

Minutes of Romsey Forum

18th September 2014 held at Romsey Town Hall

Present: Richard Jordan-Baker, P Marshal, Gordon Rogers, Stephen Beasley, Ian Bullivant, John Stone, Francis Pilkington, Anthony Hyde, Diane Hargreaves, Jeff Hawksley, Geoff Morris, Barbara Milburn, Glyn Darby, Julian H Jones, Graham Shawley, Eleanor Vamplew, Jan Haddon, Vera Brice, Rosemary Dawkins, John Shone, John Bennett, Neville Holloway, Sheridan Welch, John Welch, Roger Prescott, Mark Edgerley, Mark Cooper, Jackie Browne, Richard Buss, Frances Sweeny, Brian Sweeny, Ian Liesnham, Hilda Liesnham, Mavis Sawdy, Darren Paffey, Sandra Smith, Sue Southern, John Mason, Frank Stokes, Shirley Dawson, Jennifer Adams, Elizabeth Pratt, Kath Tilling, Rosalie Hall, Geoff Uglow, Ian Tripp, Roy Perry

Speakers : Steve Lees, Andy Ferrier (TVBC); Tor Peebles, Alan Williams (HCC); Phil Smith (SPUD)

Chair : John Parker **Minutes :** Carolyn Nixon

1 **Apologies:** Ian Richards, Dorothy Baverstock, Mike Bull, Mike Perks ; Mayor of Test Valley, Cllr Jan Lovell

2. **Minutes of the Romsey Forum held on 26th June 2014**

The minutes had been circulated and were agreed as a correct record.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 7 :The Chair congratulated the Town Centre Manager on the success of the large and very successful Food Festival, which had been supported by many local businesses.

4. **Election of Officers for 2014/15**

As all current officers were agreeable to continuing in post and there being no other nominations, it was agreed unanimously that they continue for another year.

Chair : John Parker; Vice Chair : Ian Richards;
Joint Secretaries : Carolyn Nixon / Sandra Smith

5. **Planning Update** : Steve Lees (TVBC)

Borough Local Plan : The Revised Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State at the end of July and Philip Ware had since been appointed as Inspector. He would be holding a Public Enquiry which would begin in December 2014. (The Chair gave details of the pre-hearing in October, which he would be attending, and start dates for the examination in public : from 11 December at Beech Hurst, Andover; from 13 Jan 2015, for Southern topics – at Crosfield Hall, Romsey. Further information : programmeofficer@testvalley.gov.uk)

On-street parking : The proposals were awaiting the approval of the relevant county councillor and it was hoped to have the new regulations in place by March 2015.

Planning Applications :

Housing development - at Oxlease Meadow : this application had now been allowed; at Ganger Farm : traffic implications of the application were currently being studied; - at Highwood Lane/Botley Rd : application yet to be received by Southern Area Planning Committee; at former Hillier's site, Botley Rd : new application received.

Tesco superstore : the applicants had now totally withdrawn their application to develop the Fairground Site. HCC Highways had sustained their objection throughout the process.

In answer to questions :

Oxlease Meadow application : this had been a difficult decision and both TVBC and the developer were aware of the need to take note of the impact of development on important ecological sites. The decision would allow the wetlands to be protected, primarily as a nature reserve, with public access encouraged along certain specified routes.

Flooding at Abbotswood site : Revised drainage proposals had been submitted to the Environment Agency. SL would check whether members of the public could be consulted on these.

6. **Romsey Future – update** : Andy Ferrier (TVBC)

Volunteers, working in 7 different subject groups, were collaborating on an Action Plan and the process had already had tangible results in that Romsey had qualified for a grant under the 'Our Place' programme, to enhance the services offered by the Romsey Rendezvous – a drop in centre for the elderly and isolated, held monthly in Romsey Town Hall. A grant had also been obtained, under a national scheme, to hold a Teenage Market in Romsey. Other plans already being worked on included additional long-term parking at The Rapids and a new refreshment kiosk at the Memorial Park. The various groups were also being asked to consider ideas for community facilities at the Fishlake nature reserve. It was hoped to finalise a Plan for Romsey by the end of the year.

7 **Romsey Parishes Neighbourhood Plan** : Richard Buss (member of Management Group)

The Management Group had a cross-party membership, which included councillors and members of the public, who had volunteered their services. This included Romsave, of which the speaker was a leading member. A Neighbourhood Plan enables the local community to choose the location of new building developments but only within the parameters set by the National Policy Planning Framework and other legal requirements. It can influence the design of buildings and promote the use of renewable energy. Such a Plan, once drawn up, has to be put to a referendum of local residents and, if accepted, has to be adopted by the Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Such a referendum would be managed by TVBC, sent to all households and determined by a simple majority.

