

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



Neville Whiteley

The council were saddened to hear former Test Valley Borough Councillor and past Mayor Neville Whiteley passed away before Christmas. Mr Whiteley served as a TVBC Councillor from 1999 to 2015 and was Test Valley Mayor in 2004/05.

The funeral service will take place on 13 February at 11.00am in Salisbury Cathedral and Union flags will be flown at half-mast on Test Valley buildings as a mark of respect.



Election Postponements

You may have seen reports suggesting that next year's Mayoral elections will be postponed for two years, until 2028. It's important to note that this does not affect the County Council, and other local elections which will still go ahead on May 7th 2026.

Building Energy Efficiency Support Service available for community groups

A support service for community groups and not for profit organisations on how they can make their buildings more energy efficient and, in the long term, help to reduce their energy bills is still available.

Arthian, who were appointed to undertake this service, will provide their support in four stages:

1. An initial conversation via phone call or Teams meeting will take place to understand more about the level of support required;
2. A site visit will be undertaken to inspect the building;
3. A bespoke report will be produced, outlining the findings, to highlight what could be done to make the building more energy efficient;
4. A follow up conversation will be scheduled with the community organisation to review the findings of the report, answer any queries and clarify next steps.

The service will be available until the middle of March 2026. If you know any community organisations that would be interested in this service, then please contact climatechange@testvalley.gov.uk.

Council to explore landscape protection potential for Test Valley chalk streams



Test Valley Borough Council is going to investigate whether Test Valley's chalk streams could become a National Landscape, previously known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Early feasibility work will help the local authority understand whether areas might be suitable for designation.

The work will focus on protecting the River Test, its tributaries and other chalk streams across Test Valley and beyond.

A National Landscape designation is made by Natural England and is one of the highest forms of landscape protection in the country. It recognises the natural, cultural and historic importance of an area and helps protect places from pressures such as climate change and habitat loss.

Councillor Stewart MacDonald, portfolio holder for community led projects, said: "We're proud of Test Valley's natural beauty and we know how important it is to local people. The rolling chalk hills, ancient woodlands, historic villages and the River Test create a landscape rich in wildlife, heritage and character. These qualities make the area distinctive and valued by residents, visitors and communities across the region.

"While achieving National Landscape status isn't easy, we believe this is worth pursuing, and it would also be worth knowing what other avenues could be explored to make sure it's protected for the future. It would help safeguard what makes our borough special, while supporting the needs of our communities."

Councillor Alison Johnston, portfolio holder for climate emergency and countryside, added: "Protecting our chalk streams has been a priority for Test Valley Borough Council for many years and if we can achieve this status it would be a game-changer, giving stronger protection to this unique ecosystem.

Reporting Highway Problems

Links to report road issues :

Potholes: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/potholes>

Tree/hedge problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/treehedge>

Flooding/drainage issues: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/flooding>

Pavement problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/paving>

Broken or missing signs: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/missing-a-sign>

Faulty street lights: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/streetlight>

Faded or missing road markings: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/road-markings>

Problems with rights of way:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/report-a-problem>

When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number for the report.

AI Training Opportunities for Local Businesses

Test Valley Borough Council has organised two great opportunities to help business owners and employees get to grips with AI.

Introductory Webinar: Wednesday 4 February, 10–11am Led by Luke Williams (Intergage).

This covers the current state of AI (How large language models (like ChatGPT) work, basic prompting techniques, ethical considerations, risks & opportunities.

Book using this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ai-for-small-businesses-introductory-webinar>

Romsey AI Workshop: Wednesday, 11 February, 9:30am–12:30pm

Romsey Free half-day workshop for businesses ready to take the next step with AI. This covers AI in operations, marketing, customer service and growth. Includes real-world examples, developing user-cases, pilots, and measuring impact to ensure AI is a worthwhile investment.

Book using this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ai-for-small-businesses-workshop-in-Romsey>

Feedback from the Andover workshop was unanimous: every attendee recommended it and planned to apply the content in their business. Note: The Romsey workshop assumes a basic knowledge of AI. If you're new to the subject, please also sign up for the Introductory Webinar first.

Council Grants

County Councillor Grants

Each County Councillor now has an annual grant budget of £5,000.

Eligibility Restrictions:

- Grants are only available to organisations, not individuals. Organisations cannot apply for the same project in consecutive years. Applications must demonstrate community benefit, especially if from religious or statutory bodies.
- Funding Limits: A maximum of £1,000 per project is now in place. Grants for seasonal or time-specific events must be awarded before the event date.
- Transparency and Branding: All funded projects must acknowledge County Council support in promotional materials.

New Community Resilience Grant - Helping Local Communities Prepare for Emergencies.

Test Valley Borough Council has launched a Community Resilience Grant to support local groups in planning ahead and strengthening their ability to respond when emergencies strike -from flooding and power cuts to extreme weather and other unexpected events.

