

## Introduction

Romsey Future, in partnership with Test Valley Borough Council, commissioned a Citizens' Assembly be held on the future provision of community facilities in the town. The first phase of the Assembly was held in July 2024. Prior to the first Phase, Romsey Future consulted with a wide variety of groups during May and June 2024 and sought views on what community facilities are needed in Romsey, to meet the needs of residents now and in the future.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Romsey Future hosted a workshop with the multi-faith community in Romsey's Crosfield Hall.

## Background

Between 2018 and 2020, extensive community engagement took place in Romsey which resulted in the creation of the South of Romsey Town Centre Masterplan. The Masterplan presented a series of development opportunities for the South of Romsey Town Centre area.

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*'If the Crosfield Hall is not retained, adequate community facilities need to re-provided. The facilities that Crosfield Hall provides are valuable to the local community. If the building itself is no longer fit for purpose or inefficient, it is most important that enhanced community facilities are re-provided in a location or locations that are accessible and convenient.'*

- The Masterplan, on the future of the Crosfield Hall

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For the Crosfield Hall site, the options were for car parking, retail, or residential uses to come forward on the site. However, this would only be realised if community facilities were re-provided elsewhere prior to the removal of the current facility.

The Masterplan does not conclude the future of the Crosfield Hall, but it recognises that further work will be undertaken to review community hall provision.

In 2024, Romsey Future began this further work, by commissioning a Citizens' Assembly, and planning a total of ten workshops, to gather the perspectives and experiences of different groups in the town.

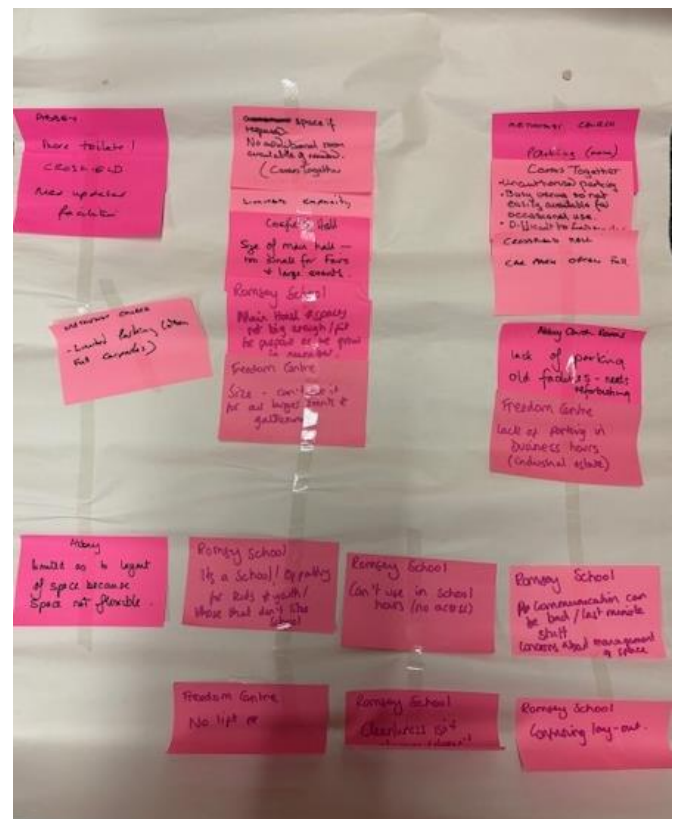
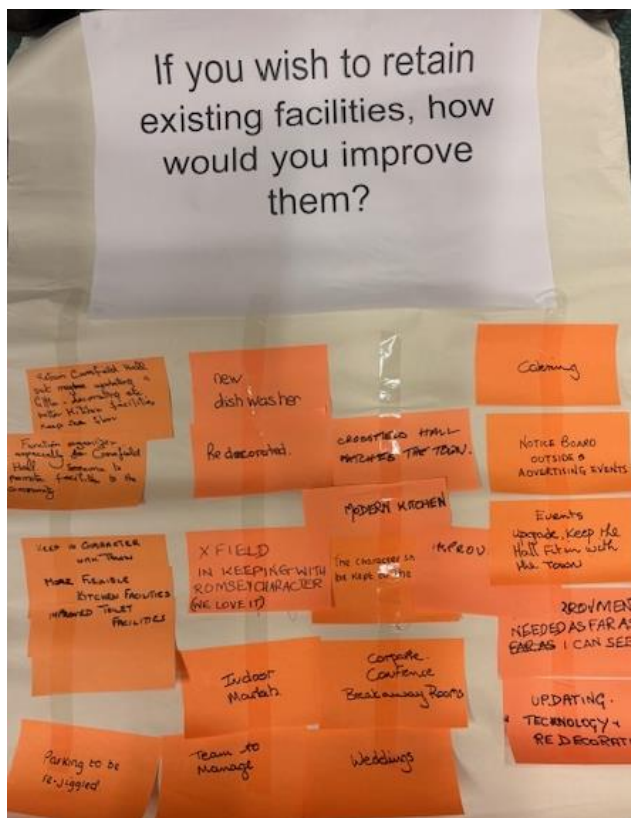
## The Workshop Structure

