

County Councillor's report to the Romsey Town's Annual Parish Council for the year 2023-2024.

1 2023 - 2024 is my 19th year as your County Councillor. Throughout that time I have served on the Regulatory Committee which is the County's planning committee. Additionally, I am my Group's Spokesperson on Regulatory. It meets on a monthly cycle and is concerned with minerals sites, waste recycling and disposal, new highways projects, school planning applications, Rights of Way, footpath issues and planning enforcement. Many of the minerals and waste applications are, by their very nature, large and controversial and involve site visits, often to the far-flung corners of England's third largest county. Throughout the year we have been waiting for the Hamble Airfield minerals application to come to committees. So far there are 5,000 objections. I also serve on the management committee of the River Hamble Harbour Authority where I can indulge my interest in all matters maritime; an additional interest and concern of mine is in maintaining the delicate balance between the precious estuarine environments of south Hampshire and the seemingly limitless demand for water based recreation. I have stood down from the Hampshire Pensions Panel and Board as its meeting times clashed with pre-existing diary entries.

2 County Council funding. In 2024 Hampshire County Council and Adult Social Services receives 73% of the Council Tax. In the past it used to be in receipt of considerable additional government grants. However, the era of 'austerity' since 2010 means that most of those grants are now gone and the County's budget has reduced by 40%, equivalent to an annual spending cut of £685 million. Every year savings have to be found which are well and truly reducing service provision. Hampshire is currently seeking additional savings of £132 million by 2025-26. If these savings are not made it means a section 114 notice may be served which is the equivalent of a Council going bankrupt.

3 Market Place Enhancement and Upgrading The Hundred. It is now five years since the Market Place was refurbished, using mainly developer S106 funding, and I still get very positive feedback from local residents. I have continued to promote the need to continue the refurbishment on down The Hundred to ensure that the existing town centre is well connected to the 'South of the Town Centre' proposals. SoTC is receiving negative publicity even though plans are not yet fixed. The Market Place enhancements had a very similar negative response. Nevertheless, 18 months ago the Market Place was the winner of the 'Solent Quality Place Award'. I for one, am very pleased we

stuck with the Market Place scheme and I hope that whatever appears in the SoTC scheme will achieve similar accolades. Now and again we need to use our vision. What's at stake is the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

The traffic calming still seems to be working ; the aim is that pedestrians should 'own the road' forcing vehicles to proceed very cautiously indeed. A 20 mph speed limit would reinforce pedestrian 'ownership'.

4 The Romsey Town Centre 20 mph Zone. I have long advocated 20mph zones in the Town Centre and on our housing estates. Indeed, I have a number of leaflets I put out in the 1990's advocating just such a policy. During the year the County announced that it would not be pursuing 20 mph zones. It is, put simply, a cost saving measure. Instead, it announced that if Parish and Town Councils wanted 20mph zones they could have them so long as they funded the County to do the installation. The Town Council has made the brave and bold move to press on with a Town Centre 20 mph Zone and I will do all I can to facilitate the project. The Town Council's survey supports that such a zone is wanted by the majority of residents.

4 The Plaza Roundabout, Winchester Road and 'Operation Resilience'. Members will recall that the new road surface from the Plaza Roundabout to Cupernham Lane was installed in April 2023 after many delays. The final quality looked very impressive and I congratulated County Officers and their Contractors for a job well done. Unfortunately, the building site at 109A Winchester Road required that all the service runs into Winchester Road needed to be re-constructed and two areas of the brand new running surface needed to be excavated. The resurfacing work last year had been done at night and the road remained open between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. It was deemed unsafe to do the same and so the Winchester Road was closed for a fortnight. One week included the February 2024 half-term which was fortunate. Despite the inconvenience - after all, Winchester Road is the main artery between the town and the eastern suburbs - I only received one emailed complaint. Rather than patchwork repairs, the County insisted that the whole width of road should be resurfaced to the standard of the rest of the one year-old surface. So far it appears to be holding up well.

