

ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL AND NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

**Held in the Heritage Hall, Royston Town Hall, Royston, at 7.30pm
on Thursday 27th March 2008**

Present:

Royston Town Council:

Councillors Lill (Town Mayor) Berry, Doel, Grimes, Harrison, Kennedy Mayne, Phillips Prime and Smith,

Officers, Susan Thornton-Björk Town Clerk and Jean Waldock Assistant to Town Clerk

North Hertfordshire District Council:

Councillors Beardwell, Burt, Hill (Area Chairman), Hunter and Smith (Leader of the Council)

1 officer of the District Council, Alan Fleck

Hertfordshire County Council:

Councillor Doug Drake

Approximately 50 electors of the town

The Mayor opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from:
Town Councillors Davidson and Gaillard,
District Councillor Inwood
Shirley Thrussell

2. Minutes:

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 22 March 2007 were signed as a correct record.

3. Annual Statement from the Town Mayor:

The Mayor gave an overview of when he first came to live in Royston; there was Auction Rooms, a Cattle Market, a Co-Op and a busy charter market. Lots of things have changed since then and most of these have gone now and not been replaced. Tesco's now seems the

place to shop which has had an effect on the High St. The Town Centre Manager, Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council are trying hard to find ways to save the shops in the High St. In my view, if the right products are sold there will be success and we must continue to support the town centre shops.

The Mayor then thanked everyone who had supported his fund raising events throughout the year.

4. **Presentation of Community Service Awards and Community Chest Awards:**

The Mayor presented the following awards:

Community Service Awards to:

Peter Ketteringham - as Trustee of the Museum and for his involvement with the Royston & District History Society and many other Royston organisations.

Shirley Keith-Williams - for her many years voluntary service to Royston and District Museum (since 1989) and other Royston organisations.

Christine Whitbourn - for her voluntary services to Royston and District Museum and her fundraising support for the Friends of the Museum since 1999.

Colin Mingay - for his thirty years' dedicated service with Hertfordshire Constabulary, of which a third of this time was spent as a Royston Community Policeman.

Christine Baker - for her thirty-six years' dedicated service as a teacher at St. Mary's Catholic Primary School.

Community Chest Awards to ,

Organisation	Purpose	Award
Archaeology Family Fun Day	Family Fun Archaeology Day (part of National Archaeology Week) at Royston & District Museum in July 2008	£100
Friends of Guiding (Royston)	To improve, tidy and plant area in front of Guide Hut	£150
Rotary Club of Royston	Towards hire charge of concert hall for Youth Makes Music Concert	£250
Royston Arts Society	Towards the rental of hall for the Annual Art Exhibition 2008	£150
Royston Band	To assist with the costs involved in the Royston Town Band's trip to the Whit Friday Band Competition	£150
Royston & District Twinning Association	Financial assistance to take visitors out from our Twinning Town Grosselmerode	£150

Royston Greenfingers Club	To purchase shrubs for planting in gardens between Health Centre & Town Hall to improve appearance of area	£100
Royston Junior Netball Club	To purchase equipment including kit and balls	£150
St Johns Parenting Team	To help with running costs of a crèche for parents attending a morning, monthly, parenting café	£100
The Open House Project	To the costs of purchasing a camcorder to be used by young people for film making projects	£100
Westgate Dance Fund	To help towards transport cost of coaches to take girls to Earls Court to take part in 'Guinness World Record' event	£100

5. REPORTS FROM ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

Finance Committee: Leader & Chairman of Finance, Councillor Berry reported.

As you may have seen in the press, Royston Town Council was awarded Quality Status in December 2007. We are very proud to have achieved this recognition and being only the fifth council in Hertfordshire to do so.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Peter Lill, for his hard work on behalf of Royston and his charities over the past year, not only has he been busy representing the town of Royston but he took the time out in December to marry his Mayoress, congratulations to Wendy and Peter.

Royston has some wonderful attributes of which the council remains committed to supporting, the War Memorial, the Cave, Royston & District Museum and the May Fayre. We continue to support Royston in Bloom and were really pleased Royston achieved a Silver Award in the Anglia in Bloom competition last year.

The Community Chest Awards are always gratefully received; Royston Town Council has allocated money to top up the Community Awards Fund to ensure that projects can be supported for quite a few years to come

I also reported at last year's meeting there was a sum included in the budget for external re-decoration of the Town Hall. This as some of you may be aware has now been done.

It is the responsibility of this Council and all its members to keep costs to a minimum whilst continuing to ensure a level of service for the town. After many lengthy discussions with fellow councillors, and quite a few re-workings of the figures, the precept for 2008/09 was set at £179,560.

