

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

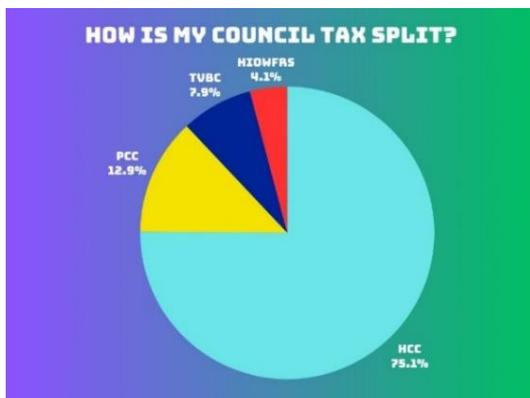


How much Council Tax am I paying for 2025/26?

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on what band the property is, 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

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



- **Hampshire County Council - £1,609.83**, an increase of £76.59 from 2024/25 (5.0%)
- **Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire - £275.46** an increase of £14.00 from 2024/25 (5.4%)
- **Test Valley Borough Council - £168.91**, an increase of £5.00 from 2024/25 (3.1%)
- **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service - £87.84**, an increase of £5.00 from 2024/25 (6.0%)

What is Council Tax and what does it pay for in Test Valley?

Council Tax is a charge households pay to their local council.

Each organisation has different responsibilities for providing public services. Council Tax helps to fund hundreds of local services.

The money you pay to Test Valley Borough Council funds the services we provide. Our services are also funded by business rates, government support and income generated from service charges and investments.

We provide a range of several local services, including:

- supporting people at risk of becoming homeless
- planning permissions for new and existing properties
- waste and recycling collections
- town centre regeneration projects
- housing advice and support
- support for local businesses and town centres
- food hygiene inspections
- street cleaning
- countryside management including nature reserves
- managing council car parks
- pest control
- election and democracy services

How can I pay my Council Tax?

You can pay your Council Tax in a number of ways:

- by direct debit
- debit card
- telephone banking or standing order
- by post via a cheque
- at a post office or pay point outlet (if you have registered for this service with the council)

Find out more about the options available to you when paying your Council Tax:

www.testvalley.gov.uk/benefitsandcounciltax/counciltax/paying-bill

Did you know that you can receive your Council Tax bills by email and manage your Council Tax account online?

Using our online facilities you can notify us of a change of address, set up or amend direct debit instructions and apply for, or cancel, a single person discount. To register for paperless billing you will need your account reference and online key, both of which are shown on the front of your latest bill.

What support is available if I'm struggling to pay my Council Tax?

From 1 April 2025, we are launching a new council tax support scheme to help some working-age households with lower incomes to pay their council tax.

Residents will be able to easily see what support they are eligible for, as the new scheme is based on a range of income bands. What band you are in depends on how much the household earns and how many people live there, which determines how much support is available.

Most households will receive the same or more support under the new scheme, but a discretionary fund has also been set up to provide further support to residents who experience exceptional financial hardship in paying their council tax. No changes have been made to pension-age households.

Devolution Consultation



This consultation seeks views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas in Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, and Southampton City Council (referred to as Hampshire and the Solent in this consultation).

The government is still seeking views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas in Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, and Southampton City Council (referred to as Hampshire and the Solent in this consultation).

The consultation runs until 13 April 2025.

The local authority leaders from councils have since written to government expressing their interest in taking forward devolution within their area through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority, with the first election for a mayor taking place in May 2026. Before taking a decision on whether to proceed with the making of the necessary legislation, the government is seeking views from interested parties, including those who live and work in the area.

Scope of this consultation

This consultation seeks views, particularly from interested parties, including those who live and work across Hampshire and the Solent, on the effect of establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority in the area. It includes questions on the proposed geography and how the Combined County Authority will make decisions, together with questions on the effects of working across this geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority.

Geographical scope

These proposals only have direct effect within the geographical area covered by the local councils listed above.

Why your views matter

Your opinions are valuable to us. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to share your opinions on the proposal for the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority across this area. Thank you for taking the time to read the consultation document and respond. The local authority leaders from councils have since written to government expressing their interest in taking forward devolution within their area through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority, with the first election for a mayor taking place in May 2026. Before taking a decision on whether to proceed with the making of the necessary legislation, the government is seeking views from interested parties, including those who live and work in the area.

Contact: HampshireandSolentDevolutionConsultation@communities.gov.uk

New Riverside Park Draft Designs Published



The draft designs for Andover's new riverside park at Western Avenue have now been published.

Since adopting the masterplan, we have been working with a team of renowned landscape, highways, and ecological specialists, to deliver on the community's aspirations for more green space in the town centre. The new park will open up new views of the River Anton, which is currently hidden by the large expanse of tarmac along Western Avenue.

By changing the road layout and creating a space for inviting landscapes and accessible pathways along the river, the changes will help to foster a seamless connection between the western side of the town, the river, Town Mills park and the new The Lights theatre.