5 County Councillor Grants awarded in the financial year 2023-2024.

Hampshire County Councillors have a devolved grant budget which is currently £8,000 a year. This is designed to seed corn small local charities and organisations and is primarily for funding capital items or 'things' rather than general running costs. Organisations should email me on

cllr.mark.cooper@hants.gov.uk to gain my support for a grant in principle and then apply on the County Council website. Each application is sent to me electronically before I sign them off. The system has been running since 2012 and I've awarded 139 grants so far. The grants awarded this year are:-

1) Voices for Hospices Choir	£250
2) Prescription Art Test Valley Art Autumn Sessions	£500
3) Test Valley Young Entrepreneurs Contest	£500
4) Romsey Town Council Christmas Lights.....	£1,000
5) Artful Collective Creative Christmas Workshop	£438
6) The Romsey Singers visit Stuttgart, Germany...	£500
7) Romsey Chamber Music Festival	£500
8) Prescription Art Therapeutic art sessions	£500
9) Romsey Opportunity Group Sensory Play	£891
Total	£5,079

MGC 02.04.2024

Test Valley Borough Councillor for Tadburn Ward Report to RTC's APM for 2023 - 2024.

1 Southern Planning Committee:- I have been Chairman of TVBC's Southern Planning Committee since July 2019. This is a busy committee meeting on a three week cycle despite the fact that the vast majority of planning applications are delegated to officers. There have been 65 SAPs in that time. The average meeting length is 1 hour 49 minutes, the longest being 5 hours and the shortest 8 minutes. A lot of my time is spent on ensuring the officer reports brought before the Committee are free of typographical errors and omissions and include planning conditions that may have been referred to in the officer report but which are missing from the conditions list. Nothing undermines public confidence in the planning system more than mistakes in written reports. I still find planning a fascinating area. I originally worked in Town Planning in Auckland, New Zealand in 1970, I'm not sure whether it's a good thing to be still engaged with the subject 54 years later. Being on the Town Council's Planning Committee is extremely helpful in that I get to see all the applications in Abbey, Cupernham and Tadburn and hear the views of my equally engaged Town colleagues.

2 The Whitenap development:- Nothing new to report. Now that there is a planning application in for the access arrangements - all other matters remain reserved matters - I have had to take a back seat as my sister and I have property that is on the development site boundary. However, there has been no progress as far as I am aware. My colleague Cllr John Parker and the case officer, who is now Mark Staincliffe, will ensure as close an adherence to the 2016 Borough Local Plan as possible.

3 Romsey Future and South of the Town Centre:- On this issue I am repeating what I reported back last year because it is important that colleagues understand the thought process of their Borough Council colleagues. In recent years Romsey's population has grown to 21,518. The last time I looked up that figure it was less than 15,000. It is forecast to grow to 23,640 by 2027. It is thus important that the facilities that are needed to service that population are

provided here in the Romsey. The 'South of the Town Centre' project which is part of Romsey Future, concluded that the land-use on the bus station car park and the Crosfield Hall site is significantly sub-optimal and could be used to further enhance the town's viability and vitality. There will be a number of residents who will be sad to see the present Crosfield Hall go once the new one is built and in use. The decision making on this matter has been interesting and based on a Deliberative Democracy process. Back on 19th September 2019 the Romsey Borough Councillors had a presentation from Nexus planning consultancy. The ideas formulated by Romsey Future and Nexus were outlined. This included, among much else, a number of broad proposals for the long term enhancement of South of the Town Centre, including:-

- (a) The maintenance and opening up of views of the Abbey
- (b) respecting the settings of listed buildings
- (c) highlighting the water courses as key assets
- (d) creating walks along those water courses
- (e) in the medium term, redeveloping the bus station, with an 'in-and-out' circulation for buses, plus commercial uses on the ground floor and residential on the first and second floors
- (f) creating a more permeable pedestrian experience in and across Broadwater Road in order to connect the Crosfield Hall site to the town centre
- (g) building a new fit-for-purpose Crosfield Hall with improved pedestrian links to the town centre
- (h) In the longer term, redeveloping the Crosfield Hall site with retail, possibly ALDI, and a 250 space four deck car park. The old ALDI site could revert TVBC and be developed as a Community Hub on The Hundred.

