

Minutes of the Romsey Forum

26th July 2018

Present:-

J Stone, D / A Chillingworth, J Haddon, M Arney, V Brice, J Hawksley, G Darby, F Pilkington, F Stokes, F / B Sweeney, J H Jones, J Mason, M Cooper, I / R Bullivant, S Beasley, J / C Tilley, E Pratt, B Milburn, J Brambley, S Lees, G Ellison, R Jordan-Baker, J Hartley, K Edmonds, N Nicholson, R Prescott, D Clemett, John Bennett, I / M Dickerson, A Clement, C Holland, L / R Hunt, J Russell, Judy Bennett, S Dickens.

Chair : John Parker

Minutes : Carolyn Nixon

Speakers : Stephen Corbett, Mark Edgerley, Graham Smith

1 Apologies:- Roy Perry, Diane Kingston, Judy Walker, Stuart Bannerman, Sandra Smith, Marianne Piggan, Diane Hargreaves, Anthony Hyde, Rosemary Dawkins, Janet & Paul Burnage, Dorothy Baverstock, Lilian Brimelow .

2 Minutes of the Romsey Forum held 29th March 2017 were agreed.

3 Matters Arising:- Item 3 : Demolition of Nightingale Lodge in Greatwell Drive had now begun and it was hoped that building of the new Extra Care facility would begin shortly. Item 4 : the new Town Council website was now active and able to provide up-to-date information on events in the Town. Item 6iii : it was reiterated that TVBC had been advised that permission could not be refused for a developer to make its residential roads narrower than the county standard. This did mean that certain roads on the Abbotswood estate would never be 'adopted' by the county and therefore residents would continue to be responsible for their maintenance.

4. Waitrose Romsey Regeneration: Stephen Corbett

The Branch Manager gave a presentation on the plans for an extensive revamp to the store in Alma Road. An investment of £4m was being made, in spite of the fact that the company's trading profits were currently at a standstill. Romsey Waitrose is one of the top 30 branches in terms of sales and one of the most profitable in Hampshire.

All refrigeration equipment was to be replaced and all new display fixtures installed, with 30 extra bays for stock. In addition, customer toilet facilities would be doubled in size, as would the number of self-checkout desks, which were used by 40% of customers. New signage and LED lighting would also be installed.

The work would take place between 16th September and 9th November, during which period the store

would keep to its normal opening times. Most of the work would be carried out at night but some disruption was to be expected while temporary arrangements for refrigeration etc were in place. Staff advocates would be on hand, specifically to direct customers to their chosen products and to answer questions about the work.

Market forces had determined that there would be no extension of the building and nor was there to be a café, as Romsey had plenty of provision already.

In answer to questions, Mr Corbett stated :

- The cost of the work would not affect pricing policy but customers should expect food prices to rise. E.g. Bananas are the third fastest selling range but make no profit.
- Provision of free coffee to Waitrose card holders would continue, in spite of the massive cost. Plastic cups were gradually being phased out.
- Parking congestion, particularly on Saturdays, had been discussed with TVBC and HCC but, until a reliable electronic solution could be found, it was still considered that current methods of control by use of the barrier were the most efficacious.
- Recycling : The use of black plastic for vegetable trays would be discontinued by 2020. Brown cardboard, made from vegetable waste, was being introduced for tomatoes and Waitrose One products. Loose fruit and vegetables would continue to be available, although margins were poor and uptake low. The store had very little food waste, any surplus being donated to Fairshare.

5. The Next Local Plan : Graham Smith (TVBC)

The first stage of the next Local Plan - an Issues and Options document - was currently out for public consultation until 14/9/18. This would be looking at the needs of the Town over the next 20 year period and was likely to be completed by 2022. Issues such as affordable housing, the changing retail sector and how the town centre will develop are included. The Plan will affect all local residents, who can find out more from the TVBC website. (planning-and-building/planningpolicy/ local-development-framework/)

In answer to questions :

- Water conservation/recycling was already included in the plan but other modes of sustainable development in new buildings needed to be flagged up.
- Local planners had to trust to central Government to find ways to enforce regulations in respect of affordable housing.

- The housing market areas currently used to help quantify the housing requirement would be displayed on the TVBC website.

Active Consultations : A list of public consultations had been circulated to members, with website links. These included **proposals to change street lighting, supported passenger transport services and the concessionary travel scheme in Hampshire** (open until 5 Aug 18); **proposed changes to Homelessness Support Services** (to 10 Aug 18); **County Council calls for views to help shape Vision for Hampshire 2050; Corporate Plan for 2019 to 2023** (until 16 Sep 18)

Many of these consultations were in effect asking for public endorsement of policies which have been forced on local government by swingeing cuts to their grants from central government.

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

The Antiques Fair in May had proved very popular, with visitors, from as far away as London and Bristol, being encouraged to move around the Town thanks to the variety of venues. Dates had already been booked for 2019.

The Inside Out Art Trail and the Mayor's Picnic had been well attended but the heat had affected spend.

The Beggars' Fair had been very popular, with a minimum of public order offences, in spite of England losing their World Cup match that day, and the Carnival had been one of the best in recent years, attracting people from the wider area.

Forthcoming events include : Hampshire Open Studios 18 – 27 Aug, with many artists in Romsey and surrounding area; Food Fest and Farmers' Market: 2nd Sept; Antiques Fair, 21 Sept; Walk the Test Way

The Town Hall Cinema showing films from July to Oct and now serving ice creams from *Sundaes Child*, as well as wine and coffee.

Work being done by 'Romsey Future' had assisted in Romsey becoming the first Hampshire town to gain a 'Coach Mark', recognition from the touring coach industry for the ease of parking in the town. More outdoor gym equipment had also been installed and it was hoped eventually to link them all in a 10k circuit. More cycle racks had been installed and were being well-used. Maps of cycling and walking routes round the town were being updated and would be put on-line.

A new *visitromsey* website was now on-line.

Consultants had now been appointed to carry out the consultation for the Romsey Town Centre (South) project. They would be talking to landlords and tenants of all the properties in the area, including the

bus station and car parks. A car park study was also to be carried out.

7 Any Other Business.

Local policing : The Chief Inspector of Police had notified local councils that the number of Police Community Support Officers in Test Valley was currently reduced from 20 to 13.25 fte. This was due in part to several PCSOs becoming Police Constables.

However, at present there were only 13 PCs to cover the whole of Test Valley and officers had recently been pulled out to augment forces at major incidents, such as the radio-active poisoning in Salisbury and the recent visit of President Trump. Test Valley's complement of officers should shortly rise to 16 but any further additions had to wait until a Neighbourhood Police Review had been carried out.

Romsey Town Council had responded by stating its concerns about the lack of officers, particularly in the light of increasing incidences of anti-social behaviour. Break-ins had been reported at the cafes both at the Park and at the railway station.

Road closures : Work was being carried out at the junction of Cupernham Lane and Winchester Hill during August/September. This would mean that traffic coming down Winchester Hill into the Town would be unable to turn right into Cupernham Lane.

9 Date of next Forum meeting : 6th September.

Then 15th November 2018