And by weaving past with present, the riverside park's beautifully crafted designs grant a glimpse into the area's rich history, which was once used for growing watercress.

We are also holding a couple of drop in sessions this week where the project team will be on hand in the former O2 unit in the Chantry Centre to talk about the plans and answer questions.

These are taking place:

- **Thursday 27 March – 2pm to 7pm**
- **Saturday 29 March – 10am to 1pm.**

Other News

Community Grants



We are encouraging communities across Test Valley 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, we have set up a VE Day 80th Anniversary Grant Scheme, which will enable communities to apply for up to £500 towards local celebrations to mark the historic event.

SOMBORNE COMMUNITY CINEMA

Special Monday Matinee **12th May 2025**

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



Music | Memories | More



Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult

Hilltop Farm receives Rural England Prosperity Fund grant to install Shepherd Huts

The council has awarded Hilltop Farm in Awbridge a Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant of more than £16,000 towards a project to upgrade and improve their micro tourism business. The investment includes a new shepherd's hut, a beautiful shepherd's hut bathroom and an upgraded sewage treatment system.



The Shepherds huts are set in beautiful surroundings with a large nature pond. The new facilities will help to encourage more bookings since they provide unique and comfortable accommodation options that highlight the charm and beauty of the rural landscape.

Mayor's Charity Appeal Ball

Come and support the Mayor's Charity Appeal at the Glitzy Glam Ball. We need your support for vital charities (see poster below). Last date for registration is the 14th April. Tickets are selling fast! **Why not make a donation if you can't come** – contact Karen Hamilton – details below.

Mayor of Test Valley Charity Appeal

Councillor Ian Jeffrey & Mayoress Maura Jeffrey

Proudly Present

Glitzy Glam Ball

Officers' Mess, Middle Wallop

Saturday, 26th April, 6.30pm to 1am

TICKETS £75

Includes 4 course meal, welcome drink, half bottle of wine per person

Auction, Raffle

Live music from

No Way Out

**In aid of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance,
Stockbridge Music, Freedom from Abuse and other charities.**

contact : **kaz@khamilton.biz** for ticket availability

Black tie, Suit or Glitzy Glam

King John's House Fire



As you may have seen, a fire recently broke out in King John's House, in Romsey.

KJH is a Grade 1 Listed Building used as a museum and tearoom with parts of the building dating back to the 13th Century. The Trust responsible for KJH, supported by Margaret Bennett,

our Principal Conservation officer, and Historic England are currently reviewing the damage and the impacts on the artefacts. Fortunately, there appears to be no structural damage to the building. From the photographs above you can see the extent of some of the damage.

For the foreseeable future the KJH manager will be based at the Former Magistrates Court, Romsey.

The Cabinet report of November 2024 referred to the intention of KJH Trustees taking responsibility of the Visitor Information Centre at 13 Church Street, which adjoins KJH. Officers will be working with the Trust to agree a way forward so as to minimise the impact on tourism information within Romsey.

Big Band Buffet Returning

The Big Band Buffet, is returning to Test Valley on Saturday 29 March at Danebury School, Stockbridge.

The idea of the event is to prevent social isolation and raise an awareness of safety in the community for residents aged 55+ years. Until March 3, priority registration will be given to Test Valley residents who have not attended the event before. After this date, applications will be open to everyone.

Operation Wolf - stop and search



On Friday 14 March, environmental officers Deborah Hughes and Chris Adams represented the council at a successful Operation Wolf at Hunts Farm, Timsbury.

"Operation Wolf", in Hampshire, is a multi-agency initiative focused on tackling vehicle fly-tipping hotspots and thoroughfares used for illicit waste transport. The team were focussed on vehicles carrying waste and checking for valid licenses.

Over 30 vehicles were stopped by the police and brought into Hunts Farm Carpark for checks. All vehicles carrying waste were checked by the team, with all bar one providing the correct certification. Education on Duty of Care was also carried out by the officers.

Also present were:

- Police officers from countryside and traffic teams
- DVSA – checking vehicle defects/weight issues/road legality
- DATATAG – checking for stolen vehicles
- HMRC – taking fuel samples

Commonwealth Flag Raising



On Monday 10 March, the Commonwealth flag was raised above the Guildhall in Andover and the Former Magistrates Court in Romsey.

This is part of the 'Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth' initiative which will see 500 Commonwealth Flags raised simultaneously throughout the United Kingdom at 10am.

Just before the raising, the Mayor and deputy Mayor of Test Valley read the Test Valley Commonwealth affirmation in Andover and Romsey respectively.

Join the Great British Spring Clean! ❤️



The Great British Spring Clean has begun! 🚫

You can make a pledge as an individual, school or group to take part from 21 March 2025 by going to www.keepbritaintidy.org.

Once you sign up with Keep Britain Tidy you can then contact us as we can support your litter pick by providing you with all the equipment you need and can collect the waste afterwards.

Visit www.testvalley.gov.uk/love to get in touch and find out more about our community litter picker scheme.

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.

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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