

Minutes of the Romsey Forum 19th June 2025

31 people present. Chair Colin Burgess, notes Sandra Smith

1. Apologies were received from N Adams-King, J Arden, J Burnage, M Cooper, J Critchley, S Leach, C Nixon, R Perry, R Prescott, A Roberts, C & J Tilley.

2. Minutes of the meeting 27 March 2025

Minutes were accepted proposer J. Parker, seconded R. Pratt.

Matters Arising: J Parker on item 6 said the South of Town Centre final options report would go to the Borough council in September not July.

3. James Roach, Director of Primary and Local Care, NHS Integrated Care Board spoke on NHS – Matching Primary Care needs (GP and Dentistry) with the Government's housing targets for Southern Test Valley.

The chair introduced James Roach and noted that the Government has revised its housing targets. The draft local plan which was in an advance stage has to be amended to comply with the new policy.

JP: draft regulation 18 revised will go out on 27th June for a 10-week consultation. The implications of the increased number of homes are an additional 3000 people for whom provision will be needed.

James Roach slides showed illustrative statistics. The Romsey and North Baddesley Primary Care Network was formed to help the 2 Practices in Romsey and 2 in Baddesley/Valley Park, deliver care together. They are 139% over capacity and North Baddesley services are already under pressure. Slides showed housing projections and the effect on patient list size, around 63% increase. NHS Capital allocation is mostly used for maintenance. There is not a fund dedicated for expanding health infrastructure in response to new housing developments. The NHS will engage with TVBC on the impact of the draft Local Plan.

JR gave some statistics on local health care for which there has been a 7% increase in demand. 51% of appointments are on the same or next day, 58% are with a GP, the rest with other clinical professionals. In 13% of appointments patients do not turn up.

From October there will be a full clinical service on Econsult with online access from 8.30am to 6.30pm.

More statistics were given, and it was noted that the uptake of COVID and Flu vaccines was high. JR mentioned the "It takes a team" campaign.

Questions and comments

If Econsult will be available who will be looking at the enquiries? There will be staff with clinical oversight, receptionists and call handlers.

Andover Mind provides wellbeing services, half through referral by a GP.

This may be a contractual requirement.

Question on dentistry. JR it is challenging but we are making improvements. 72% activity last year is up to 82% this year. There is also a mobile unit for urgent treatment.

Question. Is there a chronic shortage of GPs? Is the practice structure causing problems? Yes, the number coming through is good but fewer Doctors want to become partners and would rather be salaried.

Question: Some specialties important to an ageing population have not been mentioned, e.g. audiology and dietary advice. JR we are trying to bring these closer to GPs to avoid waits.

Question: when Abbotswood was built there were plans for health provision, but no one took up the option. JR where this has happened in other areas changing the boundaries can help.

Question: with hundreds more houses being built we can we get the GPs needed? JR: We can increase wider resources with better infrastructure around GPs teams and use other clinical professionals.

Question: Andover has a community health hub. Will there be one in Romsey? Where will it go? Is it in the local plan?

JR: More primary care is being developed in Romsey. It could be part of that or even go into High Street premises.

JP: Andover health hub is in the Chantry Centre and very accessible. It is open in shopping hours, and you can walk in and consult on health issues. In Romsey the Carers Together building in Love Lane is available. Some services, e.g. for diabetes and for incontinence, are already there.

Question: Young Doctors cannot afford to buy into practices. Is there political will to change this?

JP: The local plan is about land. It can get developers to expand consulting rooms, but it is not about recruiting doctors.

Comment: Extra houses mean extra people and the need for extra facilities. The local plan does not do that. Health authorities need to get involved.

There were further comments on missed chances with the Abbotswood development, shortage of GPs, and the need for training for integrated practices.

4. The River Test – untreated wastewater spills

As Geoff Cooper was absent with Covid and there was no availability for slides, this item was postponed to a later meeting.

5. Updates

The Town council has recently installed a solar powered defibrillator at the allotments.

The missing bench in the dissenters' burial ground has now been replaced.

The Town Council has been discussing "talking benches" where people can sit who are willing to chat. Two benches in the park could be earmarked for this.

There will be a Celebration of Diversity event in the park on Sunday 22 June.

Local Government Reorganisation plans are going out for public consultation.

6. Any Other Business.

There was much discussion about the development south of the town centre and the Citizens Assembly report on it. The report can be found on the Romsey Future website. It was stated that some issues were "set in stone" and there were no options. An Architect had 3 options, one of which was the most popular. The one putting the Crosfield Hall at the Rapids was not favoured. There had been a unanimous vote that the Crosfield hall should not go to the Rapids and the facilitator tried to persuade members that problems could be dealt with. The options were very tightly drawn, and members were encouraged to look at the report on the website.

Bob Jones, new Chair of Romsey & District Society, was appalled that only 34 were consulted and where they had voted on options, they were often asked to vote again.

JP reported that TVBC is pulling together data, e.g. on retail, parking, finance and this, together with the Citizens Assembly report, will be brought to council in September. It was mentioned that 30 flats and an unknown number of shops had been "slipped in". The Citizens Assembly did not get the document; a Councillor briefed them verbally. The Chair expressed a lack of confidence in the results.

There would need to be housing to make the finances work for a developer. The chair wanted to see social housing. This was applauded.

JP encouraged members to look at the report when it comes on the agenda for the September council meeting.

Other matters raised.

SC: commented everyone talks about car parking. Is anyone looking at public transport, cycling or travel on foot?

Potholes were a problem in Botley Road, also Alma Road. The Chair has submitted information and photographs to HCC, but they give a stock response. Reports on broken paving result in spray marking. Sometimes one pothole is repaired and an adjacent one left. JP: the problem is contracting out. Each repair must be on a job sheet.

Question. Is there news of a tenant for Morrison's store? There is not. The document on National Westminster's closure refers to the Post Office! There was mention of a banking hub.

Meeting closed 9pm

Next meetings: 11 September, 13 November 2025.