

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

**Held in the Heritage Hall, Royston Town Hall, Royston, at 7.30pm  
on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**Present:**

Royston Town Councillors:

Robert Smith (Town Mayor), Lynn Berry, Lindsay Davidson, Elizabeth Freeman, Mike Harrison, Graham Palmer, Marguerite Phillips, and F John Smith

RTC Officers: Town Clerk Susan Thornton-Björk, Jean Waldock Deputy Town Clerk  
North Hertfordshire District & Royston Town Councillors, Peter Burt and Robert Inwood,

North Hertfordshire District Councillors Gerald Morris, Jean Green, and Bill Davidson  
NHDC Officer Alan Fleck

Hertfordshire County Councillor and North Herts District Councillors Fiona Hill & Tony Hunter

Royston First Bid Co. Geraint Burnell

Royston Neighbourhood Police Sergeant Stephen Oliphant

2 members of the press

Approximately 60 members of the public

**1. APOLOGIES:**

Apologies were received from:

Town Councillor Beaver

Town Council Museum curator, Sarah Russell

Leader North Hertfordshire District Council Cllr Lynda Needham

NHDC Development & Conservation Manager Mary Caldwell

**2. MINUTES:**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 were signed as a correct record with the following amendments:

Page 1 - District Councillor Jean Green included as present

Page 7 – paragraph The Cross Toilets date should read April 2012

**3. ANNUAL STATEMENT FROM TOWN MAYOR COUNCILLOR BOB SMITH**

As Mayor, I have attended a number of civic engagements on behalf of the people of Royston. Since being elected in May 2013, I have attended nearly 80 engagements, 17 of which have been outside the environs of Royston, to date, with further engagements booked up to 2nd June 2014 when a new Mayor will be elected.

The major civic events for the year have been the Mayors Civic Reception, Remembrance Day Parade during which I laid a wreath on behalf of the Town Council at the Royston War Memorial and on November 11th at the 91st Bomb Group Memorial in Priory Memorial Gardens, Christmas Day and New Years Day visits to local nursing and residential homes, memorial service on Holocaust Memorial Day and the Civic Service.

My chosen charities have been CLIC Sargent, which is a charity supporting children and young people with cancer, from treatment and beyond, supporting the whole family through what is undoubtedly, a most traumatic occasion. CLIC Sargent is a national charity but funds raised will be targeted to North Hertfordshire and South Cambridgeshire. The second charity is the Royston Town Mayor's Community Trust Fund which awards grants to any organisation within Royston for the setting up of a new project, capital scheme or help towards a special event which is beneficial to the community of Royston. These awards will be made later this evening. During the year, I have held a charity Golf Day and 2 Quiz nights. Along with the generosity of people by way of donations, the total amount raised to date is £2906.19 and I thank most sincerely all those who have supported me in raising such a magnificent amount in these austere times.

May I just take this opportunity to promote two charity events taking place later this month. The first being a Charity Dinner at YUVA restaurant in Kneesworth on Tuesday 18th March from 6.00 to 9.15pm, details of which are on the flyer I have left on your chairs. All monies raised on this event will be for the Mayor's charities. The second event is a Holy Saviour Church Choir concert on Saturday 22nd March at the Methodist Church in Queens Road at 7.45pm; again I have left leaflets on your chairs giving further details.

The most significant impression I will be taking away with me after the Mayoral year, is the extent of community spirit and talent there is in Royston. I have been amazed at the number of community volunteers there are, all working quietly away in the background, contributing so much to the well being of Royston.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have supported me during the year, especially my Mayoress Maureen.

#### **4. PRESENTATION FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE SERGEANT STEPHAN OLIPHANT:**

Sergeant Oliphant informed the meeting that he had taken over as the neighbourhood Sergeant in October 2013 and that he had a small team of dedicated officers. Their new internet site will be going live next week.

He was pleased to report there had been a reduction in crime over the last year with 19 less victims of crime. His biggest concern was the significant increase in dwelling burglaries. He thanked town, district and county councillors for their support and also thanked Royston First Bid Co for their excellent support for operation Artemis which enables extra sessions of policing for night time patrols, the industrial area and on key dates throughout the town.

