

**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 31st March 2011**

Present:

Royston Town Councillors: Beaver (Town Mayor), Berry, Davidson, Davison, Harrison, Mayne, F J Smith and R Smith
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 Marshall, Hill and Davidson
Officer Alan Fleck

Hertfordshire County Councillor: Fiona Hill. Tony Hunter arrived at 8.10pm
Officer Helen McCormick

Royston First Bid Co. Geraint Burnell

Royston Neighbourhood Sergeant Jonathan Vine

2 members of the press

Approximately 50 electors of the town

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to join him in paying tribute to all of the people who have passed away in the last twelve months and to have a minute's silence.

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from: Town Councillors: Grimes, Palmer, and Phillips,
Cllr L Needham and David Levett
Mary Caldwell Planning Manager NHDC
Apologies for lateness County & District Councillor Hunter

2. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 25th March 2010 were signed as a correct record.

**3. ANNUAL STATEMENT FROM TOWN MAYOR COUNILLOR MARTIN
BEAVER:**

Firstly he thanked everyone who has sent him letters of condolence since the passing away of his father last week and said his family is very grateful.

With only a few weeks left to the end of his term as Mayor he thanked everyone for making his time so special. It had been a joy to attend all the events he had been invited to.

He could not mention all of the events as there would not be a lot of time left for the rest of the meeting but needless to say he cannot praise enough all the groups, organisations and individuals who work so hard in Royston. They should all be proud of themselves on how much they all enrich all of the lives of the people of Royston and beyond.

In the past he heard comments that there is not a lot going on in Royston, but said, with confidence, that there is a lot to do in Royston if people would take the time to stop and look. He has worked hard to raise as much as possible for his chosen charities this year and the generosity he had encountered throughout the year had continued to amaze him.

He then asked to put on record, his thanks to his wife Caroline and all the Town Council staff for all of their support.

He will be sad to hand over the chains in May but will be confident that whoever takes his place as Mayor will do an outstanding job.

Councillor Beaver then thanked the people of Royston for the opportunity to serve them.

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 overall crime has fallen in Royston over the year and said that there had been no instances of GBH in Royston this year.

He then gave an update on Operation Artemis which was initiated in July 09 and funded by Royston First. This had enabled two extra police officers to be in the town on Friday and Saturday nights to conduct patrols in the Town Centre and Royston Industrial estate.

Funding for ANPR cameras to make Royston a safer place had also been received. Plans were proceeding ahead for the Community Speed Watch which would be carried out by volunteers and Royston's 'Dog Watch' scheme will be launched soon. If anyone is a dog owner and wants to help the local community stay even safer, then please contact PCSO Penny Tomsett who is starting the scheme, she will explain what it's all about and how you can help to be the 'eyes and ears' of the community while out enjoying a walk with your dog.

Mr Kennedy asked in relation to ANPR cameras 'why people should have their details stored on a database and that he did not agree with this'? After further discussion the Mayor asked that Mr. Kennedy speak with Sergeant Vine after the meeting.

5. REPORT FROM GERAINT BURNELL ROYSTON FIRST BID CO LTD

Geraint Burnell gave an update on the work of the Royston First Bid Company:

- **Policing:** Operation Artemis funding was in place for the next twelve months and funding had also been provided for ANPR cameras.
- **Parking:** The project 'Free after Three' in town centre car-parks continues. A new parking initiative for business' outside the town centre is about to be launched which uses scratch cards for 1 hour free parking
- **Angel Pavement:** Refurbishment of Angel Pavement had now been done with a few sagging items to be completed.

- **Window Dressing:** Empty shops in the town continue to have their windows dressed with pictures of local scenes to improve the appearance of the centre; there are only four empty retail units in the town at present.
- **Community Cinema:** This year's project. Funding will be provided for installing a 'state of the art' cinema into the Town Hall.
- **Retailers Guide for Royston:** An A3 leaflet focusing on what's happening on the retail side of Royston will soon be published it will give details of new retailers in the town and have details of over 200 companies listed on the back.