What's available? Up to £1,000 funding (covering up to 100% of project costs) Support for practical items like first aid kits, wind-up radios, snow shovels, emergency blankets Improvements to local rest centres or activities that bring people together to plan for the future.

Who can apply? Constituted community groups, Parish and town councils, Schools with a wider community role, Resilience-focused organisations.

How to apply: Speak to the council's team before submitting your form with a clear breakdown of costs. For advice and application on details, email: communityresilience@testvalley.gov.uk

or visit www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityresiliencegrant This is a great opportunity to make sure our communities are ready and resilient when it matters most.

Business Incentive Grants

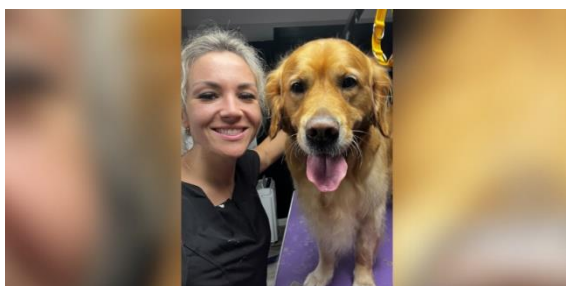
Test Valley Borough Council is committed to supporting local businesses through initiatives and grants. The Business Incentive Grant helps new businesses in Test Valley achieve their goals and contribute to the local economy. You must apply within eight weeks of starting to trade, and the grant is awarded once you have been operating for at least six months.

Council awards Independent Retailer Grant to Divine Glory Beauty and Spa



The council is delighted to announce that Divine Glory Beauty and Spa Ltd has been awarded an Independent Retailer Grant of £1,200 to support its new venture on the Upper High Street. The shop unit, which had remained vacant since the end of 2020, has now been transformed into a vibrant beauty and wellness destination for the local community. Divine Glory Beauty and Spa is a family-run beauty and hair business built on a vision of inclusivity, culture, and community.

Peas Paws gets a helping hand from council grant



A new dog grooming business in Andover has received a £750 boost through our Business Incentive Grant.

Peas Paws, run by Paris Cutting, offers professional grooming services and is already attracting loyal customers. Paris currently rents a table at Barks 'N' Bubbles on Winchester Street and plans to use the grant to buy a second pair of clippers – an essential tool for her work.

Frontage Grant

The Andover Tap awarded Frontage Grant from council to improve accessibility and outdoor space



The Andover Tap, located on Winchester Street, Andover, has been awarded an £8,300 Andover Town Centre Frontage Grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The funding went towards re-laying the pub's patio and cleaning and repairing its pergola, creating a safer and more welcoming outdoor space for customers.

The improvements will address long-standing accessibility issues, as the patio had become extremely uneven and challenging for those using pushchairs or wheelchairs.

The town centre grants are funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. 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.

Other News

Somborne Community Cinema News



In a change to the “Monday Matinee” films which have run in previous years, Somborne Community Cinema has signed up to “National Theatre Live”.

Supported by Test Valley Borough Council and King’s Somborne Parish Council we will be screening special events from the National Theatre throughout 2026.

Councillor Ian and Maura Jeffrey with the volunteer Community Cinema Team

All praise goes to Roger and Avis Stevens and the Community Cinema team for their hard work and expertise in liaising with the National Theatre to launch this series of live performances

After a successful launch at the end of January showing a thoroughly entertaining contemporary “Hamlet” the programme continues in March with Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth II in “The Audience”.

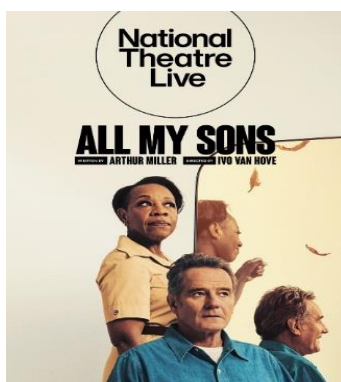
All performances are at King’s Somborne Village Hall and have been scheduled to enable those who are working the opportunity to come along at a weekend or in the evening and enjoy high quality theatre productions without the need to travel long distances and the high cost of big brand venues. We look forward to welcoming you to the spring and summer events of “National Theatre Live” at Somborne Community Cinema.



Saturday 28th March

Doors Open 2pm

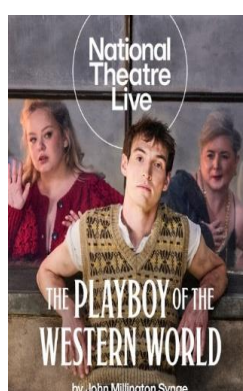
Curtain Up 2:15pm



Friday 24th April

Doors Open 6:45pm

Curtain Up 7:30pm



Saturday 25th July

Doors Open
6:45pm



Sunday 13th September

Doors Open 6:45pm
Curtain Up 7:30pm

The autumn and winter season performances will be announced later in the year.

