

**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 29th March 2012**

Present:

Royston Town Councillors: Inwood (Town Mayor), Berry, Davidson, Freeman, Harrison, Mayne, F J Palmer, Smith and R Smith

RTC Officers: Town Clerk Susan Thornton-Björk, Jean Waldock Deputy Town Clerk & Carole Kaszak Museum Curator

North Hertfordshire District & Royston Town Councillor Burt,
North Hertfordshire District Councillors Morris, Hill and Davidson
Leader North Hertfordshire District Council Cllr Lynda Needham
NHDC Officer Alan Fleck

Hertfordshire County Councillor: Fiona Hill. Tony Hunter
Officer Helen McCormick

Royston First Bid Co. Geraint Burnell

Royston Neighbourhood Police Sergeant Jonathan Vine

1 member of the press

Approximately 50 electors of the town

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from: Town Councillors: Beaver, Davison, Grimes, Hulstrom-Allen and Phillips,

2. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 31st March 2011 were signed as a correct record after the addition of Cllr Freeman included as present.

3. ANNUAL STATEMENT FROM TOWN MAYOR COUNILLOR ROBERT INWOOD:

It has been an honour to represent the town of Royston and the greatest honour has been the signing of the Twinning Agreement between Royston and Villanueva de la Cañada of Spain, I was also delighted to have attended the 25th Anniversary celebration of twinning with La Loupe. Another special occasion was receiving the visitors from America of members, family and friends of the 91st Bomb Group.

Royston has many great assets which include the cave and the museum and I urged people to visit both. The Friends of the Museum have commissioned a souvenir mug with the Queen's Coat of Arms on one side and the Priory Coat of Arms on the other for the Queens Jubilee, these are available from the museum only, price £5.95.

The town has a great community spirit and there are a lot of people who do a lot of volunteering and I would like to thank them all, and we must not forget the youth of the town, we must continue to support and work with them as they are our next generation.

As you may know, the Mayor traditionally raises money over the year with the main beneficiary being the Mayor's Community Trust Fund, which without support would otherwise have run out of money within a few years. As you will hear tonight the fund supports many local organisations. So far this year I am pleased to say, I have raised £7200 and this will be divided between the Community Trust Fund, the Royal British Legion and the Open House Project.

My thanks again for allowing me to be your Mayor; it has been a very enjoyable year. We will now continue with the rest of the meeting.

4. PRESENTATION FROM JON VINE:

Sergeant Vine gave a brief update on what has been happening in the town over the past year and said that recent statistics suggest we live in one of the safest towns in the country. Over all burglary and car-thefts are down, shop lifting remains the same as last year, with Tesco's being the biggest customer for this in the town. There have been no distraction burglaries for the third year in a row but there was 154 reported accounts of criminal damage and the police will be tackling the issue to get numbers down in the coming year. There have also been 55 counts of cannabis possession in the past year following a crack down on drugs by the police.

The ANPR cameras are having a positive effect and have caught groups' intent on committing crime in Royston. Over all he felt it had been a great year for Royston policing.

5. REPORT FROM GERAINT BURNELL ROYSTON FIRST BID CO LTD

Royston First is about to enter the 4th year of a 5 year program of improvements to the town. Our key focus is to maintain a vibrant and secure town in which to do business.

Operation Artemis: We are continuing to pay for extra policing which helps to preventing theft, damage and inconvenience to businesses through anti-social behaviour.

The **ANPR** cameras act as a deterrent to professional criminals thinking of visiting our town to commit major crime.

We help to maintain visitor levels to the town centre with our contribution to **FREE-AFTER-3 parking** and with the distribution of the parking **Scratchcard Scheme** which enables staff and visitors from companies outside the town centre to visit the town and park for a limited time, free of charge.

We also encourage and support new events that benefit businesses and the public alike: such as the:

- **INDEPENDENCE DAY** run by Royston Town Council's Markets Manager to highlight independent retailers and market traders;
- **OPEN SECRETS DAY** where retail businesses participate in an event on the heath;
- and the **ROYSTON ARTS FESTIVAL** where we will be sponsoring an initiative to promote live music in performance venues around the town.

The editions of **ROYSTON FOCUS** retailer guide were published and circulated to 15,500 households and business throughout Royston; it gives details of new and existing businesses.

