



Valley Park Parish Council Newsletter

2022 – December Edition

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**We wish all residents a Happy Christmas
and a Healthy and Peaceful New Year**



The Mayor and Mayoress's Christmas Message

2022 has been a significant year for us all.

The Covid virus shocked us into a recognition of just how fragile our world is. It also reminded us of what really matters – our health, community spirit and our solidarity. We have come to value those we rely on most – our doctors, nurses and all health care workers who are at the fore of our defence against this virus. Over the last two years we have been asked to stay away from loved ones to protect them. Then, earlier this year with the easing of Covid restrictions, we have been able to enjoy getting out and about, meeting family and friends and in June, to take part in the celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. And what wonderful events they were as people across the borough acknowledged the dedication and commitment of Queen Elizabeth II.

An accident in May left me immobile for many weeks. So, the Mayoress attended the Jubilee events, on my behalf, recounting to me each time how much she had enjoyed them. Now that I am back on my feet, albeit quite a lot slower, I particularly enjoyed hosting an event at Jermyn's House and the internationally renowned Sir Harold Hillier Gardens. We received many compliments about the gardens from Hampshire Civic Heads.

My wife, Celia, and I have been able to attend engagements and meet many people in groups, organisations and business across Test Valley. There are so many different ways in which people are actively involved and contributing really positively to our community. We are fortunate to have a wonderful richness of voluntary groups and many organisations, who are working hard to make Test Valley a really special place. And on a smaller scale, there are many examples of like minded people joining together, getting their voices heard and making a difference. They are the unsung heroes of our Community, who contribute so much in all sorts of ways.

This year is also significant for monumental events: The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces. This war is daily bringing devastation to Ukraine and its people. Test Valley residents have opened their homes to support displaced Ukrainian families and willingly given support to send emergency help to Ukraine.

In September the passing of Queen Elizabeth II saw the country in mourning for our longest reigning monarch. But, we felt pride at the pageantry and dignity of the funeral for our much loved and respected Queen. I was immensely proud to give the proclamation for King Charles III and to know that I will be Mayor when His Majesty is crowned.

The financial instability, due to many influences and factors, has, and will, take a toll. The rise in energy prices and the cost of living generally is deeply worrying for many residents. Residents can contact Test Valley Council for advice and support, via the webpage or directly.

But, this year we can choose to celebrate our festival of Christmas without excessive spending. A simpler Christmas, some may say, as they used to be. It can still be that special family time when we get together with those we love. Time together is a present we give, worth more than any gift. We can reach out to those around us in the community who are alone, and share some time with them during the festive days.

Celia and I wish you a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

The Mayor and Mayoress – Cllrs Alan and Celia Dowden



20 Years of Friends of the Park



To celebrate 20 years of Friends of the Park, Cllr Alan Dowden, Chairman of Valley Park Parish Council joined by Cllr Celia Dowden, parish and borough councillor thanked them for their magnificent work. Together with Friends of the Park and Test Valley Woodland Officer, they planted trees to replace those that had to be removed from the woodlands behind Sandringham Close due to Ash die back.

Valley Park Badminton Club



Cllr Dowden welcomed by Mark Peckham – Lead Coach and members of the Valley Park Badminton Club

Valley Park Badminton Club, Founded in 2019, is a thriving badminton club with top England and international, as well as, beginner and intermediate players. With over 50 members, the club has gone from strength to strength and many children and adult players are enjoying playing badminton at Valley Park.

The Club welcomes players of any age or ability, with the youngest member being only 5 years old. Valley Park Badminton players not only have fun and learn badminton skills, but also develop sportsmanship and other essential life skills.

Valley Park Badminton Club would like to thank Cllr Dowden for his continued support in setting up and developing the club.

Poppies in Valley Park



To commemorate Remembrance Day, Valley Park Parish Council displayed for the second year large poppies along Knightwood Road in November.

News in Brief

- Valley Park has maintained the lowest Council Tax in Test Valley Borough by far. The Parish has reduced its element of the Council Tax by 40% since the Parish was established nearly 16 years ago.
- The Orchards were due to be planted in early November. However, due to the rain, the trees were not able to be lifted in order for the officers of Test Valley and local schools to be able to plant. We are awaiting for new dates when these can be planted.
- In November, Cllr Dowden welcomed a special guest to the borough as HRH The Countess of Wessex and Forfar. The Countess visited Romsey Companions Club, where she met with the club members.

- Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) has launched its new £50k Cost of Living Grant scheme to help organisations that are supporting people who are struggling with rising costs. To find out more and to apply for a grant, visit www.testvalley.gov.uk/costoflivinggrantscheme