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

Councillor Beaver gave his thanks to Mr Rod Kennedy for initiating the start up of the Mayor's Community Trust Fund while he was a council member and congratulated everyone who had been granted an award.

The Mayor presented his Community Service Awards to:-

Zöe Barfield	In recognition of over 13 years' voluntary services to young people by establishing and running the Electralites Majorettes
Margaret MacCormack	In recognition of many years' voluntary service to Ignite Youth Club
The Volunteers of Heathlands Animal Sanctuary	In recognition of many years of hard work rescuing, rehabilitating and re-homing domestic pets in Royston and the surrounding area
Dr John Hedges	In recognition of outstanding service to the community as a GP and for many years' voluntary service to MAGPAS and Royston Hospital
Rev. Canon Les Harman	For outstanding services to the community as vicar of St. John the Baptist Parish Church since 1995
Christine Knight	For outstanding services to Royston Tennis Club for many years and in recognition of her hard work towards providing new tennis courts for the people of Royston

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
1st Royston Scout Group	Towards the cost of re-laying the area in front of the Scouts' headquarters

5 'O' Table Tennis Club	Towards the costs of replacing table tennis tables
Electralites Majorettes	Towards the purchase of 20 batons for use in displays and competitions
Ignite Youth Group	Towards providing activities for the children
Rotary Club of Royston	To assist with hire of a venue and transport costs for the 'Youth Makes Music' concert
Royston & District Town Twinning Association	To assist with the celebrations of the 25th Anniversary of the Town Twinning with La Loupe
Royston 2012 Coordinating Committee	Towards the costs of the 'Royston 2012 – A Year of Celebrations'
Royston Arts Society	To help towards the rent of the Heritage Hall, Town Hall for the annual art exhibition
Royston Parish Church Flower Arrangers	Towards the costs of the Flower Festival in July
Royston Tennis Club	Towards the costs of club equipment for junior teams and schools' programmes
The Frank Letts Blind Fellowship	Towards the costs of the summer outing to Anglesey Abbey

The Mayor then said he had one more award to present tonight, a very special one, to a truly outstanding individual, who has served Royston in so many ways. 'His wisdom, knowledge, devotion to Royston is truly amazing and he continues to serve today, but it would be remiss of me not to celebrate an outstanding achievement. So I invite Councillor F J Smith, to accept this small memento from me, to commemorate his 50 years of service to Royston'.

6. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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

On your behalf, I would like to thank Councillor Martin Beaver for the hard work and dedication he has put in over the past year as Mayor of Royston. As he has just announced, even in these difficult financial times, he has had a successful year in fund raising on behalf of his chosen charities and supporting so many different voluntary groups in and around Royston. You may recall that in the previous year, the then Mayor, Councillor Rod Kennedy, proposed that, in order to ensure a regular income and to take advantage of any charity relief, the Community Chest fund be changed to the Royston Town Mayor's Community Trust Fund, with half of the Mayor's fund raising going to the new Community Trust and half to the Mayor's chosen charities. I

am pleased to confirm that this new Community Trust was formed earlier this year and that awards to help local organisations with funding towards particular projects within the town have just been made. I am sure that you will join with me in thanking our Mayor for his efforts.

This past year has seen many good things happening in Royston, in no particular order these are:-

MUSEUM I will not go into great detail as our Curator, Carole Kaszak, will be presenting her report later, but it would be remiss of me not to say the following. At the beginning of January, our Royston & District Museum and Art Gallery was closed for some 6 weeks to allow for the installation of much needed improved lighting and the refurbishment and layout of display cases. In excess of 400 new items are now on display and the Museum re-opened on schedule on Saturday 19th February. Positive feedback from visitors has been received and, if you have not yet been along to see the improvements, I would strongly encourage you to make a visit. Special thanks are due to our Curator Carole Kaszak, her assistant Anstey Garrick Green and the small but willing team of volunteers for all their hard work in the refurbishment. Special thanks are also due to the North Herts District Council Area Committee for their substantial and generous award of a grant for the cost of the lighting improvements.