Finally, the **COMMUNITY CINEMA** – a major project due for delivery this year and set to benefit the evening traders bringing evening visitors to the town centre, offering significant sales opportunities for the pubs and restaurants.

6. REPORT FROM CURATOR of ROYSTON & DISTRICT MUSEUM & ART GALLERY:

I am pleased to report that the museum has had over five thousand visitors so far dating from April 2011. During that time we put on six exhibitions and two of these gave local organisations the opportunity to showcase their talents; the superb Monochrome exhibition by the Royston Photographic Society and the arts project produced by four schools (Roysia, Greneway, Meridian and Melbourn Village College) which was commissioned by Royston Arts Festival. The latter one certainly represented a challenge as it incorporated 3d objects, which are not easy to display in our gallery but it drew a favourable response all the same from the general public and proud parents alike.

Other local groups outside Hertfordshire have also had successful exhibitions; the Harston Painters, Meldreth Monday Artists, MESCH embroidery group, and New Horizons (creative textiles).

The museum will continue to support the Royston Arts Festival as a hub centre; it is worth noting that last year's Festival brought over three hundred visitors to the museum in two days alone and pushed the September numbers to a record six hundred and twenty nine.

As a museum, we try to encourage creativity in all fields and cater for all age groups, so this year the museum has taken part in the 'Family Learning in Museums Initiative for Hertfordshire Museums' with the help of external grant funding. As a result, we have introduced several simple activities for the under 5s which parents can engage in and have had some very positive feedback. This does not mean we have neglected the older age groups; I reported last year on the Reminiscence for Wellbeing Project (again funded by a generous external grant) which enabled the museum's team to go out into the community to deliver reminiscence sessions, this has gone from strength to strength. We have connected with around two hundred people by visiting Royston Day Centre, the Frank Letts Fellowship, and local residential homes, all with very positive feedback. The museum team now has ten members who have all received professional training in how to approach people suffering from dementia and/or short term memory loss in a sensitive way.

We continue to work with schools with the object box loan resources and workshops both in and out of the museum, and also the recent schools project for the hoardings on the old cinema site. We have also managed to maintain the Royston Time Trackers, the young archaeologists' group begun by Sylvia Beamon and Clive and James Dilley. James is now at university and it looked as if Time Trackers would cease but thankfully Sylvia's health has improved so that she has been able to continue.

Of course this year is all about Royston 2012 'A Year of Celebrations' and the museum is very much a part of this. There will be a three part exhibition commemorating the 850th Anniversary of Royston Priory, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics starting on Jubilee weekend June 2nd continuing until the end of September, and the Friends of the Museum have commissioned a souvenir mug with the Queen's Coat of Arms on one side and the Priory Coat of Arms on the other, price £5.95, all proceeds will go to the Friends. Stocks are limited and they are obtainable only from the museum.

I would just like to mention the Royston Local History Society which has also contributed to the museum's services we offer by funding the equipment for an oral history project. One of our volunteers is recording the memories of Royston's past and this will go ultimately to be uploaded to the BBC and Hertfordshire Archives website.

As an Accredited museum we have a duty of care for the collection but it can be a costly business. I am pleased to report that the Society has also recently approved funding for the care of the museum's collection of sixty seven watercolours by Whydale, to be achieved in three stages. A selection of these watercolours is on display at the museum until the end of May prior to conservation, and they will then go away to be cleaned and remounted by experts.

We have a new temporary member of staff, and we are both thoroughly committed to keeping the museum up to date in line with all Hertfordshire museums but I will finish by repeating what I said last year - that the museum would not be able to function as an amenity for the town without the generous financial support of Royston Town Council, the Friends of the Museum, the Royston & District Local History Society, and the goodwill of its loyal band of volunteers.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their excellent reports and gave a special thanks to all those who are involved with the museum.

7. PRESENTATION OF THE MAYOR'S COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS AND COMMUNITY TRUST FUND AWARDS:

Councillor Inwood presented his Community Service Awards to:-

Mrs Florence Smith in recognition of over 17 years' voluntary service as a Treasurer of Royston Townswomen's Guild.

Mr Kevin Clarke in recognition of outstanding service to Royston Chess Club for over 25 years.

