

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



Councillor Community Grant Scheme

Councillors support parents in Test Valley with £2,000 grant

A £2,000 Multi-Ward grant to the PEAS (Parents, Engagement, Advice and Support) group, has been awarded to help to fund books and resources for a vital 10-week Nurturing Programme aimed at supporting parents across the borough. The course, run by trained Parent Group Leaders through The Centre for Emotional Health, equips parents with the knowledge and skills to improve their emotional wellbeing and strengthen family relationships. Over the next year, the programme is set to benefit 180 families in Test Valley, offering practical tools to build healthier and happier homes.

Nether Wallop Village Hall enhances sustainability and accessibility with council funding



Nether Wallop Village Hall has further improved its facilities, thanks to support from Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC). A community grant of £12,286.85 from the government funded Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) has enabled the hall to install solar batteries, allowing it to store excess energy from its solar panels—boosting sustainability and reducing running costs.

In addition to its green investment, the funding has also helped enhance accessibility and inclusivity. The hall, which regularly hosts talks and guest speakers, has used the grant to purchase a new lectern, computer, and accessories, alongside installing a hearing loop to ensure that events are more accessible to those who are hard of hearing.

Councillor Stewart Macdonald said, "The new solar batteries will help make the hall more sustainable, while the improved accessibility ensures that even more residents can enjoy the events and activities on offer."

This project is just one example of how Test Valley Borough Council's funding is helping to sustain and enhance community spaces across the borough. The council awards grants to local organisations that have clearly demonstrated both the need for support and the positive impact their projects will have on the wider community.

Join the TVCAN Network: If you manage a community building and are not yet part of the Test Valley Community Asset Network (TVCAN), get in touch with Marie Stubbington, TVBC's Community Engagement Officer to find out how you can join the network of organisations and volunteers who run Village Halls & Community Associations within Test Valley, share resources, and access support & guidance: mstubbington@testvalley.gov.uk.

Abbotswood Pre-School transform building into Early Years Training and Support Hub thanks to grant



Abbotswood Pre-School and Day Nursery, near Romsey has been awarded a £25,000 grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This funding has supported a significant infrastructure project exceeding £75,000, enabling the establishment of a Training Academy alongside Abbotswood nursery's current childcare offering,

The grant has enabled Abbotswood to renovate and transform an existing building into a dedicated Early Years Training and Support Hub. The new Training Academy is offering a range of courses to early years professionals and parents, providing high-quality training, mentoring and support.

Lou Simmonds, owner and Managing Director of Abbotswood Pre-School and Day Nursery said: "Abbotswood Day Nursery's core value is outdoor learning, and teaching staff how to thrive in the outdoors. Our new training room is our first major stepping-stone in having a base/hub for teaching outdoor learning in our woodland gardens and neighbouring nature reserve."

Stockbridge celebrates opening of Queen Elizabeth II Park



Stockbridge residents celebrated the official opening of Queen Elizabeth II Park on Wednesday, 3 April, following a major community-led transformation supported by the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

The project, driven by Stockbridge Parish Council, received a grant of £12,168.56—covering 75% of the cost of the improvements—which helped turn the town's only central green space into a welcoming park.

With the support of TVBC, which administers the REPF locally, the Parish Council took on responsibility for the site and led the project with the aim of strengthening community ties and creating a calming, accessible space for residents and visitors alike.

Councillor Ian Jeffrey, The Mayor of Test Valley, who officially opened the park at the community event, said; "This project shows what can be achieved when a community comes together with a shared goal. It's been brilliant to see students involved, residents having their say, and now the town has a beautiful space to show for it. The new park is a tribute not only to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II but also to the community spirit of Stockbridge. This is exactly the kind of project the REPF was designed to support—one that delivers long-term benefits for rural communities and brings people together. We're proud to work with local parish councils to make ideas like this a reality, and I'm so pleased to see how this space has been transformed."

Rookley Farm expands livery offering with a grant awarded by the Council



Rookley Farm in Up Somborne has expanded its livery services with a £25,000 grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This funding has supported a project costing over £50,000, enabling the farm to enhance its facilities and diversify its income streams.

The grant has facilitated the construction of new stables, a tack room, muck trailers, paddocks, and an electric gate.