TOWN HALL As you may have noticed as you came into the hall this evening, work has started to install a lift in the main entrance lobby and to provide toilets for the disabled in the area behind you. The existing small kitchen area will also be refurbished and this Heritage Hall will be redecorated. This work represents the first stage of providing a Community Cinema in the Hardwicke hall upstairs, for which, detailed plans are currently being drawn up in conjunction with Royston First BID Company who are making a substantial contribution towards the cinema projection equipment and seating. I am sure that you will agree that this refurbishment is long overdue. We are delighted that it has started and are sure that it will provide the residents of Royston with a much needed leisure facility.

2012 EVENTS To celebrate the 2012 London Olympics, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the founding of Royston Priory 850 years ago, which led to the establishment of Royston town, the Town Council decided to form a co-ordinating committee for all the special events which will be taking place in Royston during 2012. The co-ordinating committee has met several times and we have been delighted and amazed at the number of events being planned by various organisations to take place in 2012. The Town Council has been concentrating on events to celebrate the London Olympics and we are being helped by Hertfordshire is Ready for Winners as a leading pioneer in Hertfordshire for co-ordinating Olympic events. May events are being planned with an Olympic theme such as the May Fayre.

FISH HILL SQUARE ENHANCEMENTS Royston Town Council supports the NHDC initiative for enhancing Fish Hill Square. Pupils at Meridian School have entered a competition to design a piece of sculpture which is proposed to occupy a prominent position in the Square and the winning entrant has now been chosen. Public consultations have been held on the design proposals for the Square and work is anticipated to commence in the next few months.

CEMETERIES I am sure that you will have read in the local press that the Royston cemeteries are now approaching maximum capacity and it was being proposed by NHDC that all future burials be at Wilbury Hills in Letchworth from April. Royston Town Council will endeavour to provide an alternative cemetery within Royston and NHDC have agreed to give us until January 2012 to try and resolve this sensitive matter which has caused a great deal of concern amongst local residents.

POWER OF WELL BEING The Town Council has recently adopted the Power of Well Being which will allow us provide further services to the local residents which are, for example, currently provided by NHDC.

ROYSTON CAVE As I reported last year, extensive work to monitor the effects of vibration and environmental conditions within the Cave has been taking place. Results of the vibration study will soon be available and will be reported on in due course and any action required will be taken to preserve this unique structure.

This year has again proven to be financially difficult for everyone, residents and the Council. The Finance Committee, working with the Town Clerk, has again examined every item of expenditure to ensure that money was being well spent and that our assets are generating the best rates of return. This year, we have not increased the Tax Precept and kept it at the same level as last year at £222,783.

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

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 June 2010 to date.

Firstly, 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.

Again, due to the economic climate there seems to have been a drop in planning applications, having had only eighty nine during the period. Sixty eight of them were supported fully by the council, one was withdrawn, another twelve of them were supported but with our concerns or stipulations expressed, and eight of them were not supported.

There have been some large building plans submitted and these have been widely publicized in the press, as always, this committee has the interests of Royston in mind when we respond to any consultations and hope this is shown in the results.

One positive is that the old Ling Dynamic site is now nearing completion and I for one look forward to having a good look round.

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.

The condition of our roads has been discussed as well as footpaths. In many cases the assistance of our colleagues at district and county has helped to resolve many of the problems. It would be fair to say I have via the internet referred many problems to the Hertfordshire Highways people. In addition, with the help on many occasions of our County Councillor Fiona Hill, many are resolved or are in the process of being so.

A lot of time has been devoted to Fish Hill Square. We have made our input to the district council and hope the end result will greatly enhance that area of the town which could do with a face lift, and improve our town for the residents and visitors.

We have also continued to keep in touch with the proposed Railway Crossing at Coombes Hole, and of course, the effects this will have on the allotments in that area.