Mrs Jean Ralls in recognition of voluntary services to Royston Museum by spending time stitching the Royston Tapestry every week since 1993

Mrs Kitty Verling in recognition of voluntary services to Royston Museum by spending time stitching the Royston Tapestry every week since 1998

Mrs Freda Wright in recognition of voluntary services to Royston Museum by spending time stitching the Royston Tapestry every week since 1993

Sue Walters in recognition of voluntary services to the Royston area of the Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Services for over 22 years.

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

ORGANISATION	PURPOSE OF GRANT	AMOUNT FUNDED
Arts Society	To assist Hall rental for the Annual Art Exhibition.	£200
Churches Together in Royston and District	To assist with the cost of holding a family fun day in the Priory Memorial Gardens to celebrate The Queens Diamond Jubilee.	£300
Electralites	To assist with the purchase of new uniforms and equipment.	£500
Frank Letts Blind Fellowship of Royston	To assist with the cost of the Fellowship's summer outing.	£300
Open House Project	To assist with the purchase of an integrated twin CD player/mixer	£250
Parish Church of St. John the Baptist	To assist with the cost of hiring the Royal British Legion Hall and Royston Town Band on 15 th April 2012 for a Tea Dance in respect of the 2012 Celebrations.	£300
Rotary Club of Royston	To assist with the annual Youth Makes Music concert.	£300
Royston & District Town Twinning Association	To assist with the costs of taking visitors from Großalmerode to visit Burghley House.	£250
Royston Volunteer Centre	To assist with the cost of replacing existing laptop.	£445
Royston 2012 Coordinating Committee	To assist with the cost of the 2012 closing ceremony	£300

8. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Report from Councillor R Smith Leader of the Council & Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Mr Mayor, on behalf of us all, I would like to thank you for the time and dedication you have put in over the past year representing our town of Royston as Mayor. It never ceases to amaze me how someone with a young family and in full time employment finds enough time to represent our town at so many functions throughout the year and, raise so much money for your chosen charities. I am sure that you will all join with me in thanking our Mayor for his efforts.

I would now like to spend a few moments in reporting what has been happening in Royston over the past year:-

Quality Council I am delighted to announce that Royston Town Council has recently been re-Accredited as a Quality Council. We were first accredited in December 2007 and required to reapply after 4 years. I would offer my thanks to the Town Council staff for preparing the application and ensuring that we continue to meet Accreditation requirements.

Royston 2012 - A Year of Celebration This year, Royston will be celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the London Olympics and the 850th Anniversary of Royston Priory founding, which led to the establishment of our town. The Town Council have organised a number of themed events throughout the year including a Royston in Bloom competition between April and July, May Fayre on 7th May, exhibition and workshops in our Royston Museum and Art Gallery May to August, a Jubilee Tea at Three party on 2nd June, Sports Fayre and Fashion Show on 14th July and a closing ceremony on 23rd November. Numerous organisations have also arranged many other themed celebrations from April through to September and all these events have been co-ordinated by a Royston 2012 Co-ordinating Committee headed by Cllr Lindsay Davidson to whom we owe a vote of thanks for all her efforts in ensuring a successful year of celebrations. Full details of the events can be found on website www.royston2012.org and I would encourage all to take a look as I have not been able to mention all the events taking place. Earlier this week, excellent murals prepared by local schoolchildren were unveiled on the hoardings around the old Cinema site. These were sponsored by North Herts Homes and Rowan Homes to whom grateful thanks are given. The enthusiasm shown by all volunteers and the schoolchildren in supporting events in Royston during 2012 has been impressive.

Town Hall Community Cinema Last year I announced that building work had started in this Heritage Hall to install a lift and toilet for the disabled, refurbishment of the kitchen and decoration of the hall. This work was completed on schedule last year as the first step to providing a Community Cinema in the Hardwicke Hall upstairs. At the end of last year, we submitted plans to NHDC for the installation of double glazed uPVC sash windows in Hardwicke Hall but, as the Town Hall is a building of Special Local Interest within a Conservation Area, the planning application needed to be presented to the NHDC Planning Control Committee for a decision. This committee granted approval last month and work is to commence very shortly for the installation of these windows which are required to suppress road traffic noise into the cinema. This delay in receiving planning approval had prevented us from moving the project forward for several months but we are now pushing ahead with all the other works required for the cinema and an opening date will be announced in due course. We are delighted that work has restarted and are sure that it will provide a much needed leisure facility for the residents of Royston.

