



A NEW BEGINNING

On May 4th 2023, the residents of Test Valley have the opportunity to change the way their Borough is run. For the entire forty nine years of its existence, there have only ever been two political parties with a credible opportunity to win a majority of the seats on Test Valley Borough Council – and the Liberal Democrat party is one of them.

This manifesto describes the way in which we will improve the lives of residents, when we are in office. In summary WE WILL:

1. Ensure that infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals) are in place before and alongside the homes the Government makes us build.
2. Keep in touch with you all year round and listen to what you have to say.
3. Represent *ALL* residents of Test Valley in how it is run.
4. Hold big business, County and national government policies to account.
5. Take the climate emergency seriously and ensure that Test Valley residents fully benefit from the Green Economy.

What follows are the more detailed actions we plan to take, under the six Themes of:

- Planning
- Homes
- Transparency and Integrity
- The Disadvantaged
- Climate and the Environment
- Economic Growth

PLANNING

The issue – there is limited integration of local needs when residential developments are built, and insufficient overall provision to match the developments already in place.

1. We will review the Corporate Action Plan and Local Plan against the aspects of health provision, local transport, and educational needs. Example actions it is anticipated could follow the review are shown in points 2. to 5. Below.
2. Apply pressure on the County Council to sustain social care services at a level that frees up hospital beds.
3. Implement incentives for local residents to increase the amount of travel that they undertake via walking, bicycle and scooter (including e-bikes and e-scooters) **AND we will increase pressure on County to address the pothole problem!**
4. Assess where demand for bus services is not being met and provide grants and/or subsidies to get them put in place.
5. Assess County plans for school provision against anticipated growth, and press for immediate increases in school places (particularly in the north of the Borough).



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6. We will create a plan for sustained improvement in the TVBC support offered to Test Valley's rural communities. That plan to cover farming, energy, transport, housing and community facilities.

HOMES

The issue – there are too few homes available to ordinary local families in Test Valley that are within their financial means. Homes, whether they are bought or rented, are too expensive to get hold of and too expensive to run.

1. We will ensure partners provide at least the number of affordable housing units they are required to on developments. We will encourage applications for developments with a higher % of affordable housing.
2. We will build net carbon zero council housing units that can only be allocated to local people. The units will either be built by TVBC alone, or in partnership with a trusted builder. They will act as exemplars for other residential development in Test Valley.
3. We will increase the number of rented properties in Test Valley available at affordable cost. To achieve this we will provide grants to support landlords in retro-fitting insulation and solar panels to their properties such that tenants will face lowered energy bills.
4. We will encourage a minimum energy efficiency as a condition for all rented properties.
5. We will use brownfield sites for development wherever possible (via compulsory purchase order if necessary) and spread some greenfield development more widely – thereby ensuring that our smallest communities have a sustainable future.

TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY

The issue – against a backdrop of several years of misleading national politics, and subsequent high levels of division and mistrust, it is particularly important for the residents of Test Valley (and for the efficient and effective running of the council) that actions are taken to sustain and increase the levels of trust in local government.

1. We will expand on the work of the LibDem's own Diversity and inclusion officer within the party, to ensure that all Council decisions are taken with these key areas in mind.
2. We will set up a review to bring Andover and Romsey Town Councils more into alignment re their respective roles, income and accountability. Taking what actions are recommended before the 2027 council elections.
3. We will fully implement the recommendations from the current investigation into how the council can improve communications with the public. This to include the public broadcasting of committee and council meetings.
4. We will increase the effort made by TVBC on direct involvement of residents in bodies such as Romsey Future, Andover Vision, focus groups, citizen assemblies and panels. This will include both individual residents and representatives of local organisations, businesses and community groups.
5. We will ensure that Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – responsible for scrutinising the work of the council and the cabinet – will be a member of the opposition, not the controlling party.



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THE DISADVANTAGED

The issue – for at least the first half of the next council administration, the cost of living crisis and a recession will persist. Test Valley residents will need more support – particularly those who are most financially disadvantaged – than may be provided by the UK government.

1. We will set aside monies from the TVBC budget until at least May 2025, specifically for use in easing the worst pressures on the poorest in our society.
2. We will provide increased financial support to community support groups, such as foodbanks and warm places.
3. We will enhance and extend ‘signposting’, i.e. making it easier for Test Valley residents and organisations to identify and connect to other sources of support.
4. We will ensure that those services which are of most value to financially disadvantaged residents have their budgets maintained at a high enough level to ensure a sustained – good - level of service.
5. We will develop a Rural Support Fund that can offer short term support with both grants and loans.

CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The issue – despite declaring a Climate Emergency, progress on TVBC’s Climate Emergency Action Plan has been woefully inadequate. It is unlikely that action on the related Environment Emergency will be any more certain under the current administration. There is ground to be made up.

1. We will at least double the number of TVBC employees working in this area.
2. We will establish bi-annual carbon reduction targets for both TVBC and Test Valley. These to lead toward the end point of net zero for TVBC by 2035, and for Test Valley by 2040.
3. We will ring fence a significant % of the council budget for climate and environment related actions – in the first year of a new TVBC council membership this will be a figure in excess of £1m.
4. We will make a carbon reduction plan a prerequisite for any business applying to TVBC for grants or awards.
5. We will prioritise retro-fitting of properties for the remainder of this decade in order to reduce both the carbon footprint and energy bills.
6. We will incorporate ‘green corridors’ in the new Local Plan between built-up areas, such that wildlife populations can move freely and thereby maintain those wildlife populations at a higher level.
7. We will establish a subsidised programme of solar panel installation on the roofs of public and community buildings, plus all TVBC owned buildings (including industrial units).



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ECONOMIC GROWTH

The issue –despite the UK economy being in an extremely unhealthy state, TVBC has significant reserves and property holdings. Unless that situation is made use of soon, there is a risk that funds could be ring-fenced by higher tiers of government. Too many of the current aims for economic growth in Test Valley rely on plans with a decades-long timeline.

1. We will review the town centre regeneration masterplans for both Romsey and Andover, with a target of accelerating the start of phase one work for both projects (with the emphasis on residential development) – and potentially delaying subsequent phases in order to release funds for higher priorities.
2. We will review the TVBC property portfolio to assess whether there are parts of it that should be sold so that the funds can be redirected to higher priorities.
3. We will establish a partnership between TVBC and a trusted partner, for the creation of solar farms.
4. We will set up a subsidised training programme to create skilled employees for green economy start up businesses.
5. We will increase our spend on attracting visitors to the Test Valley – such that both their number and the length of their visits increase. Thereby maximising this important source of funds to the Test Valley economy.
6. We will promote the designation of essential businesses as Community Assets in our rural areas and support and develop community trusts to provide essential services.

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May 4th 2023 is the best opportunity that the residents of Test Valley have ever had to create
A New Beginning. Make the most of it - **VOTE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT!**