This coming year they will be focusing on dwelling burglaries and how to reduce them. A letter will be delivered to every household about home security and he has set his team a challenge to visit every home in the town to help reduce crime in the town. He is also looking to increase Neighbourhood Watch areas. Any help from members of the public are welcomed.

He then asked if there were any questions, there were none.

The Mayor thanked him for his report and gave Sgt Oliphant apologies to the meeting for leaving as he was on duty.

## 5. REPORT FROM GERAINT BURNELL TOWN MANAGER

The Town Manager reported that the BID ( Business Improvement District) Company have been working on 16 projects over the last 5 years and with the renewal of the BID for another five years there are now a further 24 projects. They will continue to support Operation Artemis police patrols and Royston Picture Palace. At the Picture Palace from this weekend there will be showing of a promotional film on eateries within the town. There were over a 1,000 paying visitors to the cinema in January, for those of you who haven't been the cinema, it is a full cinema experience in the upper hall and this hall is converted into the cinema foyer on Friday and Saturdays nights, it is then converted back to a Community hall for use by community groups and organisations for the rest of the week.

All business rate payers were given a vote regarding the renewal of the Bid which puts an additional levy onto their business rates and there was an increase in the percentage of supporters.

Further projects include:

- Working NHDC Community Development Officer and the provision of a Youth Shelter in Newmarket Road Park near the Skate Park
- Working with Highways and the provision of Digital sign boards
- Employee parking scheme
- Negotiations are being held in regards to the opening of a Visitor centre in the town
- A 'Town App' to be run from the proposed visitor centre
- Retail Academy – to bring expertise into the town
- Window dressings are planned to be put in the old Marcelle's and Peacock buildings while work inside the stores is carried out.

The Mayor congratulated Geraint Burnell and Royston First on the renewal of the BID and thanked him for his presentation.

## 6. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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

I took over the leadership of the Town Council when our Town Mayor took up his present office, so this is the first time that I have prepared the Council Leader's statement.

I have now been a councillor in Royston for more than fifty years, in which time I have seen many changes in the way that services are delivered to our townspeople. However, I have noticed that recently the work of the Town Council has evolved to something like what the former Royston Urban District Council did in the period before the five-authority amalgamation to form North Hertfordshire District Council in 1974. This is because recently NHDC has been reducing its commitments in order to keep its finances within bounds.

There has been a consequent increase in the services for which the Town Council is responsible. Not that we were required to take such matters under our wing – but an example of what I am referring to is the toilets block at the Cross. If we had not taken them over, the District Council would have closed them. You will recall that we consulted the people of Royston, who indicated by more than 80 per cent of those who

responded to the consultation that they thought that it was desirable that we took on the maintenance of these toilets.

We took on the management of the market, which is a vital part of the trade and attraction of our market town. More importantly and topically, we now have the once in a lifetime chance to acquire the market area from its current owners. The Council has approved in principle the acquisition in the sum of £300,000, for which purpose it is necessary to raise a loan from the Public Works Loan Board. The Board is asking us to show that this proposal meets with the general approval of our townsfolk, for which purpose I hope that this evening you will comment favourably on our proposal. I will come back to this in a moment.

Other services that we provide rather than NHDC have always included the provision of public halls, such as this venue and the Market Hill Rooms, and the allotments. The other North Hertfordshire towns have these amenities via NHDC. Elsewhere too, NHDC provides a museum service. Here, we have our own Royston Museum and Art Gallery, a vital cultural and tourist attraction, which in my opinion is the best museum in the area. It is most encouraging to note how the number of visitors to it is growing under the management of our new curator.

We have decided to make provision for the departed as well as for the living. Knowing that the two cemeteries in current use will have no empty plots in five years time, we felt that Royston families ought not to have to depend on the NHDC burial ground 12 miles away in Letchworth Garden City. We undertook an exercise to identify potential sites for a new cemetery in Royston. Twelve sites were examined but for a variety of reasons, only the one at Wicker Hall proved satisfactory and available. We have now purchased this piece of ground, obtained planning permission for its new use and are making detailed plans for its layout and access.