RTC Consultation Questionnaire During the months of January and February this year, the Town Council consulted with residents on a number of initiatives being considered which collectively could increase the Royston Town Tax Precept by between 10p and 15p per week for a Band D property if implemented. The questionnaire was distributed to over 6000 households throughout Royston and responses were received from 714, giving a good response rate of nearly 12%. We thank residents for responding to this questionnaire.

The first question requested whether residents would support Royston Town Council providing a new cemetery in Royston. The vast majority of respondents supported the proposal.

Support	602 votes (84%)
Not support	61 votes (8.5%)
Neither agree nor disagree	44 votes (6%)
Void votes	7 (1%)

The Town Council has identified a suitable plot of land at the south end of Briary Lane. Detailed plans are now being prepared and the land will be purchased subject to planning permission being granted by NHDC, following due public consultation. We are still at the early stages of this development and further announcements will be made in due course.

The second question requested whether residents would support the Town Council in looking for additional allotment land providing it was self-financing. The majority of respondents supported the proposal.

Support	523 votes (73%)
Not support	31 votes (4%)
Neither agree nor disagree	127 votes (17.8%)
Void votes	10 (1.4%)

The land identified for cemetery use is more than adequate for that purpose and it is being considered that a separate part of the site may be used for allotment use.

The third question requested whether residents would support Royston Town Council considering taking over the cleaning and maintenance of the Public Conveniences at The Cross. The majority of respondents supported the proposal.

Support	573 votes (80%)
Not support	87 votes (12%)
Neither agree nor disagree	51 votes (7%)
Void votes	3 (0.4%)

As NHDC had advised it was their intention to close The Cross public conveniences in April, Royston Town Council, having seen the early returns of questionnaires, felt it prudent to include the annual maintenance costs in the RTC Tax Precept for 2012/13, this amounts to 2.5p per week for a Band D property in the first year. It is our intention to assume maintenance of the public conveniences from 1st April.

The remaining 2 questions related to the provision of Christmas Lights in the enhanced Fish Hill Square and better tourist information literature to attract more visitors. Neither of these received majority support, with 322 (45%) in support of Christmas Lights and 309 (43%) in support of tourist literature. These will not be progressed but will be kept under review.

Tax Precept This year has proven yet again to be financially difficult for everyone, residents and the Council. Last year, we managed not to increase the Tax Precept but after working with the Town Clerk in examining every item of expenditure and allowing for the extra expense of maintaining the public conveniences and the ever increasing utility and service costs, plus the cost for re-decoration of the council's properties, we have had to increase the precept from £222,783 to £244,310. This equates to a weekly increase of 7p for a Band D property.

I would take this opportunity to thank our local County Councillors and District Councillors for their generous financial support by way of grants given to various organisations throughout Royston and to Royston Town Council over the past year. Thanks are also due to "The Listing" magazine and Johnson Matthey for their sponsorship of the town council newsletter, the "Town Crier"

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank all the Town Council staff and my fellow councillors for all their hard work, support and dedication over the past year.

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 from the planning committee for the period of April 2011 to March 2012.

As a consultee in the planning process, the town council's Planning Committee meets monthly to consider applications that have been submitted to North Herts District Council. The committee's comments are then forwarded to the planning officer before the application is determined. Over the last year, we have discussed over one hundred applications, out of this the committee objected to nine of them.

I should like to thank the council staff for their sturdy work over the period ensuring all applications are presented to the committee in advance of meetings and the committee room is always prepared with precision and care.

Thank you Mr. Mayor this concludes my report.

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

Once again it has been a busy year for us and we have discussed many different matters over the course of the council year.

- School visits; Councillors have visited the local schools and spoke with staff and students. It can be quite interesting to learn the views of the younger members of our community. In this respect our thanks go to all the Town, District and County Councillors who give their valuable time to attend the Royston schools and discuss matters with students. In addition we also receive reports from the Royston Youth Network group.
- Speed Watch: this has now being operated by various Councillors including myself. The aim of this work is not to prosecute drivers, but to educate them to drive within the speed limits in our town and hopefully further afield as well.
- Local Transport Plan; our views were submitted on our local transport plan, and a new A10 North/South bypass has also been discussed.

