

Minutes of the Romsey Forum

Held in the Courtroom, Romsey Town Hall 8th December 2004 at 7.30

Attendance list: 46 citizens including... Cllr Liz Barron (HCC); Brian Palmer; Tom Gould; Henry Maddick; Nora Burke-Scott; Elizabeth Drew; Marjorie Exall; Barbara J. Milburn; John Mason; Mike Gray; Jan Gray; Leo Patrick; Cllr Julian Jones (RTC); Tony Barron (MP's office); Rod Hoyle; Diane Hargreaves; Neill Beasley; Mike Bull; Alan Wiltshire; Laurence Smith; Sandra Smith; Sarah de Sigley; Anthony de Sigley; Cllr Cheryl Collier (RTC); Julian Gee; Cllr Mike Richardson (RTC); Mark Taylor; Caroline Gardner; Paul Gardner; Geoff Morris; Euan Russell; Shirley Rogers; Elizabeth Bell; Peter Phillips; Anne Stringfellow; Madalene Winter (TVBC); Steve Lees (TVBC); Greg Davies; David Allthorpe; Denise Amery; Chris Amery; Eunice Hutchison; Mary Hill; David Hill.

In the Chair: Phoebe Merrick; **Clerk to the Forum:** Cllr Mark Cooper.

Item 1: Apologies: Sue Hough; Frank Akerman; John Parker; Tessa Parker; Rod Simpson; Dorothy Baverstock; Bill Lees; Kevin Ford; Sue Ford; Sandra Gidley MP; Sally Leach; John Palk; Phil Warner; Alan Marsh, Carolyn Nixon.

Item 2: Election of Forum Chairman. Phoebe Merrick was proposed and seconded and elected *nemine contradicente*.

Item 3: Election of Forum Secretary. Mark Cooper was proposed and seconded and elected *nem. con.*

Item 4: Minutes of the last Romsey Forum 8th September 2004. Approved.

Item 5: Matters arising:- There were none.

Item 5a: Town Diary.

1...The Broadlands events for 2005 are posted on the Broadlands website.

2...Farmers' Markets for 2005 are (all Sunday): 23rd January; 20th March; 15th May; 17th July; 18th September; 20th November.

3...Tadburn Meadows Litter Pick-up, Saturday 11th December 10am-12 noon.

4...RDS Quiz Night (teams of six), Saturday 5th February 7.30 Age Concern Hall, Linden Road.

Item 6: Duttons Road offices: Cllr Ian Carr, Leader of TVBC was delayed at a meeting in Andover. He had asked the Forum Secretary to distribute a number of copies of the report that had been taken at the 3rd November Executive the outcome of which was a resolution to continue with two offices serving the Borough. Cllr Carr asked that the Forum be informed that ... "if the report had lent towards a closure of Duttons Road there would have been a public consultation before a final decision was made". The Forum Secretary reported that he had an amendment accepted that ... 'recognised the benefit for the Borough of being served by two offices'.

Item 7; Review of the Town Centre Environmental Enhancements undertaken to date. The Chairman invited the Forum to give their comments on the various elements of the enhancements. County Councillor Liz Barron undertook to note the comments and report any problems back to the County officers.

Church Place. The general view of the Forum was overwhelmingly supportive of the improvements: the scheme was... "good" ... "had dignity" ... "handsome" ... "felt as if the pedestrian had priority".

Negative comments were... 'sad to see paint being used to delineate parking spaces rather than relying on surface texture' ... 'potential litter problems from the two nearby 'fast-food' outlets' ... 'there are too many signs' (re. Report circulated by Geoff Morris).

County Councillor responded that she supported GM's call for fewer signs and said that the north side 'Controlled Zone' sign was to be removed.

'Need for a way to indicate no parking on the north side; parkers were being ticketed' ... 'street furniture needs a coated finish to prevent fat stains from fish and chip debris' ... 'stone balls are collecting car paint; they need to be either lower, to avoid damage, or higher, where they can be seen' ... 'disabled sign should share a post' ... 'can the space be used for events?'

Answer; Yes and the bollards have an electricity supply to serve events

'great shame the scheme does not extend across Church Street'.

Answer: Church Street is in the next phase of enhancements and cost of very high quality materials limited work in this phase to Church Place.

Alma Road : The Forum expressed two main concerns;

- (1) crossing Alma Road remained difficult and dangerous and
- (2) the exit from Waitrose on to Alma Road had a significant blind spot looking south.

Additional concerns expressed were:

- (a) The traffic light timings don't work as well as they did at the start; the pedestrian green go operates even when there are no pedestrians.
- (b) There are cushion pads at the mini-roundabout but no signs warning traffic there may be pedestrians crossing.
- (c) Crossing at the Station Road end remains difficult.
- (d) The pedestrian crossings have lost their audible warnings making it hard for the blind.
- (e) Access into Waitrose on Friday a.m. is very slow and creates long queue backs in the local road system.
- (f) Alma Road Surgery access can cause delays.

