

**ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
AND
NHDC ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING**

**Held in the Heritage Hall, Royston Town Hall, Royston
on
Thursday 22nd March 2018 at 7.30pm**

Present:

Mayor of Royston, Town Councillor Vera Swallow (Chairman)

Royston Town Councillors:

Lindsay Davidson, John Davison, Sarah Dingley, Mike Harrison, Rob Inwood, Rod Kennedy, Marguerite Phillips & F J Smith.

Royston Town Council Officers:

Caroline Mills, Town Clerk, Eileen Byfield, Assistant Town Clerk & Claire Marvell, Administration Assistant.

North Hertfordshire District Councillors Bill Davidson, Gerald Morris & Tony Hunter.

Hertfordshire County Councillor and North Herts District Councillor Fiona Hill.

Hertfordshire County Councillor Steve Jarvis

Royston First Bid Company – Geraint Burnell.

Royston PC Peter Cook.

Approximately 50 electors of the town.

1 member of the press.

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from:

Police Sergeant Guy Westwood, Town Councillors Mark Hughes and Laura Whitford and North Hertfordshire District Councillor Linda Needham.

2. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 23rd March 2017 were signed as a correct record.

3. ANNUAL STATEMENT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR, COUNCILLOR VERA SWALLOW

Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow councillors, the Town Clerk and Staff, and our Guest speakers. Thank you all for attending this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it has been an honour and a privilege to serve our town as Mayor this year. It has given me a great insight into the behind the scenes and events that take place in our great market town of Royston.

To begin, I will mention that although there are a few issues that cause some disquiet, such as, the planning of more homes and the closure of the toilets at the Cross, the Town Council

work hard to put the interests of the people first. Regarding the toilets, a new scheme involving the use of facilities in other places such as restaurants and public houses has also been used in many other towns. ‘The Jolly Postie’ and ‘The Coach and Horses’ have kindly agreed to allow their premises to be available. There are still public toilets available on Market Hill.

Royston has seen several new shops open in the town and I do think personal service is always a more pleasurable shopping experience. Also new stores are due to be completed on the Gateway site sometime in the summer. The business companies, large and small, continue to thrive. All these bring job opportunities to the town. Royston Business Awards, to be judged in a few months, always attracts a lot of competition and excitement.

Being an historic town, Royston with its many Churches, the Cave and Museum and not forgetting its connection with royalty adds a depth of belonging to a very special place. Remembrance day this year, being the centenary anniversary of World War 1, it is hoped that the War Memorial will have had some restoration completed in time to honour those brave souls.

In September last year we held a Charity Golf Day for the Mayor’s Community Trust Fund. The weather was brilliant. I would like to thank my husband, Colin, Royston Golf Club and all the members who took part and all the businesses and people who kindly donated gifts and vouchers. Their generosity was astounding. There was also a photographic competition for the schoolchildren to produce a Royston Calendar. The proceeds from the sales also went into the Trust Fund.

Tonight some of that money will be handed out to some of the very good causes that help to make life just that bit better and a big thank you to all the people that give their time and energy to achieve that. We will also be honouring some members of our great community with awards for their services to our great town.

Finally, I would like to say again, thank you to you all for coming along tonight.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE MAYOR’S COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS AND COMMUNITY TRUST FUND AWARDS:

Community Trust Fund Grants: These awards help local organisations with funding for particular projects within the Town.

ORGANISATION	PURPOSE OF GRANT	AMOUNT AWARDED
Royston Arts Society	To assist with the cost of hiring the Heritage Hall for the Autumn Art Exhibition which forms part of Royston Arts Festival.	£230
Rotary Club of Royston	To assist with the cost of providing tables for the schools Technology Tournament	£250

Home-Start Royston and South Cambridgeshire	To purchase two pay as you go mobiles for use by two HSRS coordinators when away from the office	£280
Royston Speak Out club	To assist with the cost of a summer outing	£300
Royston Photographic Society	To assist with the cost of hiring the Town Hall for Royston Arts Festival	£152
Girl Guiding Royston District	To refurbish the outside space at the Guide HQ in Garden Walk.	£450
Team Paula – Sepsis Trust	To make a charity donation to the UK Sepsis Trust.	£500

The Town Mayor, Councillor Vera Swallow, then presented Community Service Awards to:

Rita Turner – In recognition of her services to the Royston community over many years as a Town Councillor.

