

Minutes of Romsey Forum

20 June 2007, 7.30pm, Romsey Town Hall

Present: Chris Amery, Simon Atkinson, David Barker, Neil Beasley, Ian Bullivant, Gary Codling, Mark Cooper, Martin Hatley, Eunice Hutchinson, Julian Jones, Sally Leach, Helen Murray, Phoebe Merrick, Carolyn Nixon, John Parker, Tessa Parker, Franc Pilkington, Euan Russell, Ian Tripp,

Speakers: Jim Adkin, Peter Bray, Madalene Winter

In the Chair: Jill Gethin. **Minutes:-** Sandra Smith

Item 1: Apologies

Denise Amery, Jane Brambley, Sandra Gidley, Barbara Milburn, Pam Mutton, Caroline Noakes, Brian Palmer, Gill Roberts, Rod Simpson.

Item 2: Minutes of the Romsey Forum 14 March 2007

These had been circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting. With one correction, Denise Amery was present, it was proposed by Chris Amery seconded by Julian Jones that the minutes be approved. Carried

Item 3: Matters Arising.

None

Item 4: The new Leonard Cheshire residential facilities in Romsey - Peter Bray, Regional Director, Leonard Cheshire Homes.

Peter Bray gave a brief overview of the Leonard Cheshire organisation, founded 60 years ago it is now an international organisation and the largest provider of services to disabled people in the world. In this country 167 services are offered for people with a variety of disabilities. He then described the new development in Romsey, which had been introduced to the community with an open day at the Crosfield Hall. This will be a 20 bedded unit for people whose disabilities make it difficult to live out in the community. It is located off Botley Road, at the back of the former Palmerston House site. Romsey had offered an ideal location. It is accessible by road and rail, close to an airport. Disabled users had liked the proposed site. There is level access into the town centre which has good facilities and is a pleasant place. Homes have previously been built in isolated country locations and had extensive facilities. Now the preference is for home where residents can relate more closely to the local community and make use of local amenities. There were questions about the site and location, whether it was in the flood plain, about accommodation and facilities and where residents would be drawn from.

PB would welcome any offers from volunteers

Item 5: Conservation Projects. Jim Adkins, Countryside Officer North, TVBC

JA described the four main Local Nature Reserve sites in Test Valley; in the north Anton Lakes and Rooksbury Mill Park and in the south Valley Park Woodlands and Tadburn Meadows. With the aid of slides JA illustrated the work of the two countryside officers maintaining the reserves, working with conservation volunteer groups, coppicing, hedge laying, tree cutting and tree planting to develop the sites for wildlife. Highlights included the presence of the silver washed fritillary and the return of otters to the Anton. Some works are done with the Environment Agency such as the river Anton enhancement scheme. In the summer the officers do a great deal of education work with groups of children, around 3,000 in the year.

JA noted problems with vandalism and with fly tipping (8 tons of rubbish this year). There were questions on the tension between conservation and public access and on problems with Himalayan Balsam.

Item 6: Update on Planning. Madalene Winter, TVBC

The planning white paper: now out for consultation. There are proposed changes which should help make the Planning system work better. MW noted in particular changes to householder permitted development consent which covers things like extensions and garages. These currently make up 70% of planning work and most go through with no problem so proposals are to relax the rules and take a lot out of the planning system. Impact on neighbours, community and street scene are key issues.

SE Plan: probable publication date is now spring 2008. MW anticipates an increase in housing numbers

Local Plan: core strategy with broad localities for new housing is due out in January (so before the Government figures for new housing are available). The options for TVBC's decisions are informed by 25 sustainability objectives covering social, environmental and economic factors in making this ultimately political decision. In the Southern Test Valley 3,900 houses are anticipated on sites already having permission + "windfall" sites and green field sites. New regulations will mean "windfall" sites cannot be counted so more Greenfield sites will have to be allocated, probably as reserve sites. Abbotswood was a reserve site but may have to be released as the authority has to show a 5 year land supply. The scoping report and environmental impact assessment will have to be done before a planning application is submitted.

There were questions on the scoping report, timescale, housing density (30-35 per hectare) and affordable housing (will be dispersed through the development). The meeting was informed that the cattle have now gone from Abbotswood. It was also noted that the mountain bike area built by youngsters, with the developer's knowledge and agreement to keep it, had now been bulldozed.

Item 7: Any Other Business

David Barker offered news on a number of items:

The clock in the bus station has now been changed to British Summer Time. The hanging basket brackets are still rusty. Brown patches around lampposts etc are due to spraying. DB questioned the need for such spraying as information obtained under the freedom of information act showed it cost £2,500 to spray in Romsey and the spraying will need to be repeated. DB expressed a low opinion of the sports centre roundabout flower beds and considered them very poor value from TVBC. The bypass needs attention, in particular the verges which are being eroded by vehicles.

Phoebe Merrick told the meeting that The Friends of Botley Road Cemetery had found 71 varieties of lichen there. They had also let the grass grow long in some areas to increase biodiversity and found unexpectedly that this has reduced the use of the cemetery by hooligans. PM also mentioned the Hampshire Water Festival which is taking place in Andover this year. In Romsey there will be two water related walks on the Sunday

Simon Atkinson drew attention to a proposal from NATS to expand the local air corridor to increase the capacity of Southampton and Bournemouth Airports. Copies of the document are available and TVBC has been asked to respond and cascade information to town and parish councils. The expanded route will pass over Romsey and could have a noise impact as aircraft will be descending. Chris Amery considered the impact may not be a problem as aircraft would go over Romsey for landing only, at 5,500 feet, after 5.30pm and before 9.30am. MW will take concerns to the TVBC Chief Executive.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Romsey Forum – meeting dates for 2007.

All meetings are at the Town Hall and start at 7.30pm

14 March

20 June

19 September

21 November