

# Minutes of Romsey Forum

## 11th March 2009 held at Romsey Town Hall

**Present:** Sandra Smith, John Parker, Tessa Parker, Gill Roberts, Cllr Sally Leach, Mike Richardson, Eunice Hutchison, Ian Tripp, Phoebe Merrick, Shirley Rogers, Mary Hill, Cllr Ian Richards, Robert Grime, John Mason, Brian Palmer, Rod Simpson, Geoff Uglow, Richard Jordan-Baker (Broadlands), Ian Bullivant.  
**Speakers:** Cllr Roy Perry, Alison Evans.

**In the Chair:** Jill Gethin. **Minutes:** Carolyn Nixon.

**Item 1: Apologies:-** David Barker, Julian Jones, Dorothy Baverstock, Mark Cooper, Hal Sanchez, Steve Lees, Cllr Caroline Nokes, Sandra Gidley MP, Cllr Mrs P Mutton, Mayor of Test Valley.

### Item 2: Minutes of the Romsey Forum 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008

These had been circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting.

It was proposed by J Parker, seconded by S Leach that the minutes be approved. Carried

**Item 3: Matters Arising.** None

### Item 4: Election of Officers

Chair : Jill Gethin wished to stand down, having served for 3 years. She therefore proposed that Cllr John Parker take the chair. This was seconded by S Smith and carried unanimously.

Vice Chair : Cllr Ian Richards Proposed I Tripp , seconded R Perry Carried

Joint Secretaries : Sandra Smith, Carolyn Nixon Proposed P Merrick, sec. R Perry. Carried

### Item 5: Highways : Cllr Roy Perry

Due to illness, the General Manager of HCC's Highways West was unable to attend. Cllr Perry, Deputy Leader of HCC, had kindly agreed to take his place and give the presentation.

Items highlighted in the presentation:

Bus access to Mountbatten School from the A27: work on the new access road had finally started, which would hopefully relieve congestion at the school gates. However, there would still be problems at beginning and end of the school day because of the number of students attending from out of the catchment area and there might be need for a further review of yellow lines/hatching on roads in the area. HCC was planning to start on the third generation of school travel plans.

Safe cycle routes: N. Baddesley to Rownhams now completed; N Baddesley to Chilworth expected soon. Need to encourage more use.

Access to north platform Romsey Railway station: Government grant of £300k now agreed. Work to be completed in 2009/10.

Potholes: The budget for the year had been doubled to £2m throughout the county (8500 km of roads).

Street lighting: A new PFI contract had been negotiated to replace all street columns in the county.

Street signs: Speed limit reduction signs cost £3000 each but have been shown to reduce speeds by only one mile per hour.

There were far too many signs in some areas and experiments were being considered to do away with street signage altogether. It might be that Romsey town centre would be used for a pilot study on this.

Cllr Perry listed the current programme of works being undertaken to carriageways/footways and explained that 7 county councillors made up the Highways Action Team, which could review and amend the list of works. The meeting was offered the opportunity to suggest other work which needed doing. Members were also encouraged to report defective street lights and also to inform the Highways Dept if they knew of any trouble spots where salt bins could be usefully provided.

In conclusion, Cllr Perry stated that the county could easily find use for double its current budget but this was not possible if it was to maintain the lowest council tax levy in the South East.

#### **Item 6 : Mottisfont Abbey : Alison Evans, National Trust Property Manager**

The speaker reported on current and future plans for the local property and spoke of the opportunities and threats inherent in running an ancient mansion attracting 138,000 visitors a year, They were currently engaged in making access to the roof easier, installing a computer system to control humidity levels and monitoring visitor 'lingering time'. Results from this last project showed the need to give consideration to regulating visitor time, by way of timed tickets or guided tours.

The NT shop had been moved to permanent premises in the Stable Block, where there was also exhibition space and a further exhibition area was being opened on the top floor of the mansion. The bell tower had been renovated and the main gate finally repaired after damage caused by a crashing motorist.

The estate, all NT- owned, included 64 cottages and 2 farms, a complete inventory of which had finally been completed. A loft insulation programme for all properties was in process, using lamb's wool or cotton/hemp, but there was some delay in completion because of the presence of bat roosts.

A conservation management plan was being drawn up, to decide how best to balance the various priorities inherent in running the Abbey and its gardens: the need to attract new visitors, whilst encouraging repeat visits; involving the local community; introducing new features, while conserving and enhancing the existing attractions. Plans included : the re-hanging and augmenting of the fine 20<sup>th</sup> century art collection; developing a wetland trail; designing a winter garden and introducing further child-friendly features. There would continue to be theatrical performances in the grounds but on a smaller, less environmentally damaging scale than previously. It was also hoped to allow visitors to watch conservation experts at work and possibly to have tours round the working saw mill.

#### **Any Other Business**

Stream Clean: Phoebe Merrick encouraged members to attend this event on 29<sup>th</sup> March.

John Parker closed the meeting by thanking the speakers for their interesting and informative contributions and pointing out that the Forum had now been in existence for 15 years. He hoped that members would give him some feedback on how useful they found the proceedings of the Forum and also send him suggestions for future speakers.

Next meeting Wed 17 June 2009, 7.30pm, Romsey Town Hall  
Followed by 16 Sept., 18 November