

## 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 interest groups in Romsey and the surrounding areas during May and June 2024 to understand the requirements for future community facilities in the town, to meet the needs of residents now and in the future.

As part of the consultation with interest groups, these groups were:

- Existing users of the Crosfield Hall
- The U3A
- The Chamber of Commerce
- Multifaith groups
- Disabled People's Partnership
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Older People
- The Romsey and District Society
- Young people (aged 11-15)

On 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Romsey Future hosted a workshop with the U3A in the Crosfield Hall. This report summarises the questions that were asked and the outcomes raised during the workshop with the U3A.

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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 (page 28)
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## 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.

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 needed to be undertaken to understand what the requirements were for community facility provision and how this could be accommodated.

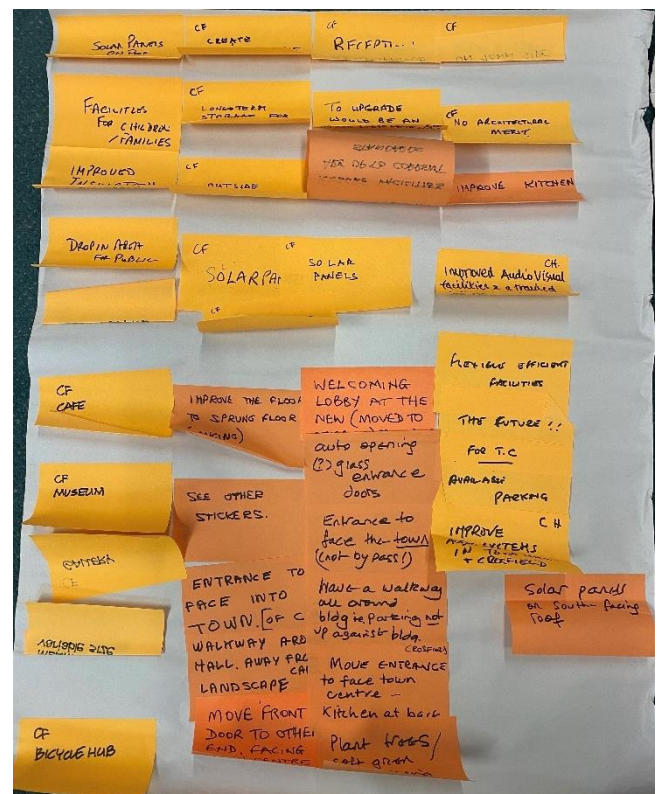
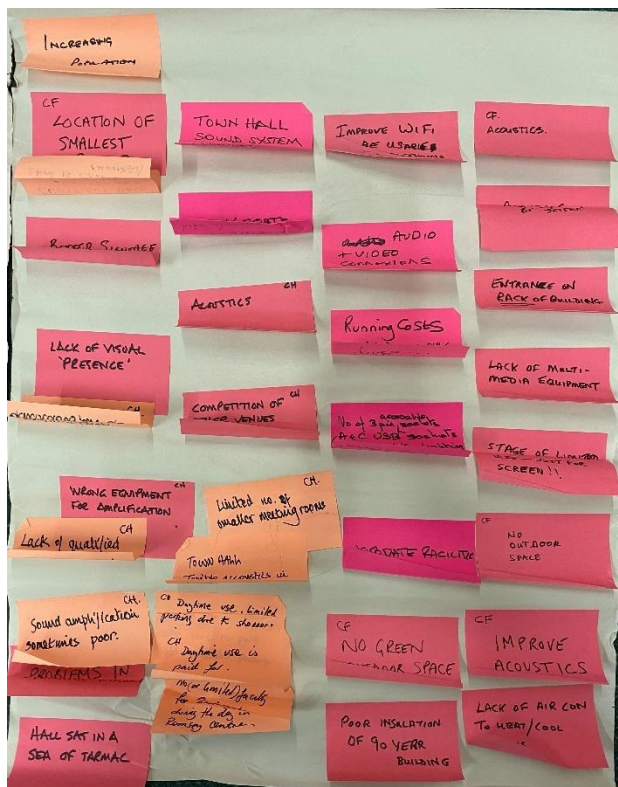
In 2024, Romsey Future began this further work, by commissioning a Citizens' Assembly, and planning a total of ten workshops, to gather the perspectives and experiences of different community interest groups in the town.