Botley Road: The five traffic islands creating chicanes has slowed most traffic down and are welcomed by pedestrians.

Concern was expressed about:

- (a) the blind spot looking west exiting Halterworth Lane;
- (b) the unpopularity of the chicanes amongst parents accessing The Mountbatten School; and
- (c) the habit of some drivers of by-passing the chicanes at speed on the wrong side of the road.

The Hundred and Latimer Street: The Forum expressed strong support for the improvements especially to Latimer Street which has benefited from the 'uplift'.

Strong criticism was made by a number of the Forum relating to:

- (a) the lack of level surface; the kerbs made using the pavements feel awkward; the use of texture or colour to differentiate areas would be much more beneficial for pedestrians.
- (b) Forest of signs at the junction; some duplication, lack of post sharing; their strong visual intrusion had ruined the overall appearance. There was comment, too, about the half width loading bays and the lack of clarity of what could or could not park in the loading bay opposite Aldi.

The County Councillor reported that the horseshoe seat specified to go around the ginkgo tree would be located elsewhere in the town as a result of advice from the landlord of The Tavern and the police.

Item 8: The Part-time Pedestrianisation Issue: Greg Davies.

A paper by David Allthorpe advocating pedestrianisation in Romsey had been circulated to the Forum electronically and at the meeting. Copy in the minute book.

Greg Davies said that whilst part-time pedestrianisation was a good, full pedestrianisation was better so that people could take full ownership of the street. The area would be between Superdrug and Latimer Street. Traders and residents would complain but revenue in the shops would go up and goods could be trolleyed to shops without goods access. But a pedestrianised system would only work if there was adequate parking and schemes such as that being used by Bradbeers and Waitrose whereby staff parked at the Sports Centre car park and were mini-bussed into work. David Allthorpe made a strong plea for pedestrianisation quoting successful schemes used elsewhere.

The Forum's response was mixed. Many liked the idea of part-time pedestrianisation, a minority advocated full pedestrianisation. But many residents felt that the displaced vehicles would increase traffic in unsuitable residential roads such as Cherville Street, Portersbridge Street and Alma Road to the detriment of the quality of life of local people; some thought the displacement would still be significant even with 10a.m. to 4p.m. part-time pedestrianisation. A number felt that as long as the town centre streets gave the pedestrian priority, pedestrianisation, as such, became unnecessary.

It was also pointed out that the case studies quoted all had by-passes, and that displaced traffic in other centres did not have to find its way through residential streets as it would have to in Romsey. The view was also expressed that the current layout should be given time to settle before additional changes were suggested. It was suggested that the process used in Alton should be tried where, after consultation of all households by the County and Borough Councils, changes were trialled experimentally, and then a re-consultation done to see the result of the temporary changes made.

The Secretary said that TVBC still had his proposal do a consultation on part-time pedestrianisation 'on the table' but that a review of the changes in traffic movements since all the enhancements would take place first.

Item 9: What needs to be done in future to further enhance the town centre:- The Chairman stated that the previous agenda item had covered the main points.

Item 10: 'Look at Romsey'; update of progress to date. The Chairman explained that 'Look at Romsey' was a series of Design Statements on 10 areas in Romsey that were so drafted as to be acceptable to TVBC as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). It had already been done in many villages. The focus of the work was to define the visually unique characteristics of each area. Two areas have drafted their Design Statements and they are now with TVBC to ensure their relevance as SPG's. Romsey 'old town' is at the earliest stage whilst Romsey 'new town' (that area between the medieval core and the railway line) was at the questionnaire drafting stage.

Two themes were emerging from the current work. The first was the importance of the waterways to Romsey people, for example the Barge Canal and the Tadburn... all the pathways were well used but the water environments were badly managed, the Tadburn especially suffering from 'basic engineering' such as culverted banks and inconsistent fencing. The Canal was a major pedestrian highway but had a very real litter problem. A path was needed over Martha's Piece so pedestrians could access the railway station from The Sun area without having to use the Sun Arch. The second was the need to enhance the busiest part of the town, from the Gunville Roundabout to the Plaza and then to the railway bridge. The only thing that unifies the area is the overhead cabling and the Plaza is hidden behind a thicket of posts and giant road signs. Such spaces need a unity that can be enjoyed. There will be an exhibition on 23rd January in the Court Room.

A question from the Forum asked for the impact of new technologies such as solar roof panels to be assessed in relation to the design and appearance of the town.

Item 11: Dates and topics for future Forums. Forum dates for next year are: 16/03/05; 08/06/05; 07/09/05; 30/11/05.

Topics suggested include:

Romsey Cemetery; Potential development at Romsey Infant School; Geoff Morris's Street Clutter Report; the Romsey Brewery site; Romsey's CCTV system.

Item 12: Any other business: reference was made to the state of the old British Legion building. Its lack of re-development was the result of a dispute between the Legion and JLP regarding the specification of the new BL building. This was a private matter between the parties.