Finally in this listing of properties run by the Town Council, I must, of course, mention the opening of Royston Picture Palace within the Town Hall. This could not have been achieved without the financial support of Royston First, the BID organisation, which has been a remarkable fillip to the business of our town. We know that Royston is unique but that epithet is amazingly applicable to Royston First, which is the only BID (business improvement district) to encompass both the commercial heart of the community and also take this opportunity of thanking Royston First for its five years of progress and of wishing it well as it starts its second five year stint. It was particularly pleasing that the recent vote by the business community showed a larger majority in favour of this initiative than five years ago.

Now let me turn to consider the finances of the Town Council. We always try to live within our means; in other words we do not look for increases in our Council Tax precept if we can avoid them. At the same time we have seen from examples elsewhere that it is stupid to run down any reserves that we may have, since eventually councils that do so find that they have to demand a big increase in Council Tax when the funds run out. Thus in the new 2014-2015 financial year we are asking for a Town Council share of the precept that is the equivalent for a Band D property of a less than 5p per week uplift and this is in order to meet the specific purchase of the market area, that I referred to earlier. The lease of the market had been costing the town some £15,000 per year. A PWLB loan will cost around £19,000 per year for 25 years but the market will then be the unencumbered property of the town for the first time. Forgive me as something of a local historian if I point out that from the 12th century until the

dissolution of the Priory during the reign of King Henry VIII, the market belonged to the Priory. It then passed through the hands of those who bought the assets of the Priory until within the last century it was owned by the Royston Market Company, whose successors are now looking to dispose of it to the town. An opportunity for us after 800 years!

Lastly, let me point out that controlled development in Royston is positive. You have only to look at the Austin Corner building across the road, the Opening of the Manor House, the work to revive the Banyers, and the promised new store at the top of Market Hill to recognise that the town is thriving. We on the Town Council will do our utmost to maintain this positive scenario. Furthermore I would like to thank the District and County councils, with whom we have excellent relations, and which provide us with constantly improving services in spite of financial stringency.

To sum up and briefly – Royston is in good heart and likely to remain so. We expect to continue to meet the aspirations of existing residents and we welcome new arrivals and visitors.

Now back to the matter about purchase of the Market Place. Information about the purchase of the Market Place has been made available for everyone and these details are also available on our web site and over the last few months the local press has been reporting the council's deliberations on this matter. The Town Council was unanimous in its vote for raising funds to purchase the Market Place and now I would like to hear your views.

Mr Gould asked - Is it right that we need to take out a loan for 25 years for an extra £4,000 per year and is there likely to be a market in five years time?

Cllr FJ Smith responded - the market has operated for many centuries and we believe will continue to do so as trading varies, it is important to gain ownership of the Market Place and Market Rights for the town and to stop it being purchased by anyone else. This building we are in now, the Town Hall, was purchased by the council with a 60 year loan.

Mr Gould then said what Authority would allow the Market Place to be built on and it was nonsense to committee to a 25 year loan for a market which was declining. Cllr F J Smith replied, legislation changes, it is important to protect the heart of the town and to secure the land for long term.

Cllr Davison then commented that the nature of the Lease for the Market Place is for increases in rent in line with RPI so in time the rent will more than £15,000 per annum in ten years time. It is also important to have parking in the centre of the town. Purchase of this land is a good and sound investment for the town.

Other comments from electors were:

- a) Important to keep this land for the twice weekly market and to have parking in the centre of town. Parking also generates income.
- b) I'm passionate about Royston and we need to keep land for the future
- c) I shop twice a week at the market and pleased to see we have a new market manager starting.
- d) Saffron Walden market is expanding and with a new manager in place hopefully Royston will also.
- e) Does the council make a profit from the market and parking fees collected?  
The Town Clerk confirmed no profit is made at the moment after all expenses such as , rent £15,000 per annum, rates, Bids levy, insurance, cleansing, advertising, and

market manager costs are taken into account. We also need to put funds aside for resurfacing of the area.

There were no further questions. Cllr F J Smith then asked for a vote for those that supported the taking out of a loan to purchase the Market Place, 31 showed their support and 2 voted against it.

### **Report from Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor Mrs Berry:**

Mr Mayor, fellow councillors and members of the public, may I present to you the report for the planning committee for the period 1 April 2013 to 6 March 2014.

There have been slightly more applications this year going from 97 last year to 109 this year. Out of these, there have been 16 objected to by Royston Town Council after taking the views of the committee members into consideration, NHDC refused 10 of these applications, 3 were withdrawn and 3 are ongoing. All other applications were approved.