### The Workshop Structure

The workshops began with a presentation on the previous engagement that took place between 2018-2020 to shape 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 examples of the sticky-notes pages from the U3A workshop.



## U3A Workshop

In response to question 1, (what do you currently use community facilities for?), there were a total of 48 answers, identifying a variety of different uses, including music evenings, dog training club, art society and U3A meetings. Below is a wordcloud featuring the most popular answers:



In response to question 2, (What is good about the community facilities you use?), the five most common answers were:

1. Size
  - People responded that the size of existing facilities was a real benefit.
  - Comments included “size of main hall” ad “friendly size”
2. Parking
  - People responded that the parking at the Crosfield was useful.
  - Comments included “parking alongside” and “good parking”
3. Staff
  - People responded that the staff were an asset.
  - Comments included "caretakers good" and “friendly efficient staff”
4. Location
  - People wrote that the location of existing facilities (the Town Hall, Crosfield Hall) was central to the town.
  - Comments included “central and accessible on foot” and “centre of Romsey – close to public transport”.

## 5. Room variety

- People responded that having different rooms, of different sizes was very positive.
- Comments included: “right size room for our requirements” and “annexe good”

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

### 1. Facilities

- People responded that issues with facilities made the hall harder to use.
- Comments included “cold in winter” and “no blackout facilities”

### 2. Kitchen

- People wrote that the kitchen facilities could be improved.
- Comments included “kitchen needs updating” and “

### 3. Maintained

- People commented that the Crosfield could be better maintained.
- Comments included “badly maintained and dirty”

### 4. Noise

- People wrote that existing facilities faced issues with acoustics.
- Comments included “acoustics could be better”

### 5. Modernise

- People responded that existing facilities were out of date.
- Comments included “shabby décor and furniture”

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. Suggestions for future uses

- People answered with ideas of different uses for future facilities.
- Comments included “bicycle hub”, “heritage centre display space” and “outdoor theatre”

### 2. Location

- People wrote that the location was an important feature of any future facility.

- Comments included “location in heart of town, north of bypass” and “easy access on foot”
3. Room variety
    - People responded that having rooms of different sizes, for different uses would be valuable.
    - Comments included “meeting rooms of various sizes with separate accesses” and “flexibility - use of different adjoining rooms”
  4. Size
    - People wrote that size of space was an important factor.
    - Comments included “large hall” and “hall large enough for major events and 500 people - craft fairs etc.”
  5. Efficiency/ environmental
    - People responded that energy efficiency was significant and should be considered for any future facility.
    - Comments included “solar panels on roof” and “better insulation”

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. Energy efficiency/ environmentally friendly
  - People responded existing facilities should be made more environmentally friendly/energy efficient
  - Comments included “improved insulation/efficiency”.
2. Entrance
  - People responded that the entrance of the Crosfield Hall should be moved or adapted.
  - Comments included “move front door to other end, facing town centre” and “entrance to face the town (not bypass!)”
3. Future Uses
  - People wrote that the future needs of the town were significant to consider.
  - Comments included “museum” and “facilities for children/families”
4. Outside space
  - People responded that the space outside existing facilities could be worked on.

- Comments included “walkway around hall away from cars” and “outside green space”

#### 5. Kitchen

- People wrote that the kitchen could be improved
- Comments included “improve kitchen (replace)” and “kitchen at back”