Romsey's first-ever Literary Day promises a celebration of stories, community, and culture

Romsey is thrilled to share that it will host its first ever Literary Day on Saturday 10 May 2025 at 10am, organised by Romsey WI in celebration of their 50 years in the town.

With author talks, literary panels and local community groups involved, this one-day event will celebrate women's writing and the power of storytelling. It's all about connection, curiosity, and creating a new cultural moment for Romsey.

Thanks to a £2,000 community grant and support from Romsey Future, Romsey Literary Day will take place at Crosfield Hall and promises something for every book lover — or anyone who enjoys a great day out.

Tickets will be available at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/romsey-literary-day-tickets-913008241227>

COUNCILLOR COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME

BUDGET SUMMARY 2024/25

This year's outcomes demonstrate the real difference that the Councillor Community Grant Scheme has made in 2024/25:

- Every ward received at least two grants, ensuring borough-wide impact
- A diverse mix of projects were funded – from environmental initiatives and youth programmes to village hall improvements and community events
- Councillors played a key role in enabling these successes by engaging with residents and community groups



109 grants were awarded last year, our highest ever!

That's a **41.5% increase** from last year, with one grant awarded every three days on average.

GROWING YEAR ON YEAR



2023/24: 77 grants | £53,929
 2024/25: 109 grants | £80,815
 Let's aim for 100% spend in 2025/26 and grow our reach even further.

Every pound spent strengthens local communities and supports the Corporate Action Plan

2024/2025

FUNDING AVAILABLE: £106,070



76% of funds were awarded to community projects, with 24% carried forward, ready to be used this year.

These grants delivered real impact in communities, and there's more opportunity to build on that momentum.

Unsure of your ward balance? Contact your Community Engagement Officer.

LET'S USE EVERY PENNY

24% of funds from the 2024/25 budget rolled into this year - nothing was lost.

That means extra budget is now available. Let's make sure every pound goes towards projects that matter in 2025/26.

With full spend, we maximise community benefit and long-term impact.

DID YOU KNOW?

Councillors can choose to part-fund applications, so grants don't need to use the whole budget at once.

This enables more projects to benefit and helps make the most of available budgets.

To check your remaining balance or discuss potential applications, please contact your Community Engagement Officer.

2025/26 FUNDING NOW AVAILABLE

£102K

£102,722.98 funding is available this year, inclusive of the 24% carried over from 2024/25

Other News



Communities across Test Valley are encouraged to mark the special Victory in Europe (VE) Day anniversary in May.

Thursday 8 May 2025 will mark 80 years since Germany's unconditional surrender of its armed forces, bringing the end of World War Two in Europe.

To honour this, a VE Day 80th Anniversary Grant Scheme has been set up, which will enable communities to apply for up to £500 towards local celebrations to mark the historic event.

To mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day, the council will be flying the Union flag at all council buildings across the borough on Thursday 8 May.

Meanwhile, a service to mark the anniversary is being held on Thursday 8 May at 6pm, in St Mary's Church, Andover.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Test Valley, Councillor Ian Jeffrey and Mrs Maura Jeffrey, will be in attendance.

You are warmly welcome to attend and support this special occasion.

The service is expected to last about an hour and refreshments will be served in St Mary's following the service.

Please be seated in the church by 5.50pm. If you haven't already responded to the invitation, please advise [Sharon Goodridge](#) if you are able to attend.

SOMBORNE COMMUNITY CINEMA

Special Monday Matinee

VE Day Commemoration

at King's Somborne Village Hall
The Recreation Ground, SO20 6PP

Come in 1940s Dress (Optional)

Doors open 1:30pm
Film Starts 2:15pm

Free to All | No Ticket Required

Tea | Coffee | Biscuits

Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult

12th May 2025



MUSIC | MEMORIES | MORE

Test Valley
Borough Council

Connect Transport on Demand

HCC has trialled its first new demand responsive transports system which will begin to provide connectivity for our rural areas where bus services are so few and far between.

Where does it run? Transport on Demand operates to and from various bus stops in the Northern Test Valley area. The service covers most bus stops with postcodes SP10 and SP11 and the Wallops, Stockbridge, Chilbolton, and Barton Stacey areas.