These concepts were tested. Test Valley, and Romsey specifically, was selected as one of three government pilot areas for a Citizens' Assembly. It was/is an example of Deliberative Democracy. DD depends on giving people detailed evidence; asking them to weigh up the pros and cons and then coming to an agreed recommendation. 10,000 invitations were sent out to a randomly selected group from the electoral roll. The returns were then stratified based on age, gender, and usage of the town until a panel of 50 people was selected. It was an expensive process funded by a £60,000 government grant. The Citizens' Assembly met over four sessions in October and November 2019. The attendees were paid £75 per day and asked to attend all four sessions. The process was witnessed by officers and councillors. The Citizens' Assembly exhaustively examined, tested and then endorsed the proposals.

Romsey and TVBC Councillors, of whatever persuasion, are inclined to support the Romsey South of the Town Centre concept, that is the scheme supported by the Citizens' Assembly five years ago.

Crucial to the future success of Romsey as its own viable economic entity is the enhancement of the pedestrian links between the town centre and the South of the Town Centre developments.

But remember, nothing, as yet, is fixed, and the Borough has outlined a new round of consultations to test out public opinion on possible futures to take place later in the Spring. MGC 02 04 2024

Cupernham Ward Report – 2023 – 2024

Throughout the year, the ward councillors Janet Burnage, Neil Gwynne and Rohit Kohli have been active in the ward, assisting residents with any issues or concern.

Cllrs Gwynne and Burnage remain active with Wilder Romsey and continue to work alongside TVBC Countryside Officers to improve the run-down areas on some of the older housing developments in our ward and work on the Abbotswood Nature Reserve to ensure that it continues to be a natural resource for the wildlife in the area and also a pleasant place for all residents to be able to access.

We have also been in contact with residents on the King's Chase development over concerns related to poor parking by users of the sport centre at the weekends; there is parking available but users still will park on the access road into the development, which in turn can block the road. Staff are putting notices on the cars parked along the road to advise them to use the car park and/or overflow car park. It is down to Hampshire County Council to put in double yellow lines and this is also being looked into.

Councillor Burnage is working with concerned parents/carers to try and secure funding from Hampshire County Council to install some form of safe crossing over Cupernham Lane from Woodley Lane to Mercer Way – this is not only for the safety of children, but with all the additional housing being built Cupernham Lane is now a much busier road.

On the subject of development - all councils and councillors have to abide by national regulations re what development can, and cannot, be amended or refused. As ward councillors we played our part in - and were extremely pleased by - the refusal to give planning permission to the proposed development north of Oxlease. This area, by both the canal and Fishlake Nature Reserve, needs to be protected.

REPORT TO ROMSEY TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Cllr John Parker – TVBC and Romsey Town Councillor for Tadburn Ward

Tadburn ward is, thankfully, relatively free of issues so most of my time has been spent on planning matters as a member TVBC Southern Area Planning Committee and of RTC Planning Committee.

Considerable time has been spent on reviewing the draft Local Plan 2040, put together by TVBC officers and presented to TVBC councillors for comment. RTC has produced an extensive critique of the draft plan at Reg 18 Stage 2. It is expected that councillors will be more fully engaged in the process of refining the plan to Reg 19 stage. In doing so we will be examining in detail the officer analysis that has led to the choice of strategic development sites.

The other broad planning matter of concern has been following the very slow progress of discussions between our planners and the Ashfield Partnership to bring the current Whitenap planning application to a conclusion. There is still no date for it to come to committee.