It had been accepted by the Group that, should the Revised Local Borough Plan be approved by the Inspector, then there was little point in continuing with the project but, in the event of the RBLP being found unsound, it was expected that TVBC would wish to work with the Group on drafting a new Plan. The Group would be referring back to the work carried out in past years by projects such as 'Look at Romsey' and 'Romsey 2020' and also looking to identify new land for future development. More people were needed to help with this work and all volunteers were welcome.

8. **The Place of Art** : Phil Smith (Space, Placemaking and Urban Design)

SPUD had been commissioned by TVBC to consult with residents of Abbotswood and the surrounding area on how art works might enhance the new development and help to give it a sense of identity. Funding would be coming from the site developers. They particularly wanted to look at how to highlight connections between the site and the town. They would then draw up a brief for artists who wished to bid for the work.

The speaker then gave examples of well-known public art works which had been adopted by the public, after initial reservations. He also referred to the Exbury Egg, which had been commissioned by his organisation and designed by Romsey resident and architect of the Queen Mary 2, Stephen Payne. This had been constructed of recyclable materials and floated on the Beaulieu River for a year, housing a resident artist. (see exburyegg.me)

Suggestions from the floor included siting a sculpture at the junction of Jermyns Lane and Sandy Lane, as a gateway to the site. Those interested in the project were asked to refer to *Test Valley Creative*, which is a group for all arts professionals, working in every discipline, who want to make connections with arts in the Test Valley.

9. **Flooding in Romsey** : Alan Williams and Tor Peebles (HCC)

A formal investigation, commissioned by HCC, into the flooding in the early part of the year had been ongoing for some time. There had been four main areas affected:

Cupernham Lane / Abbotswood – where surface water had discharged from the higher land down onto the Lane. An engineering appraisal had since determined that, because of the record rainfall, flooding would have occurred whether or not there were any houses on the Abbotswood site and that, although the drainage system in place had not been designed to cope with the excessive rainfall which occurred on 23/24 Feb, it did function properly on the day and may have reduced the volume of water which spilled out.

Fishlake – flood water had over-topped the adjacent road, running down into Greatbridge Rd and Budds Lane. At the time, a temporary diversion had been constructed north of the town to restrict the amount of water flowing into the Fishlake. HCC and the Environment Agency were now looking at a flow-management system, with the possibility of installing a ‘cat-flap’ across the Test, which could be dropped in whenever it was necessary to divert the river into the flood plain. They were also looking at re-instating channels through agricultural land and along Budds Lane, in order to channel flood water away more quickly.

Winchester Rd, Middlebridge Rd, Riverside Gardens : Here excessive surface water had inundated drainage systems. This had been compounded by the failure of one of the pumping stations. Problems with infrastructure had been identified and HCC/EA and Southern Water were in ongoing discussion on how to promote resilience.

Mainstone / The Causeway : Earlier inundation of houses in December, from fields the other side of the Salisbury Rd had been caused by blocked culverts, which should have carried floodwater into the river. Emergency measures had to be taken to reinstate a culvert and dig new ditches. The subsequent storm of 14 February had inundated all drainage systems and the structure of The Causeway had acted as a weir. Emergency measures taken at the time were limited by the need to protect gas, electricity and foul water pipes embedded in the Causeway. There was an additional concern about access to Southern Water’s large pumping station at the far end of The Causeway.

New kerbs and larger gullies were now being installed along Mainstone and there would be a feasibility study undertaken into flood alleviation from the flood plain west of Romsey. Funding had been made available for early actions and HCC was bidding for Government funding for a six year programme of works. Otherwise work would have to proceed as the budget allowed.

With the encouragement of TVBC, residents’ action groups had been formed by residents affected by the flooding, to review what worked at property level and what would have useful effect in the future.

In answer to questions : *(copies of the HCC presentation available on request)*

Rivermead Close : the authorities were aware that properties here had also been affected and options for future action were being examined. It was hoped that residents would form their own Action Group, which could liaise with the planners.

Sewage Treatment : Southern Water controls 4 pumping stations, in Romsey, which pump foul water to the sewage treatment works. During the storms, the Southampton Road pumps failed because a falling tree cut the electricity supply. Engineers were now examining the options for making each of the sites more robust and to avoid ever having to discharge effluent into the water courses. HCC was in continuing discussion with Southern Water on ways of keeping rainwater out of the sewage system. The challenge of protecting the town from future episodes in similar circumstances could not be underestimated.

Maintenance of gullies and ditches : Roadside ditches are joint responsibility of HCC/TVBC and are cleared annually, where land ownership is known. Work was now being undertaken to identify ownership and map all roadside ditches in the county. Landowners could then be forced to keep them clear.

7. **Any Other Business** : None
8. **Date of Next Meeting** : Thursday 20th November 2014, 7.30pm, Romsey Town Hall.