

Minutes of the Romsey Forum

Romsey Town Hall, 14 March 2019, 7.30pm

Present: N Adams-King, M Arney, L Askey, J Bennett, V Brice, L Brimelow, A & D Chillingworth, M Cooper, N Daas, P Godwin, J Haddon, J Hawksley S Hayes, L & R Hunt, J Jones, S Lees, S Netherclift, C Nixon, J Parker, R Perry, F Pilkington, R Prescott, M & R Robinson, J Russell, P Sands, M Sawdey, C Simpson, F Stokes, B & F Sweeney, C & J Tilley, C Watkins

Speakers: Graham Smith, Sandra Smith, Mark Edgerley,
In the Chair R Jordan-Baker, Secretary Sandra Smith

1. **Apologies:** C Barrington Brown, J Brambley, J & P Burnage, A Hyde, D Kingston, G Massie, M & R Robinson.
2. **Minutes of the Romsey Forum held 15 November 2018** were agreed as a true record.
3. **Matters Arising**
Item 5 gave a link where comments on the local plan could be viewed on the website but they could not. Graham Smith responded that the link was to the document. Comments are yet to be posted.
4. **Planning Matters. Graham Smith (TVBC)**
Work on the masterplan for the area south of the town centre is continuing covering highways, with HCC, and a desk exercise on the archaeology. All comments will be taken note of. A second round of engagement will begin in the summer and the plan is due in November .
Brewery site – TVBC has met the developer. Positive ongoing conversations give some hope that things are moving forward.
Whitenap – the environmental impact assessment is taking place - consultation later this year.
5. **Romsey Citizens Advice. Sandra Smith, Trustee.**
In April Citizens Advice will be offering an additional service.
To give some context SS briefly outlined the history of CA from its volunteer origins in World War 2, through the development as local charities until now there are 280 local independent charities in 2588 locations. All are affiliated to the national body which maintains the excellent information resource and recording system, provides training and support, and audits each local organisation to ensure quality of advice. In 2017-18 2.6million people were helped with advice.

Universal Credit is the fastest growing advice issue. Citizens Advice has been campaigning to improve the service based on problems brought to local offices. The campaigns have had some success – the telephone helpline is now free and the long wait before any payment is offered has reduced. Government funding was given to local authorities to help and support claimants but provision has been mixed and Citizens Advice has now been asked to take on the support service. UC's reputation was so poor that many of the local charities had misgivings. But already more than 190,000 clients have been helped with UC problems. Considered clients would benefit from getting support with initial applications Citizens Advice has contracted for a year to offer this support. The new service is called Help to Claim. It is a national service to support people making a new Universal Credit claim – from initial claim to first payment. Clients can be referred by other agencies or can present themselves either in person, by telephone or post or online. Citizens Advice will help check entitlement, set up an account, verify identity, provide additional evidence and help clients understand the monthly payments system. The support includes access to a computer as UC is all online and this has proved difficult for people without a computer.

Romsey has had a Citizens Advice Bureau since the 1970s and in 2014 Romsey and Andover CABs merged to become Test Valley Citizens Advice, maintaining the offices in both towns. The service is largely delivered by highly trained volunteers, about 30 at each office, supported by salaried chief officer and some key staff. It is important that all of Test Valley is well represented on the Trustee Board. Currently of 9 Trustees, with a wide range of experience and skills, 3 are from the southern Test Valley. Forum members are encouraged to use their contacts and find people who could support this vitally useful service as Trustees. Contact the Chief Officer at the Former Magistrates Court. Volunteers are also always welcome to train as advisers, both for the full service or for telephone advice, and for clerical and research support.

6. **Romsey Community Emergency Plan. Cllr John Parker**

The plan aims to enhance community resilience and enable communities to respond in emergencies in an organised, controlled and safe way. The group comprises elected members, community and voluntary groups and emergency responders. Advisers and supporters include HCC, TVBC, police and fire services. It was set up in June 2018 and is independent of local authorities. The area covered is Romsey Town and Romsey Extra.

In emergencies e.g. severe storms, floods, fires or loss of service the community response could be before emergency services arrive. Afterwards the group can ensure that things get back to normal rapidly. It undertakes risk assessment, actions to be taken and resources needed. It identifies resource providers, e.g. for premises or generators. It identifies those likely to be affected in an emergency and necessary contacts e.g. Social Services or GPs. Anyone interested can go on the mailing list or become a member. Contact emergencyplangroup@romseytc.org.uk

7. **Short Updates**

Abbotswood development review. GS reported that TVBC in association with Romsey Futures will hold an event on 19 March to consult with residents about their experience of living at Abbotswood. This is just for Abbotswood residents.

Mark Edgerley, Town Manager: there is a French Market on Sunday 31st March, an Antiques and Collectables Fair on 1st May. In 2020 TV will be a Borough of Culture. TV Arts Foundation and Romsey Arts Festival are working on lots of events in Romsey and the surrounding villages.

Town centre businesses: Romsey has a 4.8 vacancy rate. Of 10 vacant units 7 are being returned to use. There is a planning application for 15 Market Place to be a restaurant. There is planning approval for a mortgage adviser where Sundaes Child was. 7 Bell Street may be a business and community hub.

Romsey Digital Town project: information system for Romsey has retained a consultant.

Beggars/homelessness: one person who sleeps in rear door of M&Co has been offered lots of help but refuses to engage. Recently a man and woman appeared in town but again both refused help. ME asks that we encourage people to engage with housing officers or Two Saints Charity who can help.

Break-ins – there have been several incidents, most recently perfumes stolen from Bradbeers.

Dog fouling: Following a rise in complaints a campaign is planned.

Market place development: is going well though slightly behind schedule. There will be Saturday morning working for 8 weeks. Comment - it can be difficult for traffic to know where to go.

Craft Market: in response to requests a monthly one will be held in the Town Hall Court Room.

Town Market: Broadlands, the Town Council and Bradbeers are working to re-badge the market and increase the food offer. Questioned about charity stalls ME says 2 will be written into the contract.

Abbey Hotel: ME reported that some work is being done. Money is now in place (around £1 million) to bring the building back into use.

Cllr Adams-King Romsey Future. Current activities were outlined. Romsey Future are in talks with the Whitenap developers. Ashfield estates are involved. There will be consultation later in the year. The Cycling and Walking group is looking at routes to provide greater connectivity. The Natural Environment and Sustainability group is working with H&IOW Wildlife Trust on Fishlake Meadows. Question on air pollution - Not in traffic survey but there are monitoring points around the town.

8. **Any Other Business**

SN asked about Edwina Mountbatten House on behalf of her aunt who is resident in a flat there. Currently there are several flats but under new plans these will be redeveloped to provide dementia care accommodation. SN asked if any Forum member could offer advice. Cllr Perry suggested contacting adult social services. RB who is a trustee, believed there had already been consultation with residents and relatives.

Mark Arney representing Romsey Ramblers was concerned about a temporary diversion of the Test Way to allow flood alleviation work on The Causeway. The diversion is considered unsafe due to fast moving traffic. Cllr Parker said the onus is on the Environment Agency. Contractors have been put on hold. Cllr Perry will check. Cllr Cooper noted that the Environment Agency do not need planning permission for the works.

There is a Romsey & District Society litter pick-up on April 6th, 9.30am.

Next Romsey Forum meeting 27th June 2019