I have also been representing Romsey's interests at the Romsey Future Programme Board and hope that some of the more ambitious projects will come to fruition in the near future subject to technical resources and funding. This includes the South of Town Centre development scheme for the whole bus station area and for the Crosfield Hall area. I am looking forward to design work commencing soon for the bus station area. The requirements gathering workshops and subsequent citizens assemblies to determine the best arrangements for the provision of modern community facilities will be starting shortly.

At a very local level, I am pleased to be able to report that improvements to the Green at the end of Tadfield Road to prevent unacceptable parking will start shortly.

Finally, I am hoping that we will shortly be able to see the transfer of Montfort Community Hall from the Montfort Hall Community Association to Romsey Air Cadets as their new HQ.

Cllr John Parker

4 April 2024.

The past year has seen exchanges with all three of Romsey's twin towns. At the end of April 2023 a group from Romsey spent a long weekend in Paimpol, a visit described in last year's Report. In July we welcomed a party from Treviglio to Romsey, their visit timetabled to coincide with Beggars Fair. The Italian visitors were accompanied by members of TAE Teatro, a Treviglio theatre company which had performed previously in Romsey in 2017. Once again the actors entertained the Beggars Fair crowds with their lively and colourful brand of street theatre featuring stiltwalking and masked characters from the commedia dell'arte. It was a particular pleasure to welcome also the Mayor of Treviglio who joined the Italian twidders for the last part of their Romsey visit along with a small party from his office. It was Sig. Imeri's first visit to Romsey and we are grateful to the Town Mayor, Cllr. John Ray, for making time in his busy schedule to show his counterpart around the town.

In October a group from Battenberg travelled over to Romsey by coach. Their weekend featured a visit to the Whitchurch Silk Mill and a farewell dinner at the Empress of Blandings in Copythorne, to which we were delighted to welcome the Town Mayor and Mayoress.

With the growth of many different modes of communication an increasingly important aspect of our activities has been to foster and encourage links between other Romsey groups, especially youth groups, and their counterparts in the twin towns. Over the past year we have supported a correspondence exchange between Year 6 pupils at Cupernham Junior School and young students of a similar age at schools in the Paimpol area. We also facilitated and supported a concert in Treviglio by Romsey Youth Choir as part of their tour of northern Italy at the end of July. Future links involving sports clubs and scouting groups are currently being explored.

In August we were pleased finally to deposit the Twinning archive at Hampshire Record Office where it has been catalogued and is now available for public inspection. The

archive represents sixty years of twinning records. It had previously been stored in the Town Hall but we were asked five years ago by the Town Hall to remove it. It is good to know that the archive is now kept safe and secure and to the requisite conservation standards.

In the coming year we look forward to visits to Treviglio in April and to Battenberg in October. A group from Paimpol will visit Romsey at the end of May. The most exciting development of the year promises to be the launch of our website in the summer. Although we have a Facebook page Romsey Twinning has not had a formal presence on the internet since the demise of Romseynet so we hope that this will prove to be a significant vehicle for raising our general profile and for the recruitment of new members.

Roland Matthews
Chairman
2.4.24

TOWN HALL ARCHIVES: SPECIAL REPORT

We have reached a stage at which we have a responsibility to advise the Romsey Town Council of the current position regarding the Town Hall archives. In particular, we need to point out certain areas of concern, some of which require financial input.

Stored Artefacts

This work has been completed other than insertion of thumbnail images on the computer inventory. The following needs to be noted.

- Restoration work on Volunteers ceremonial silk flag of 1860 is a serious responsibility. External funding required as this demands specialist work on an important rare survival.

Public Displays

An up-to-date inventory has been taken and computerised. Thumbnail images to be inserted. The following matters have been noted.

- *Foyer*: The illuminated border around the 2007 list of names attending the Town Hall reception for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip is in serious danger from UV light. *Note*: Howard is attending to this.
- *Main stairs landing*: The illuminated border around Lady Mountbatten (then Lady Brabourne) also affected by UV light, together with the colour photograph.
- *Corridor behind west wall of Council Chamber*: A small photograph near lift of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip was taken on 6th April 1957 when they attended the celebration day for the 350th anniversary of the 1607 royal charter. It is recommended that this should be transferred to the foyer alongside the list of those attending Prince Philip's luncheon. *Note*: Howard agrees and thinks it should be part of the foyer work.