The workshops began with a presentation on the 2018-2020 engagement and the Masterplan, before heading into facilitated discussion on the following five questions:

1. What do you currently use community facilities for?
2. What is good about the community facilities you use?

3. What are the challenges, if any, in using these community facilities?
4. What should be included in any community facilities that are provided in future?
5. If you wish to retain the existing facilities, how would you improve them?

Participants wrote down their answers to the questions on sticky-notes, which were placed on the wall. Below are two of the pages from the multi-faith workshop.



### Multi-faith Workshop

In response to question 1, (what do you currently use community facilities for?), there were a total of 55 answers, identifying a variety of different uses, including meetings, parties, concerts, craft markets and choir. Below is a word cloud featuring the most popular answers:



In response to question 3 (what are the challenges, if any, in using these community facilities?), the five most common responses were:

1. Size

- People responded that facilities cannot be used for larger events due to their size.
- Comments included “freedom centre - size - can't use it for our larger events and gatherings” and “no additional room available if needed (carers together)”

2. Parking

- People wrote that parking could be a barrier to using facilities
- Comments included “Freedom Centre - lack of parking in business hours (industrial estate)” and “Methodist Church - limited parking (often full carparks)”

3. Availability

- People responded that venues can be unavailable
- Comments included “Cares Together - busy venue so not easily available for occasional use” and “Romsey School - can't use it in school hours - no access”

4. Booking

- People wrote that booking facilities can sometimes be difficult.
- Comments included “Romsey School - communication can be bad” and “Romsey School - concerns about management of space”

5. Modernise

- People responded that facilities need updating.
- Comments included “Abbey church rooms - old facilities - needs refurbishing” and “Crosfield - need updated facilities”

In response to question 4, (what should be included in any community facilities that are provided in future) the five most common answers were:

1. Room Variety

- People responded that having rooms of different sizes, for different uses would be valuable.
- Comments included “large space with flexible walls” and “variety of spaces from large hall to small meeting rooms, reading rooms etc.”.

2. Transport

- People wrote that the facilities should be accessible by public transport and have available parking.
  - Comments included “accessible for public transport”, “needs to be accessible by car and bus”, and “adjacent parking”.
3. Young People
- People highlighted the need for more facilities for young people
  - Comments included “children friendly play area” and “space for parking buggies”.
4. Facilities
- People wrote that internal facilities could be developed.
  - Comments included “sound proofing (so neighbours not disturbed)” and “tech gear and production equipment (lights, PA...)”.
5. Kitchen
- People responded that kitchen facilities could be improved
  - Comments included “properly planned kitchen facilities” and “good catering facilities”.

In response to question 5, (if you wish to retain the existing facilities, how would you improve them?) the five most common responses were:

1. Kitchen
- People responded that kitchen facilities could be developed.
  - Comments included “modernise kitchen” and “better kitchen facilities in Crosfield”
2. Modernise
- People wrote that the facilities could be modernised instead of moved.
  - Comments included “we should keep this building in this location but refurbish - more sustainable than full relocation - current location is excellent” and “retain existing site and rebuild”
3. Toilets
- People responded that toilet facilities need improvement.
  - Comments included “update the toilets”
4. Accessibility

- People noted that accessibility to facilities should be improved.
  - Comments included “improve accessibility throughout - e.g. kitchen”.
5. Energy efficiency/ environmentally friendly
- People responded existing facilities should be made more environmentally friendly/energy efficient
  - Comments included “energy - use green energy, reduce the footprint” and “improve insulation”