We were also asked to request a change of name to the link road between Fish Hill and Market Hill so that it was named after a previous Mayor who served with distinction twice, but it was felt he deserved a much better piece of tarmac to honour his name, and it was suggested one of the new estate roads when built would be better suited.

Speed Watch has taken up a lot of discussion time, and several councillors have undergone Criminal Record checks to ensure they are suitable people to operate the system. I am pleased to say no councillor has a criminal record unless he or she owns a Cliff Richard one.

The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge; we have nominated a suitable open space for a possible grant and have nominated the Green Walk Plantation, we are yet to hear if we have been successful. There are, of course, other open spaces in the town but it had to be land owned by Royston Town Council.

A petition has been received about the old 17 bus route, and this will be discussed at our next meeting on Monday 4th April. In addition, we have been asked to put the seat back in the High Street as elderly people found it convenient to rest. The seat was removed at the request of the police, as youngsters were using it in the early hours of the morning and causing a lot of noise for people living in the area. Again this matter is due to be discussed on Monday evening.

Councillor Lindsay Davidson has been a link for the council with the local youth organisations in the town and regularly reports to us on this matter at our meetings.

In closing, I would like to thank the Town Clerk, her deputy and the other ladies in the office for their help over the past year. Without them we could not do our job as councillors. So thank you to them all.

In addition, I would like to thank my deputy Cllr Lindsay Davidson for her continued help and support and the other councillors on the committee for their support and hard work over the past year.

Finally I must thank Councillor Fiona Hill who is always there to assist us when needed in her roll as Chairman of the NHDC Royston & District Area Committee and also as our County Councillor, also Councillor Tony Hunter who attends our meetings when possible to help and assist us and not forgetting Councillor Bill Davidson who also attends when possible. Thank you to them all.

Report from Royston & District Museum Curator:

The museum was closed for six weeks after Christmas to:

- enable emptying and cleaning of the storeroom
- find and select new objects previously unseen by the public
- and to change the layout and contents of various cases.

The original plan was to redisplay 4 cases but we ended up changing 9 altogether and brought out a total of around 400 objects which had never been displayed before. This was achieved by the help of 3 volunteers devoting 500 hours of their free time and the Friends of the Museum giving £500 to cover the cost of materials.

A substantial grant from North Herts Royston & District Area Committee enabled us to have new lighting installed on the ground floor and feedback from visitors has all been positive ranging from 'What a lovely transformation' to 'Informative and entertaining'.

In spite of the closure there were 63 visitors in January even though we were closed and the number of visitors from March 2010 – 2011 continues to increase (around 5,000). This has been the trend for the museum in the last few years as we put on more events as well as continuing to display six exhibitions per year. About a quarter of visitors come to research the archives for projects and family history which include 3000 photographs and the Royston Crow newspapers.

A focal point of the museum calendar is the Family Fun with Archaeology Day organised by Clive and James Dilley which this year attracted around 80 visitors, and raised £73 for the Museum Donations Fund. However, this year is an important year for James as he prepares to go to university, so we are planning something rather special and very different - if it can be arranged within regulations.

In spite of the limitations of space the museum, supported by its volunteers, ran several events over three days to support the Royston Arts Festival which included craft sessions for children supervised by the museum assistant, a demonstration of the Royston Crow Printing Press Demo by Liz Beardwell, Saxon Calligraphy, and Flint Knapping & Saxon Leatherwork Armour by James Dilley.

In addition, two of our trustees managed to get the Magic Lantern up and running to show Victorian glass slides made in Royston by Frank Hinkins and Robert Clark. Not least was the premiere of two short films made by Anstey and me which are the end product of a major government funded project in which the museum was selected to take part along with 3 others in Hertfordshire intended to take the museum out into the community. Anstey and I had training in filming techniques and an initial grant of £2,000 enabled the museum to acquire some of the equipment which was further supported by North Herts and the Friends of the Museum. The two films featured the Royston Over-60s reminiscing about Old Royston which was called Looking Back, and the other, called Looking Forward, featured the youth group Ignite down at the Community Centre. These DVDs are not available to buy but can be viewed in the museum on a regular basis. We intend to take this project further with films such as a town trail, time permitting. In fact an official booklet has just been published this week about this project and Royston Museum has its own section.

