome Lucy Easthope, one of the UK’s leading experts in emergency planning, resilience and recovery. Lucy will be delivering a session on the importance of prevention, preparedness, and recovery. Lucy brings a wealth of experience and inspiring stories to the forum, and we hope you and your communities will be able to make it. For more information about Lucy, visit her website here - [About – Whatevernext](#)

The session takes place on **Friday 27 March at Crosfield Hall, Romsey** and the networking breakfast will be available **from 9.45am**. The session will aim to end around midday.

You are welcome to forward this invitation to community contacts who may be interested in attending. If you are attending, please RSVP to gbloss@testvalley.gov.uk.

Site cleared for Andover’s theatre as demolition completes



Work to prepare the site for Andover’s new theatre has reached another milestone, with demolition of the former Poundstretcher building now complete. The old store has been carefully dismantled over recent months by specialist demolition contractor, Erith, making way for the next phase of the project.

A planned gap between demolition and construction was built into the programme to allow time to address any unforeseen issues that might have arisen during demolition and to protect the main build schedule. With demolition completed successfully, the site is now ready for construction to start once a contractor is appointed.

The new theatre will include a state-of-the-art multi-level auditorium seating over 400 people - a significant increase from the 249 seats available at the current theatre. There will also be a separate, flexible performance and event space, a range of dance studios, and meeting rooms which can be hired out by the public. The new theatre will offer flexible social spaces for visitors,

with café and bar areas at either end of the building, and terraced outdoor areas will provide inviting spots in which to relax during the warmer months.

The theatre will play a central role in enhancing Andover's daytime and evening economy, drawing more people into the town centre to support local businesses.

Construction of the new theatre is expected to complete in early 2028, with the current theatre continuing to operate as normal until the new venue is ready to open, ensuring continuity for audiences and performers.

The project is part of the wider Andover masterplan, which sets out a long-term vision to create a thriving town centre - and is being supported by £18.3 million of funding from central government, secured to accelerate key regeneration projects in the town. It will play a central role in creating a more vibrant, welcoming and resilient town centre for residents, businesses and visitors.

Park plans progress – have your say at upcoming drop-in sessions



Plans to transform Vigo Park in Andover are moving into their next stage, and residents are invited to help shape what happens next.

Following approval of a £3.5 million investment, work is now under way to develop detailed designs for a new community pavilion/bowls clubhouse, a refreshment kiosk, water play attraction and secure public toilets.

To make sure the designs reflect what the community wants and needs, the council will be holding drop-in sessions where residents can see early ideas, ask questions and share their views.

The sessions are open to everyone, including families, young people, older residents, access groups and regular park users.

The next drop-in session is on Saturday 28 March, 10am to 3pm

Council Grants

2025/26 Councillor Community Grant Scheme Applications closed 22 March

The 2025/26 Councillor Community Grant scheme closed for applications on 22 March.

The scheme will remain closed for a short period while we move into the new financial year. The 2026/27 scheme will open in April, and we'll share an update once applications reopen.

So far in 2025/26, councillors have awarded funding to 79 community groups, supporting great work across Test Valley. These awards total £60,000.

This leaves just over £40,000 unspent from the 2025/26 budget. This balance is made up of previously unspent annual allocations. The good news is that this is within acceptable limits, so none of the funding will be lost. Instead, it will roll over into next year.

However, 2026/27 is the final year of the current four-year funding cycle, which means all remaining funds must be spent next year to ensure the full budget reaches local good causes.

Every ward has received at least one grant this year, with some wards being awarded up to seven grants.

To apply, visit: www.testvalley.gov.uk/ccg

Rural England Prosperity Fund

The UK Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund is part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund that provides capital funding for rural business and rural communities. TVBC received over £150k for 2025-26 which is being distributed between businesses and community organisations across the rural areas of our borough to help develop our rural economy. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

Rural business strengthens digital support for early years providers with grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund



A rural Test Valley business has expanded its innovative digital platform for early years settings after receiving £19,922 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

Impact Early Years Ltd, based in Awbridge, was awarded the grant to help accelerate the development of its digital platform. The system is designed to give early years providers a

single, easy-to-use place to collate and monitor essential information about their setting, staff and the children they care for.

The platform has already been shaped by local practitioners, who test new features and give regular feedback. The team's research showed the tool could save early years staff around 20% of their time by bringing everything into one system.

Impact Early Years works closely with its partner business, Jigsaw Early Years Consultancy, and has continued to grow, now supporting more than 160 early years settings. The funding has helped the business speed up development and invest further in digital innovation, while also creating local employment opportunities.