The service covers four zones:

Zone 1: The service can pick up and drop off passengers at Andover bus station, Andover train station, and Andover War Memorial Hospital

Zone 2: Specified bus stops in the SP10 Postcode area south of Weyhill Road and London Road, where other buses don't run

Zone 3: Specified bus stops in the wider SP11 postcode area

Zone 4: Specified bus stops in the **Wallops**, Chilbolton, **Stockbridge** and Barton Stacey areas.

When does it run? 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, excluding bank holidays.

How do I book? Journeys can be requested up to three days in advance using the Book a Journey app. Children under 16 and those without app access can call 0333 015 1271 to book. Phone lines are open 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

How much will it cost? Single tickets range from £2 to £5. Up to two children under 5 years travel free with one fare paying passenger. Concessionary and scholar bus passes are not accepted on this service. Accessibility Minibuses are wheelchair accessible and folding pushchairs are permitted. Please book a wheelchair seat when booking.

Houghton Lodge unveils the start to the 2025 season



The flavours of Hampshire at The Glass House Food Festival were indulged at Houghton Lodge on Saturday 26 April. Featuring over 45 local food and drink producers, this event was a culinary celebration of the region's finest offerings.

Find out more about events at Houghton Lodge in 2025 here: [Houghton Lodge Gardens unveils Spring splendour, with a vibrant start to the 2025 season](#)

Message from the Mayor

The year has gained momentum for the Mayor and Mayoress of Test Valley, with various engagements to new businesses, concerts, pantomimes, and school productions in the borough.

Test Valley celebrated Commonwealth Day on 10 March by raising the Commonwealth Flag at the Guildhall and Former Magistrates' Court. The Commonwealth Affirmation was read by Mr Mayor in Andover and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Linda Lashbrook, in Romsey



Councillor and Mrs Jeffrey attended a reflective Holocaust Memorial Service on 27 January in Romsey Abbey which was most ably led by pupils of Romsey Abbey Primary School.

Councillor Jeffrey gave well received speeches at the Hampshire County Royal

British Legion Annual Conference, the Ukraine Support Group event in Romsey and the Anton Rotary evening and supported the Big Band Buffet 2025 event.

The Mayor and Mayoress hosted a Charity Burns Night event raising funds for the Mayor's chosen charities: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance, Jumbulance, Andover Talking Newspaper, Stockbridge Music and Finding Freedom from Abuse. The evening included traditional Scottish fayre and dancing.

More recently, the Mayor and Mayoress hosted the Mayor's Charity Ball to raise funds for the same charities. Both evenings were very enjoyable events.

Councillor Jeffrey supported the annual Rotary Youth Speaks Competition and presented prizes to the incredibly confident youngsters. The Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Consort, comprised the judging panel.

A particular highlight of the year so far for the Mayor and Mayoress, was attending the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Concert in Romsey Abbey – a most special and fabulous occasion.

Urban Meadows 2025

Now that spring has arrived and the first signs of wildflowers appear across many of our nature reserves and green spaces, details have been provided for this year's Urban Meadows season.

In response to the Climate Emergency, and to help make our green spaces more wildlife friendly, TVBC will be relaxing the current grass cutting schedules across a number of our sites between May and September. This will create urban meadows, which will provide a vital haven and wildlife corridor for insects including butterflies which have seen a long term decline, with 2024 being the worst year on record for butterflies (from data from UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, Butterfly Conservation).



The council has been increasing the amount of urban meadow we create each year since we began in 2021. This year, we'll be letting a total of over 42 hectares in Andover, Romsey and Valley Park grow wilder – that's more than 82 football fields of grass that will be left unmown until September, when it will be cut and collected.

Detailed maps of this year's Urban Meadows can be found at [Urban meadow creation | Test Valley Borough Council](#)

For more information on Urban Meadows or to make suggestions for new areas to be included for 2026 please email nomowinfo@testvalley.gov.uk or alternatively contact Charlotte Rimmer, Senior Countryside Officer, on crimmer@testvalley.gov.uk

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)
Ashley – Ashley Farm (24 hours)
Over Wallop - the White Hart pub, Pinchbecks Garage and Army Flying Museum.
Nether Wallop -Village Hall and the Pavilion on the playing fields.



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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.

Bank holiday bin changes



Due to the bank holiday on Monday 5 May 2025, bin collections in Test Valley will take place one day later than your usual schedule.

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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