

Minutes of the Romsey Forum

Held in the Courtroom, Romsey Town Hall, Wednesday 8th September 2004 at 7.30pm.

Attendance list: 34 people including... Neill Beasley; Phil Sands; Henry Maddick; Cllr Ian Carr (TVBC); Cllr Rod Simpson (REPC); Barbara Burbridge; Euan Russell (Broadlands); Eunice Hutchison; Barbara J. Milburn; Sarah de Sigley; Anthony de Sigley; Cheryl Collier; Diane Hargreaves; Mary Akerman; David Parsons; Margaret Raines; Christine Linnegar; Mike Linnegar; Peter Phillips; Pam Gale; John Mason; Jill Gethin; Shirley Rogers; Philip Warner; Carolyn Nixon; Tom Gould; Brian Palmer; Greg Alexander (TVCS); Alan Wiltshire (Romsey Advertiser); Brenda Langdon; Chris Amery; Mike Richardson.

In the chair: Phoebe Merrick; Clerk to the Forum, Mark Cooper.

Item 1: Apologies: Liz Barron; John Parker; Anthony & Elizabeth Porter; Alan Marsh; Sue Hough; Steve Lees.

Item 2: Minutes of the last Forum, 16th June 2004. Approved.

Item 3: Matters Arising. None.

Item 4: Town Diary: 28/09/04 RDS at the Town Hall; lecture by Nicholas Zorab. 16/10/04 Apple Day at KJH.

Item 5: Report on work done towards Romsey's Charter celebration 2007 by Cllr Julian Jones.

The Royal Charter, granted by James I in 1607, was last celebrated in 1907...coincidentally the date of the Abbey's foundation is 907. Cllr Jones outlined the programme that would start with the publication of a celebration calendar in October 2006. The Charter date is 6th April but in 2007 this is Good Friday; celebrations will therefore commence in March 2007. The programme put together so far is appended to these minutes (*electronic attachment to follow with hard copies available at the December Forum*).

Julian Jones received a number of comments and questions from the Forum that highlighted the importance of the schools in the Charter Celebrations and the need to replace the mulberry trees at the Abbey and at Broadlands.

Item 6: TVBC's Space Efficiency Study and the possibility of relocating the Duttons Road, Romsey offices to Beech Hurst, Andover. Cllr Ian Carr, Leader of TVBC made a presentation.

No proposals had been made, no decisions had been taken and there were no hidden agendas. The Study was an open-minded attempt to obtain information about whether it was viable to have two sets of offices. The process was driven by the June 2001 District Audit Asset Management Report and by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process, which questioned having two offices. There were many more staff at Duttons Road than was normal for a Council's Area office and the building was unsatisfactory with poor disabled access. The Leader would not accept any reduction in local services and would not create a need to drive to Andover. Council services would continue to be provided from Romsey and Council meetings would continue to be held in the town. There were many staff relocation issues but TVBC was not looking for redundancies and the cost of relocation packages was forming a significant part of the cost analysis. Alternative uses for the Duttons Road site would also be costed but if change did not make sense financially there would be no changes.

Cllr Carr then dealt with a number of questions from the Forum; his aim was to improve service provision, certainly not to reduce it; the decision on Duttons Road would be made by the Executive on November 3rd; yes, he would consider publishing the consultant's report ahead of a decision to allow for informed public debate and agreed that the calibre of staff in a 'One-Stop Shop' solution would need to be high.

Item 7: A Parking Buddy Scheme:- Presentation by Cllr Mark Cooper.

The concept of organising the use of private vacant driveways to supply some of a town's long term parking need was not present anywhere in the UK although an Internet search had found an example in the United States. TVBC officers felt the legal difficulties were hard to surmount because each parker would be involved in a private contract with each provider. Each provider in turn would have to declare any income derived from the scheme for tax purposes and there were questions in relation to legal liability on both sides. It seemed the best way forward was to encourage individuals to come to private agreements with each other rather than attempt an official scheme.

Item 8: Topics for Future Forums: suggestions included a post-implementation review on parking and the environmental enhancements in Romsey: feedback on Duttons Road and an update on the Brewery site.

Item 9: Any other business: None

Item 10: Dates for future meetings: 8th Dec '04; 16th Mar '05; 8th Jun '05; 7th Sep '05 and 30th Nov '05.