

RAPS Chair's Report 2025

The RAPS Committee met only three times since the 2024 AGM, most of its business being carried out by email, which demonstrates, yet again, how uneventful a year it has been. Moreover, RAPS ends the year with less members and a smaller committee than at the start. Sadly, Olivia Firth, our Membership Secretary since 2021 and at one time Chair of RAPS, had to step down from the Committee for health reasons and RAPS lost two long-standing members during the year: Catherine Foster, who served on the Committee for many years up until 2015, and David Ewers who, with his wife Helen, never missed a quiz night or AGM. Membership has decreased again this year, hence the emphasis placed in the latest Newsletter on the need to join RAPS or keep membership renewed.

Business this year has been dominated by things not happening as expected or not happening at all. At the 2024 AGM a set of questions was gathered about the Tipner West Regeneration Project, answers to which would be provided by City Council at a time that did not clash with pre-election restrictions. Much hope was placed on getting fulsome answers in a meeting Angela Britton and I attended on July 19th at the City Council's Guildhall offices with Tim Raw and Molly Penney. As the report of that meeting on the RAPS website shows, Tim Raw and Molly Penney are from the City Council Engagement team and not, as anticipated, from the Tipner West Regeneration Project who had submitted brief, high level replies to be read out to us. A community engagement panel was recommended to take the matter further but the first meeting of that panel, arranged for November 26, was cancelled by them and has not been re-scheduled. RAPS understands that Molly Penney has moved to another job. We can, however, take some positives from the meeting, in particular the thinking about a new bridge link, the one detail in the project plan that has been guaranteed to grab the attention of RAPS members. A quick reminder about the relevant Q and A:

What public transport links (e.g. incorporating Port Solent) are being proposed?

The bridge is an aspiration but not a requirement for Tipner. It would be for sustainable/essential travel, not cars.

Will there be a bridge link between Tipner West and Horsea Island and if so, what will it be designed to carry?

It's not in our requirement and it is not for traffic if it does happen.

All of that became irrelevant in March just as I was compiling this Chair's Report. Unexpectedly, in view of the Government's statements about removing barriers to housing developments, Angela Rayner announced that government funding for the development at Tipner West was being withdrawn on account of valid environmental concerns. RAPS understands that there may still be development at the site but nothing on the scale previously intended.

RAPS was pleased to support our local Councillors' summer initiative to improve the leisure facilities on the green field by installing two additional picnic tables. Regular use has been made of them regardless of the season, as evidenced by the increase in litter.

So much for business. What kind of a year has it been for socials? For a brief moment during the Autumn, it appeared that RAPS would be able to offer an exciting social event or two in 2025. Carl Inman, who had very successfully continued hosting a third season of monthly quiz nights at The Botanical, offered to organise summer outings and a wine tasting evening. He was co-opted onto the Committee in October to carry these forward. Initial proposals were not met with the expected

level of enthusiasm and before he had time to make a revised offering, he announced that he was leaving The Botanical in February. So, apart from the quiz nights, there will not be any RAPS socials in the coming year unless somebody comes forward to serve on the Committee or provide assistance.

Fortunately, Carl Inman's departure did not, as feared, put an end to quiz nights at The Botanical. Interim manager Alicia will run the quiz nights henceforth, unchanged, pending the appointment of a new, full-time manager. Participants are now more likely to come from outside Port Solent and takings from the quiz nights more than make up for the fall in income from membership dues.

For the third year running, RAPS joined in with organising Carols at Port Solent. For safety reasons, the venue was moved from outside The Harvester to the area outside The Botanical, from where people could get hot chocolate with rum and a mince pie. But the event on 20th December drew less people than last year on account of some atrocious weather. Those that attended took shelter inside The Botanical or along the Boardwalk at either side of the band and choir standing outside the main entrance facing in. The final amount raised for the Salvation Army Portsmouth fund is not known as it involved a generous matching donation but I believe it was around the £1000 mark as in the previous year. RAPS also made a donation to Trussell, made up, as in previous years, from quiz night takings during the summer months.

My last actions as Chair this year were to obtain an update about the Country Park and to encourage members to engage with the consultation about the establishment next year of a unified authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight overseen by a new mayoral position based in Winchester. One suspects that the suspension of the Engagement Panel I mentioned above, is related to uncertainties about how this new administration will function. Looking to next year, it will be one of the Committee's tasks to ensure that RAPS can continue to have similar means for engagement with local authorities as before. As for the Country Park, or should I say the site of a proposed Country Park, viewed from the motorway slip road or from the perimeter pathway it looks barren and scrubby, but RAPS is assured that an assessment of the tree planting last year showed that 60-70% of saplings were looking strong and healthy.

I will end by thanking the Committee members for their dedication and for agreeing, myself included, to keep going for another year in the hope, dare I say expectation, that somebody else is thinking, oh, I could do that!

Chris Clark (RAPS Chair). March 21st 2025