

Minutes of the Romsey Forum 30th November 2005

Attendance:- 31 residents including Mary Hill; Alison Johnston; Barbara Milburn; Nigel Richardson; Joyce Carpenter; Jean Denham; Max Gordon; Phil Bundy; Eric Harrison; Paul Marke; Jennie Polyblank; Mike Richardson; Euan Russell; Jill Gethin; Julian Jones; Geoff Morris; Ian Bullivant; Neill Beasley; Roger Scrimgeour; Anne-Marie Lomax; Ted Mason; Anthony de Sigley; Roy Perry; Caroline Nokes; Jeanette Kell; Rod Simpson; Veronica Perry; Peter Funnell; Steve Lees; Mark Cooper; Phoebe Merrick.

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

Item 1:- Apologies:-

Brian Palmer; Sandra Gidley M.P.; John Parker; Ron Genge; Hal Sanchez; Sally Leach; Dorothy Baverstock.

Item 2:- Minutes of the Romsey Forum 7th September 2005

Having being circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting, the minutes were approved.

Item 3:- Matters Arising:- There were none.

Item 4:- Election of Forum Chairman.

Jill Gethin was nominated as Forum Chairman. There were no other nominations. It was agreed that Phoebe Merrick would chair the meeting with Jill Gethin taking the March 2006 meeting.

Item 5:- Election of Forum vice-chairman.

There were no nominations for Forum vice-chairman. At the end of the meeting, and **subject to the agreement of the March 2006 Forum**, Julian Jones volunteered to be vice-chairman.

Item 6:- Election of Forum Secretary.

There were no nominations for Forum secretary. At the end of the meeting and **subject to the agreement of the March 2006 Forum**, Sandra Smith and Carolyn Nixon volunteered to share the secretarial role.

Item 7:- Gypsies and Travellers.

There were three speakers following an introduction by the chairman.

Steve Lees, Planning Policy Manager at Test Valley Borough Council gave the legislative and planning background. Local Planning Authorities have a duty to make provision in their local plans to either allocate gypsy sites or allow gypsy site applications. Under the 2004 Housing Act the LPA has to assess the need for such sites. This has not been done in the new Borough Local Plan so the Borough will adopt the BLP and then adopt the new legislation which requires an obligation to allocate both for permanent sites and temporary sites. Applications for gypsy sites are decided on whether the definition of 'gypsy' is met and local planning policy. Site allocations have to be made; there are social needs and human rights issues involved and there is established case law. Two recent appeals in Test Valley illustrate the situation. An appeal at Wellow Wood Road was dismissed because whilst the applicant had gypsy status he had no 'need' as he had a house in Southampton. The appeal at The Frenches was upheld because Test Valley had made no provision for gypsy sites.

Brian Cowcher, Head of Housing Strategy at Test Valley Borough Council said that under the 2004 Housing Act there was a legal responsibility on Housing Authorities to do housing needs assessments. Up to now scant attention had been paid to the needs of gypsies and travellers. A countywide survey is currently taking place of permanent, transient and settled gypsy and traveller sites and at the winter and summer travelling patterns including 'stopping-off' places. There is, therefore, a need for a spectrum of provision. Hampshire CC has four sites including Eling and Kaners Hill. There is a high number of unauthorised camping going on which reflects the low level of authorised pitches. The Government is producing draft guidance and funding £56 million countrywide for upgrading and new sites; the bidding timetable ends 31st January 2006.

Peter Funnell, Romsey Police Inspector, described the wide range of legislation that applied to gypsies and travellers. Additionally, Article 8 of the Human Rights Act states that a 'home' set up without legal

authority is still a home. The police need to give a proportional response and relate to health and education needs. Additionally, trespass was a civil matter not a criminal one. Action on these matters requires a Superintendent's authority under the 1994 Act. Police powers are discretionary and the travellers must be identifiable. Huge resources are needed to move gypsies on and there must be sites for them to go to. Hampshire has no temporary sites.

There followed a question and answer session, with questions and comments coming from Mike Richardson, Ted Mason, Barbara Milburn, Mary Hill, Henry Maddick, Chris Amery, Carolyn Nixon, Roy Perry, Phoebe Merrick and others. Points made included:-

- there were 250 gypsy and traveller vehicles across Hampshire with between 12 and 15 in Test Valley;
- sites, when provided should be self-funding; charges were weekly but daily for transit sites;
- the law constrains the issue;
- aggravated trespass happens yet nothing is done;
- it is society that is aggravated – sites must be provided;
- yes, the police are frustrated. It is the settled community that feels victimised by a minority.
- The Chief Constable does feel travellers should be accountable;
- can TVBC get on and find suitable sites and can TVBC get a funding bid in before 31st January 2006;
- a provisional bid would be made.
- There were two elements in the travelling community – those who respect the law and those who deliberately defy the law – the failing is the legislation.

Item 8 Romsey Conservation Area Review:-

Anne-Marie Lomax, Test valley Borough Council's Historic Areas officer and **Robert Scrimgeour**, the Borough's Design and Conservation Architect gave presentations on the Romsey Conservation Area Review. The full presentation is appended to the file copy of the minutes of the meeting.

Item 9 Confirmation of Romsey Forum dates for 2006.

All Wednesday, at 7.30 pm in Romsey Town Hall.

15th March 2006; 21st June 2006; 20th September 2006; 29th November 2006.

Item 10 Any other business at the discretion of the chairman.

- 1 Euan Russell, Broadlands Events Manager, presented the Provisional Programme for Broadlands, including the Farmers' Markets to be held in Romsey, for the year 2006 (attached to the minutes).
- 2 Nigel Richardson gave a short presentation on 'Soul in the City – Activate Romsey', a Churches' initiative for social action. It was hoped that the Forum would support such an initiative with a suggested launch date being Saturday 13th May 2006.

MGC March 2006.