Quite a few of the applications were for change of use from retail to either dwelling or restaurant use. As you will appreciate, it is not the Town Council's responsibility to attract businesses to take up empty shop spaces, contrary to what sometimes appears in the letter page of local newspapers, it is the property owner/landlord's responsibility to actively try to fill their empty properties. Unfortunately, our High Street is not any different to many like it around the country and is struggling to attract businesses.

What the committee does try to ensure is that where possible, the retail aspect is maintained but as I have stated before, the final decision is down to NHDC and the planning regulations.

I do have one piece of good news; if you attend this meeting regularly you will have heard me questioning the start date of the development of the old cinema site. It was a little spooky that after last year's meeting the development got underway almost within a month.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Town Clerk and on occasion the Deputy Town Clerk for their expert use of the new system for viewing planning applications at meetings. You may not be aware that the town council no longer receives paper copies of applications and the applications now need to be downloaded and projected onto a screen at planning meetings, this is quite time consuming and heaven forbid we lose power at any time!

### **Report from Chairman General Purpose & Highways Committee, Councillor Harrison:**

Many different matters come before us each year. During the 12 months since we were last here, we have discussed items including:

- The Royston Youth Network. The Deputy Chairman, Cllr. Lindsey Davidson, updates the committee of their activities.
- Free Trees from the Woodland Trust. We discussed the Royston in Bloom working party applying for a small pool of free trees to be planted at Stile Plantation.

- Draft Water Management Plan. We were advised of the publication on this subject.
- Highways matters included discussions relating to speed limits on Baldock Road, Lumen Road parking issues, vehicle weight limits on Newmarket Road, cycling on footpaths and proposed traffic regulations for Newmarket Road/Priory Lane area. Other topics were the footpath from Ivy Farm to McDonalds, the Town Tidy up and details regarding the set up of a Food Bank for Royston.
- Discussion also took place regarding the possibility of cycle ways in Royston in the future linking with those being built in neighbouring South Cambridgeshire.

I must thank the Town Clerk for her help and assistance and for her hard work, together with all the staff in the office. We could not operate without their co-operation. I must also thank my deputy, Cllr. Lindsey Davidson and the other councillors on the Committee for their work throughout the year. Finally I must thank our County Councillor, Mrs Fiona Hill, who is always there to offer her help to us, along with the District Councillors who attend our meeting to offer help and advice when required. It is good to have the Town, District and County Councillors working together for the benefit of our town.

## **7. PRESENTATION OF THE MAYOR’S COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS AND COMMUNITY TRUST FUND AWARDS:**

**Community Trust Fund Awards;** these awards help local organisations with funding for particular projects within the town.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
First Royston Scout Group	To assist with the purchase of equipment to set up a 2nd Cub pack due to high numbers on the waiting list and replenish craft materials.	£200
Frank Letts Blind Fellowship Royston	To assist towards the funding of the annual summer outing to the Cambridge Motel which this year will celebrate the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Fellowship.	£350
Ignite Youth Group	To assist with the cost of holding a family community day on Good Friday	£300
Lions Club of Royston	To assist with the purchase of raw materials for Kite making workshop at the Royston Kite Festival	£300
Rotary Club of Royston	To assist with the cost of the transport to the ‘Youth Makes Music’ concert held in March 2014 at West Road Concert hall, Cambridge.	£250
Royston Arts Society	To assist with the cost of hiring the Heritage Hall for Art Exhibition as part of the Royston	£220

	Arts Festival	
Royston & District Community Transport	To assist with funding the purchase of a new wheelchair accessible minibus	£300
Royston & District Volunteer Centre	To assist with funding of one 'Successfully Involving Volunteers Seminars' in June 2014.	£145
Royston Open Secrets	To assist with the cost of supporting local community groups in their attendance at the annual exhibition	£100
Royston Time Bank	To assist with the funding to design and print publicity material to promote the 10 year celebration events of the Royston Time Bank	£250
The Open House Project	To assist with purchasing a computer projector	£340
The Royston Food Bank	To assist with one year's membership of the Trussell Trust supporting the startup of The Royston Food Bank	£350

Councillor B Smith then presented his Community Service Awards to:

#### **Chris Murphy - Royal British Legion**

In recognition of his services since 1996, in organising the Remembrance Sunday Parades and the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Royston, Chris has always efficiently organised these events and also coordinated the Poppy Day Appeal in Royston and the surrounding area.

