

Minutes of the Romsey Forum held at Romsey Town Hall

7.30pm Thursday 19th September 2019

Present: C Barrington Brown, N Beasley, J Bennett, V Brice, L Brimelow, D Chillingworth, M Cooper, G Darby, Len Dupont, A Ferrier, M Fowler, P Godwin, J Haddon, J. Hawksley, R & L Hunt, K Jackson, Julian Jones, V Leggett, J Mason, V Messenger, C Nixson, M Piggin, F Pilkington, F Stokes.

Speakers: Ian Tripp, Mark Edgerley.

Chairman Richard Jordan Baker, Minutes Sandra Smith

1. Apologies: M Arney, J Brambley, A Chilingworth, N Daas, S Derbyshire, D Hargreaves, A Hyde, M & R Robinson, J Stone, B & F Sweeney, J & C Tilley, J Whiteley, C Wise.

2. Minutes of the Romsey Forum held on 27 June 2019.

Proposed by MC, Seconded JJ, they were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

Item 6 Local plan. Q. Had there been any public engagement events? A. In effect no.

MC reported that there have been 10 tree preservation orders served on site. Hoe lane is likely to be finished first. TVBC is looking at small sites to achieve its housing requirements.

4. Ian Tripp, Environment Agency: Water conservation and Flood prevention

Water conservation: We are in a prolonged dry spell with rainfall lower than average last year the Test awaits winter recharge. Drought permits were issued in September to enable Southern Water to continue supplying west Southampton, the New Forest and the Isle of Wight but flows were approaching "hands off flow" in July. SW are obliged to seek ways to reduce water usage, such as reducing leakage, publicity campaigns to encourage household reductions and hose pipe restrictions as well as longer term resource management. This may involve sharing usage with neighbouring water suppliers. Transfer pipes between rivers are being considered but may not be the favoured option in the short term. The Testwood to Otterbourne link whilst in SW's proposals has a low probability of being instigated in the near future but will be kept as an option if necessary. (T11)

Q. Does the Environment Agency give the permissions? Do they encourage water boards to conserve water? A. Yes. Both Test and Itchen are important and to be protected.

Q. re desalination. A. the problem is its very high energy usage.

Information about the water situation can be checked on the gov.uk website.

Flooding: Work has started. Slides showed plans of this and next year's works – mainly constructing embankments, Fishlake Stream Flow Control and spillways under the Causeway. Test piling has started on the Causeway to check load bearing piles. The bridges constructed will take the biggest anticipated fire engines and refuse lorries as well as residents' vehicles. Construction techniques were explained. The works will ensure that floodwaters in adjacent fields can flow back into the Test.

Q. When will people be able to walk along the riverbank? A. Bridge decks are being manufactured in Holland and should be in place by the end of October. (T12)

Embankment work has started near Timsbury. Temporary barriers held locally can be deployed before the permanent embankments are completed.

HCC works have started with drainage improvements in Mainstone and works in Middlebridge to improve surface and drainage. Utility diversion is done. There will be a pause over Christmas and work will commence in spring.

IT showed a slide of the barge river overgrown with vegetation. Fish levels in the river are very healthy but shade is leading to overgrowth. Test Valley are coppicing trees and removing brambles to improve light levels. Water voles and invertebrates need vegetation in the river. The Wildlife Trust are looking after it. Wildlife is diverse and healthy although the river looks messy.

5. Short updates:

a) Planning Matters. Andy Ferrier for TVBC and Romsey Future (a partnership including TVBC, RDS, the town council and other local organisations and individuals)

200 people took part in a consultation on work south of the town centre and many felt that more could be done with this area. Masterplan ideas are being worked on to see what is viable and what community gains could come from development. In October a new round of consultations will show what the master planners have come up with.

Romsey has been chosen for 1 of 3 pathfinder schemes. 10,000 households in Romsey and Romsey Extra will get invitations to take part in a sort of citizens' assembly on the plan. 50 people will be chosen based on factors such as postcode, age, employment and usage of town. The assemblies should result in some recommendations. There will be other opportunities to get involved.

In the New Year the borough and Romsey Future will adopt a masterplan to enhance the existing town centre, historic market place plan.

See Romsey Future website www.romseyfuture.org.uk for more information and to become involved in any of the work stream groups.

There were questions about how residents are being informed. Last time there were banners, signs and notices. Postcards were delivered to all households, including the flats, in the plan area (the south of the town). Efforts will be made to give out as much information as possible.

Andy Ferrier sees the Borough Council as facilitating the plan developed by Romsey.

b) Town events.

ME reported that the Food Festival was very successful. A new layout will be considered.

There were leaflets for a Storytelling Festival 1 – 6th October with many venues and events.

October 13th will be the Antiques and Collectibles fair with about 100 stalls.

ME noted that events like the Beggar's Fair and the Food Festival can hugely increase the turnover of other businesses in the town.

Community cinema – new leaflets on autumn showings are available

Christmas: 23 November Christmas lights switch on, 6 December late night shopping, 8 December Christmas Antiques and Brocante event, 23 December carols in the Market Place.

ME reported that the A3057 has reopened. It was closed following a water leak with temporary repairs to allow Romsey Show traffic. Now a proper repair has been done.

Town centre shops: the vacancy rate is low. ME described what was happening to most vacant properties. The Abbey Hotel is on the market but not being assertively sold. There seems to be a need for accommodation in Romsey as occupancy rates are currently 80%

6. Any Other Business

Mr Len Dupont raised the issue of noise pollution on the bypass. Residents close by experience noise nuisance and air pollution from the bypass. The speed limit is 30mph then 40mph but there are particular problems with vehicles racing by at night at speed with noise and backfiring.

Residents are concerned speed limits are not being enforced. LD listed the people and bodies to whom complaints had been sent and their responses. The police could monitor for a week to see if a mobile speed unit could be used. Comments from the floor showed this is happening in many local areas and some suggestions for action were made. MC said Police action had caught a range of offenses as well as speeding. Members of the community can be involved but action must be under the supervision of a uniformed constable.

MC: there will be a litter pick up on 5th October, 9.15am meeting at the Crosfield Hall.

DC mentioned that the recent Park Run at Mountbatten had three uniformed police in attendance. ME responded that they picked up several important leads and noted that police and community officers need to talk with people.

7. Date of next meeting: 21st November 2019

Topic: Test Valley Borough Council and Climate Emergency