- Cycle lanes: we have passed our comments on about plans put forward for the Old North Road area. I would add that in some cases our views differ from those put forward by the Highway Authorities.
- Recycling: Some Councillors attended the Cumberlow Green composting site to see how recycling is dealt with. A report was then made back to the committee and a suggestion was made that students from the senior school may benefit from a visit to the site to see how recycling is organised.
- Parking: Issues were raised re the matter of parking on grass verges in Newmarket Road, Priory Lane and the area where the new estate is being built close to the junction on the A10 and A505. These matters have been referred to the Area Committee of NHDC.
- Royston Hospital: We have also discussed Royston Hospital and the clinics which will need to be provided elsewhere if and when the hospital is redeveloped. These discussions are on-going.
- Salt supplies: The Committee agreed free salt supplies from Highways should be made available to local organisations.
- In addition, we agreed to support plans for remedial work for the Newmarket Road and A505 junction and to improve the verges along the B1039 for the benefit of walkers. It was further agreed for the repositioning of the 40mph and welcome sign on Baldock Road to take into account the new development at Ivy Farm.
- Drought management plan: The Committee has also agreed to support the water authorities drought management plan

I am due to attend the Hertfordshire Police Draft Strategic Policing Plan next Tuesday 3rd April 2012 at Welwyn Garden City.

I would like to thank my Deputy, Councillor Lindsay Davidson and the other members of the committee for their work and support over the year. I would also like to thank County/District Fiona Hill for all her support, along with County/District Tony Hunter and District Councillors Jean Green and Bill Davidson who regularly attend our meetings to offer their help and advice.

Lastly, I must thank the Town Clerk, Susan Thornton-Bjork, the Deputy Town Clerk, Jean Waldock and the other ladies in the office, Yolanda Hayes and Pam Robinson for their continued help and assistance.

9. 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. In common with other authorities, the Council is facing a very challenging time but has been prepared for tightening budgets over the last few years and as a result has managed, yet

again, to achieve efficiency savings, whilst freezing Council Tax for a further year and having minimum impact on front line services.

Last year there was a great deal of concern regarding Royston Library. The County Council is fully aware of how important this facility is in the Town and although cuts have been made in the opening hours, the Library has remained in Royston. The very popular Baby Rhyme Time has continued and the County has continued to work with the staff in Royston Library to ensure the best service possible is available for Royston residents.

The County Council continues to work in partnership with the Police and Fire and Rescue Services which are also facing challenges on budgets. However, despite these constraints, both are providing Royston with excellent services. Crime has reduced and the Fire Service is doing some great preventative work. Both the Police and Fire Services carry out awareness work with the schools in Royston and the surrounding villages.

The Children's Centre, which serves Royston and the surrounding villages, is going from strength to strength and I am delighted that County is continuing to support this resource. I am proud to be associated with it.

Education remains one of the key responsibilities of the County Council. Last year the Middle and Upper Schools were considering whether to move to Academy or Federation Status. In the end they became a Federated Academy which means that they share resources and are outside of the control of the Local Authority. However, these schools continue to work closely with the Local Authority and are still able to buy-in to the services and use the existing expertise, for the benefit of the children in the town and villages. Standards remain extremely high with pupils achieving excellent results. Yet again, the schools participated in the extremely impressive Youth Makes Music and Technology Tournament organised by the Rotary Club. Schools have also been competing in various sporting events over the year and have achieved brilliant results. Local schools designed murals for the North Hertfordshire Homes site and these were unveiled yesterday. It is very encouraging to see such high standards and engagement with the local community.

The concern over the future of health services in Royston remains. As you are probably aware, there has been a recent consultation on Intermediate Care and other services and a joint response has been submitted from your County Councillors and the Royston and District Area Committee. This response stressed the importance of the Intermediate care beds and the ancillary services provided at the Hospital by an extremely committed team of staff. We also stated that a financial legacy should remain in Royston for healthcare if any part of the site is sold at any point in the future and that the land should be used for healthcare services. At a meeting yesterday, amongst others, a recommendation was agreed to build an extension on the Health Centre.

The Underpass is nearing completion. I appreciate that there has been a great deal of inconvenience for many residents but the County Council and the contractors have tried to alleviate the disruption as far as possible. They have also been working closely with local residents. When the project is complete, there will be a safe link between the two sides of the Town. In addition, a crossing at the North end of the town is continuing to be investigated and I am working with officers to find a way forward.

