

Minutes of the Romsey Forum 19 November 2015

Present: S Bannerman, V Brice, J Burnage, M Cooper, J Coppard, J Critchley, J Haddon, A Hyde, J Jones, G Morris, F Pilkington, R & E Pratt, R Prescott, J Russell, J Stone, J Walker, R Perry, S Smith, D Baverstock, M Perks, I Tripp, I Dickerson, M Dickerson, L Brimelow, R Hall, J Adams, F Stokes.

Speakers: David Bibby (TVBC), Sandy Thomson & Dan Tasker (Hants Fire & Rescue)

Chair: John Parker. Minutes: Carolyn Nixon

1. Apologies: C Wesson, I Bullivant, S Derbyshire, J Hawksley, M & R Robinson, F & B Sweeny, S Leach, N Beasley.

2. Minutes 17 September 2015.

There was a request from the floor that any acronyms used in the minutes be also shown in full, at first use. Adoption of the minutes was proposed by J Coppard, seconded by G Morris. Agreed.

3. Matters arising.

Romsey "pong": It was hoped to hear in March from the Environment Agency on the results of their survey

4. Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service : Dan Tasker (Risk Review Manager) and Sandy Thomson (Group Commander)

A review had recently been carried out looking at the way the Service was being run and considering whether it was delivering value for money. The resulting action plan was now out for public consultation. DT/ST then spoke to the consultation document, *Planning for a safer Hampshire*.

The Service was governed by the Fire Authority, which had local government representatives, including Cllr Mark Cooper, amongst its members. Final decisions on changes to the Service in any of the county boroughs would be made by the Authority. All fire stations had been consulted on future plans, with Romsey officers being particularly pro-active.

In the last 10 years, there had been a 52% drop in incidences of fire and the risk profile had changed. Because of stricter building regulations and safer building materials, any increase in house building should not increase the risk of domestic fires. The widespread use of smoke detectors had also contributed to the decrease. The Service now spent much of its time in prevention and protection work, while being ready at any time to respond to any fire incident. However, with the need to address the planned Government spending cuts, it was important to match resources to risk in a more relevant and intelligence-led way.

56% of the Fire Service's funding comes from council tax (a Band D property would be contributing £1.18 per week) and the rest from Government. Without savings there would be a £16m funding gap by 2020. Proposed measures include :

- Raising the council tax precept
- Sharing back-office facilities with other services
- Replacing fleet every 10 years, rather than 5
- Substituting larger engines for smaller vehicles where appropriate.

There would be no compulsory redundancies - in fact there would be a recruitment drive within eighteen months – but certain posts would be lost through natural wastage.

Romsey has an on-call fire station, based in Alma Rd. It currently has two large fire engines and up to 20 personnel, available on shift, 24/7. It is proposed to replace one engine with a lighter, more economical First Response Vehicle, which would need less crew and would be easier to negotiate narrow streets of the town centre. It would carry a range of equipment, giving an enhanced medical as well as a fire and rescue response. The number of personnel needed would reduce to 15 but it was expected that the initial response time would be lowered to just under 9 minutes.

In answer to questions :

- Any extra-curricular activities, e.g putting up Christmas decorations, were carried out in a purely voluntary capacity and so would not be affected.
- The current Co-responding Car and new First Response Vehicle could be called upon by the Ambulance Service to assist in life saving emergencies.
- The purchase of new vehicles would be phased in.
- There is already an element of cross-border support. Dorset and Wilts are combining their Service. Hampshire and Wiltshire support each other £ for £ but If the Hampshire Service goes into Surrey, it makes a charge.
- IT security is governed by rigid protocols, in partnership with 3 other Fire & Rescue services, so that each could seamlessly take over from the other.
- HFRS provides animal rescue training all over the world. Consideration is being given to claiming on the insurance of rescued animals.

5. Planning update. David Bibby TVBC

Borough Local Plan (BLP) The Inspector's report was expected shortly. It might be that further modifications would be needed, in which case further consultation would be required but it was hoped that the Plan would be adopted early in 2016. There was currently sufficient housing planned to meet the required 5 year supply figure.

Provision for Gypsy/Traveller sites : this was a separate document from the BLP. The Housing and Planning Bill proposes to remove the need to make provision for gypsies/travellers as a specific group but there is a general duty to carry out an assessment of need and to provide a 5 year supply of deliverable sites for caravans and houseboats

Community Infrastructure Levy : a decision on its adoption was awaiting the Inspector. If adopted, 15% of the levy would go to parish and town councils.

Test Valley Cycle Strategy : This had been adopted on 11/11/15

Abbotswood estate : Occupation level had now reached 556. A community association had been established and it was hoped to start building a community hall in the spring. A Nature Conservation Management Plan was awaiting adoption. There was provision for a health facility but only if a provider were to come forward.

Concern was expressed by several members at the current state of the conservation area. It was expected that Keven Harrington would be the lead officer when TVBC took on the management.

Traffic lights at Braishfield Rd / Winchester Hill junction : work expected to begin in new year.

Romsey Town Centre enhancement : The work on Church Street was expected to be finished by the end of November, while work on the area at the rear of Abbey, which was likely to take 6 weeks, would begin in February 2016.

HCC boundary divisions : Proposed changes to the internal divisions of the county were currently out for consultation. It was proposed to re-name Romsey Extra as Romsey Rural.

Romsey Future : The strategy document would be launched in December 2015 and it was intended that it would be reviewed annually.

Planning Applications - housing

Highwood Lane/Botley Road : appeal deferred until the new year

Luzborough farm (56 units) : to be considered in December 2015

Oxlease Meadows (64 units) : awaiting application on reserved matters.

Baroona, Cupernham Lane (40 units) : acceptance had been recommended

Ganger Farm : negotiations continuing

6. Update on current projects in and around Romsey

Youth in Romsey centre : it was hoped that construction of the new building at Romsey Sports Ground would begin in January 2016 and be completed by March.

Fishlake Meadows Nature Reserve : a further announcement was expected before Christmas.

Nightingale Lodge, Greatwell Drive : A written report had been received from the HCC Commissioning Officer (Extra-Care). An application for 52 'Extra Care' units was going to Council for approval in December. The day services, which previously operated from Master's House, had now been moved to Hayter House (behind Nightingale surgery) until such time as the new building was completed, when they would be moved back to a new purpose built day service area in the Lodge. It was hoped to begin building work by the middle of 2016.

7. Any Other Business

Whitenap post office : Residents were currently being consulted on the proposal to integrate the post office services with the retail operation at the Nisa store on Botley Road. There would no longer be a separate counter for post office transactions, which could lead to a loss of privacy. An advantage would be that services would be available during all hours that the store was open. The post office in Viney Avenue, Woodley had been operating in such a way for several years.

Date of next meeting: 17 March 2016

Dates for 2016: 16 June, 29 September and 1 December