Councillor Alison Johnston, portfolio holder for Climate Emergency and Countryside, said: "Impact Early Years is a brilliant example of a rural business using technology to make a real difference for early years providers across Test Valley and beyond."

Rural business expands with support from the Rural England Prosperity Fund



A long-established Test Valley business has taken a major step forward with the development of a new modern office building, supported by a £20,000 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant.

BF Keane Electrical Contractors Ltd, based at Testwood Farm in Lopcombe, has been providing electrical services since 1991 to commercial customers across Hampshire including Hampshire

County Council, leisure centres and NHS sites.

The company had outgrown its previous building and began working on a spacious, energy-efficient new premises featuring solar panels and improved workspace for staff. The development also includes dedicated space that will be made available for other rural businesses once complete, helping to support the local economy.

The project has been delivered using local tradespeople and materials throughout.

Juliet Keane, from BF Keane Electrical Contractors Ltd, said, "While the project is still in progress, the funding has helped us move forward and invest in our facilities. As a local business, we are proud to employ local people and to have used local trades throughout the build. The new premises will support the continued growth of BF Keane Electrical Contractors Ltd, and we look forward to providing office space for other local businesses once the project is complete."

Councillor Alison Johnston, portfolio holder for Climate Emergency and Countryside, said: "This is a great example of how the Rural England Prosperity Fund can help rural businesses grow in a way that supports both the local economy and the environment. BF Keane Electrical Contractors Ltd has created a high-quality, energy-efficient building using local skills and materials. I'm pleased that the project will also provide space for other rural businesses, offering long-term benefits for the wider community."

Council nominated for award for transformational Health Hub partnership

The Local Government Chronicle (LGC), a national publication, hosts an annual awards ceremony, celebrating councils that have undertaken exceptional work over the past 12 months. TVBC is up for the LGC's Public Partnership award, which recognises local authorities that have worked with other public sector bodies to improve lives and outcomes for their communities.



The council has been nominated for an award for their work with the NHS to create the innovative Andover Health Hub.

Leader of Test Valley Borough Council, Councillor Phil North, said: "It is brilliant that the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) has shortlisted us for our partnership working to create the Andover Health Hub.

The Health Hub is a great example of what can be achieved when we think beyond organisational boundaries and instead focus on what's best for our communities, helped by the relationships fostered in the Andover Vision."

In 2025, a citizens' assembly was run bringing together a representative group of people from across the town to share their experience and to work with health partners to shape a future vision for health. We've also reached out into our local communities, creating new wellbeing worker roles that operate in our local neighbourhoods as part of a new approach to addressing health inequalities.

Andover Health Hub is a vision brought to life through leadership, collaboration, and a relentless focus on resident needs. By transforming access, reducing pressure on practices, and embedding health within the community, it delivers a blueprint for modern, resilient care."

The LGC Awards ceremony will take place on 10 June 2026.

Other News

Government considers licence points to tackle fly-tipping

The Government is considering new measures to deter fly-tipping, including adding penalty points to the driving licences of offenders caught dumping waste from vehicles. Ministers are also encouraging councils to seize and crush vehicles used in illegal dumping as part of a broader crackdown. Environment secretary Emma Reynolds said the proposals aim to strengthen enforcement against repeat offenders who harm local communities and the environment. The department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs noted that the average fly-tipping incident is

roughly the size of a small van load. Officials hope the risk of licence penalties and vehicle confiscation will discourage illegal waste disposal on roadsides, in rural areas and other public spaces.

Wet winter linked to rise in rat infestation

A particularly wet winter has contributed to a rise in rat infestations in UK homes according to Rentokil Pest Control. The firm reported a 10% year on year increase in pest activity with call-outs rising 26% in Northern Ireland and about 20% in Yorkshire and the North West. Experts say heavy rainfall can flood burrows and sewers, forcing rats to seek drier shelter in properties. Warmer conditions have also extended breeding seasons. Pest control specialists advise home owners to remove debris, secure waste and seal gaps in buildings to reduce the risk of infestations.

The state of pavements in Stockbridge from a Stockbridge Resident

"I am a resident of Stockbridge, helping the Parish Council take effective action to make the Highway Authority fulfil its obligation to repair and then maintain the pavements here which are in a very poor and often dangerous state with the result that Stockbridge people have tripped, fallen and injured themselves. The Highway Authority has a legal duty to ensure that the pavements are safe for pedestrians and action needs to be taken about the pavements.