Planning Committee: Chairman Councillor Prime reported

Good Evening Ladies and Gentleman

The planning committee has had a busy year since last May. I would like to thank the Town Clerk, and the Town Hall staff, for all their help over the past months together with

my colleagues on the committee, who have worked tirelessly on a un-prescended number of Strategies and two bids to run the Town Market. I have been very fortunate indeed to have Councillors with key expertise in assessing what the District Council has laid before us in the Royston Town Centre Strategy, Housing Strategy and Land Allocations consultations.

One of the key responsibilities of the committee is to examine applications not just for technical aspects, but also to try and make sure that they blend in with surrounding buildings, many of which are very ancient and historical to the town.

A total of 114 planning applications where received. There were a number of contentious ones that concerned residents of the town greatly and a number of members of the public came and addressed the committee to voices their views. With the ever increasing number of applications decided by delegated authority at the Planning Authority, it provides the only opportunity for public debate of some planning applications.

General Purpose & Highways Committee: Chairman Councillor M Harrison reported,

Last year we mentioned discussions were taking place with the police to set up a No Cold Calling Zone, this has now been done in one area of the town.

Gypsy sites were also mentioned, we understand that the sites mentioned just outside the town were found to be unsuitable.

Parking is a major problem in Royston and Royston Town Council informed the district of areas of concern particularly Newmarket Road. I'm pleased to see that restrictions will soon be in place. A parking strategy for the whole of the town centre in general is still under discussion by the district council. We are still trying to bring in a weight limit of 7.5 tonnes for Melbourn St to help protect the cave. We have had support from the NHDC Royston Area Committee and are still waiting the out-come of this.

Bus Services: The local bus service has been a major concern to us and we have discussed in length the withdrawal of the 17 service and expressed our opposition to this. It is now possible that some form of compromise could be found but details of this are not available as yet.

Royston Youth Council: We are pleased to have worked with North Herts District Council in setting up a Royston Youth Council. We hope this will help engage the young people of our town in some if not many of the issues that face us in connection with the youth. In addition, town and district councillors and a county councillor have visited schools in the town, to explain the workings of the various councils and to listen to the students' points of view.

In closing, I would like to thank my deputy, Councillor Philip Mayne and the other councillors for their support and also the town clerk, her assistant and the other members of staff for their help and assistance. I would also like to thank our County Councillor Doug Drake and various District Councillors who have attended our meetings, their input and advice is always greatly appreciated.

6. Report from Hertfordshire County Councillor Doug Drake:

Councillor Drake expressed thanks to Royston Town Council and its officers both for their support and for giving him the opportunity to make a short report concerning your County Council:

- The County Council had recently done a survey on views of living in Hertfordshire and over 80% are satisfied living in the county, where people are dissatisfied, it is mainly in relation to the state of the roads
- Household waste recycling centres and libraries are the most used services and the services which received the highest satisfaction scores overall. Many who use the libraries feel the new opening hours are more convenient and that it has increased usage
- The Hertsdirect web-site is becoming more user friendly and providing more information
- Climate change – Residents are willing to change but only 41% agree HCC are handling climate change effectively

These survey results are important and inform council when decisions are being taken.

- Highways: This coming year there is to be £10 million investment to continue improving roads/footpaths and drainage with money being funded from sales of HCC assets
- Social Care Housing: Costs continue to rise. More beds are being provided in care homes and more and more people are being cared for in their own homes, this has created a rapid rise in staffing levels and overall costs and these continue to rise year on year
- Airport expansion: HCC are opposing BAA's application of second runway at Stansted because of the pressure it will create on both population growth and the insufficient infrastructure. Interestingly, the new proposals for relocating aircraft holding patterns will remove much of aircraft movement away from Royston.
- Railway Underpass: The underpass is on track to be done over the Christmas 2009 period; this is supported by the Funding for the Sustran Lottery. HCC would welcome further support of funding from both the District and Town Council
- Bus Services: The loss of the local bus service has caused much stress for both young and old people in the town. County Transport are making arrangements to run a bus for 1 day a week based on the No 17 route to establish what demand and usage there could be. A new route is also being planned for a regular link between Royston – Ashwell - Baldock – Letchworth, details of this are still to emerge, I am seeking that if possible it could also provide a link to Lister Hospital.

Finally Councillor Drake concluded with saying that this coming year will be my last as your elected Royston County Councillor and I wish to assure everyone that I will give as much effort and time to my final year in office as in the past.

7. North Hertfordshire District Council Royston & District Area Public Meeting – District Councillor Fiona Hill, Chairman of the Royston & District Area Committee:

Thank you all for attending the 9th joint Annual Town and District Council meeting, which remains an excellent opportunity for public participation in the town.

