

Minutes of Romsey Forum

21st November 2007 held at Romsey Town Hall

Present: 72 members of the public were present, including representatives from HCC, TVBC, Romsey and Romsey Extra Town Councils, Broadlands, LTVAS, Romsey & District Society, CPRE, Romsey Advertiser

Speakers: Mary Ward, Romsey & District Carers Forum; Philip Heath, Green Issues;

In the Chair: Jill Gethin. **Minutes:** Carolyn Nixon.

Item 1: Apologies:- Sandra Smith, John Burgess, Denise & Chris Amery, Karen Dunleavy, Ian Bullivant, Dr Paul Marke, Helen Murray, Caroline Nokes, Sandra Gidley MP, Cllr Mrs P Mutton, Mayor of Test Valley.

Item 2: Minutes of the Romsey Forum 20th June 2007

These had been circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting.

Peter Shelley of HCC had asked that the following amendments be made to the report at

Item 5.1 : para 1 – the county council had a ‘statutory’ rather than ‘legal’ responsibility to look at gaps in commercial services; options for future services would be discussed with the TV Transport Forum in Feb 08, once tenders had been received from operators.

Para 2: HCC could only have an influence on those services which were ‘wholly or mainly contracted’.

Item 5.2 : details of connections to Southampton General Hospital were now being publicised in the Romsey Bus & Train Travel Guide; **Buses to Romsey station:** amended sentence should read: HCC is in discussion with TVBC about providing a turning circle for a mini bus but the provision of a bus service will depend on funding available and could take several years to resolve.

Item 6.1 : David Barker disagreed with the interpretation of his remarks vis à vis the warden service and the allotments.

With these amendments, it was proposed by J Jones, seconded by N.G.Smith that the minutes be approved. Carried

Item 3: Matters Arising. None

Item 4: Romsey & District Carers Forum – Mary Ward, Co-ordinator

Mary Ward spoke of the service which the Carers Forum was providing to support young carers, ranging in age from 4 to 15. Volunteers ran clubs for juniors and seniors, where the youngsters could relax from the strain of helping to look after disabled siblings or parents. There were currently 36 young carers registered and more were looking to join, while 21 volunteers provided a befriending service. More volunteers were always needed, including younger adults. The Rotary Club provided generous support but donations were always welcomed.

Item 5 : Housing Development at Abbotswood

Philip Heath represented Green Issues Communications, a consultancy which acts to deliver political and community support for planning applications. He spoke of the feedback from the recent public consultation which had contributed to the base plans for the new development. Of the 700 people who had attended the exhibition, 355 had returned questionnaires.

Jim Tarzy, a qualified town planner, represented the consortium of Perbury Group, Bellway Homes and Taylor Wimpey who were now applying for planning permission to build at Abbotswood in Romsey Extra. With the agreement of the planning authority and the Inspector,

outline permission would be sought in Jan 08, with a decision having to be made within 13 weeks. While awaiting the decision, which was not foregone, they would be working up the main application, taking into account the requirements of Highways and Planning. The number of dwellings (800, i.e. 37/38 dwellings per hectare) had been endorsed by the Local Plan Inspector, of which 73% would be houses, mainly 2 and 3 bedded. In consultation with TVBC, 40% of the dwellings would be designated 'affordable', either through housing associations, shared ownership or discounted marketing. There would be an element of carbon neutral buildings. 50% of the site would be left as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and would be managed by TVBC.

The consortium was in discussion with HCC regarding traffic management, particularly with regard to road junctions both near the site and within the town. A circular bus route would be provided. TVBC would manage all open spaces and appropriate drainage facilities would be provided. The sewerage system would be updated and overhead power lines currently on the site would be taken underground.

5.2 Q & A

Earliest building on the site would be 2009 -14. The local authorities had to show that they could meet the need, identified by Government, for housing over the next five years. From the floor, County Cllr Perry expanded on the revised national housing target and how it impacted on Lower Test Valley. Cllr Hatley, Deputy Leader TVBC and member for Ampfield & Braishfield, pointed out that the proposed 3910 dwellings to be built in southern Test Valley over the next 20 years was still a substantial reduction on the target originally proposed.

'Affordable' housing is delivered in perpetuity and cannot be sold on a buy to let basis.

The Local Centre planned for 2 hectares in the south east of the site would not be required until a certain number of houses had been built. The proposal for a shop as part of the Centre would depend on whether an interested retailer could be identified. Interest had already been shown in the proposal for a community tavern there, although the consortium was aware that opposition to such a proposal had been voiced by a substantial number of respondents to the public questionnaire.

Item 6: Any Other Business

6.1 Better Bags for Romsey – Sue Darbyshire

The speaker gave details of the campaign to reduce the use of plastic bags locally. She outlined the consequences, fatal to wild life, of the fact that the world uses 1 million plastic bags a minute. She was hoping to discourage Romsey shops from supplying free plastic bags, as was already happening in many other towns, and would be investigating the replacement of the original 'See you in Romsey' cloth bag.

6.2 Romsey Railbus

Cllr Mark Cooper reported that Stagecoach had refused to restore the original timetable and the revised timetable would continue until the summer.

6.3 Mineral extraction in Romsey area

The Forum was reminded that the deadline for responses to the consultation was 12 December. There were plans to increase the capacity of the Squabb Wood site and to open an additional site at Mansbridge.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm. Next meeting Wed 12 March 2008, 7.30pm, Romsey Town Hall