Peter Andrew – In recognition of over 20 years fund raising and organising outings for MENCAP.

Sid Seward – In recognition of his fund raising efforts for MENCAP which include the annual charity golf day.

Royston Town Football Club – In recognition of the successes achieved including their promotion last year to the Evo-Stik League Southern: Premier Division.

5. REPORT FROM SNT GUY WESTWOOD READ BY PC PETER COOK:

Staffing news:

The North Herts CSP is still headed up by Chief Inspector Julie Wheatley; and the SNT Inspector is still Richard Lilley, who joined us February last year.

The local Sergeant is still Guy Westwood – who sends his apologies and can't be here due to childcare issues as his wife is away on a residential course.

Royston Urban PCs are Pete Cook and Jo Cattley, who joined the team in Dec 2016, and Mark Ellwood is the Rural PC, having been with the team for many years now.

We have a very positive change, in that we now have four PCSO's on the team, allowing for two urban and two rural. This will allow for a better follow-up on crimes, and allow for more visibility. Currently the PCSO team is made up of Robyn Allen for the town; who is joined by our newest member of the team – Charlie Crichton, who joined us just after Christmas. Charlie is very keen and seems to be settling in well. Our rural team of PCSOs is now made up of Chris Brabrook and Penny Tomsett. The sad news is that Robyn will be leaving us on Fri 23rd March, having joined BTP. She will be an extremely sad loss to our team, but I have every faith she will make an excellent Police Officer and will probably come back in a few years as an Inspector or higher and start bossing us about!

This will put us back down to three PCSOs. Penny will move back to covering a bit of town and a bit of the rural, until we have a new PCSO in post for the town to work alongside Charlie.

Local Priorities:

These again remain unchanged – Burglary, Speeding and ASB.

They have remained as this for some time, as when people express an opinion on what we should focus on, these three subjects usually come high on the agenda. We are open to changing the local priorities, and having priority setting meetings if anyone is interested, and of course people can email us any concerns or ideas.

ANPR:

We now have the long awaited ANPR cameras all set up and working. Locations are:

1. East Bound and West Bound Newmarket Road Royston
2. North Bound and South Bound Melbourn Road Royston

It has been part of a strategic review of ANPR across Herts, Beds and Cambs. There are other cameras that have been put in across the area, but this is all Royston are allowed to have, for the legal reasons discussed at last year's meeting, and probably the one before that also!

It is good news that we have these cameras, but it is not the be all and end all of policing. Many criminals are camera aware now so will disguise their number plates or use stolen or fake ones and change them often.

Crime Trends

The whole country is currently suffering an increase in theft from motor vehicles – with tools regularly being stolen from works vans. Royston has also shared in this increase. We are currently carrying out increased late evening and night patrols, and have recently held a tool marking event on the Heath, for tradespeople to come and have their postcode engraved into their tools. We are also in the process of securing funding for further property marking events, using Selecta DNA property marking.

Year to date, crime is up across Hertfordshire by 12.8%, and in North Herts by 16.4%, in Royston by 16.3%.

CRIME TYPE	THIS YEAR ROYSTON AREA	LAST YEAR ROYSTON AREA	THIS YEAR ALL OF HERTS
All crime	975	838	78,747
Violence against the person	234	221	22,310
Theft from shop	40	45	7,655
Theft from motor vehicle	95	60	4,884
Burglary residential (outbuilding/garage attached to house)	96		4,918
Burglary residential dwelling (house itself)	62		3,651
Burglary residential non-dwelling (outbuilding in garden)	34		1,267

Burglary business and commercial (non-residential)	43		1,887
Theft from person	10	7	1,118
Make off without payment	83	48	2,603
Robbery	3	3	836
Criminal Damage	104	137	9,699

As the table shows, although Royston is showing an increase in most listed crime types, the numbers are still very small, and compared to the whole of the county our crimes make up a very small proportion of the overall crime that has occurred over the last year.

Future for Royston SNT

I want to get the SNT back to going out offering timely crime prevention advice and working closely with NHW and partner organisations such as the Local Councillors, Royston First and local businesses. I strongly believe we should be able to reduce the impact of predictable crime trends by helping people to help themselves – with crime prevention advice and products. The policing landscape has changed over the last few years, with reducing budgets and increasing workloads, and we have been unable to be as visible as we would have liked in these vital areas of policing. This year I will be focusing more on preventative operations that will hopefully help to show a reduction in our crime this time next year.

