

Minutes of the Romsey Forum 1 December 2016

Present: M Sawdy, M Greggains, S Dickens, K Edmonds, N Bachman, J Hawksley, S Tatham, P Tatham, S Smith, S Hayes, A Duignan, G Massie, J Stone, J Bennett, A & D Chillingworth, G Darby, I Dickerson, JH Jones, N Nicholson, C Barrington Brown, F Stokes

Speakers: Vivien Messenger (TVBC), Mark Edgerley (Town Centre Manager)
Cllr Mark Cooper (HCC/TVBC)

Chair: John Parker. Minutes: Carolyn Nixon

1. Apologies: V Brice, M & R Robinson, J Haddon, F Pilkington, M Arney, R Prescott, R Bullivant, J & C Tilley, S Bannerman, J Walker, G Smith (TVBC)

2. Minutes 29 September 2016. Agreed Prop : M Cooper, sec: JH Jones

3. Matters arising.

Item 3 : Romsey River walk project : Mavis Sawdy reported that the number of volunteers helping to fill bags was very gratifying. There would be a further session that week to complete the current work on the new banking. A flight of steps had been installed on the banking, to allow dogs to enter the river without causing further erosion. The project had received donations from both Waitrose and Tesco Community Funds and had reached the final in its bid for £35k from the Aviva Community Fund.

Item 5 : SO Lottery : No further information had been seen.

Item 10 : Romsey Advertiser : In responding to an invitation to attend a future meeting, the Editor of Newsquest, Ian Murray, had informed the Forum that he had appointed a local reporter, Will Rimell, to work on the Advertiser.

4. Proposals for the Market Place : Vivien Messenger (Planning Officer, TVBC)

Now that work on Church Street had been completed and plans for Bell Street had been agreed, attention was being turned to what could be achieved in Market Place, within the obvious constraints of a mediaeval street pattern. The main intention was to allow for a larger, traffic free area to one side of the statue, which would allow for more outdoor seating and general gatherings

The first aim was to achieve a level surface across the whole area, with ramps to slow down vehicles entering the area. The Palmerston statue would remain in its current position but would no longer stand on a roundabout. Instead, it would be the focal point of a paved area, attached either to the pavement outside Santander Bank or to that outside the Nat West Bank. In either case, traffic would be routed in front of the statue and pedestrians would have greater priority. 7 parking spaces would be retained.

Three options had been drawn up, one of which would prevent traffic coming from Church Street and then turning right into Abbey Water or through the arch down towards the park and the doctors' surgery. The various plans could be seen on-line or on display in the Former Magistrates Court and residents were being encouraged to feed back their views by 18 December.

In answer to questions :

- Hampshire County Council engineers had checked all proposed routes and determined that large lorries would be able to negotiate any turns. The emergency services were also being consulted.
- Double yellow lines would be used, to prevent parking and additional street furniture would be installed. Delivery bays would be designated.
- To prevent traffic damage to the York stones, a solid base would be installed under the carriageway, which should stop the slabs from moving.
- Gateway signs to the entire town centre area would be considered once all the work had been completed. In the meantime, it was hoped that the new buff coloured surface would alert motorists to the fact that they were entering a controlled area.

5. Town Centre Report : Mark Edgerley (Town Centre Manager)

Christmas Lights : The 'Switch On' had attracted bigger than ever crowds. New lights had been provided in Bell Street and the rest of the street decorations, which were about 20 years old, would shortly need to be replaced by similar, modern fittings. The cost would have to be met by the Town Council.

Other events for December included a 'Small Business Showcase' in the Town Hall; the Late Night Shopping event, with the Lantern Parade, involving 1000 participants; the Santa Fun Run; Carols in the Market Place and, on Boxing Day, the Pre-'76 Car And Bike Meet.

Regular events were continuing, with the Farmers' Market (first Sunday of the month, excluding January) being one of the most successful in Hampshire. The Community Cinema in the Town Hall was also proving very popular and was held twice a month in the Town Hall. Tickets on-line or in person at the Town Hall.

Romsey Festival would be held 1 – 16 July in 2017 and a complete guide to the year's events would be delivered to every household in Romsey. Leaflets on shopping and parking were also being funded by the Town Council and TVBC.

There was now a Romsey News and Information group on Facebook and local groups were being encouraged to send their publicity to it.

6. Five Minute Updates

6.1 Planning : written report from Graham Smith (TVBC)

The trustees of the Barker Mill Estate, who have residential and commercial development interests in Nursling and Rownhams, challenged the Local Plan, (adopted in January 2016). This was on several grounds, including claiming that the Plan failed to provide sufficient housing, employment and commercial land to meet the local need.

All of the trust's claims were rejected in a High Court judgement 25 November. The judge said that Barker Mill Estates had "failed to identify any misinterpretation of any planning policy", either by the Council or a planning inspector who had considered the plan, and that there was nothing irrational about the way in which the Council and inspector had applied planning policies.

The judge had also rejected a challenge against a planning inspector's decision to refuse planning permission for warehousing on land at Adanac Park, Nursling.

This will put TVBC in an even stronger position to defend against speculative planning applications on greenfield sites. The judgement can be viewed on <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2016/3028.html>

6.2 Environment Agency application for additional car parking at their premises to the rear of Romsey station had been withdrawn.

6.3 TVBC ward review – John Parker : Proposals had been submitted to the Boundary Commission, with the intention of reducing the number of Borough councillors and evening out the number of electors per ward.

6.4 Romsey Future – John Parker : Project plans were being formulated and a programme board set up, with the aim of turning some of the vision statement into a reality. Particular areas being considered concerned cycling and walking routes and the future of the bus station site.

6.5 Romsey Neighbourhood Plan – J Parker : This had been put on hold but it was intended to update the 'Look at Romsey' documents which together had been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in 2008.

6.6 Community Emergency Plan – J Parker : This was being formalised.

6.7 Nightingale Lodge – Cllr Mark Cooper : The Lodge had been closed over two years previously on the understanding that rebuilding would take place very shortly. However, because of Government and HCC cut-backs, there was a funding shortfall. It had now been agreed that TVBC would also contribute a subsidy, so that the project could now go ahead. It was planned to provide 54 rented extra care flats.

6.8 Devolution – J Parker : Southampton/Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight councils were still pursuing the idea of becoming a combined authority with a directly elected Mayor but Hampshire County Council wished to retain the status quo. With a change of Government Minister, it looked likely that any plans for devolution in the South of England would be placed on the back burner.

7. Any Other Business

Corn Exchange : the 250 year old building was to be sold at auction in December. It was understood that Barclays Bank had renewed its lease for five years, with a 3 year break clause). Immediate renovations were needed at a probable cost of £250,000. Romsey & District Preservation Trust had been alerted.

Date of next meeting: 30 March 2017 Romsey Town Hall 7.30 pm

Future dates for 2017: 22 June; 21 September; 16 November