

Borough Councillor Report
Councillors Maureen Flood and Susanne Hasselmann
March 2024

Budget and Precept for 2024/ 25

The budget for Test Valley Borough Council was approved at the Council meeting on 29th March 2024. It is a balanced budget without the need to draw from reserves to cover ongoing costs. This is the result of sustained efforts to control costs and the continued income from property and cash investments.

To protect front-line services and in order to remain in a stable financial position, an increase in council tax by £5 for an average band D property, to £163.91, for 2024/25, was approved. This is a rise of 3.14%, and below current inflation levels. This represents less than 9% of the total Council bill people in the Test Valley will pay in 2024/ 25. Although TVBC collects the Council tax, most of it is distributed to other authorities, including Hampshire County Council, Police, Fire and Parish and Town Councils.

In addition, to protect its most vulnerable residents, the Council recently approved its Council Tax Support scheme, for low-income households, to minimise the impact of the proposed increase.

Finance portfolio holder, councillor Maureen Flood, said: *“Local authorities across the country have had a difficult few years, and Test Valley Borough Council has been no exception. However, thanks to our hard work, and being careful with our money, we find ourselves in a strong financial position.*

“Any increases made to council tax are always difficult but are important to make sure that we are able to keep providing our vital services to the public, including bin collections, maintaining green and open spaces, housing and homelessness, planning and much more. It will also help with our ambitious plans to regenerate both Andover and Romsey town centres. At an increase of 3.14%, we are still below the national inflation rates and believe it provides excellent value to our residents.”

Motion to oppose pumping of wastewater

Following an in-depth debate where several speakers provided evidence and information to Council members about the impact of river pollution, a motion by Cllr Drew and Cllr Hasselmann was approved unanimously by Test Valley Borough Council on 29th February 2024.

The motion read: 'This Council strongly opposes Southern Water pumping wastewater into the River Test or its tributaries. The Council is therefore calling on Southern Water to fix the problem by improving its infrastructure more widely and at greater speed, and work with Ofwat and the Environment Agency to enable the required investment funding to be released. In addition, we are calling on all parties to inform and closely engage with affected communities and relevant agencies.

Water quality must be monitored and transparency must be maintained by publishing all testing data promptly.'

Your Councillors and Caroline Nokes MP are working to put further pressure on Southern Water to resolve the many issues/ problems in our area. At the same time there is a move to replicate some of the structures set up for the pan-parish forum elsewhere.

Test Valley Community Resilience Forum

The next Test Valley Community Resilience Forum will take place at King's Somborne Village Hall on Saturday 20 April 2024. The normal 'resilience' breakfast of sausage/bacon rolls and pastries will be on offer from 9.45am with the session beginning at 10am.

The event will, in part, comprise of a power outage exercise, a risk faced by all of our communities. The event will also look at other risks facing our communities, including the increasing threat of wildfires. Finally, there will be a presentation about the outcomes of the LRF's work on community resilience.

A final agenda will be circulated closer to the time.

For more information and to RSVP to this event, please contact:
gbloss@testvalley.gov.uk

Greening Campaign – Information Events for Communities

The Greening Campaign is a scheme designed to help communities to consider how to tackle climate change, including measures to reduce energy use, health impacts related to climate change, waste prevention, promoting biodiversity and growing your own food.

National Lottery funding has been awarded to help 20 communities in Hampshire to support their journey in relation to climate change through this scheme. Eighteen communities are already signed up across the county, so there is funding available for a further two communities. A small number of free information events have been organised for those who want to find out more, with the final events comprising an online session on **Tuesday 12 March at 7pm** and an in-person event at Romsey Town Hall on **Tuesday 26 March at 7pm**. Alternatively you can get in touch with the Greening Campaign using the details below.

For more information contact the Greening Campaign on hello@greening-campaign.org to ask questions or go to the website www.greening-campaign.org.

Cllr Susanne Hasselmann, cllrshasselmann@testvalley.gov.uk

Cllr Maureen Flood, cllrmflood@testvalley.gov.uk