

A newsletter from the Borough Councillors for the Test Valley Borough Ward of Mid-Test

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Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant

The government recently announced a package of support to businesses affected by the omicron variant of coronavirus. Businesses in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors are now able to apply for a one-off Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant of up to £6,000. This will be particularly beneficial to pubs and restaurants that faced a wave of cancellations in the run up to Christmas due to spiralling COVID cases, in what would normally be their busiest period. It also applies to Village Halls.

The application form and a copy of the guidance, which gives examples of the types of business that are eligible, is available on the Council's website at www.testvalley.gov.uk/businessgrant. We encourage all our Mid Test businesses and Village Halls to check eligibility and apply as soon as possible.

All applications must be determined by 31st March and therefore businesses are encouraged to apply as soon as possible and before the application deadline of 18th March 2022 to ensure that their application can be processed in time.

Covid Plan B phase ends

As Councillors during the 'Plan B' phase, we have been avoiding holding non-committee meetings (workshops etc.) in person. Moving back to "Plan A" means that whilst we can now hold these non-committee meetings in person the Government still advises a precautionary approach. This includes the wearing of face coverings in enclosed or crowded spaces and when meeting strangers.

The legal requirement to self-isolate, if you test positive for Covid, remains in place until at least the end of March. Committee meetings will continue as prior to Plan B with rooms being ventilated and carbon monoxide- monitored. This approach may well suit community meetings such as Parish Council meetings.



DIARY	FEBRUARY 2022
1	Broughton PC
2	Member & Community Development Group
3	Over Wallop PC
7	Community Governance Review Member panel
7	King's Somborne PC
7	Longstock PC
10	Licensing Committee
14	West Tytherley PC
15	Last date for most Parish Magazines
15	Nether Wallop PC
17	Mid Test Ward Update
17	Stockbridge PC
17	Mottisfont PC
22	Southern Area Planning
23	Cabinet
23	TVAPC meeting
25	Full Council

Ash works Zionshill Copse Valley Park

Over the last week there has been a buzz of activity in Zionshill Copse part of the Valley Park Woodlands Local Nature Reserve where work to remove Ash trees suffering from Ash die back disease have been felled to ensure that permissive paths around the woodland can continue to be used. Where possible every effort has been made to retain ash that can naturally decline away from paths and provide valuable deadwood habitat.

The countryside officers have been working with a contractor who uses heavy horses as part of the timber extraction process. This helps to reduce the impact on the woodland floor and allows the woodland a quicker recovery from the works. As you can see Tokie is working hard to extract lengths of ash which will be used for biomass to produce electricity.

Wonderful to see this traditional approach being used today to great effect.

Mid-Test Communities in Action

Mid-Test has an enormous number of active communities, and we will try and highlight examples each month to recognize their efforts and perhaps spark an idea in another community. We will get these from the Parish magazines that carry all the local information and news, and they are the very best examples of community activity. There is of course a delay and an element of yesterday's news, but it doesn't diminish the importance of these community events. We can often fund a startup of a new activity or have grants that help provide facilities.

Christmas Wreath making in King's Somborne from the Gauntlet



Everyone was so pleased that the annual King's Somborne Wreath Making Evenings could be held once again. The evenings were held over two nights, plus 'kits' were given out to those who couldn't attend but still wanted to make a wreath. Over 75 people made beautiful wreaths and there were people from as far away as Lymington attending. As well as the evening being a fun social event for the village, the event also raised over £1,500 which is to be shared between the King's Somborne Primary School and The Sombornes Pre-school. Absolutely what community events are all about. TVBC has supported the King's Somborne Village Hall with a variety of grants of the years enabling it to modernise and

offer excellent facilities for all types of community activity

Longstock Fete from the Longstock Newsletter



What can be more English than the Village Fete and Longstock know how to put on a great one. The weather was very kind and the sun shone through for the children's games and dog show. The evening BBQ, which was a ticketed event, was also very well attended, a chance to eat drink and be merry in a true village setting. A huge thanks to all the people who pulled this together, no mean feat at all. This is again a prime example of how everyone pulling together as a community can achieve great things. The following day the Allotmenters had a BBQ to unveil a memorial wildflower garden and TVBC was pleased to help provide a small grant to help this.

Get in Touch

Have you got an event you would like to highlight here or something you really are proud of - let us know.

Councillor Community Grants

A good place to remind all Mid Test organizations that we still have about £3000 left in our grant pot for this financial year which could be 3 grants of £1000 for instance to help start a new idea! Apply now and the money can be spent by end of the year.

Another fly-tipper feels the force of TVBC!



A man from Southampton has been handed a suspended prison sentence and made to pay more than £1,500 after fly-tipping three times in the space of six weeks across Romsey and Wellow.

Kenneth Dibden, of Salisbury Road, Southampton, left the waste at two laybys in Luzborough Lane, Romsey, in February last year, followed by a further fly-tip at Tanners Lane, Wellow, the next month, before a final offence at Abbey Park Industrial Estate, Romsey, at the end of March. At Southampton Magistrates Court, he was ordered to pay

£500 costs for each of the three offences, and a £128 victim surcharge, on top of the prison time, suspended for 18 months. He was also banned from driving for three months.

