

2018 Houghton Annual Parish Assembly - April 13th 2018

TVBC Council Tax

For the third consecutive year Test Valley Band D customers will have a tax increase of 3.7%, equating to another rise of £5., following a number of years of no increases. As stated in my report last year the reduced Government grant this year, after years of the similar reductions, is pushing the Borough towards increasing self sufficiency. Central Government is intending to remove financial support altogether

All the Departments of the Borough have made considerable efficiency savings – the pips are squeaking! Our other approach is to increasingly undertake prudent property investments and pursue business initiatives – these we are told are yielding approx. 7% returns.

Only last year the leisure management provider contract was awarded to a new provider, who has undertaken to provide a rebuilt facility at the Andover Sports Centre and refreshed premises at Romsey Rapids and Valley Park, (at no capital cost to TVBC) all of which will make significant savings on Leisure provision, in fact will make a financial return.

HOUSING and LEISURE

The Councils Housing Strategy is a continuing success story to help local people access decent homes, in both Andover and Romsey. It is not just about building houses but also about building communities with first class facilities, such as community halls, leisure park areas, sports pavilions, and numerous sport pitches. This building strategy has delivered more affordable homes than our original target of 200 per year for the 3 years until 2019 – last year it was 266.

In the south, Romsey's sporting infrastructure will shortly benefit from a remodelling of the Rapids with an increase in facilities. In addition on the Northern boundary of Romsey there is to be a new development which will be home to a consortium of local sports clubs and will provide floodlit astro pitches, grass pitches and other vital sporting accommodation, all now being created at Ganger Farm (adjacent to Hilliers Arboretum at Braishfield).

We have benefitted from the Government's New Homes Bonus, this provides TVBC with the means to accumulate the Community Asset Fund, which directly helps local community projects, giving up to 25K grants. Parishes can also

benefit from the new Test Valley Community Toolkit, a valuable aid to those embarking on a Neighbourhood Plan and thereby identifying your local needs.

Test Valley Borough Council actively supports the Future Skills and Technical Centre at Cricklade College, and the Council itself is running a very successful apprenticeship scheme. This with its programme of supporting small business has resulted in the Council receiving two prestigious Wessex Area awards; Best All Round Business Friendly Council and a special award for outstanding commitment to supporting small businesses.

As I have tried to indicate this should give a small flavour of how enterprise orientated the Council has become and it is developing constantly innovative ways of generating new income streams. It is interesting to note the return on completed projects is forecast to be 7.8%, that delivers £1.3Million **more** than had that capital employed remained in reserves.

THE FUTURE

What is coming? An exciting new wetlands area at Fishlake Meadows, just north of Romsey. This is a wildlife park owned by Test Valley, which will be open to the public for ecological pursuits and informal recreation and managed by the Hampshire and IOW Naturalist Trust.

There are to be more enhancements to Romsey town centre. The waste collection depot at Portway is to be clad in solar panels. Also, there will be increasing use of the Beech Hurst Headquarters by sharing some of the space for functions with Hampshire County Council.

WARD BOUNDARIES

There are proposed Ward boundary changes, which are significant, and not universally welcomed, in this central Test Valley area – possibly to be renamed the Mid Test Ward. As well as Houghton this new ward will include Stockbridge, Longstock, Broughton, Kings Somborne, Lockerley, the Wallops, Mottisfont and the Tytherleys. Locally we have argued for a 3 member Ward to cover the whole area - any other decision, to make the numbers right, would have resulted in divisions between adjoining communities ie Stockbridge and Longstock, or splitting apart neighbouring communities who currently work well together i.e. Broughton and Mottisfont, Broughton and Houghton, the Wallops. This proposal will result in an increased workload for 3 elected members in 2019; each of these 3 will be expected to be responsible for 6

parishes each and so the change will result in each Councillor having 2400 electors. You as a Parish Council have been consulted on these changes, and they will be finalised in May.

Another exciting prospect for the future is that the Borough Council have acquired the Magistrates Court adjacent to the Lights Theatre and are seeking suggestions for how this can best be used, with the ultimate aim of creating a Cultural Quarter for the town.

LOCALLY

As Councillors we have done our bit to encourage local enterprise initiatives, either with modest grants from our individual community grant fund, or by steering entrepreneurs towards the right advice and expertise that we have within the Council,

Stockbridge had our financial help for Trout n About and the Christmas Lights were helped two years in a row.

We contributed substantially to new deer and rabbit- proof fence around Longstock Allotments

We have also helped numerous other projects throughout our Ward. And are willing to listen to any proposals

PLANNING

Houghton has had several challenging and often locally unpopular planning applications this past year, most as a result of changes to the Settlement Boundary. Daniel and I have done our best to help and mitigate proposals where possible.

We are pleased to hear that Houghton Parish Council is undertaking a Neighbourhood Area Plan.

We get to as many Parish Council meetings as we can but there is often a clash of dates

We would like to thank the Houghton Parish Councillors, and the Clerk for all that they do, and for keeping us informed

Cllr Peter Boulton 01794301212

Cllr Daniel Busk 01794388389