

Minutes of the Romsey Forum 30 November 2023

Present: F Akerman, C Barrington Brown, N Beasley, K Beaver, J Bennett, M Blake, J Brambley, V Brice, I Bullivant, D Chillingworth, M Cooper, G Darby, C Dewis-Hall, D Hall, P Halliwell, L Holloway, C Hughes, J Jones, V Messenger, N Offord, A Page, J Parker, A Roberts, P Roberts, D Robinson, M Robinson, R Robinson, J Russell, J Stone, I Tripp, E Vamplew.

Chair: Mark Edgerley, Secretary: Sandra Smith.

1) **Apologies** were received from S Ridgeley. Cllrs Cooper and Parker would be late.

2) **Minutes of the September meeting** were approved. Proposer J Jones, seconder I Tripp.

3) **Presentation on St John's Homeshare** by Emma Kiss, Manager of St John's, Winchester.

St John's is one of the oldest almshouse charities. It has 84 units in Winchester with more about to be opened. It is now putting resources into the community with three initiatives – Hand-in-hand, Dementia Care, and Homeshare. Homeshare matches an older householder with a younger person needing a room. In Winchester 33% of over 65s are living alone and a sharer can offer some practical support, company, and help with costs but not personal care. No rent is charged but both parties pay for the service, the householder £100 and the sharer £200. The very robust safeguarding measures include interviews, references, and an enhanced DBS check. There is ongoing support and contact from St John's. Arrangements start with a trial weekend, a voluntary agreement and a month's trial. There were several questions from members about how Homeshare worked. It started in September 2022 in Winchester. So far there are 3 in Winchester and 2 in Southampton.

4) **Dragonfly Power Community Energy Group**. Presentation by Anton Page

Anton started with a section on climate change and the need for sustainable power. Dragonfly Power grew out of Transition Towns Romsey and now covers all of Test Valley. There are five such groups in Hampshire. The aim is to identify suitable buildings and work with owners to install e.g. solar panels. Dragonfly Power maintains the generating equipment and sells energy to the building owner at an advantageous rate. The benefits are that there is no cost to the building owner who gets cheaper electricity which is zero carbon. Suitable buildings need a large strong roof, a southerly aspect, and a year-round demand for power. Examples included care homes, sports centres, community halls and schools. Occupants must own or have secure use of the buildings. The process would be to identify a site, a feasibility study, a formal agreement, funding (community share issue), installation and operation. An example was given of a secondary school saving £20,600 in year one and 77 tons of CO₂.

You can get involved – Dragonfly power welcomes skills in marketing and publicity, technical, legal, and financial. Questions:

Is it only solar panels? These are cost effective. Heat pumps and batteries are expensive.

Who does the work? It will go out to tender.

Do you advise individual householders? Haven't got to that stage yet.

Roofs not designed for panels? There would be a surveyor's report. New panels are lightweight.

Retrofitting? FOE has been trying to get the council to require developers to build for renewable energy, but TVBC is reluctant. There was discussion about the look of things and comment that retrofitting may spoil your view, but climate change will be worse.

Are any projects underway? No but they are in talks with various organisations. Schools seem reluctant.

There was discussion about a community grid for new developments.

5) **Election of Officers**. The current officers were confirmed.

6) **Any Other Business**

Planning - John Parker gave updates. There have been some speculative applications outside the Local Plan. The Plan is being worked on with the final version expected in 2026. It will identify new houses needed up to 2040 and where they could go. The council must have enough reserved sites for the number of houses needed.

There is a revised outline application for the Whitenap site. 1100 houses are proposed for the Ashfield site. Concern was expressed about the traffic this could generate and questions about Doctors' surgeries. Affordable housing? 40% was set aside for this – 20% as low-cost rent, 10% low cost and 10% shared ownership. (Abbotswood had 40% affordable housing).

Town Centre There was discussion about the plans for the town centre and the lack of any financial plan. ME said first there would be ideas for what could happen then detailed plans can be worked up. RDS is willing to host meetings.

The former Edwina Mountbatten Care Home is crucial to the entry to Romsey and to the South of Town centre plans. TVBC put in a bid for that site but the trustees did not participate in the South of Town Centre plans and accepted Churchill's offer. (It was noted that Charity Trustees must do the best for their charity)

There were comments from members that the plan seemed to be a fait accompli and a suggestion that a design competition might be held. M Cooper offered to investigate. M Cooper noted that there was a plan in 1966 but it was not cost effective and was dropped. The current plans may also be dropped if not financially viable.

7) **Dates of meetings 2024.** March 14th, June 27th, September 19th, and November 21st.