

Minutes of Romsey Forum

18th June 2015 held at Romsey Town Hall

Present: Sandra Smith, Dorothy Baverstock, Chris Wesson, Jean Russell, Mary Greggains, John Critchley, Sue Derbyshire, Katharine Edmonds, Diane Kingston, Sue Taylor, Vera Brice, John Stone, Anita Mason, Ann Cassel, Andy Ferrier (TVBC), Barbara Milburn, Diane Hargreaves, Sheridan Welch, John Welch, Glyn Darby, Julian H Jones, Janet Coppard, Rosalie Hall, Shirley Rogers, Mark Cooper, Geoff Morris, Franc Pilkington, Jeff Hawksley, Frances Sweeny, Brian Sweeny, Frank Stokes, Stuart Bannerman, Judy Walker, Elizabeth Pratt, Richard Pratt.

Speakers : Chris Esplin-Jones; Mark Edgerley

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

1 **Apologies:** Ian Hibberd, Ian Richards, Rev Tim Sledge, Steve Lees (TVBC) Anthony Hyde, Janet Burnage, Anthony Hyde, Roy Perry.

2. Minutes of the Romsey Forum held on 19th March 2015

Item 6 : the 'Halterworth' application was in fact a reference to the refusal of a planning application on a site on the corner of Highwood Lane and Botley Rd., which was now being appealed.

Item 7 : Romsey Extra PC had granted £1000 to the Christmas Lights.

3. **Matters Arising** : all items to be covered on the agenda.

4. **Romsey Future** : Chris Esplin-Jones

A summary of findings had been presented to the public at an open event last December. An immediate outcome of this had been the organising of an occasional Youth Market. A group of five, unaligned but interested and experienced, volunteers was now meeting to draft a strategic document, supervised by Andy Ferrier (TVBC). A vision statement had been prepared and this was based on the aims of the original groups which had met during the previous year. The intention was to inform the next Local Plan and to use the strategic document as a means of obtaining funding for future improvements.

The strategy was not intended to include outlying areas, such as Nursling & Rownhams, but these still had to be taken into account. As the focus of the economy in Southern Test Valley, Romsey's future development, in all its aspects, needed to be addressed by the strategy. Many aspects were linked together, such as tourism and parking; flood risk and drainage; accessibility and housing provision. The group had many and various ideas which they wished to write into the strategy. Once completed and agreed by the wider co-ordinating group, it would be circulated for consultation before being submitted to councillors.

5. **Town Centre Report** : Mark Edgerley, Town Centre Manager

As part of his brief, Mark was involved with the drafting of the Romsey Future strategy. His aim was to attract even more residents to use the town centre and to shop locally. He was encouraged that there were over 250 businesses operating in the centre of Romsey and an equal number in the outer area. Increasing investment in the Town showed the growing confidence of the private sector, which made Romsey the envy of many other Hampshire towns.

He outlined some forthcoming events in the Town, including the unveiling of the War Horse statue by the Princess Royal, in the Memorial Park on 3 July. Princess Anne would be escorted to the park by a troop of Household Cavalry, some on horseback, and the puppet from the play, *War Horse*, kindly sponsored by Silks Hotel.

Improvements to the entrance to the Memorial Park had now been completed and the new café was expected to be finished by August. Events in the park would include the Mayor's Picnic (5th July) and a Youth Fest, to coincide with the Beggars Fair in the town centre.

The Summer Carnival would take place on 19th July and on Sunday 6th September the Romsey Food Festival, which had attracted over 7,000 visitors in 2014, would take place in the town centre. It was also hoped to be able to hold a Farmers' Market in the town centre around Christmas. Currently these markets were held in Alma Road car park. It was planned that the Town Council should at some point take over responsibility for markets held in the town centre and introduce more variety but Smith Bradbeer & co currently held the rights to the market. Other Christmas attractions would once again include a Lantern Parade, for which new volunteers were needed, both to help in making the lanterns and to act as marshals.