#### **Royston Town Band**

In recognition of their work and dedication in representing Royston and in celebration of the band's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Town Band entertained us at the Civic Reception last October and at the Civic Service last month. They have recently signed a lease for their new rehearsal hall at Tannery Drift School and are busy fund raising for the band. They are currently rehearsing this evening for the London and South East contest which takes place next Sunday and we wish them well.

#### **Graham Pfaff - Royston Town Crier**

In recognition of his enthusiasm and dedication in representing Royston since 2003. Graham can often be seen around the town announcing local events and adds a colourful and historic look where-ever he goes.

#### **Royston Arts Festival Committee**

In recognition of the Committee's hard work and dedication in organising the successful annual Royston Arts Festival. The Arts Festival has received much public acclaim and last year was perhaps the most successful showcasing the depth of the talent in Royston to the many people who visited the town.

### **Mrs Joan Germany**

In recognition of her dedication over 50 years to youth work within Royston and more recently leading Pastoral Care at Queens Road Methodist Church. Joan is just one of many volunteers in Royston who largely go unrecognized and received little public recognition for all the work they do in Royston, contributing to the well-being of the town.

## **8. REPORT FROM HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR FIONA HILL**

Mr. Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to update the meeting on County Council issues. The Council continues to face challenging times but has been prepared for a reduction in expenditure, combined with the need to make savings – this year of around £13m, next year £45m rising to £105m in three years' time. At the same time, Council Tax has been frozen for a further year with no major cuts to front line services.

The County Council continues to support libraries and realises that they are a valuable asset in local communities. A consultation on the future of libraries has recently been carried out and the results are currently being analysed. Royston Library is presently undergoing a refurbishment and will open again to the public next week. There have also been some changes to opening hours to suit the needs of the users.

There is also a consultation taking place with regard to Children's Centres in the County and we should all be very proud of the facility in Royston, situated near Roman Way and Roysia Schools. This services Royston and the surrounding villages and works in partnership with many organisations such as Home Start, the schools and the health sector to help families with very young children.

Education remains one of the key responsibilities of the County Council. The relationship between local schools, the County Council and County Councillors remains strong even though the Middle and Upper schools are now a Federated Academy. Standards remain high with pupils achieving well. All schools First, Middle and Upper participate in inter school sports activities with excellent results and again participated in Youth Makes Music and the Technology Tournament, both arranged by the Rotary Club.

Partnership working continues with the Police and Fire Services, both of which also face challenges with budgets, whilst providing Royston with an excellent service, particularly during the challenging weather this year.

Health services in Royston have continued to be a concern for residents over the year. Following community rights to bid on the London Road site, the tender process was stalled. Following the national changes to the Health Service and the cessation of PCT's, the new organisations are, again, reviewing the future of Royston's health facilities. Together with our local MP and the County Councillor for the villages south of Royston, I have instigated regular briefing sessions with the Clinical Commissioning Group, GP's, NHS England and Propco and these have now been widened to include District and Town Councillors, Friends of Royston Hospital and RHAG. We are expecting details of a plan from the NHS shortly. The County Council is committed to a new care home and we are pushing the NHS to keep all our current services and more.

One of the main responsibilities of the County Council is Highways. A new contractor was appointed in October 2012 and both the main contractor and framework contractors remain well aware of the need to perform and are under constant scrutiny to provide a good service. Although we have not had the snow as in the past couple of years, there have been record levels of rain and wind, resulting in widespread flooding. This has led to other challenges and the contractors have worked well with partners to minimise the issues for residents and ensure the roads are open and traffic able to move about freely. We have resolved flooding issues in Burns Road and Newmarket Road and have also seen major roads such as Icknield Walk and Garden Walk completely resurfaced. Many others are planned for next financial year. Many thanks to the Highways and General Purposes Committee of Royston Town Council for their support of many of the schemes put forward.