Questions

Q - How do the Police feel about NHDC turning off the street lights in Royston after midnight?

The Police do not feel that crime trends link directly to the lights going off. Van thefts have happened during the day.

Q – Has the method for logging crime changed which could account for increases in the crime figures?

None that PC Cook was aware of but there are increases in “new” crimes such as those related to technology.

6. REPORT FROM GERAINT BURNELL ROYSTON FIRST BID CO LTD:

Operation Artemis continues to provide after-hours policing. We are also in the process of assisting the police to deliver an initiative to tackle thefts of tools from vans. All four children’s trails delivered record numbers of participants (although one was only two up on the previous record!) and once again Royston Focus was delivered to 15,000 households listing all the consumer businesses in Royston and featuring 15 businesses new to the town on the front cover. The town website continues to be improved and updated (we’ve added the promised new section on parks & open spaces). We updated the eateries short film showing in the cinema and may possibly do so again this year together with an edit of the

retail short film. We continued our commitment to deep clean the pavements up to three times per year (although in 2017 things were somewhat disrupted by the refurbishment of the high street). We also experimented with our most daring Christmas window painting when we decorated the entire empty window of the former store 21.

We also mounted our usual Christmas lights display in partnership with the town council although new regulations being phased in by HCC caused us more than a few problems this year and look set to be an increasing issue over the next couple of years.

We achieved the promised soft launch of our Discover Royston initiative. In order to encourage visitor groups into Royston we have created a half-day activity encompassing 40 minute experiences of the cave, the museum and the Royston trail. At present we are involved in a consultation exercise with 50 tour companies in order to ascertain the optimum formula.

Another new, and possibly less welcomed phenomenon, in the high street has been the appearance of amplified buskers. A report has been prepared for and submitted to the town council but the issue nationwide is one of enforcement (without which it makes little sense to have a policy/charter).

The Royston Picture Palace has had another record year – with attendances exceeding 11,000 over a 12 month period for the first time.

Many of you will be aware of ‘construction’ activity in the area between York Way and the A505. This is the ‘enabling’ work for the Royston Gateway. As a representative body of the businesses on the industrial estate we have been lobbying hard to get the slip road to the A505 built as soon as possible in order to relieve congestion on the industrial estate during peak hours.

Finally, this is the last year of the current 5 year bid term and our board is actively involved in weighing-up options for Royston from April 2019.

7. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES:

Cllr F.J. Smith, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Finance Committee

This is my fifth statement to the Town Meeting in my capacity as the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Finance Committee. Like its predecessors, I am happy to report in it that our finances are in good heart and that on the whole the Council is making progress in most respects. The budget for 2018 to 2019 is much like previous years and so we have been able to set our precept at the same level (£42.10 for Band D properties) as the two previous years. However, Council Tax bills this year will be higher but that is due entirely to the demands for services provided by the County and District Councils. The North Hertfordshire District Council share of the total precept is going up by 2.99% and the Hertfordshire County Council share by 5.99%. I do not criticize the District and County authorities, since the extra money is needed for vital services to be maintained, especially social care. I pay tribute to our staff for their hard work and to my fellow Councillors for their help. I also take

this opportunity of again thanking our retired Town Clerk Susan Thornton-Bjork for her years of service to the authority.

The Council's assets are in good order, although of course this means that there is always work required here and there, for example, it is necessary for us to constantly program tree maintenance in the woods at Green Walk and Stile Plantations. Our buildings are in constant demand and for a variety of purposes. I would pay particular note to the Royston and District Museum and Art Gallery where there is a varied set of activities, making it a true centre of culture for the town. The Royston Tapestry is now nearing completion and deserves its imminent exhibition to the public. I am glad that visitor numbers there continue to rise.

One matter that troubled us for a while was the future of the toilets at the Cross but I feel that a very satisfactory solution has been reached thanks to the cooperation of the Coach & Horses and The Jolly Postie, firms that have offered to allow the public to use their facilities, for which of course we will recompense them for their trouble.

In this centenary year marking the end of the Great War of 1914-1918 we hope that the necessary refurbishment of our War Memorial will be complete as soon as possible, ideally before Remembrance Sunday but I cannot promise that this specialist task can be completed in time. However we are determined that deterioration should not continue.