Highways are another of the main responsibilities of the County Council. Hertfordshire Highways was well prepared for bad weather and gritting commenced again in October.

Fortunately, the end of last year and beginning of 2012 was not as difficult as the last two years.

The County Council introduced a new initiative where Town and Parish Councils could order up to 850 kgs of salt (in 25 kg bags if required) for use by community or residents' groups and organisations. We were delighted about this initiative as Councillors have been trying to obtain additional salt for use in the Town and villages for several years. It has been extremely successful and I would like to thank the Town Council for taking it on board and arranging storage and Councillors Bill Davidson and Gerald Morris for assisting with distribution.

Other positive work includes drainage work in the town, including in Fish Hill Square, which would not have been possible without the improvement scheme.

Hertfordshire Highways has invested funding of around £378,000 for roads and footpaths in Royston and £154,000 on drainage improvements.

I will conclude by mentioning that the Locality Budget has, yet again, been hugely successful with more and more applications being received. The fund has, again, been able to support the Free After 3 Parking initiative in the Town and assist many local organisations. I am delighted to have been able to support these organisations and so glad that we have the Budget to use again locally next Civic year. Applications are already being received and by joint working with Tony Hunter, County Councillor for North Herts. Rural we have managed to increase the amount of funding given to various organisations and I hope they have found this of benefit. During the forthcoming year, additional funding of £90,000 will be available for local Highways projects.

I should like to thank all the officers (Town, District and County) for their support and in particular Helen McCormick for supporting me tonight and her work on the Underpass project. Thank you also to Royston Town Council for welcoming me to the meetings.

Mr. Mayor this concludes my report. Thank you.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA PUBLIC MEETING

Mr. Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen

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

As always, the Area Committee meetings during this Civic year have covered a wide range of issues. We have received presentations including the Year 2012 Celebrations in Royston, the House Drop-in Centre, Fire and Rescue Service, City Kids are OK and Open Secrets. We have also received regular updates on the progress of the Fish Hill Square project, which is now complete.

We have received petitions regarding bus services around the town, cobbles in the town centre and provision of benches.

The Area Committee formed a joint response, with the County Councillors, to the consultation on Intermediate Care and Healthcare services in Royston, voicing strong support for the importance of the Care Beds and services currently taking place at the Hospital site and also stressing the importance of a financial legacy remaining in Royston for healthcare. The Committee has also had input into the District Council Budget process and once again Council Tax has been frozen.

Members of the Area Committee have, again, participated in the visits to the schools in Royston, organised by Town Councillor Lindsay Davidson and these have been extremely successful and very worthwhile. The last visit took place yesterday and at all schools the children were extremely enthusiastic and came up with many suggestions and ideas for us to take forward and consider. We discussed with the children the work of the Councils and listened to their views on what they liked about Royston and what they would like improved. The visits have taken place for a number of years and I sincerely hope will be repeated again next year.

As an Area Committee we are totally against all burials taking place in Letchworth. I and other members have spoken to this effect at Cabinet meetings and are delighted that, following these presentations, a decision was made to allow a relaxation in the decision date, which allowed Royston Town Council to work up a plan to provide another cemetery in Royston. The work on this is currently proceeding.

We also strongly resisted any car-parking charges on Sundays or Public Holidays and made presentations to Cabinet. I am pleased to say that, following this, the charges on these days will remain at zero.

The Area Committee has continued to work with Hertfordshire Highways and has provided match funding towards work in and around Royston. The work on improvements to the verges on Old North Road has been completed and gateway improvements on the A10, is imminent. A consultation is also due to take place in King James Way regarding parking restrictions. We are trying to address the speeding issues in various roads around Royston with the Police and Highways and are still trying to move the bus route back permanently through Kneesworth Street and away from Tannery Drift which is congested by traffic, particularly at school drop off and pick up times.

Section 106 funding, via the District Council and the Royston and District Committee's Discretionary fund and small grants budget has, once again, I hope, assisted a large number of organisations throughout the year. Grants provided have included the Electralites Majorettes, the House, Cruse, Churches Together, the Community Hub, Young People of the Year, Corvus Cornix Basketball Club, North East Herts. Schools Partnership, Royston Heath Archery Club, Royston Town Council, Royston Museum, Hang Out Youth Club, City Kids are OK, Rotary Club, Open Secrets and also a grant towards the Free After 3 Parking Scheme in Royston.