The initiative for free salt to be ordered, for use in the community, continued again this winter and I would again like to thank Royston Town Council for storing and co-ordinating the orders and Councillors Bill Davidson, Tony Hunter and Gerald Morris for their help in distribution. The introduction of Highways Locality Budgets have also assisted in bringing forward schemes on many roads and pavements. These include many estate roads in Royston.

The Underpass has proved to be very successful and a safe link between the two sides of the town for pedestrians and cyclists. We have had some issues with maintenance but the area is now on a regular schedule and if there are problems a special clean can take place. Substantial finances have been invested into cycle routes within the town and walking and cycling continues to be a priority for the County Council. The cycle network across Old North Road is imminent and pedestrian crossings are planned across Baldock Road and Melbourn Street. I am also working with officers and councillors in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire County Councils to provide a solution to safe crossing of the A505 into Cambridgeshire. An investigation is currently taking place.

We are also looking at the possibility of 20 mph zones outside the schools and a survey is being conducted to gain views in other areas of the town. In Garden Walk the County Council is actively seeking a replacement Crossing Patrol and the Highways Locality Budget is funding an investigation into safety measures in Garden Walk outside the schools.

Community Locality Budgets have received a huge number of applications. The fund has, again, been able to support the Free After 3 Parking initiative in the Town Centre and also many local organisations. I am delighted to have been able to support these groups and that the Budget has been approved again for next year. Joint funding with Tony Hunter, County Councillor for North Herts. Rural, has increased the amount of funding given to various organisations for the benefit of residents of Royston and the villages.

I should like to thank all the officers (Town, District and County) and my colleagues on the Town and District Councils for their support. Thank you also to the Royston Town Councillors for welcoming me to their meetings.

Mr. Mayor this concludes my report. Thank you.

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING**

Report from Chair of Royston & District Area Committee Councillor Fiona Hill

Mr. Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you all for attending the joint Annual Town and District Council meeting. It continues to be an extremely effective way of engaging with the community in Royston and the surrounding villages.

The Area Committee has again covered a wide range of issues during the year. We have received presentations from Royston and District Twinning Association, the Young People of the Year organisation, Friends of Therfield School, the Police, Royston First, Royston Arts Festival, Young Enterprise, Royston Foodbank, Royston Town Band and the Ambulance Trust.

There have also been representations from residents of Windmill Close in Barkway regarding the potential land sale and petitioners requesting a splash park in Royston and safety issues outside the schools in Garden Walk. Windmill Close is being reconsidered by Cabinet and the Green Space Strategy now contains a requirement for a feasibility study to be carried out into a splash park. The County Councillor Locality Budget is funding an investigation into safety improvements in Garden Walk.

Members of the Committee have had input into the District Council Budget. The Area Committee has consistently lobbied against blanket increases in car parking charges across all car parks in the district and there will be a full review, car park by car park, town by town, which could result in decreases in some car parks.

We have also had input into the review of polling districts and polling places.

The school visits have continued again this year in Royston, organised by Councillor Lindsay Davidson and these continue to be very successful. The children always put forward a multitude of good ideas and issues of concern to them. Councillor Davidson also gave a very full report at Area Committee.

The Area Committee has continued to have input into Highways issues. Schemes from the County Councillor Highways Locality Budget have been discussed with Town and District Councillors, before being agreed for implementation. Together with input from local residents, this ensures the views of the community are taken into consideration. The Committee has also pushed for action with regard to flooding issues in Burns Road and Newmarket Road.

The Big Town Tidy Up, involving the community and councillors, has resulted in a joint working party to move forward with resolving the issues and the first meeting is to take place next week.

Section 106 funding, via the District Council and the Royston and District Committee's Discretionary fund and small grants budgets have been available again this year. The Committee was delighted to be able to support over £40,000 towards improvements to the Town Hall in order to accommodate the very successful cinema. We also supported the lights in the Priory Memorial Gardens, in order to extend the hours of use for the MUGA and the BMX track renovation.

Discretionary grants to organisations have included Angels Support Group, Royston Food Bank, Royston Scouts, Royston Town Band, Friends of Therfield School, Ignite, Rotary Club, Barkway Parish Council, Reed Village Hall, Home Start, Royston Open Secrets, Royston and Villages Children's Centre, to name a few.