This meeting is part of our communication with the public. We are fortunate that our local press, both the Royston Crow and The Listing are helpful in that regard, together with our website, and especially for the support of Royston First and Johnson Matthey for assistance with publication. The Information Point in the library is helpful too.

Finally I wish to pay tribute to the late Mrs. Rita Turner, who was a really keen and cheerful member of the Council – we do miss her.

Report from Cllr Lindsay Davidson, Chairman, Planning Committee

The Town Council Planning Committee have once again been working very hard on a large number of planning applications, 142 in total, which have come before us since I made my last report in March 2017. We have seen quite a large increase in the number of planning applications for house extensions, it seems that an increasing number of residents would rather extend their properties than move house (quite an expensive proposition these days), when they outgrow their current home.

There have also been quite a number of brownfield planning applications for smaller housing estates over the past year, such as the 19 houses currently being constructed on the old Mark Weatherhead site in Garden Walk, and numerous flats and houses being built across the town on old industrial sites, such as Lumen Road or on land where older properties are being removed, even the old SG8 nightclub in John St, is being changed into 10 residential flats with a very 21st Century look to them. While we generally raised no objection to many of these applications we did express concerns where necessary, particularly where we felt there would be serious traffic issues or over-development in proportion to the size of that site. Our concerns when raised with NHDC have often resulted in various issues subsequently being addressed with the developers.

The large housing development on the land North of Newmarket road, where up to 330 houses are to be built by Linden Homes, has submitted plans for the first and second phase of development, the first phase of 83 new homes and the second of 108 with a good percentage of affordable homes in both phases. While we have had no general objection to either application, we have joined local residents in the Garden Walk area with their concerns about access to the site from Garden Walk. Although a new exit and access road and roundabout is being built to the A505, the emergency vehicle only access from Garden Walk has yet to have a clear means of deterrent and enforcement to ordinary traffic. We understand that this issue is currently being looked into by both the developers, Highways and NHDC. We also made a number of other points concerning site traffic and the parking of site workers vehicles in surrounding roads. The other ongoing major development on land West of Royston and North of Baldock road submitted a further outline planning application for up to 279 dwellings in September and we once again strongly objected to this application with regard to their proposal for foul water drainage which took no account of the serious problems with the existing pumped water system, which is unable to handle the discharge from the 81 houses built in phase 1 and the further 50 houses in phase 2. We asked that a condition should be included that no dwellings should be occupied until an adequate new foul water drainage sewer is completed, which is connected to Royston's waste water treatment works, without using the existing pumped sewer connected to Baldock Road. We understand that once again this issue is being investigated.

We will continue to remain vigilant with all the planning applications that come to our committee and you can be assured that we will always do our best to faithfully represent your views and raise any valid issues of concern that residents may have with any new housing.

I would like to thank all the members of the Planning Committee for their hard work, commitment and support over this past year. Well done to all of you for your valuable insight and input to every planning application that we see and always trying to do your best for our town and its residents.

The Town Council staff, as always, have provided the admin and expertise for our work, especially our Town Clerk, Caroline Mills who despite only being in the post for a few months has proved to be extremely helpful and efficient with our Committee. I have really appreciated the meticulous care she has taken to prepare for every meeting and provide us with every piece of relevant information that we have needed to do our work.

Thank you.

Report from Cllr Mike Harrison, Chairman, General Purposes and Highways Committee

Annual School Visits

The annual school visits, which have been organised for the past 9 years by Councillor Lindsay Davidson on behalf of our committee, have just been completed and 6 local schools have been visited by a team of local Councillors from Town, District and County Councils. As always an enjoyable and informative time has been had with the children. Councillors have explained their various roles in local government and talked about citizenship and

community issues. It has always been very interesting to hear the children's views on various issues in Royston and we are always pleased to hear that a large percentage of the children like living here and feel Royston is a nice town with lots of things to do in it.

Naturally Royston

The Naturally Royston Team have continued to work hard over the past year despite being few in number. The Front Garden and Children's photographic calendar competitions launched last year proved to be very successful with over £455 being raised for the Town Mayor's Community Trust fund from the sale of the 2018 calendars. The front gardens competition had a high number of entries with the three outstanding winners receiving cash prizes. Both competitions have been re-launched this year and further information about them can be obtained from either our office or our Town Council web site. The new eco corner at last year's May Fayre was a huge success and there will be another one at this year's Fayre with hedgehogs, raptors and bees being the main attraction. Our thanks go to all the members of the team for their commitment and hard work.