Councillors are nominated on to various organisations and we have received reports on the Chamber of Commerce, Home Start, Royston Community Association (Coombes Community Centre), Royston Day Centre, Royston Town Twinning and the Sports Council. All the community organisations do excellent work and should be hugely appreciated. We have continued the "open air Council surgeries" held in the town. Royston Town Councillors and the Police continue to join us. We are finding this is a great way of linking in

with the community but, of course, we can be contacted at any time if there is an issue of concern.

I will conclude by thanking all the Council officers (Town, District and County) for their invaluable help and advice, particularly Mr. Alan Fleck (C.D.O.) for all his hard work in the community and his support to me, Susanne Gow our Committee Clerk, Councillor Bill Davidson, Vice Chairman of the Committee together with all other colleagues on the Area Committee, for their support and contributions throughout the Civic year and also Susan Thornton-Bjork (Town Clerk, Royston Town Council) and her team (Jean, Pam and Yolanda). Thank you also to the members of the Town Council and Press who attended our meetings.

Mr. Mayor this concludes my report. Thank you.

QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS:

Rod Kennedy put his question to Councillor R Smith and said that the increase in precept should be quoted as a percentage and asked why the town council had increased its precept by 9.6% this year when the district council and police was zero? Councillor R Smith responded by saying that the increase was only 7p per week and was needed to cover raising utilities costs and the up keep of the council's buildings.

Mr D Emblem put his question to all councillors and said that the free after 3 parking was appreciated but said that the 3 loading bays in the High St were not used and why can't they be converted to free limited parking for 20 minutes? Councillor Hill replied, these have been changed on various occasions and these will be reviewed in the future.

Mr T Hutt (not a resident of the area) complained about the condition of the High St and that people were tripping over, Mr Kennedy said that the raised kerbs around the trees at the Cross were also a trip hazard. Councillor Hill responded that it would take a lot of work to alter the kerbs and that an officer was looking at the High St to see what can be done. She encourages the public to keep reporting problems with the pavements and roads. Helen McCormack said that the public can log on to Herts Direct to register problems; all problems reported are investigated and if dangerous will be repaired immediately.

Tim Greateux's question was about the ANPR cameras and he directed it to Sergeant Vine. He had concerns about personal data and who it was accessed by. Sergeant Vine explained that it was held at police head-quarters and only accessed by the police using a password. If people are not doing anything wrong then there was nothing to worry about. It is possible that information is passed to the Vehicle Licensing Authority.

Rod Kennedy said that the land being looked at for cemetery use was in a SK Zone 1 area. Councillor Burt confirmed that a small part of the site was in Zone 1 area and this area and a further 15 metres of the site will never be used for full body burials. Rod Kennedy then said as most people are now being cremated why was the cost of developing a burial ground being inflicted on everyone? Councillor Burt replied that the ratio was 60 cremations to 40 burials and that the site will also be for interment of ashes. Draft plans had only just been received and the full costs had not been identified yet. A donation to purchase the site had been received. Councillor R Smith said that the recent consultation by the town council was that 84% of the replies were in support of the town council providing a cemetery for the residents of Royston. Rod Kennedy then said that the land by the Meridian Line was ideal for green

burials and Councillor Burt replied that this had been investigated and the land was not available.

Bridget Matthews asked if there was any update on the closure of the CAB office in Royston. Councillor Hill said that Herts County Council did provide funding but it was not in their control of what they decide to do. The council had not received any official notice of closure. A central telephone system was in operation.

Mr Kennedy asked Councillor Berry if the town council had responded to the North Herts Housing Growth Strategy Consultation. Councillor Berry said that a response had been made and that the council had made some objections, the response was made on-line. Councillor Hunter said that this document identified numbers, not sites, and that a further consultation will be done for sites.

Tim Greateux asked about the proposed community cinema in that, if it is not sustainable what will the cost be to the local tax payer? Councillor R Smith responded by saying that it was a joint project between the Royston First Bid Company and Royston Town Council. The council's money was from a ring-fenced account which was acquired from the sale of a council asset some years ago and this has to be spent on a capital project. An indication from a previous consultation shows it will be well supported.

The Town Mayor then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.10pm