

Minutes of the Romsey Forum 17 October 2024

Present: F Akerman, S Bannerman, N Beasley, V Brice, I Bullivant, J Burnage, M Cooper, G Darby, J Dwyer, C D Hall, D Hall, P Leech, S Lees, B Marshall, V Messenger, J Parker, F Pilkington, E & R Pratt, A & P Roberts, J Russell, M Sawdy, C Simpson, S Taylor, I Tripp, G Wilburn.

Chairman Roy Perry. Notes: S Smith

1 **Apologies:** Yinnon Ezra, J Brambley, M Bull, S Gidley, J Jones, M & R Robinson

2 **Minutes** of the 27 June 2024 meeting were accepted : proposed G Darby, seconded J Parker.

3 **Test Valley Arts Foundation**

In the absence of Yinnon Ezra, Roy Perry himself a former Chair of TVAF, spoke about the organisation. He described how Test Valley District was formed from Andover, Romsey Town, Andover Rural and Romsey and Stockbridge Rural District Council areas. The Arts Foundation was established in 1991 after the late Madeline Edmunds, an active supporter of the Arts, suggested that Michael Colvin MP encourage Tesco to contribute £100,000 to the new charity. With additional grants from TVBC and HCC, the Test Valley Arts Foundation was then set up, with Mrs Edmunds as the first Chair.

RP emphasised the importance of the arts in the area, then described how the Foundation had fulfilled its mission over the years, encouraging many different arts projects, setting up Chapel Arts in Andover and funding exciting community arts activities, such as the Test Valley Tapestry. Discussions are currently ongoing with TVAF to fund an artist-in-residence at King John's House in 2025.

However, TVAF's reserves are now seriously depleted, and the future of the Foundation is uncertain. A consultation meeting is to be held on January 6th 2025 in Andover, to which all are welcome. Further information is at <https://testvalleyartsfoundation.org/>

4 **Short Updates**

Mavis Sawdy on The Causeway. Romsey Riverwalk Restoration project was set up following the floods in 2014 to raise money to repair the banks along The Causeway. The private owner was chiefly interested in the fishing rights and offered to transfer the land. In 2017, residents formed the Romsey Riverwalk Restoration Community Interest Company. The road has now lost its camber and has numerous potholes, so the group has applied to TVBC for a Community Asset Fund grant. They were grateful for help from Louisa Rice of TVBC for directing them to the Levelling Up Fund. Romsey Future endorsed the application. The estimated cost is £45,000. TV will contribute half, Romsey Town Council £1,000 and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - £10,000 which must be spent before March 2025 and can be used for preparatory work. At some point in 2025 the Causeway will need to be closed for 3 weeks while work takes place. The Causeway is a real community asset. Its use increased during Covid and an audit done in March of this year counted 700 people walking along it in a single day.

Pam Leech on Romsey Good Neighbours. PL with Diane Dawkins runs Romsey Good Neighbours which takes local elderly people to medical appointments. Most trips are local, and drivers get expenses. Clients are appreciative but the service is currently very short of drivers. The office is in the centre of Romsey and some office cover is also needed. Anyone who could help please contact romseygoodneighbours@gmail.com

Gary Wilburn of E P Architects gave an update on the possible future use of redundant buildings at Romsey Railway Station. Working with Hampshire Community Rail Partnership, buildings at Shawford Station have been transformed into a coffee shop called **Platform 1**. The Romsey Project will be **Platform 2**. The Station Master's House will be available for a peppercorn rent. There is a need to find a purpose for the building and funding needed for works is estimated at 1.3 million pounds. The Railway Heritage Trust can contribute 40% for work related to the historic fabric. TV are supportive and application for a lottery grant is planned but there is "still a mountain to climb". The hope is to raise enough to get into the building, repair what is possible and replace where needed. The project is still open to ideas.

John Parker gave a planning update. He considers that the Whitenap outline planning application should come before the committee soon. The new National Planning Policy will increase the target for houses from 524 to 921. The new number comes into effect next year and means the current 3-year land supply will not be enough. If land is not identified within the plan, developers may be able to go with their own plans. MC noted that the 921 figure for Test Valley would be every year for the next 17 years. TVBC would like a planning-led system not a developer-led one. Developers can get planning permission then sit on the land while it increases in value. Fiscal ways of stopping this might be a site valuation tax or levy. The Council has written to the Government, but no reply has been received.

5 Any Other Business

JP asked about Bunny Lane tip closure. Cllr Mark Cooper outlined HCC's dire financial situation as the reason closure may happen. However, the cross-party committee were keen for tips to be kept open. The Cabinet agreed, so for the moment it will remain

A question was asked about the World of Water site. There is no news, there are complex problems.

6 Date of next meeting November 21st, 2024