Town Centre Working Party

Our Town Centre working party under the Chairmanship of Councillor Lindsay Davidson has met three times since last March and continues to work closely with our District and County Council colleagues and Veolia cleaning contractors as well as representatives from the local community.

We have been pleased to see an improvement in the town centre street cleansing standards and cleaning issues that have arisen in other areas around the town have been addressed when we have brought these to the attention of the contractors and NHDC environmental officers.

We are also looking forward to working with the new cleaning contractors Urbaser, who take over on 6th May and who will be based closer to us in Buntingford. They appear to have a much more flexible approach to street cleansing and work with a greater use of modern technology. We have been informed by NHDC that every town in North and East Herts will be given an electric street vacuum cleaner for their own individual daily use, which should greatly enhance the standards of street cleansing. We would like to thank in particular County and District Councillor Fiona Hill for all her hard work on the High Street road re-surfacing and also various other assorted town centre issues which she has been very helpful in addressing on our behalf.

General Purpose and Highways Committee

As in previous years the committee have discussed many different issues over the year. As I reported last year the 26 bus route was still an issue. Several Parish Councils in Cambridgeshire wanted peak time buses to start and end at Trumpington. This Council stood out alone and opposed this, as many people use the peak hour buses to get to and from work. It was our argument that what Cambridgeshire Councils were calling for would have been a great inconvenience to our residents. I myself attended several late evening meetings in Harston on the subject and made it clear to other councils that Royston Town Council intended to look after our residents, even if this went against the wishes of other councils.

The 27 bus service was brought to our attention for comment, but as that ran only in Cambridgeshire, we said that was a matter for that county to resolve in the circumstances.

We are looking for a new non-Christian memorial in the park, so people of other faiths can hold remembrance services themselves, with the memorial facing East. Funding for this is being sought at present.

There is a wish being put forward by people who live along the A507 that the road should have a 7.5 ton weight limit placed on it. This would have an adverse effect on our town, as heavy goods vehicles that currently use the road would have to go somewhere, and the A505/A10 would be an alternative route and this council opposes this, as it would affect us all. As with many other matters we are working with our District and County colleagues to try and find an answer.

We have recently had surveys on transport and waste in Hertfordshire and worked with the Town Clerk, District and County Councillors to respond accordingly. Talking of our colleagues on the District and County, they always attend our meetings to offer help and advice, and I would like to thank them very much for this.

The town centre working party report to this committee as do other sub committees. It is good to see since last year the high street and other roads have now been resurfaced and it is now much better for the pedestrians to get about in the town centre.

Street buskers have been mentioned by businesses in the town centre area, as noise levels can affect people working or in business meetings. It has been suggested that busking be allowed in designated areas similar to London, so as not to disturb people while they work. One suggested area is The Cross at the northern end of the High Street.

I did mention the District and County Councillors earlier. They always submit reports to us every meeting, to update us on what is happening that can or may have an effect on our town. With this in mind, I wish to thank both Councillor Fiona Hill and Councillor Steve Jarvis from the County Council for their help and assistance over the past year.

In addition I would like to thank the chairman of the area committee of the District Council for his reports, help and assistance over the past year, so thank you to Councillor Tony Hunter and the other NHDC Councillors, Jean Green, Ben Lewis, Bill Davidson, Fiona Hill and Sarah Dingley. Ben and Sarah are also Town Councillors and members of this Committee. I must also thank my deputy Sarah Dingley for her help and assistance and all the other committee members who have worked hard for the benefit of the town. As we all come to the end of term of our office in May, I would like to wish all those standing down my best wishes for the future and those seeking re-election including myself good luck and hope to see you all again next time, but the electors will have the final say on that.

Finally, I must thank Mrs Susan Thornton-Björk the former Town Clerk now retired and wish her a long and happy retirement. I must also thank the new Town Clerk Miss Caroline Mills for her help, both as the new Clerk and previously the Deputy. Thank you Susan and Caroline for putting up with me all this time. I would also like to thank the ladies in the office for their help and assistance.