The museum will continue to support the Royston Arts Festival and it is worth noting that last year's brought 300 visitors to the museum in one weekend and pushed the September numbers to a record 600.

Other services provided by the museum include the Schools Objects Resource scheme and the Reminiscence Object boxes. The purpose of the Schools Resource is fairly obvious and allows schools to borrow certain items to support class lessons; the Reminiscence objects are intended for use with people who may be suffering from short term memory loss, or worse still, dementia, with the aim of promoting well-being by using the objects to bring back good memories. The boxes may be borrowed by people such as nursing staff in care homes, and for Reminiscence sessions in general, and this project has been greatly helped by the very generous county grant support which we really appreciate.

On the subject of grants I should mention the Royston Time Trackers, the young archaeologists' group run by Sylvia Beamon and Clive and James Dilley. Last year the group received recognition from the Round Table which donated £300 for the group and has actually pledged lifelong support for this group and we are really grateful for that.

As for this year, we have planned another year of varied exhibitions and workshops, and also next year, especially with the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee in the offing, and we hope this will enhance and expand the museum experience for residents and visitors alike.

I would finish by emphasizing that the museum would not be able to function as an amenity for the town without the generous financial support of the town council, the Friends of the Museum, the Royston & District Local History Society, and the goodwill of its loyal band of volunteers, and Anstey and I will strive to do our best to protect the heritage of the town for future generations to enjoy.

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

REPORT FROM HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR FIONA HILL

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to update the meeting on County Council issues. The council is facing a very challenging time but has been prepared for tightening budgets and has been carrying out a transformation programme over the last couple of years. As a result, efficiency savings of £31m have been made in the year 2010 – 2011 and further savings of £57m have been identified for 2011 – 2012. Council Tax will also be frozen in the year 2011-2012.

The Council has tried to ensure that there is as little impact as possible on front line services and in most cases has managed to make savings through CUTTING rather than CLOSING services.

Royston Library is a facility the town should be proud of and I am delighted that, although cuts in hours have been agreed, the library will remain. Through consultation and negotiation we ensured that the day the library will close was the one which was least disruptive to the general public. The services provided range from the traditional book lending facility through to access to IT services and services for young children such as Baby Rhyme Time and Story Time. There has been a great concern that, when the hours and days of opening change, Baby Rhyme Time will cease. I will, personally, fight to ensure that this service does not cease. We need to work with library staff and County Council Library Service to see how this can be accommodated.

We have a great Police and Fire and Rescue Service which are also facing challenges on budgets. I am delighted that the Police will not be closing the front desk at Royston and will be able to maintain a strong neighbourhood presence. Crime in Royston, compared to other areas, is extremely low and the officers do everything possible to combat the perception of crime and make sure that the public feel safe.

Education remains one of the key responsibilities of the County Council. All the schools in Royston are achieving well and have improved Ofsted. Standards remain extremely high with pupils achieving excellent results. I have been extremely impressed with the participation of local schools in the excellent Youth Makes Music event and also the participation in the design for the Fish Hill Sculpture. Officers from the County Council, myself and my colleague, who covers Royston Rural (Tony Hunter) have been working with the schools to ensure that children in the area are given the very best opportunities available for their education. As you are probably aware from recent Press coverage, the Middle and Upper Schools are currently undergoing a consultation to determine whether they should move to Academy or Federation Status. Schools will now receive their funding directly, rather than through the County Council, although a fund will remain with the Council. Federation Status would mean that schools could share resources and Academy Status would mean that schools would no longer be accountable to the Local Education Authority and would receive this additional fund directly. However, they would still be able to buy-in to the LEA services and this has happened in the majority of cases in the County where schools have become Academies.

