

MINUTES of the meeting of **ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Heritage Hall, Town Hall, Royston at 7.30pm on Monday 15th January 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor Adams (Mayor) in the Chair
Councillors Beardwell, Freeman, Harrison, Haugh, Jani, Langdon, Lockett,
Rees and Squire-Smith
In attendance: Town Clerk
County Councillor Hill
4 members of the public

Reverend Steven Sivyer from the Royston Parish Church led the meeting in prayer. The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and informed those present that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed. The Chair reminded Members to be mindful of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency declared by Royston Town Council when making decisions on behalf of the Council.

261/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

A representative from Royston Girlguiding spoke to members regarding their Community Grants Scheme Application. She detailed that if approved, they would use the grant funding to start a programme of improvement as the Guide HQ needed renovation. She thanked members for the opportunity to speak.

A representative from Royston and District Community Transport spoke to members regarding their Community Grants Scheme Application. He detailed that if funding was granted, it would be used to part-fund a crash-tested wheelchair for passengers to use on their minibus. He thanked members for the opportunity to speak.

262/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Antony, Birch, Brown, Compton and Inwood.

263/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS:

Members were advised to declare any interests at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. No requests for dispensations were received.

264/24 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Mayor detailed the engagements and events she had attended since June 2023:

- French Twinning Reception
- Flag Raising Ceremony at County Hall, Hertford for Armed Forces Day
- Buntingford Town Mayor's Civic Reception
- Independents' Week celebrating independent businesses in Royston.
- Beating Retreat Ceremony and Reception at Bassingbourn Barracks
- School Summer Fairs including Roman Way and Tannery Drift
- Royston Kite Festival
- Make Lunch Annual Family Day
- Senior Committee's first event – A trip down Memory Lane
- Royston Allotments Open Day

- Royston Arts Festival 2023
- 25 years of Women's Football at Royston Town Football Club.
- Installation of the new Parish Vicar at Royston Parish Church.
- Silver Sunday at Royston Town Hall
- Royston WI's Centenary Celebration
- Remembrance Sunday Parade and Events
- Christmas Lights Switch On
- Mayor's Charity Christmas Fayre – The Mayor put on record her thanks to Royston Fire Station staff for helping to set up, and generous donations from Royston First and Caro Group.
- Christmas Day visits to St George's Nursing Home and Richard Cox House

265/24 MINUTES:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on:

- a) 18th September 2023 (minutes 138/24 to 153/24).
- b) 30th October 2023 (minutes 196/24 to 200/24).

The minutes were signed by the Chair.

The Chair brought forward agenda item 8 for discussion next.

266/24 COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME APPLICATIONS:

- a) Councillor Squire-Smith declared an interest in this item, left the room for the duration of the discussion and took no part in the debate or vote.
Members **RESOLVED** to award a £500.00 grant to Royston Girlguiding from the Community Grants Scheme.
- b) Councillor Harrison declared an interest in this item, left the room for the duration of the discussion and took no part in the debate or vote.
Members **RESOLVED** to award a £340.00 grant to Royston and District Community Transport from the Community Grants Scheme.

267/24 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

It was **RESOLVED** that the following minutes, which have already been adopted as a correct record, were adopted into the workings of the Council:

- a) The meetings of the Finance Committee held on:
 - 25th September 2023 (minutes 154/24 to 164/24)
 - 30th October 2023 (minutes 180/24 to 195/24)
 - 27th November 2023 (minutes 208/24 to 223/24)
- b) The meetings of the Planning Committee held on:
 - 2nd October 2023 (minutes 165/24 to 170/24)
 - 6th November 2023 (minutes 201/24 to 207/24)
 - 4th December 2023 (minutes 224/24 to 231/24)
- c) The meeting of the General Purpose and Highways Committee held on:
 - 16th October 2023 (minutes 171/24 to 179/24)

268/24 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

It was **RESOLVED** that the following minutes, which have not already been adopted as a correct record, be adopted into the workings of the Council:

- a) The meeting of the Finance Committee held on:
 - 18th December 2023 (minutes 232/24 to 241/24)
- b) The meeting of the General Purpose and Highways Committee held on:
 - 18th December 2023 (minutes 242/24 to 254/24)

269/24 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTY MEETINGS:

- a) Members **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Communications Working Party meetings held on 2nd October, 10th November and 14th November 2023 into the workings of the council.
- b) Members **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Youth Council Working Party meetings held on 4th January 2024 into the workings of the council.

270/24 BUDGET AND PRECEPT APPROVAL 2024-2025:

- a) Councillor Squire-Smith asked whether there were plans in the budget to increase the market rents as expenditure had increased dramatically for the market. As Chair of the Markets Advisory sub-committee, Councillor Rees reported that the number of traders on the market varied week upon week and increasing the rents would not be viable at this point in time. It would be kept under regular review. Members **RESOLVED** to approve the 2024-2025 budget proposals from the Finance Committee.
- b) Councillor Harrison detailed that the proposed precept increase for the Town Council would equate to a 4 pence a week increase for a Band D property which was a reasonable amount. The Band D property charge for 2024-2025 would be £59.22 for the year, a rise of 3.68% on the previous year. Members **RESOLVED** to request a precept of £404,099.39 from North Herts Council plus £11,750.61 Council Tax Reduction Scheme compensation totalling £415,850.00 council tax related funding.

271/24 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT:

Councillor Harrison recorded his thanks to the Town Clerk and her team in achieving another clean audit.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the interim internal audit report 2023-2024 into the workings of the council.

272/24 ALLOTMENTS ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE:

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillors Freeman and Harrison to the Allotments Advisory Sub-Committee.

273/24 VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Vexatious Complaints Policy into the workings of the Council.

274/24 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2024-2025:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Investment Strategy 2024-2025 into the workings of the Council.

275/24 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Grievance Procedure into the workings of the Council.

276/24 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Disciplinary Procedure into the workings of the Council.

277/24 DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Document Retention Policy into the workings of the Council.

278/24 BIODIVERSITY POLICY:

Councillor Freeman recorded her thanks to the Deputy Town Clerk for her work on producing this policy.

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Policy on Biodiversity and Action Plan into the workings of the Council as recommended by the General Purpose & Highways Committee.

279/24 PROCEDURE FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF A SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Procedure for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure into the workings of the Council.

280/24 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE POLICY:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Health, Safety and Welfare Policy into the workings of the Council.

281/24 PROTOCOL AND GUIDANCE ON MEETINGS WITH DEVELOPERS:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Protocol and Guidance on Meetings with Developers into the workings of the Council.

282/24 MINUTES OF ROYSTON & DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION:

Members received the minutes of the Royston & District Twinning Association meetings held on 6th September 2023, 4th October 2023, 1st November 2023 and 29th November 2023 into the workings of the Council.

283/24 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

There were none.

284/24 CLERK'S REPORT:

The Town Clerk reported that serious damage was caused to the gates and front entrance at Market Hill Rooms when a car drove into them. An insurance claim has been made and the repairs will be completed in a few weeks' time.

The Town Clerk also spoke about the Residents' Survey, she informed members that many paper surveys have been received and staff are currently inputting these on the system. Many electronic responses have also been received.

Finally, she reminded all members to give apologies if they were unable to attend a meeting. She highlighted that there had been a number of occasions recently where members had not turned up, not given apologies, and meetings have been inquorate and cancelled.

Date of next meeting: 18th March 2024

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.14pm.

Signed: _____

Date _____

Chairman