### **Citizens’ Assembly – July & September**

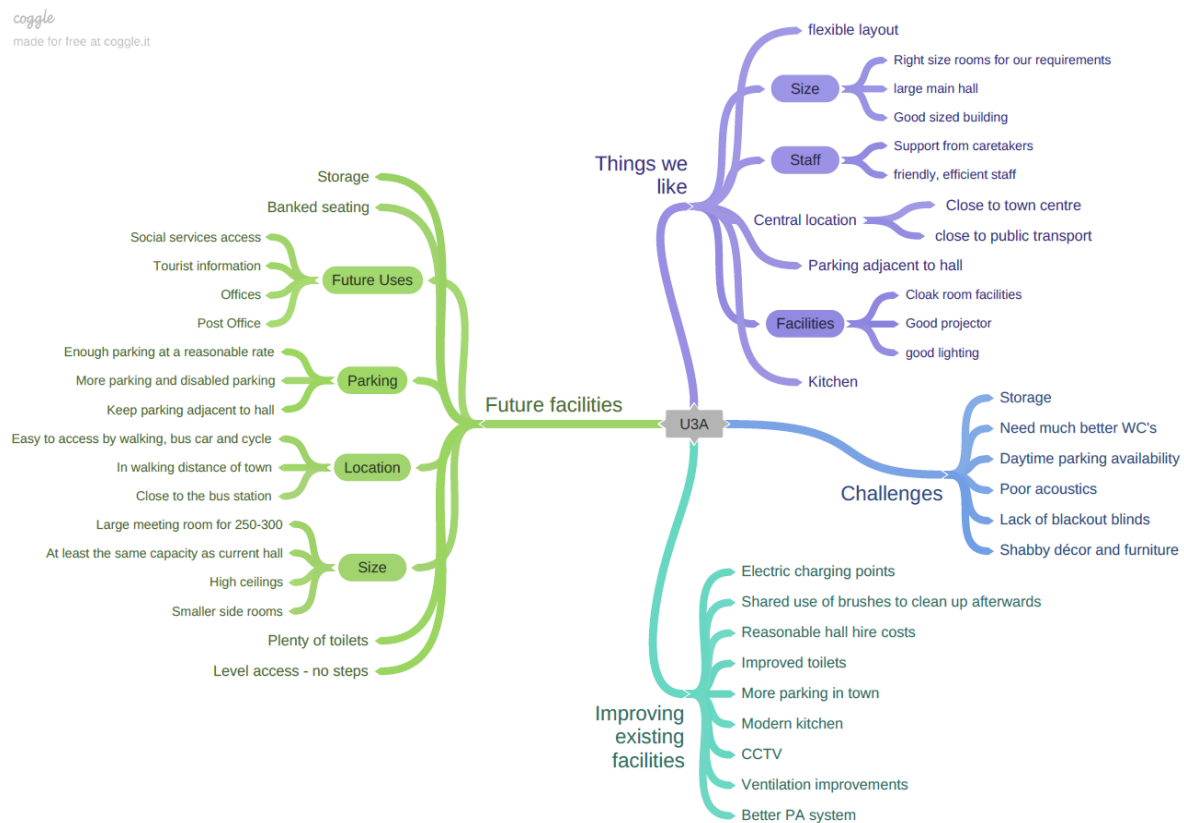
Two sessions were held at the end of July to open the Romsey citizens' assembly 2024. The citizens' assembly were asked to deal with the following question:

*What should be included in the improved community facilities that meet the needs of Romsey now and in the future?*

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 interest groups, including the RDS, were invited to present the discussions from their pre-engagement workshops to the citizens' assembly. The outcomes of the pre-engagement workshops were turned into mind maps which visually represented the points that were raised during each workshop. This was an opportunity for the citizens' assembly to learn more about the different needs and experiences of interest groups in respect of existing community facilities in the town.

Below is the mind map made from all of the comments raised at the RDS 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 a design specialist on how their requirements could be accommodated on land owned by the Council. The Assembly reflected on the list of requirements for community facility provision, as identified in the July sessions, and worked together to create preferences in respect of the location for future community facility provision.

### Next steps

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.

The outcomes of the citizens' assembly will be written up into a report and this will be considered by Councillors to form a crucial part of their decision making. The date and exact decision-making body of the Borough Council is yet to be confirmed.

The Council will need to undertake additional feasibility work, this includes an initial cost plan for each option considered by the assembly. This will assist the Council in

its consideration of the site options appraisal and the recommendations from the assembly. to the recommendations being considered by the Borough Council.