

Minutes of the Romsey Forum

27th June 2019

Present:-

D Chillingworth, G Darby, F Pilkington, F Stokes, J H Jones, J Bennett, J Parker, S Smith, M/R Robinson, F/B Sweeny, M Cooper, J Russell, D Baverstock, L Brimelow, R/L Hunt, M Sawdy, J Burnage, J Mason, P Godwin, C Watkins, S Dawson, M Arney, J Cairney, D Doulton, S Langford, R Metcalf, C/J Tilley, A Hyde, M Southam .

Chair : Richard Jordan-Baker

Minutes : Carolyn Nixon

Speakers : Clare Goddard, Robert Metcalf

1 Apologies:- R Perry, A Chillingworth, J Haddon, D Hargreaves, N Daas, I Bullivant, J Stone, V Brice, S Hayes, J Brambley, S Derbyshire, Graham Smith, Mark Edgerley.

2 Minutes of the Romsey Forum held 14th March 2019 were agreed. There were no matters arising

3 Sir Harold Hillier Gardens : Clare Goddard, Director

An update on current projects and future plans was given by the newly appointed Director, who originates from Hampshire and has worked most recently at Painshill Park in Surrey. Sir Harold's original vision of 'conservation, presentation, education and recreation' was now 70 years old and reaching maturity. He had expected that annual visitor numbers, which were 80-90k in the 1980s, would reach 250k by 2040. In fact, this number had been achieved in 2018/19, which meant that the 50 year old masterplan needed to be re-written.

School visits were a major part of their education work but there was also an emphasis on life-long learning, including showing the way for horticulture in a changing climate.

The Visitor Centre was now in need of some refurbishment and work would also begin in November on an extension at Jermyn's House. This would provide a 100 seat restaurant, which could be available for functions as well as public use. It was also planned to develop a walled garden and plant cherry trees in the Japan section of 'woods of the world', to create a Cherry Blossom festival

The gardens contain one of the world's finest collections of 9,500 'significant' trees, which provide enough oxygen to support 19,000 people. These include 600 'champion' trees, being the best in species. A trail was being planned to highlight the top

25, although attention had always to be given to protect the root plate of these special trees.

In answer to questions :

Lack of mobile phone reception in the area was a problem and it was hoped that a 4G network might be installed in the near future. New, faster tills would be introduced to the Visitor Centre in the autumn and a new scanning system for Memberships.

This autumn will see the provision of a new footpath, following the south east corner of the Gardens along the Braishfield Rd, from opposite the Dog & Crook pub, as far as the new roundabout at the Jermyn's Lane/Sandy Lane junction.

Not all areas of the Gardens are fully accessible, although provision is made for mobility scooters and wheelchairs. Consideration was being given to the introduction of an electric buggy to take visitors to Jermyn's House and also perhaps to remoter areas.

The Sir Harold Hillier gardens are keen to develop closer links with Romsey and the surrounding communities and Clare was very appreciative of the opportunity to present to the Romsey Forum.

4. Test Valley Crematorium: Robert Metcalf, Manager

The new facility just outside Romsey had opened in August 2017 and had already held 2,600 services. There is one chapel (capacity 100) and arrangements can be made to live stream or record each service. The aim is to offer as much choice as possible, in order to individualise each ceremony. A standard length service being 45 minutes but additional length can be booked.

Landscaping of the 16 acres had been done in consultation with local growers, Hillier's and Pocock's. It was hoped to plant many more trees and to avoid 'over-memorialising' the site, with plants and benches being used as memorials where possible, to enhance the natural surroundings.

The only emissions from the crematorium itself are steam and water, as the gases are burnt off. The resulting heat is not currently utilised. Cremation actually takes place after the building has been locked and strict ID checks have been carried out. The ashes handed back to relatives weigh 7 lbs. All artificial joints, gold fillings etc. have been removed and, with permission, are recycled. Income from this source is then donated to local charities.

It is intended to install two roof canopies outside the building shortly and to make more car parking available, which will include charging points for electric vehicles and it is hoped to introduce electric hearses soon.

There is usually a waiting list for cremations, due to the necessary delays in obtaining the required signatures of 3 GPs to verify a death.

There are of course alternatives to cremation but, as the crematorium had been built on a landfill site, it was not possible to offer burials and neither did their guidelines permit them to accept 'direct cremation'.

Mr Metcalf closed by saying that anyone wishing to view 'behind the scenes' would be welcome to visit.

5. Town Centre report (written) : Mark Edgerley

Events in July included the Mayor's Picnic, the Beggars' Fair and the Youth Festival in the Park.

Sun 1st Sept : Romsey Food Festival and Hampshire Farmers' Market.

Sun 8th Dec : Antiques & Brocante Market.

M27 (J3/4) closure 28/6 – 1/7 : residents were warned that traffic would be diverted through Romsey

Market Place Improvements : it was expected the work would be completed in July, with the roads re-opening in time for the Beggars Fair on 13th. It would be necessary to close the road again to allow removal and replacement of a section of the gold tarmac that had developed a fault. This would be at the sub-contractor's expense.

(Above information to be circulated to members immediately after the meeting).

Town market : This was now to be jointly operated by Bradbeers and the Town Council, continuing to be held on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. It was planned to attract additional stall holders.

VistRomsey.org website : Set up by a Romsey Future group, this would carry details of events in and around the town.

6. Short Updates :

6.1 Planning (written) : Graham Smith (TVBC)

The next Borough Local Plan : 150 comments on the *Issues and Options* document had been received during the consultation period. It had taken some time to redact these and to get the necessary permissions for publication. It was hoped that they would now be available on the TVBC website by 1st July. (planning-and-building/planningpolicy/ local-development-framework/)

South of Town Centre development: it was planned to hold the next consultation at the end of the summer. Hirers of the Crosfield Hall would have a separate meeting.

6.2 Romsey Future : John Parker

The various workstreams were generating projects, including a new cycle map currently being printed. The footpath along Southampton Rd, opposite Broadlands Wall, would shortly be converted to a cycle path. An updated Heritage Map was now available from the Tourist Information Centre.

When the Nexus report was finalised, it would be necessary to carry out a viability study on their suggestions for South of Town Centre and then identify one or more developers interested in taking any work forward.

A report on the current and future infrastructure needs of Romsey was also being prepared.

The Natural Environment group was looking for more members and was about to launch the 'Refill' scheme in Romsey, a national initiative whereby local cafés etc will refill water bottles without charge.

6.3 Local Plan / Neighbourhood plan (JP)

Ashfield development (Whitenap) : an initial meeting had been held with the developers and public engagement events were planned for the summer. It would be necessary to strike the right balance between the provision of housing (1300) and work units.

Employment : funding was being sought to enable Romsey to become a 'smart' town, with free wifi and information apps, giving details such as available parking spaces or background history of local buildings.

6.4 Romsey Riverwalk Restoration : Mavis Sawdy

The Causeway was now completely closed until at least September, while flood alleviation work was carried out. A temporary roadway had been constructed across the back field for the use of motor traffic only. The Test Way footpath had been diverted.

6.5 Brewery site: Cllr Mark Cooper reported that there were some favourable signs of movement from the owner and that Cllr Adams-King had made it his top priority to resolve the issue.

7. Any Other Business.

7.1 Balancing the Budget consultation : HCC was asking residents to give their views by completing a response form. Deadline 17th July.

7.2 Potholes : part of the re-laid road surface in Braishfield Rd was already deteriorating. Cllr Cooper agreed to report this and suggested that others do the same, via

www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance

9. Date of next meeting 19th September, then

21st November.