A Romsey film festival was being organised 26 Sept – 3 October, using venues in and around the town, in partnership with organisations such as RAODS, Romsey Twinning and the Signal Box preservation group.

Church Street would be closed for a number of weeks from the end of July, to enable the work of re-designing the roadway as a shared surface.

6. The Romsey 'Pong'

Various members reported on their experience of the smell which had permeated the area earlier in the year. It was agreed that it had been worse on the western side of the town but that it had been much less in evidence during the warmer, summer weather. Cllr Cooper stated that it had been proved not to emanate from the Viridor site and that, unless the source could be verified, TVBC were unable to take any action. Other suggestions of the source included rotting vegetation left over from the flooding in 2014.

John Critchley had met Environment Agency officers at the Viridor site and they had agreed to install monitoring equipment at the bottom of Mill Lane from December 2015, for three months, in hopes of identifying the gases and their source. He was happy to distribute a copy of his notes to any interested individuals. It was agreed that a representative from the Environment Agency be invited to a Forum meeting early next year, when the results of the monitoring exercise would be available.

7. Planning Update : the Chair delivered a written report sent by Graham Smith (TVBC)

Revised Borough Local Plan (RLP) : TVBC's proposed modifications to the RLP, in response to the Inspector's initial concerns, had to be with the Inspector by 26 June. These and comments from the public consultation would be published on the Council website. The Inspector's report was expected in the autumn. Additionally, those who had already commented on the housing requirement would be consulted on the implications of changes to household projections.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) : The Inspector had asked TVBC to do more work on its proposals. One proposal was that large developments would not be subject to this levy for off-site improvements, as they would be making substantial contributions to provision of on-site community facilities, through S106 levies.

Supplementary Planning Documents : The Romsey Town Access Plan and the Cycle Strategy, both of which identify where improvements can be made to the highway network to improve accessibility, had been consulted on, amended where appropriate and would be reported to Cabinet later in the summer.

Planning Applications :

Housing development

– at Highwood Lane/Botley Rd (116 dwellings): an appeal had been lodged - no date as yet;

- at Ganger Farm : the application had been withdrawn in May, to allow for further public consultation on additional plans by the developer. It was understood that there had been objections made by another developer. No date yet set for taking the application to committee.
- Land adjacent Luzborough Pub (58 dwellings) – No date yet set to be reported to committee
- Wrens Corner, Cupernham Lane (18 dwellings) : LRM Holdings Ltd. Site is opposite entrance to Belbins Business Park. The land had been cleared but no date yet set to be reported to committee.
- Oxlease Farm (64 dwellings + nature reserve) – TVBC was awaiting submission of reserved matters application by the landowner.

Fishlake Meadows public consultation: this had included guided walks and exhibitions. Officers from Leisure Services were now reviewing the comments made and a summary of responses would be published shortly on the website.

8 Any Other Business :

Tadburn Meadows Play Park provision : A proposal had been made by TVBC to install a new children's play area at the western end of the nature reserve, on the open area much used by local residents for walking and exercising themselves and their dogs. People in the area had been consulted the previous year as to what sort of play provision they thought would be appropriate. Council officers had then commissioned a design, which they claimed to have been based on comments received but had given very little time for any comments to be made on the actual final design, before it was to be implemented on 6th July.

As soon as the design had been published, concern had been voiced that it was inappropriate in size and design, in relation to the land available. Furthermore, there were fears that the seclusion of the site would attract older youths late at night, with the consequent possibility of noise nuisance and vandalism. In earlier years, play park provision on the same site had been damaged beyond repair.

As the result of representations made to Cllr Cooper, he had reached an agreement with council officers that the work would be deferred for further consultation.

9 Date of Next Meeting : Thursday 17th September 2015, 7.30pm, Romsey Town Hall.

For information :

The TVBC website has a page which lists all its current consultations:

<http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/consultation-portal/>