Stockbridge could take this action alone, but our action would be much more convincing if others were prepared to help with their own experiences. So, we are asking for your help in the form of written statements from you if you or someone you know who has had an accident or other problem caused by a defect in the pavement."

A statement needs to be in writing or e-mail and contain the following information and sent to me at the address below:

Your name and Parish (not address)

When during the last six years did the incident occur. No need for exact dates, but as accurate as your memory allows;

Where? outside so and so would do.

What was the incident? A fall, an injury and how serious was it.

Then please **sign and date** the statement.

All your statements will remain confidential but will be sent as evidence to the Highway Authority.

Roger Tym
The Old Manse, High Street, Stockbridge SO20 6EX
roger_tym@yahoo.co.uk

Stockbridge Music



Patron: Professor David Owen Norris MA (Oxon) FSA FRAM FRCO

STOCKBRIDGE MUSIC

Friday, 23rd April 2026 at 7.30pm
Doors open at 6.45pm
St Peter's Church, Stockbridge

MICHELMERSH SILVER BAND



St George's Day Concert

celebrating English Music

Tickets £15 (U18s £5) from stockbridgemusic.uk
or on the door, if still available

Michelmersh Silver Band St George's Day Concert

Celebrating English Music

Stockbridge Music welcomes Michelmersh Silver Band.

The current resurgence of interest in brass band music has brought many long-established regional bands back into the limelight. Right on our doorstep we have the 140 year old Michelmersh Silver Band, and when better to celebrate this most English tradition of music than on our national saint's day.

Join us for a special St George's Day concert at St Peter's Church with the Michelmersh Silver Band conducted by Kevin Smith.

With a very English flavour, the programme opens with a number of pieces from films and musicals and other popular light music. In addition to brass band favourites such as 633 Squadron, the programme includes pieces by Bernstein, the Beatles, and

themes from Oklahoma and Bond movies. The second half rounds off with music often associated with the Last Night of the Proms including Elgar's Nimrod and Parry's Jerusalem.

The band are currently rehearsing for the South West of England regional contest and are a local band with a national reputation.

The concert takes place on St George's Day, **Thursday**, 23 April 2026 7.30pm at St Peter's Church Stockbridge **NB not Friday**. Doors open at 6.45pm

Tickets £15 (U18s £5), £30 for a family ticket (2 adults, 2 children under 18). from Stockbridgemusic.uk or on the door, if still available

Refreshments will be available.

Stockbridge Community Cinema

Upcoming screenings



The Friend (15) - MATINEE

Stockbridge Town Hall

Hampshire

Wed 25 Mar 2026,

4:45PM - 6:50PM

Wed 25 Mar 2026,

7:30PM - 9:10PM



I Swear (15)

Stockbridge Town Hall

Hampshire

Fri 17 Apr 2026,

Fri 17 Apr 2026

7:30PM - 9:35PM



The Choral (12A) - MATINEE

Stockbridge Town Hall

Hampshire

Wed 22 Apr 2026,

4:45PM - 6:45PM

Wed 22 Apr 2026,

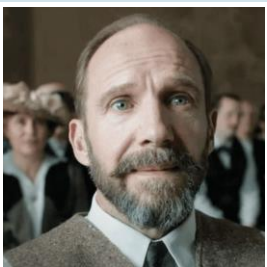
7:30PM - 9:30PM

King's Somborne Community Cinema

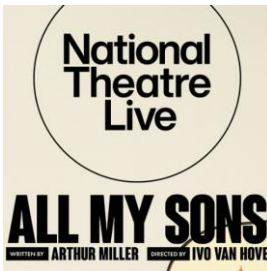
Upcoming Screenings



THE AUDIENCE
NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE
Kings Somborne Village Hall
SO20 6PP
Sat 28 Mar 2026, 3:00PM



The Choral
Kings Somborne Village Hall
SO20 6PP
Thu 9 Apr 2026, 8:00PM



ALL MY SONS
NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE
Kings Somborne Village Hall
SO20 6PP
Fri 24 Apr 2026, 7:30PM

Defibrillators for public use are located at:

Stockbridge Recreation Ground (24 hours)
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.
Broughton Village Hall
Mottisfont Social Club
Ashley- Ashley Farm (24 hours)
Lockerley - Outside the main door at the Lockerley and East Dean Memorial Hall. SO51 0JG
Lockerley - Outside the door of Lockerley Stores on Lockerley Green. SO51 0JN
East Tytherley – outside the entrance to the farm.

Instructions for use are given when the device is commandeered.

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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