I will finish on a very sad note, we lost one member of the committee just prior to Christmas when Rita Turner sadly passed away. Rest in peace Rita, I, like everyone else, will miss you.

Thank you.

**8. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR
FIONA HILL:**

Madam Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to update the meeting on County Council issues. The Council remains in the position of having to increase revenue and make efficiencies. The Council Tax increase includes 3% which is specifically for Adult Social Care. This will help to protect vital front line services. Adult Care and Children's Services remain huge priorities for the Council and are where the highest expenditure occurs, at nearly £400 million and £200 million respectively.

Education is one of the key responsibilities of the County Council and the relationship between local schools, the County Council and Councillors remains strong. The inter school sports activities continue, with excellent results. Greneway Middle School is one of the most successful schools in the county for sport. Schools have participated in the Technology Tournament, Youth Makes Music and Youth Speaks, all of which are arranged by the Rotary Club. Although not within the remit of the County Council, the situation with regard to the future plans for Meridian, Greneway and Roysia Schools (Federated Academy) is high on the agenda, with RSAT and Councillors wanting the very best outcome for students and staff. The Hertfordshire Adults and Family Learning Service (HAFLS) also runs a wide range of services for adults (19 +) and at the other end of the age range the Children's Centre, both aiming to improve the lives of residents.

Healthcare in Royston continues to be a key issue and together with Sir Oliver Heald, QC MP and Councillor Tony Hunter, I have supported Royston Community Health in our quest for integration of health and social care in Royston, the Royston Hospital site in London Road being the current preferred option. We visited the Secretary of State for Health and put forward the points of how this fits exactly with the Government agenda for Integrated Care. Public Health remains a high priority for Government and the County Council and the preventative work taking place is continuing to have a significant effect on the decrease of smoking, alcohol and childhood obesity, which will relieve the impact on the acute hospitals in future years. Mental health issues in schools is also now being recognised as a high priority, with much partnership working taking place.

Partnership working between the County, District and Town Councils and stakeholders, such as the Police and Royston First, has taken place again during the year. We have worked and will continue to work on safety issues such as speeding, safer crossings within Royston (and cross border) and weight limits to prevent heavy traffic through Melbourn Street, Baldock Street and Baldock Road, where a scheme remains on the Highways Locality Budget list. This is on hold pending the outcome of the investigation and consultation on the A507. The work has now been carried out on Royston High Street, with further work due, imminently, to complete the project. We have held joint meetings to respond to a number of consultations including the Transport Vision, Waste Local Plan and Libraries. County, District and Town Councillors have also continued with the school visits and received valuable feedback from pupils.

Working with colleagues and officers, we are close to finding a solution to retaining playground equipment in the parks at Betjeman Road and Farrier Court. These are important, particularly for young children and strengthen the case for Public Health outcomes.

I have also been working closely with Sir Oliver Heald, Town Councillors Davison and Kennedy and District Councillors Dingley and Hunter to resolve the issues, from sewage, on the Ivy Farm Estate. No further building will take place on the Baldock Road site until an acceptable drainage solution has been found.

Free salt, for use in the community, continued this winter and unlike the previous few years has been fully utilised. The gritting teams have also proved exceptional in keeping the county roads moving and have gone beyond their remit.

The Highways Locality and Community Locality Budgets have, again, provided funding for many highways schemes and to various organisations, for the benefit of residents in Royston and the villages, including the contribution to Free after Three car parking and the excellent events, provided by the Rotary Club, for schools in Royston and the surrounding villages. We are extremely pleased to have the local discretion, provided by these funds, available and they will be provided again in the next financial year. Full details, of all areas where highways works have been carried out and organisations have received funding, are available to view on the website.

I should like to thank all the officers from the County, District and Town Councils and my Councillor colleagues for their support. I should also like to thank the previous Town Clerk at Royston Town Council, Susan Thornton-Bjork, for all her help and look forward to working with her successor, Caroline Mills. Thank you also to the Royston Town Councillors for welcoming me to their meetings.

Madam Mayor this concludes my report.

9. REPORT BY STEVE JARVIS, COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR ROYSTON WEST & RURAL:

This is the first year at which there have been two County Councillors reporting to the Town Meeting, which is of course because this is the first year that Royston has had two County Councillors. You will be pleased to hear that I do not intend to repeat everything that Fiona Hill has just told you.