There has been concern over a number of years for Royston Hospital. Both the Health Authority and County Council are well aware of the facilities offered in the hospital, not only Intermediate Care, but also the large number of additional services provided. We are updated, on a regular basis, with any discussions concerning the facility and there is a will to see that the services remain.

The Railway Underpass has been high on the agenda again. Last year we faced the prospect of a Public Enquiry to address the objections to the Compulsory Purchase Orders. This has now taken place and it has been determined that the Underpass will go ahead. A contractor has been appointed and work will start this year. A crossing to link the two sides of the town has been requested for many years and there are safety issues with illegal crossing of the railway line. I can only thank my predecessor Doug Drake for his persistence in pursuing this project and pushing to obtain the funding.

The year has also been another difficult one for Hertfordshire Highways. December was the coldest year on record since the 1960's and possibly longer. To give an indication of the problems regarding potholes I would advise that the average for January is normally 4,300 and this January we had 6,480. There have been 47 gritting runs and this included work over the Christmas period. I would congratulate Hertfordshire Highways on managing to keep the roads open throughout the bad weather.

Burns Road and the first phase of drainage works in the town are now completed and there have been a number of roads completely re-surfaced.

The revamp of Angel Pavement has now been completed and a grant from Vibrant Towns for £22,000 was provided towards this project. I would emphasize that this grant could not be diverted to other highways works or maintenance within the town but had to be spent on a project such as this.

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 been able to support the Free Parking initiative in the town and assist many organisations. I hope that this has made a real difference to many organisations. I am delighted to have been able to support these organisations and so glad that we have the budget to use again locally in the next Civic year. Applications are already being received for the next financial year.

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 meeting and Tony Hunter, County Councillor for Royston Rural, for joint working (particularly on grants) and support which I hope has been of benefit to Royston.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA PUBLIC MEETING

Thank you all for attending the joint Annual Town and District Council meeting. It is an extremely effective way of including the whole 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 regarding Youth issues in Royston, Royston Cemetery, the Volunteer Centre, Time Bank, Royston and District Community Transport North Hertfordshire 50+ Forum, Hertfordshire Community Meals, North Royston Action Group and Royston Museum, to name but a few.

We also received petitions regarding the enhancement of Fish Hill Square and the reinstatement of the Number 17 Bus.

As a Committee, we have been totally against the proposal to cease full burials in Royston. I and my colleagues have spoken against this at Cabinet and we are delighted that, following this, the decision has been delayed pending further investigation.

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. Yet again, the children were extremely enthusiastic and there was no shortage of ideas for us to take forward and consider. One of the many points which were raised was the inclusion of equipment in the play parks for children in the age range of 8 to early teens. This has been considered by the Area Committee already and we are trying to secure funding to achieve this. We talked to the children about the work of the Councils and listened to their views on what they liked about Royston and what they would like improved. These visits have taken place for a number of years and I sincerely hope will be repeated again next year.

The Area Committee has had major input into the Budget, Halls and Community Centres Strategy, Polling District Review, Fish Hill Enhancement, Royston Cross Development Brief and the Dispersal Order and Street Trading policies.

The Area Committee has also been heavily involved in the flooding issues in Royston and I am delighted that work has now been completed on the drainage improvements to the areas of Burns Road and the first phase of the Town Centre.

The Area Committee has continued to work with Hertfordshire Highways and provided match funding towards work in and around Royston. We are currently trying to get improvements to the verges on Old North Road and parking restrictions in King James Way and Princes Mews. We are also trying to address the speeding issues in various roads around Royston with the Police and Highways and have been working to move the bus route back through Kneesworth Street and away from Tannery Drift which is congested by traffic, particularly at school drop off and pick up times.