The successful prosecution follows a year in which the council lost no cases of fly-tipping prosecutions in court. During 2020-21, 17 people were prosecuted for waste-related offences, with the authority's enforcement team continuing to work throughout the Covid-19 pandemic

Tree planting at Ox Drove Meadow



Over 30 volunteers from The Anton River Conservation Association (TARCA) worked hard to plant 300 trees at Ox Drove Meadow on Sunday 23rd January. The trees will help to improve the vital habitat corridor which is so important for the movement of dormice around the site. Blackthorn will provide important egg-laying habitat for brown hairstreak butterflies, which are also present on site.

Volunteers also helped to complete the planting of Kidney Vetch donated by Andover Tree United as part of the Back from the Brink project on-site. To help improve the habitat and encourage new populations of Small Blue butterfly and the Striped Lychnis Moth.

Trees planted this weekend also contribute to the total planted this year. With new planting at Anton Lakes Local Nature Reserve, Swattons Field, Hunts Farm, Valley Park Woodlands Local Nature Reserve and Harewood Common, bringing the current total of whips planted to 6,700.

Are you going Green?

Please let us know about your local zero carbon initiatives or other green projects happening in your area so we can share ideas in this newsletter

Tree Planting for Dormice

Further opportunities to get involved with tree planting are going ahead this weekend on the Facombe Estate as



part of the Test Valley Dormouse Project. The project is a partnership project between Test Valley Borough Council, The Peoples Trust for Endangered Species and Hampshire Dormouse Group and aims to work with landowners to learn more about the distribution of dormice throughout the north of Test Valley, as well as identify hedge planting opportunities to link landscapes and create habitat corridors for dormice.

The project is being delivered by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) South East and

has secured funding from the Tree Council to plant up to 2.5km of hedgerow in partnership with the Facombe Estate.

If you would like to be involved with tree planting everyone will be meeting in the overflow car park of The Jack Russell, in Facombe just north of Andover at 10 am on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th January. The event runs till 2 pm (refreshments and tools provided).

For more information or to sign up for the event please contact us.

M3 upgrade works



On 12 January 2022 the Government issued their response to the Transport Select Committee report, which paused construction of any new all lane running motorways until 2024, when a full 5 years' worth of safety data will be available.

The M3 junction 9 to 14 all lane running upgrade is one of the schemes being paused.

You can read more information about the Government's response to the Transport Select Committee here: [Rollout and safety of smart motorways: Government Response to the](#)

[Committee's Third Report - Transport Committee \(parliament.uk\)](#).

There will however, be work carried out to upgrade the existing central reservation barrier from metal to concrete, as this delivers standalone safety benefits.

Further boost for Chantry Centre businesses as council cuts charges by a third

Chantry Centre businesses have seen their service charge fall by a third since Test Valley Borough Council bought the mall in 2019, providing a much-needed boost to those impacted by the pandemic.

The charge, which covers the management, promotion and maintenance of the centre, has dropped from £1.2M in 2019 to £850K for 2022. But businesses will still receive the same level of support as they have in previous years, as the council has identified significant cost savings and more efficient ways of delivering the same services.

As part of this efficiency drive, the council is now managing the centre directly, rather than using a management company which has been the case historically.

Since purchasing the centre, the council has made several improvements, including refurbishing the lifts in the multi-storey car park and the toilets by the bus station, repairing the leaking roof and upgrading the CCTV system.

With the reduction in the overall service charge bill, most tenants will see their service charge fall, while a handful will have their charges frozen at 2021 levels. Before the council acquired the Chantry Centre, tenants would generally see a year-on-year increase in their service charge.



Romsey barge canal improvement works

Wilder Romsey volunteers and the countryside officers have recently worked on the old barge canal to cut back vegetation, which has in places engulfed the channel and reduced light levels reaching the water. The main aim is to allow the development of aquatic vegetation along the margins of the canal to provide a better habitat for wildlife.

The works were carried out over 2 days and saw 40 volunteers helping over this period, with 120 hours of people time given up in total, and 5 truckloads of material were removed, to help bring the canal back to a place where people can enjoy a stroll. Future vegetation works are due in February.

Assisted Bin Collection Review

An assisted bin collection is provided to those households who find it difficult to move their wheeled bins. Each application is individually assessed. Every two years, the residents who receive this additional service are asked to renew their application. This is so that we can ensure that our records are up-to-date and that only those residents who need this service, receive it. The next review is about to commence, and householders will be asked to renew their applications in the next few days.



King's Somborne Allotment Planning Appeal Dismissed

A Planning Inspector has endorsed the Southern Area Planning Committee decision to refuse a planning application to build 18 houses on the allotment site which had existed for 110 years.

This decision was the culmination of a long arduous process for all concerned but was an example of all the different facets of the planning process. TVBC Planning Policy protects allotments by insisting any space or facility lost would be replaced by an equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality and be in a suitable location

The applicant proposed an alternative location and in addition a large woodland to achieve nitrate neutrality. The Officers worked hard with negotiation and planning conditions to achieve that equivalence and on balance with the benefit of the additional houses recommended to the Planning Committee that permission be granted. This was unanimously overturned by the committee and the application refused. TVBC Officers and Legal Representative then accepting the Committee decision fully fought the case with the Appeal Inspector who has agreed with the Committee decision and dismissed the appeal.

Throughout the community has rallied around the Allotment users and petitioned and objected using all the means at their disposal.

A smaller but equally important allotment site in Houghton has also recently been refused permission for development.

It is vital communities complete their Neighbourhood Development Plans to provide as much protection for these valuable assets as possible.

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