Councillors are nominated on to various organisations and we have received reports on the Chamber of Commerce, Home Start, North Hertfordshire Homes, Royston Community Association (Coombes Community Centre), Royston Day Centre, Royston Town Twinning and the Sports Council. These organisations and all the immense number of other organisations in Royston are vital to the local community.

We have continued the "open air Council surgeries" held in the town. Royston Town Councillors and the Police also participate. These provide an informal opportunity for residents to approach Town, District, County Councillors and the Police but, of course, this does not replace any other means of contact. We were also joined by the Police Crime Commissioner in March.

I will conclude by thanking all the Council officers (Town, District and County) for their invaluable help and advice, particularly Alan Fleck (Community Development Officer) who will be retiring at the end of March. His hard work in the community and support to councillors will be hugely missed. My role would have been a great deal harder without him. I would also like to thank Susanne Gow our Committee Clerk, Councillor Bill Davidson, Vice-Chairman of the Committee and all other colleagues on the Area Committee, for their support and contributions throughout the Civic year. Thank you also to Susan Thornton-Bjork, (Town Clerk, Royston Town Council) and all her staff, members of the Town Council, the Press and public who attended our meetings.

Mr. Mayor this concludes my report. Thank you.

### **QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS:**

Nigel Reader: Are you aware that the Cozy Travel bus on occasions also uses the Green Drift route instead of Kneesworth St?

Councillor Hill responded that she was not aware of this and would investigate.

Jackie Gould: What progress has been made on the cemetery project?

Councillor Burt responded the council is still working on detailed plans, when these are completed the council will then arrange to meet with neighbouring residents and consult with NHDC.

Derek Emblem: I have contacted 4 companies, (Farm Foods, Wilkinsons, QD and Icelands) inviting them to take on retail space in the town, all of which have said No thank-you. – Malcolm Walker from Iceland said it was because there are not enough parking spaces nearby. Mr Emblem asked that the 3 loading bays in the High St and the taxi parking bays be turned back into parking bays and why were parking spaces planned to be turned into charging bays for electric cars?

Councillor Hill responded that the taxi rank was a contentious issue, the taxi firms had requested it but it is rarely used by taxis' and the situation is being monitored. Retailers in the High St have been consulted on about the loading bays and they want them kept as loading bays, we can investigate again if this is still the case.

In regards to electric charging bays, this is in accordance with the Government initiative to promote the use of low emission vehicles and to raise awareness of green transport issues and the opportunities available to the general public.

Town Manager Geraint Burnell then reported that he had also been in contact with Iceland who had said that the outlay to fit out a store in Royston was very expensive and the town was not big enough for them to be able to recruit the expenditure of the outlay.

Chris Murphy: Is there going to be a memorial for Holocaust Day?

Cllr B Smith replied that this had been debated by Town Councillors and the views of NHDC were being sorted. Chris offered his services to help move this forward and suggested the memorial could be called 'Peace Memorial'.

Rod Taylor said he was concerned over the safety of people using the footpath from Ivy Farm to McDonalds especially in the dark and asked who was responsible for re-instating it and was there a time frame that it was required to be done by?

Cllr Hill & Hunter responded that it was originally the utilities companies that dug it up and it was their responsibility to reinstate it, the time scale is 6 months. The utilities have failed to honour the agreement and legal have been consulted on this. Some of the Section 106 monies from the Ivy Farm, McDonalds and McCarthy & Stone developments will be spent on the footpaths in this area and two further pedestrian crossings will be installed in the town.

Gillie MacAdam gave his congratulations to the Royston in Bloom working party; in a few months they have done a great job in highlighting issues in the town centre and the importance of cleanliness of the town to encourage visitors. He welcomed the set up of a joint RTC and NHDC working party to take things forward. He asked if he would be able to attend the working party meeting.

Cllr B Smith explained that the meeting is not open to members of the public but any comments in writing were welcomed.

Mr Gould asked what the legal situation was regarding the path to McDonalds as it was taking so long to get done and also asked about repairs to the High St pavements.

Councillor Hill responded as above about the path and that Black tar infill was used to make the broken pavement areas safe. The area has been surveyed and the broken pavements are not really suitable for the High St as it is used by heavy lorries. A better solution is being looked into given that the area is a Conservation area.

There were no further questions.

The Town Mayor then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.20pm