

MINUTES of the meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSE & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE** held in Room 11 at the Town Hall, at 7:30pm on Monday 19th February 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor Harrison (Chair)
Councillors Beardwell, Brown, Freeman and Langdon
In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk
County Councillors Hill and Jarvis
1 Member of the Public

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and informed those present that the meeting was being recorded. The Chair reminded Members of the Climate & Biodiversity Emergency declared by Royston Town Council and asked Members to be mindful of this when making decisions on behalf of the Council.

292/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

There was none.

293/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Antony and Inwood.

294/24 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.

295/24 APPROVAL OF GENERAL PURPOSE & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE MINUTES:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the General Purpose & Highways Committee held on Monday 18th December 2023 (minutes 242/24 to 254/24). The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

296/24 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTY MEETINGS:

Members received the notes of the Climate and Biodiversity Working Party meeting held on 17th January 2024 into the workings of the Council.

297/24 REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA FORUM:

A question was asked on the outcome of the Integrated Planning Budget.

County Councillor Hill reported that the Integrated Plan Process had been through Scrutiny, Cabinet Panels and Cabinet. A budget of £1.1 billion (excluding schools) was agreed at Council on Tuesday 13th February 2024, to maintain and improve services for 2024/25, including increasing spending by £98 million overall. The increase of 4.99% on Council Tax includes 2% ringfenced for Social Care.

A member asked for an update on the situation at King James Academy.

County Councillor Hill reported that there was a delay with portacabins due to the increased demand from schools in Essex arising from RAAC, however the first portacabins are being installed on the site and most year groups should return to face-to-face learning after half-term.

A member asked why KJAR couldn't use the former Roysia site.

County Councillor Hill answered that it was investigated by KJAR, however they discovered that it would take considerably more time, finance, and resources to re-open the site rather than install portacabins.

A member asked when the vehicle weight limit on Baldock Road would be imposed. County Councillor Jarvis informed members that there were no plans for a weight limit on that road, but the 40mph speed limit would be legally enforceable once the appropriate signs had been installed by Redrow's sub-contractors. However, it was proving difficult to compel them to complete the works under the section 278 agreement.

County Councillor Hill added that they had raised concerns about heavy goods vehicles travelling through Royston previously and that the roads between Baldock and Buntingford will be monitored in the future.

A member asked for an update regarding the situation between Royston Town Band and Hertfordshire County Council.

County Councillors reported that HCC had decided to review the tenants to whom they granted a significant rent rebate. Because of this, the Town Band had been informed of the possibility that their rent might increase to the commercial rate when the lease renewed. However, it was reported that there was a great deal of sympathy for the Town Band to receive a rebate as it met all sorts of community and social benefits and the CEO, senior leadership and Executive Members of the County Council were all aware and working on the situation. However, it wasn't guaranteed that the Town Band will receive the same level of rebate again and the County Council couldn't commit to anything just yet.

Councillor Freeman asked whether the halving of the locality budget would affect the Free After 3 parking scheme.

The County Councillors reported that decisions would have to be made on how to allocate the locality budget going forward, but they had not yet had an answer as to whether this would be needed.

The Chairman of Royston & District Area Forum reported that quantitative and qualitative surveys on the Free After Scheme 3 were commissioned last year by the Area Forum and Royston BID, they would be meeting with Royston BID to discuss the results and decide on the next steps. It would take a while to resolve this. She also clarified that the Area Forum would not be giving a grant towards the parking scheme as it didn't meet the criteria.

County Councillor Jarvis informed members that the scheme didn't meet the criteria for funding from the locality budget either, but that he and County Councillor Hill had managed to justify the scheme's qualification for funding in previous years.

The Chair expressed his disappointment at the new 3-weekly residual waste collections under the new waste contract.

The Chairman of Royston & District Area Forum reported that North Herts Council had undertaken a survey on residents' views. The results stated that approximately 75% of residents reported their residual bin was never full after 2 weeks and roughly 80% would like NHC to encourage residents to recycle more. The Chairman also reported that the contract would cost significantly more to renew under the existing bi-weekly residual waste collection arrangement rather than a 3-weekly one. To combat the potential for residual bin overflow, she reported that soft plastics have been made eligible to put into mixed recycling, therefore reducing residents' residual waste.

Councillor Langdon suggested more education should be provided for residents on the new collection system as there would be confusion on the new schedule for bin collections and where residents could put their waste.

The Chair of Royston & District Area Forum agreed that education was needed and reported that a Waste Liaison Officer would be working on this.

The Chair further reported that NHC's Community Investment Fund was oversubscribed with applications, but Green Heat Coop, Royston Homestart and Royston Museum were among those that had received grants.

298/24 NHC SHARED PROSPERITY FUND:

a) The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the officer administering the NHC Shared Prosperity Fund confirmed that painting the bus shelter on Priory Lane, the bench at Princes Mews and erecting a bike repair stand would all fit the criteria for funding, and that the Town Council should progress with the application process. In response to a project suggested at the last meeting, she reported that the finger post next to the BMX track was maintained by Hertfordshire County Council and she had reported that it had fallen down.

County Councillor Hill highlighted that the recently painted finger posts in the town were still pointing to the toilets at the cross that were no longer existent.

The Deputy Town Clerk responded that she wasn't sure she could do anything about this as no one claimed ownership of the posts.

b) The Deputy Town Clerk reported that she had received a quote for the installation of a bike repair stand and this could be covered by the grant.

Members agreed for the placement of a bike repair stand to be on the south-west corner of the Market Square, next to the existing bike shelter.

299/24 UPDATE FROM CHAIRMAN:

The Chair reported that he and Councillor Rees had recently attended a Sustainable Travel Town meeting at which it was agreed to schedule a Bus Workshop on Tuesday 12th March 2024 in the Town Hall to discuss new and existing bus routes in Royston. He wouldn't be available to attend this but had submitted proposals for new routes covering the Ivy Farm estate and Meridian Gate to be discussed at the meeting.

The Chair informed members he would be attending a meeting for Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils in March as the Town Council representative.

County Councillor Hill reported that Ivy Farm and Meridian Gate were included in the Section 106 agreement for these new developments but finding an operator to take on the route might take some time.

300/24 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

There were none.

Date of next meeting: 15th April 2024.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

Signed: _____

Date _____