I represent the Western part of the town, to the West of London Road, King Street, Kneesworth Street and North Road as far North as Rock Road, together with all the villages between Royston and Stevenage.

At the County Council I sit on the Highways Panel and the Education, Libraries and Localism Panel.

Highways are of course one of the most visible of the County Council's services. The panel's role is not related to the day to day operations of maintenance and repairs but to looking at the ways in which the council goes about these things and considering what works and how it could be improved. There will never be enough money to do all the work that we would all like to see done so it is important to look at ways in which the money that

is available can be spent most effectively to keep roads and footways in the best state possible.

The safety of the A505 between Royston and Baldock is something that concerns many people and there are clearly far too many accidents on this stretch of road. I have been following on from the work started by others to get the highways engineers to come up with some proposals to make the road safer and to do this as quickly as possible. There are conflicting views about issues such as closing of gaps but I hope there will be some proposals for public consultation in the next month or so.

One area that the Education, Libraries and Localism Panel has been considering is the question of whether the Library Service should be run in a different way, with the service operated by some sort of trust with charitable status, rather than directly by the County Council. A public consultation on this has now closed and the panel is likely to be considering the results in the next month.

Finally like other County Councillors I have a budget that can be spent on highways works and another that provides grants to local groups and organisations. I am not going to provide a detailed list of what these have been spent on now but I am happy to provide details to anybody who wants them (or they can be found on the County Council web site) or to hear from organisations seeking funds from next year's grants budget.

It has been a privilege to be one of Royston's County Councillors for the last year. I knew that there was a lot going on amongst the many groups and organisations in the town, but I have discovered that there is even more than I was aware of. Royston people can justifiably be proud of this level of civic activity in the town.

10. REPORT FROM ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, DISTRICT COUNCILLOR TONY HUNTER:

Welcome and good evening, my name is Tony Hunter and I became Chairman of the Royston & District Committee in May 2017.

During the year we had reports from the Police, both the Neighbourhood Team and the Inspector Julie Wheatley. Important to note we now have a number of ANPR cameras operational which have been cleared by the Information Commission.

We are involved in a number of reviews which include old bylaws (other methods of enforcement now exist). Royston Town Wide Parking review which is a work in progress and a priority list agreed.

Anglian Water attended a meeting as requested to answer questions and give updates on the Ivy Farm sewage problems. We continue to communicate with them and highlighted the fact that future development in the area should not have similar problems.

We have had input into the Green Space Strategy and are working on a solution to avoid any loss of play areas.

Grants have been given to a number of worthy organisations to aid and assist. Creative Royston (Royston Arts Festival), Corvus Basketball, Rotary Club (Youth Makes Music and Technology Tournament), Royston Swimming Club and Royston First for a joint project to assist Police in supplying Selector DNA marking kits and alarms for vans and sheds.

We continue with school visits and have representatives on a number of local organisations including Coombes Community Centre, Royston First, Community Transport, Town Twinning, Day Centre and North Herts CVS.

North Herts District Council Cabinet recently made the difficult decision to charge for green waste. Financial pressure due to the substantial cuts in Government grants mean the Council has to save £4.2m over the next few years. The joint meeting with East Herts Council was attended by County Councillor Fiona Hill and all the difficult questions were asked on the new contract. Noted 60% of all Councils charge (all political persuasions), weekly collection food waste and battery collection, in cab technology and bin sharing. Service could remain not terminated and still subsidised. Contract in place now and starts early May.

Many will have seen the District Council Offices are undergoing refurbishment at Gernon Road. The Council decided to buy the building rather than move as the work being done would have happened due to the 1970's full repairing lease. £5.91m budget allocated and the work needed to make it fit for purpose carried out within budget even with the large costs for asbestos removal. Careline are now in the building and space has been allocated for other possible organisations.

My thanks to all who have assisted the committee this year, Community Officer, Officers, Town Council, Members and colleagues.

OPEN MEETING: QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS TO TOWN, DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS.

Q – A member of the public welcomed the forthcoming contract for Royston Community Toilet Scheme. How long is the contract and can unaccompanied under 18s use toilet facilities in public houses? What would happen to the building?

Councillor Davidson explained that the building belongs to North Hertfordshire District Council and they would decide what is done with it. The Community Toilet Scheme is initially for one year and is renewable annually. She explained that unaccompanied minors can use the public toilets at Fish Hill.