Although there have been significant changes to its format during the current Civic year, the Area Committee has, again, had a busy term.

In May 2007, the Planning function was removed from Area Committees and a Planning Control Committee was formed. Prior to this, Royston Area Committee, once again, refused the planning application in respect of 16-20 Green Drift. Unfortunately, despite opposition from Councillors and residents, the developers won the appeal. This was very disappointing, particularly as a second application on the same site was also refused by the newly formed Planning Control Committee, resulting in another appeal by the developers. This second appeal has now been withdrawn.

I am delighted that the dentist in Queens Road, for which planning permission was granted last year, is now up and running and greatly welcomed by residents of Royston.

It is very positive that, despite the concerns expressed, regarding the introduction of a Planning Control Committee, there has always been significant public representation at the meetings held.

Last year, I reported that the Area Committee had received a number of petitions. These related to car parking charges, bus services and closure of the bus station public conveniences. I am now pleased to report that reviews are currently taking place regarding parking and transport. Traffic Regulation Orders are in place for restrictions in Rock Road, King James Way and Newmarket Road and many of the loading bays are to be released for more free parking in the High Street. The public conveniences at the Cross and Fish Hill have been upgraded and rebuilt to comply with current legislation and negotiations are taking place between the Council and a private individual regarding the public conveniences at the Bus Station, which would result in them remaining open. The Area Committee has continued to provide funding towards cross border bus fares for the elderly and after opposition from the Area Committee regarding the cutting of bus services and working with County Councillor Drake, a trial is to take place, commencing at the end of April, to ascertain the usage of a bus on the 17 route and hopefully find a solution to the problem.

The Committee has been involved in consultations such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Development Framework, and Tree Strategy and is currently working on the Royston Town Centre Strategy and linked to this the Car Parking Strategy. It is vital that the Town Centre and Parking Strategies are right for Royston, as they form the basis for the future of Royston over the next 15 years.

At each Area Committee meeting, we have ensured that the agenda contains an item of particular significance to the community. These have included Neighbourhood Policing, with a presentation from the Police, plus Health, with presentations from the Health Authority and a local G.P.

There was also an agenda containing Youth issues and this has resulted in the Town and District Councils supporting and providing funding towards the formation of a Youth Council. The Youth Council has now been set up and will be attending the next Area Committee meeting.

The Royston and District Committee's Discretionary and Small Area Grants budgets have supported many organisations in the town throughout the year. We continue to support the Town Centre Manager who works extremely hard for the town and has progressed many initiatives during the year. We have supported the Town Council with grants towards hanging baskets for Royston in Bloom and towards Royston May Fayre. Funds have also been allocated to the Young People of the Year Award, the Youth Council, Tannery Drift Playgroup, Royston Day Centre, Royston Kite Festival and Royston Arts Festival, to name but a few. I would, at this point, like to thank Alan Fleck, Royston's Community Development Officer for his hard work within the community, working with organisations within Royston and for his support to me.

We have continued to work with the Highways Authority and have provided match funding from the Area Capital Visioning fund towards work in and around Royston. We are also working with Highways to try and find a solution to the problem of heavy vehicles in Melbourn Street, which threaten the Royston Cave.

Councillor Surgeries have continued and 2007 saw the first "open air surgery" held in the town. This was extremely successful and the exercise will be repeated again during 2008.

As always, I would encourage members of the public to attend our surgeries and meetings and participate. We greatly value this input.

I will close by thanking all Council Officers for their invaluable help and advice. I should also like to thank all my District Councillor colleagues on the Area Committee, together with Town and County Councillors, for their support and contributions throughout the year and the press for attending and reporting on the meetings.

8. Questions from Electors

Councillor Kennedy asked the Leader of the District Council about the costs of the new toilets at Fish Hill and the refurbishment of the toilets at the Cross and had a proper public tendering process been used. Councillor F J Smith replied that proper tendering had taken place and he would make available the costs to the Town Council for Councillor Kennedy. He also said that far too much money was being spent on consultation costs but they were instructed by Government to do them.

Neil Gutteridge asked about the costs for implementing the new parking provisions and the policing of them for Newmarket Road and King James Way. He commented that if the Town Hall car parking charges had been reduced this would have been a cheaper option. Councillor Smith said he would arrange for the details to be given to Mr Gutteridge after the meeting and reported that the new parking provisions had also been done for safety reasons.

Mr Gutteridge then commented that it was good to see that Royston is gradually moving forward with the Chamber of Commerce, Town Centre Forum, Royston Town Council and North Herts District Council all working for the benefit of the town and to remember the town's motto: A bonis ad meliora, which means: From good things to better. ...

As there were no further questions the Town Mayor thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and closed the meeting at 20.26pm