Civic Regalia

Work has begun on up-dating the civic regalia cupboard and this has caused dismay on many counts.

- The most pressing problem is the reduced space now allocated to the robes and accessories.
- Sharing space with the bags of display boards is causing multiple problems
- The careless way in which these display board bags are returned to the cupboard, one being found shoved in between and squashing the robes and on top of accessories boxes. The small boards bag empty and loose board thrown in haphazardly to the detriment of accessories boxes. Loose boards temporarily removed for us.
- Inappropriate storage of tricorne and bicorne ceremonial hats. Silk items are deteriorating badly along with gilt braiding. Proper archival storage needed.
- Suspicion that robes are not being returned to protective cloth bags

It is recommended that

- Alternative storage should be found for display boards asap
- Someone should be designated as responsible for weekly check of cupboard and specifically after occasions when regalia has been in use / checking that items such as jabots are ironed and fit to use.
- Investment to be made in appropriate archival textile storage (currently being researched for most suitable). This may require suitable shelving in cupboard.

We very much appreciate the support and help offered by Howard and Dave.

Barbara Burbridge and Jennifer Wilsdon

The Mayor's Report

My Mayoral Year has been extremely busy. The Romsey Show and Walk the Test Way in September organised by the Rotary Club of Romsey Test, was hugely successful with over £90,000 raised for the charities represented and some 525 walkers. Remembrance Day saw the return of the Royal Engineers. We were delighted to welcome two other military units, the Field Medical Core and the Army Air Core who organised for 3 Apache aircraft to do a fly pass over Romsey. With over 100 military marching and over 250 cadets from our local groups it was quite a spectacle in the Market Place. Christmas Light Switch and the Winter Carnival saw 1000's fill the town followed a couple of weeks later by the ever-popular Saving Santa event hosted by the Romsey & District Chamber of Commerce and Carols in the Market Place hosted by the Rotary Club of Romsey Test. Rose and I have had a busy but delightful December with many concerts in our beautiful Abbey and other community Christmas events. Mayor's At Home evening was a chance for Rose and I to thank all the people who have supported us throughout my Mayoral Year. Mayor's awards were given to – Marion & Chris Maxey – Romsey Choirs, Liz, Wagner, Dick Hewitt and the late Mark Edgerley – Romsey Festival and Janet & Peter Morton for the volunteer litter picking in the town every day. I am having a Mayor's Ball in on 4th May in the Crosfield Hall and a Charity Golfing event on 26th April.

Chief Officer Report

2023 -24 has been a busy year. The merger with Romsey Extra Parish Council is now complete. Christmas events again were a huge success as are the different markets we have in the town throughout the year. The Town Hall is thriving. After the closure of Barclays Bank in the town centre, Barclays have a hub here three days a week which is proving very popular. Councillors are working on many projects to improve our town, so watch this space...! Howard Brisland, Buildings & Environment Manager is retiring on 30th April 2024. A big thank to Howard for all his hard work over the last eight years. The improvements he has brought to the Town Hall have been brilliant, in particular the installation of a lift. After twenty years of service I am retiring on 31st August 2024. It has been a "great journey". The highlight was probably been involved in organising HRH the Queen and Prince Phillips' visit to Romsey in 2007. To experience and be part of what a town has to do when having such a royal visit was mind-blowing. Never seen so many police, security etc in Romsey. Post boxes sealed up, drains checked and covered. Snipers on the roof around the Market Place. It is a memory I will never forget. Other events I organised include the Freedom March by the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment in 2011, the War Horse event in 2015 unveiled by Princess Anne and not forgetting taking over the management of Christmas Lights ten years ago. All lights had to be replaced, inspections and risk assessments carried out every year to ensure light switch-on event can happen. Thank you to Romsey Town Councillors for their support to me since 2004.