Q - Why can't a town the size of Royston sustain a sixth form?

Councillor Fiona Hill explained that in order to be sustainable, current guidance is that around 200 pupils are required, and there are currently insufficient in Meridian Sixth Form. The sixth form at Knights Templar will provide similar facilities to those currently offered.

Councillor Steve Jarvis responded that the uncertainty of the situation was making the problem worse although RSAT are doing their best.

Q - Have Royston Town Council been involved with how the High Street will be kept clean following the recent improvements?

Councillor Davidson explained that Royston Town Council is hopeful that the new cleaning contractors will provide an efficient service and that they will be using an electric cleaning machine in the town.

Q – Concerns were raised about the lack of transparency in the planning process and that information is hard to find and inaccessible. Royston Town Council had been very supportive on the recent Linden Homes application. How can the decision making process for planning applications be made more transparent?

Councillor Tony Hunter explained that the National Planning Policy Framework is a moving platform which changes over time. The Government lay down the processes and it was suggested that the member of the public writes to MP Sir Oliver Heald.

Q - Regarding the potential merger of the town's middle and senior schools, how will the possible loss of teaching staff be addressed? Many teachers find that teaching the sixth form is an attractive aspect of the job and that without a sixth form it could be difficult to attract and retain staff at the new school.

Councillor Steve Jarvis stated that the RSAT proposals are not yet concluded but agreed with the concerns that the retention of teaching staff could be an issue. Teachers would decide what is best for them.

Q - Concerns were also raised about the safety of traffic between the Therfield Road and McDonalds and road safety near the old service station at Slip End. Whose responsibility is it?

Councillor Steve Jarvis agreed that the A505 roundabout needs attention to improve safety and that the Slip End garage needs to be made safer and tidied up, but was unsure if it was within Hertfordshire or Cambridgeshire. He said that the planning system does have mechanisms to make people tidy things up.

Q – Concern was expressed regarding the buses using Tannery Drift unsafely. Buses and cars frequently mount the pavements to avoid a collision due to the narrow nature of the road. Also that the buses may exceed the weight limit and that there are no traffic calming measures in place as at other local schools.

Councillor Fiona Hill explained that the operator has agreed to re-route the buses providing that they are not held up by vehicles obstructing them on the Kneesworth Street route.

Councillor Steve Jarvis confirmed that the 331 is a commercial service and if the service changes then smaller buses may be used, also that reducing the speed limit to below 20 mph would be beneficial.

Councillor Davison commented that the weight restriction in Tannery Drift is only North, not Southbound.

Q - A Member of the public enquired about deregistration of Wicker Hall land and asked why do Councillors support selling/deregistration of children's play areas?

Councillor Fiona Hill replied that she supports play areas and it states in the NPPF that there should be play areas in new developments.

Councillor Davison commented that Echo Hill was never an official play area and the Conservators need to maintain the Heath and provide new features. Royston Town Council does not have a policy on deregistration of land. Royston Town Council are a consultee and pass comments on planning applications, NHDC make the decisions. The Town Council originally objected to the application to build on the site but it was agreed by NHDC. The Town Council voted in favour of deregistration of the land.

Q – What are the Councillors thoughts on the Gladman planning application?

Councillor Davidson replied that no application has currently been lodged with NHDC for the proposed “Gladman site”. Companies such as these distribute literature to say that they have consulted with local residents. The public should ignore their publications.

Q – Does Royston have a quota for new builds and has it reached it?

There is no such quota for Royston. The NPPF urges Councils to get houses built.

Councillor Davidson said that we do need more houses, especially affordable ones as young people cannot afford to buy.

Q – What is the definition of affordable housing?

Councillor Jarvis replied that it is housing at less than the market price.

Q - What time of day would the toilets be open for the Community Toilet Scheme, would they be open early in the morning?

Councillor Sarah Dingley confirmed that they would be open when the Jolly Postie and Coach and Horses opened, but that the Fish Hill toilets are available from 7am every day. The disabled toilets are available 24 hours a day for those with radar keys.

Q – A member of the public commented that if the town wishes to continue to develop and grow, people must not stand in the way of progress and housing developments which are essential for future Royston generations. He agreed with Councillor Davidson that more housing is needed.

Councillor Davidson thanked him for his comment.

There were no further questions.

The Town Mayor then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.53pm.