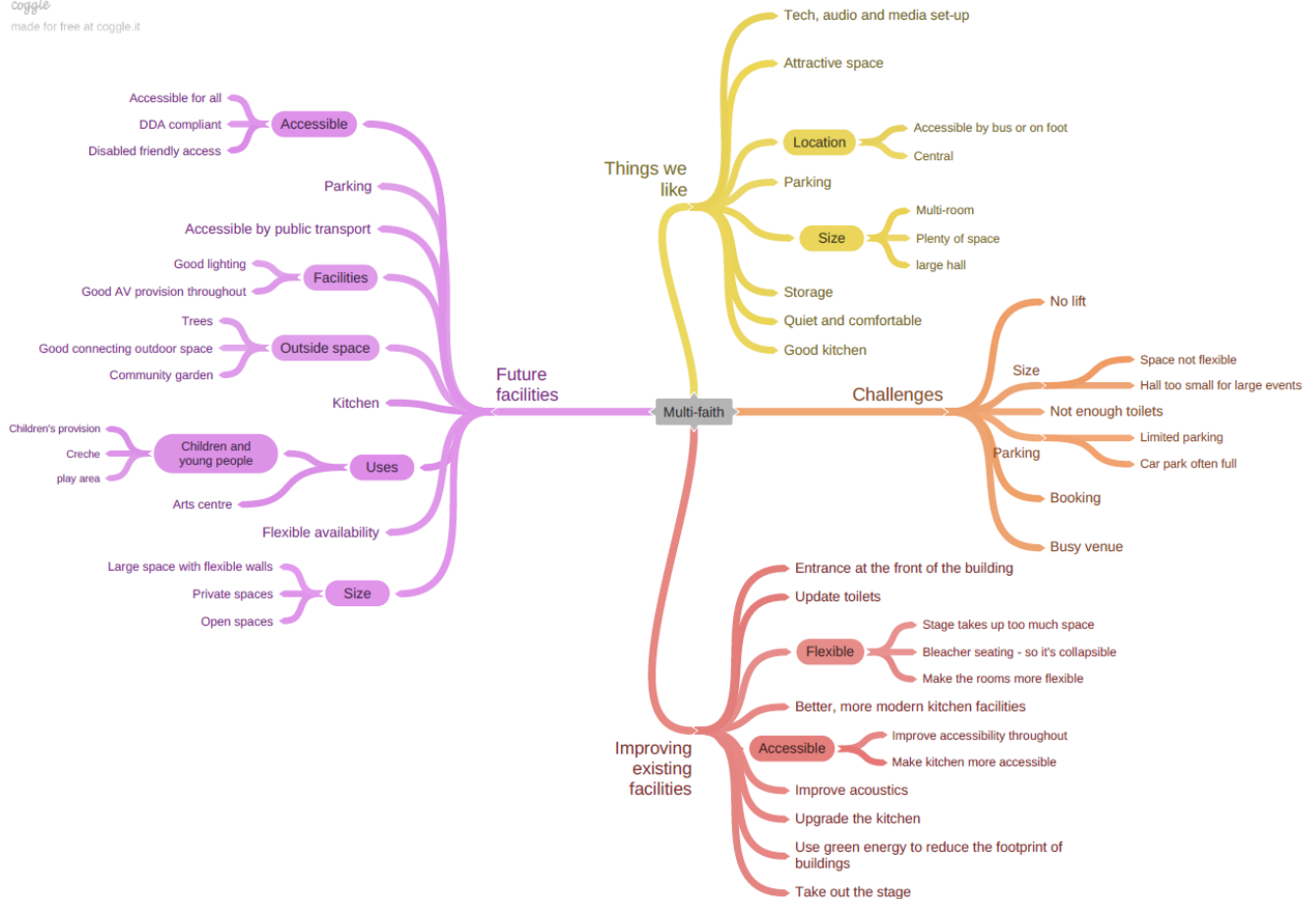
### Citizens' Assembly – July & September

Two sessions were held at the end of July to open the Romsey citizens' assembly 2024.

The 36 participants took part in workshops and received presentations highlighting the current community facilities in Romsey. The group was randomly selected to ensure the citizens' assembly was demographically representative of the town. The assembly were asked to discuss Romsey citizens' needs, desires, and expectations for community facilities in the area south of the town centre.

Speakers from different community groups, including the RDS, were invited to present their findings from their pre-engagement workshops to the citizens' assembly. The outcomes of the pre-engagement workshops were turned into mind maps which highlighted the common themes that emerged from each session. This was an opportunity for the citizens assembly to learn more about the different needs and experiences of current community facilities.

Below is the mind map made from all of the comments at the multi-faith workshop.



In September, the Assembly met again to discuss options for future community facilities and where they might best be located to serve the needs of the town. They were reminded of the requirements and preferences of the lived experience groups and heard from design specialists on what might be possible in different locations across Romsey. The Assembly worked together create preferences which will be given to Councillors, to form a crucial part of their decision making.

## Conclusion

Thank for you speaking to us about your views and experiences on existing community facilities in the town, and for sending representatives along to speak to the assembly.