

Minutes of the ROMSEY FORUM

Held at Romsey Town Hall Wednesday June 15th 2011

Present: Ray Alborough, Simon Atkinson, Janet Coppard, Steve Corbett, Doug Cramond, Judith Giles, Robert Grime, Keith Gulliford, Diane Hargreaves, Ian Hibberd, Mary Hill, John Holdway, Peter Hurst, Eunice Hutchison, Julian Jones, Richard Jordan Baker, Steve Lees, G R Linekar, David Medcalf, Carolyn Nixson, Gordon O'Hara, Brian Palmer, John Parker, Roy Perry, Mike Richardson, Ian Tripp, Simon Troke, Geoff Uglow, Carol & Geoff White, Paula Williams, David Willox , Bryan Wood.

In the Chair Mark Cooper. Minutes Sandra Smith

1. **Apologies** were received from The Mayor of Test Valley, Dorothy Baverstock, Jane Brambley, Ian Bullivant, Sandra Gidley, Mike Hedderley, Theresa Hibberd, Terry Hinks, Phoebe Merrick, Caroline Nokes MP, Tessa Parker and Roger Prescott

2. Minutes of the Romsey Forum held on 16th March 2011

It was proposed by M Richardson, seconded by J Parker that these be accepted. Agreed.

3. Matters Arising

JP reported that the appeal over housing at North Baddesley had been dismissed

4. CLOSURE OF ASHFIELD RAILWAY BRIDGE

John Holdway – National Rail gave a short presentation on the planned works.

The works are necessary as shipping is using larger containers. The Department of Transport has funded the adoption of a core route from Southampton to the Midlands to accommodate large containers which will save many thousands of lorry journeys. The Romsey section will form an alternative to the main route through Winchester for use when that needs maintenance.

To send the new size containers as rail freight requires either special wagons or work on the track and bridges where these are too low. Among the options considered were track lowering, which is impractical due to drainage problems, and notching the arch (removing two or three courses of brick) and skewing the track but this would not achieve sufficient clearance.

The chosen solution is to replace bridges where necessary. Local bridges affected are Ashfield Bridge, Old Salisbury Bridge on the B3084 and Lee Drove Bridge. Work on these three is planned for October 2011 through to February 2012. The new bridges and safety barriers have been designed to be future proof and have a 120 year life. In response to a query about historic bridges from Cllr. Perry JH stated that contractors must match historic brickwork as well as possible.

HCC and TVBC have been consulted and Councillors and local press have been briefed.

Ray Alborough, Senior Transport Engineer, TVBC

RA outlined the transport problems which would result from the planned works. There would be a small localised closure near Andes Road and a small diversion at Lee Drove. The major problem would be the road closure required by work at Ashfield Bridge. This was scheduled to last from 3 October to 5 December. Other organisations would take the opportunity to do work. Broadlands planned repairs to the Mile Wall and HCC would clear self seeded trees on the verge.

RA showed the official diversion route. This has to be able to take all kinds of vehicle so local routes with low bridges or a weight limit cannot be used. The official route loops

round taking traffic via Totton and Ower. It is understood that local people are likely to use other routes including Botley Road, Winchester Road and the M27. Access to property will be by arrangement with the contractor. When the details are finalised Parish Councils and local press will be notified. The published order will be for a longer period than planned in case of over runs.

Questions. Those from the Chamber of Commerce and local retailers were particularly concerned with the October to December road closure timing, the economic impact on Christmas trade and the lack of communication with businesses over this major project and others, including the Alma Road closures.

JH responded that they were restricted to the rail companies' chosen timing for track closures. There was a press release about 18 months ago. Local councils had been consulted.

Further questions include access for cyclists (of particular interest to Roke where around 500 people work). The plan is to have continuing pedestrian and cycle access.

To a question about putting in an extra bridge at Ashfield JH responded that with additional land, embankments and serious changes to road route and roundabout this would add around £2,500,000 additional costs and was too expensive.

On the question of buses JH noted no scheduled bus services use the bridge. School buses do but will be re-routed. Trains can be re-routed via Eastleigh. There will be some weekend line closures.

5. Timetable for Test Valley's revised Core Strategy

Steve Lees, TVBC Forward Planning.

The Core Strategy replaces the local plan. It covers planning topics such as how many homes will be needed, jobs, infrastructure, transport and leisure.

The plan should go to Cabinet in late October then to full council. Consultation should take place in the New Year. After the inspection process the Inspector's report should be received by the end of 2012.

There was some discussion of neighbourhood planning and localism.

6. Visit Romsey – The Marketing of Romsey. Update

Judith Giles, Town Clerk, introduced Elaine Rust, Tourism and marketing officer (part time), who has been in post just one week. Elaine outlined her background which included work as Special Events Officer in Winchester and HCC Tourism Marketing Business Officer plus a masters degree specialising in Sustainable Tourism.

A website is planned, "Destination Romsey", which will promote attractions, events and business.

S Troke welcomed Elaine to the town.

M Hill asked for other forms of advertising for those who cannot access a website.

S Atkinson cited the Beggars Fair as the sort of event good to advertise.

7. Any Other Business

The Chairman asked for topics for future Forums.

JC suggested air quality. MC will check this with TVBC

Localism Bill and how it could be used in Romsey was suggested.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Next meeting 21 September 2011

Because of changes which have been made to the timing of the planned rail works since the Forum meeting John Holdway has provided the following updated information:-

Ashfield Bridge, Romsey: Following consultation with a number of stakeholders it has been decided to postpone the road closure in connection with the works at Ashfield Bridge on the A27 between Romsey and Southampton.

The most likely date for the road closure will now be March 2012 with demolition of the bridge taking place in April and road reopening to be in May or June of that year.

Further communications and press releases will be issued nearer to the time of the works when firmer dates have been obtained.

In the meantime if you have any queries please contact the Network Rail helpline on 0845 711 4141.

John Holdway has provided a hard copy of his presentation which will be available to view at the September meeting.