

Report for Royston Town Council

GP & Highways committee

15th April 2024

North Herts Council Royston Area Forum

Budget

On 29th February Full Council approved a revenue budget of £19.898m and a Council tax rise of 2.99% (the amount expected by the government), which equates to £7.50pa for Band D, and allocated £1.7m from reserves (currently £13m) to balance the budget without cutting frontline services. An additional £10k was allocated to expand bee corridors to Royston, Baldock & Hitchin and a one off £25k to Area Forum budgets in 2024/25 (additional £5k for community grants in Royston area), to part compensate for cuts to County Councillor Locality budgets.

Leisure Centre

Everyone Active took over the leisure contract on 1st April 2024, which includes a gym extension and the possibility of a learner pool at Royston. The Council has been awarded £7.7m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding, which will be matched by £3m from Council's 2024/25 capital budget, to install solar panels and air source heat pumps at all leisure centres.

Royston Skatepark

Works are due to start shortly on the refurbishment and expansion of Royston Skatepark on the Newmarket Road recreation ground.

Health care motion

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICS held a meeting with Royston Councillors on 25th March to discuss local services and representation of Royston residents, following the Council Health Care motion in February. The ICS expressed commitment to developing a new Community Health Hub in Royston and has agreed to continue to meet quarterly with local Councillors to provide updates on progress.

Bus workshop

NHC hosted a workshop in Royston on 12th March, to hear about the local needs for bus services. It was well attended by officers from Herts CC and representatives of local community groups. The feedback received is being collated and will inform the allocation of S106 Sustainable Transport funds.

Waste & Recycling

The soft plastics trial in Knebworth, funded by a government grant, is due to be expanded to Royston in the next few months.

Car parks

A supplier has been appointed to install EV charging points, funded by OZEV, in The Warren car park. Parking payment machines will start being replaced, from Summer 2024, with new ticketless tap in/tap out contactless options.

'All out' Local Elections

On 2nd May, all 51 seats in 25 newly created wards, will be contested at once, for a 4-year term for the first time. A new administration will be agreed at North Herts Annual Council on 23rd May.

Ruth Brown
Chair Royston Area Forum

Royston Town Council

General Purposes and Highways Committee 15th April 2024

County Councillor's Report

The changes to Service for Young People resulting from budget cuts introduced by the County Council last year have now come into effect resulting in a 25% reduction in the number of programmes run for young people across North Herts. It remains to be seen how this will impact programmes in Royston.

The state of the works being done by Redrow in Baldock Road remain unsatisfactory. Although more work has been done the traffic islands are still incomplete, the street lights do not work and the signing of the new 40mph speed limit has only been partially installed. I have taken this up with the council's development management officers and I know that they are attempting to agree a date with Redrow for the work to be completed.

There has been a satisfactory short-term solution regarding the rent of the Royston Town Band building with the band and the County Council agreeing a modest increase in rent for the next two years. The County Council is still reviewing non-commercial rents for community organisations so there still may be a need to demonstrate that the band should pay a less than commercial rent, but at least there is now time to do this properly.

Steve Jarvis

County Councillor for Royston West & Rural

April 2024

INTEGRATED PLAN (IP)/BUDGET

Hertfordshire County Council approved the Integrated Plan at its Council meeting on 13th February and managed to maintain frontline services with no planned closures of libraries or fire stations. Full details of the budget proposals are available on the County Council website.

SCHOOLS/EDUCATION

Following the considerable damage in the storms during January students are now back to full face-to-face learning at King James Academy Royston (KJAR) in temporary buildings while the permanent repairs are carried out.

HEALTH

I continue to press, with the NHS and through HCC, the need for improved services in healthcare, particularly timely GP appointments and accessibility to dentists, both of which are issues across Hertfordshire. The problems are high on the agenda of the Health Scrutiny Committee at HCC, where the NHS is held to account by County Council members.

LIBRARIES

Royston Library continues to host the Police and Barclays Bank for drop-in sessions, together with many other new activities, in addition to the regular activities, such as Storytime, which exist throughout the year. The Lego Club and Code Club are back and a new project, Page One, begins on 22nd April for four sessions.

ARMED FORCES COVENANT

All presentations to the winners of the Christmas Card competition have now taken place and the winners participated in a day of adventure which I had the pleasure of observing. We also held a meeting of the Armed Forces Covenant Board during March and I attended the Commonwealth Flag Raising at County Hall on 11th March.

HIGHWAYS/TRANSPORT

The following schemes have been completed recently or are scheduled under HLB (Highways Locality Budget) and IWP (Integrated Works Programme) for completion 2023/2024 or 2024/2025: -

The Traffic Scheme Consultation (speed mitigation proposals on Burns Road/Shakespeare junction) is proceeding to the next stage.

Melbourn Road - surface inlay works.

Icknield Walk, Nash Road, Shaftesbury Way, Studlands Rise, Wheatfield Crescent, Whydale Road – footpath works.

I have also raised issues with the weight limit signs in Melbourn Road/Newmarket Road, surface of Serby Avenue and drainage issues in Melbourn Street (outside the Town Hall) and between the Tesco/A505 roundabouts (scheduled for vector works).

GENERAL/COMMUNITY ISSUES

The issues with land lease rates for some community organisations have now been resolved.

I have attended the Active Travel workshop held in the Town Hall on 12th March. This was an opportunity for key community organisations to feed in their views. The subject of the significant delays between S106 being agreed on new developments and the delivery of bus services was raised by several people. We are investigating how to resolve this.

At the Sustainable Travel Town meeting on 18th March, we discussed the Active Travel workshop, pedestrian ramp to the Market square and bike racks in the town. We also received a progress update.

I attended a virtual Sport Mental Health conference on 27th March, where the importance of sport on positive physical and mental health and wellbeing was strongly reinforced. I am currently working on a couple of projects which fit in with the Public Health prevention agenda.

Fiona Hill

County Councillor for Royston East and Ermine

7th April 2024