Tickets for all events are £10 and are available from the Somborne Community Cinema web site or at the door on the day. www.sombornecommunitycinema.co.uk

Mayor's Annual Ball

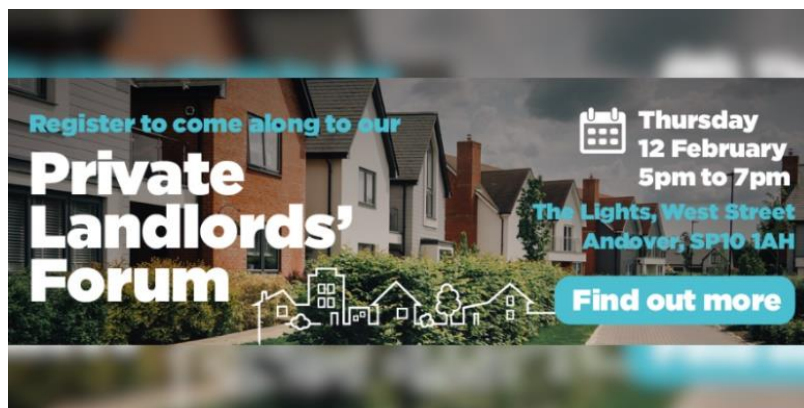
The Mayor of Test Valley, Councillor Gordon Bailey, and the Mayoress, Karen Hamilton, present The Mayor of Test Valley Annual Ball on 9 May 2026 at Keystone Hall, East Street Andover.

It's supporting the Mayor's charities:

- Andover/Romsey Foodbank
- The Abel Foundation
- Greenbuttercup dementia services
- Unity

If you would like to buy tickets please email Karen Hamilton at kaz@khamilton.biz.

Private Landlords Forum - 12 February 2026



Test Valley Borough Council is hosting a Private Landlords' Forum on Thursday 12 February from 17.00 - 19.00 at The Lights Theatre, Andover, SP10 1AH. The agenda will include an NRLA presentation on the Renters Rights Act, "Let's with Pets" advice and guidance for landlords and a Q&A panel.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 introduces the most significant reform of England's private rented sector in decades, reshaping the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords

The Act abolishes fixed-term assured and assured shorthold tenancies, ends Section 21 "no-fault" evictions, and strengthens protections to give renters greater security and stability.

To reserve your place, please complete the [Private Landlords Forum registration form](#).

Parks and Countryside Events and Activities

Events range from nature discovery days and bat walks, to opportunities to learn new skills by volunteering, to helping with the management of local nature reserves and wildlife sites. This includes coppicing, pond maintenance, vegetation control and more, to encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the great outdoors.

The south of the borough includes Valley Park Woodlands, Tadburn Meadows and Abbotswood Nature Reserves. The guide for the south of the borough has been compiled with local groups including Tadburn Conservation Volunteers, Friends of the Parks, and Wilder Romsey.

Tadburn Meadows Local Nature Reserve,

Hidden amongst the houses, Tadburn Meadows covers almost 12 acres and provides a home for a variety of Britain's best loved wildlife and some nationally threatened species. The site boasts a variety of habitats, from a stream more characteristic of the New Forest, to wet woodland and grassland.

Abbotswood Local Nature Reserve

Abbotswood Local Nature Reserve, located adjacent to the Abbotswood development, has been designated primarily due to the presence of great crested newts, a European protected species. The site contains a host of interesting habitats, including wetlands, ancient semi-natural woodland and grassland. These support a wealth of wildlife. The site also boasts veteran oak trees, estimated to be over 300 years old and each a home to hundreds of other species, making them a hugely important part of the site.

Valley Park Woodlands Local Nature Reserve

Comprising ancient woodland with a mixture of woodland rides, open glades, ponds and rough wildlife as well as archaeology the woodland is home to a variety of species including pipistrelle bats, roe deer and a host of insects and plant life. The site is thought to be derived from the historic Baddesley Common complex and has close characteristics with the New Forest. It also boasts the remnants of an Iron Age enclosure and associated features.

Come and join volunteers to help with the on-going programme of events. New volunteers, including families, are always welcome to help. See dates and tasks below.

Wed 28 Jan 10am-1pm

Task: Vegetation Management

Venue: Romsey barge canal,

Meeting Place: New Road car park

Wed 11 Feb 10am-1pm

Task: Vegetation Management

Venue: Abbotswood Local Nature Reserve

Meeting Place: TBC

Sun 15 Feb 10am-12pm

Task: Coppice (Hazel)

Venue: Valley Park Local Nature Reserve, Skyswood

Meeting Place: Top of Morgan Le Fay

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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