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 Royston Arts Festival, Barkway, Reed and Therfield Parish Councils, Royston Boxing Club, Royston Community Association, Barley Town House, Royston Town Youth Football Club, Royston Museum, Depression Alliance, Royston Town Council, Over 50's Forum, North Royston Action Group, Burns Road Youth Project, Town Twinning, The House and Electralites Majorettes.

Grants have also been allocated to Royston Museum for lighting, Royston Town Council for disability improvements to Royston Town Hall, funding towards Angel Pavement and funding for equipment for the Police. We also initiated the 'Free After 3.30' parking scheme and allocated a grant for this. This was then supplemented by funding from the County Councillor Locality Budgets and then Royston First which allowed the scheme to run from 3 p.m.

Councillors are nominated on to various organisations and we have received reports on the Chamber of Commerce, Home Start, North Hertfordshire Homes, Relate, Royston Community Association (Coombes Community Centre), Royston Day Centre, Royston and District Scouts, Royston Town Twinning and the Sports Council. All the community organisations do a wonderful job and should be hugely appreciated. We have also continued the "open air Council surgeries" held in the town. Royston Town Councillors and the Police continue to join us and we are finding the attendance excellent. These are 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.

One of the most satisfying events which took place this year was when Councillor F. John Smith was appointed Alderman of North Herts. District Council. I had the pleasure of seconding the motion put forward by the Leader of the District Council at the Full Council meeting. This is not only an honour for John but also for Royston where he has served for over 50 years. John is a previous Chairman and member of the Area Committee and I have always greatly valued his support and advice.

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, my Vice Chairman, Councillor Howard Marshall, who represents the villages surrounding Royston, together with all other Councillor colleagues on the Area Committee, for their support and contributions throughout the Civic year and also, Susan Thornton-Bjork (Town Clerk) and her team (Royston Town Council). 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:

Terry Hutt stated that he would volunteer to get people who had transport problems, to the cinema when it was open; he then requested that the toilets at the bus station are re-opened as it was a shame to have them and not use them.

Councillor Burt responded by saying that the toilets were closed because they do not meet health and safety standards and they were not fit for use, there are good toilets just 70m away in Fish Hill.

Derek Emblem said that there was only a water leak. Councillor Burt said that a company had received a financial incentive to run the toilets but standards were not acceptable, so the toilets have been closed. Any organisation could make a business case to NHDC to take on the running of them; this would need to include daily opening/closing, cleaning, servicing, and insurance.

Mr. R Kennedy asked about ANPR cameras and if they were to be in Orchard Road and York Way only, he said it was not right for businesses to be funding cameras in other areas of the town. Geraint Burnell explained that in the Royston First Bid prospectus provision had been made for CCTV cameras and it had been put to the Advisory Committee for a vote to fund ANPR rather than CCTV cameras. HCC and NHDC are also giving grants towards the ANPR cameras.

Mr. Kennedy then asked about stopping winter bedding plants, and said that savings should be made on things like the publication of Outlook by cutting the number of editions or the quality of paper used as Royston had receive cuts to hanging baskets, pyramid planters and the closure of its outdoor swimming pool already. Councillor F Hill said that they have tried not to affect front line services and a grant from the Area Committee will cover the costs of the hanging baskets. The open air swimming pool was closed because NHDC did not own the site.

Councillor Burt said, the roundabouts that were sponsored would continue to be planted up, but some companies were withdrawing their sponsorship. Perhaps the Royston First Bid Company would be willing to pay for bedding plants in the town.

David Allard said the History Society continue to sponsor a hanging basket for Royston in Bloom and that the toilets had been a gift to the town 40 years ago and were needed.

Mr Zambonini asked what the implications were on staffing and resources if schools were amalgamated and they became a federation. Councillor Hill said a federation would mean the schools would maintain their own identity but resources can be shared and they would still remain under the control of Herts County Council. The decision rests with the schools. Councillor Hunter said everyone will be consulted; it would be a way of schools assisting each other and working together with better facilities. If federation occurs, there is no extra cost to the school.

Neil Guttridge asked about the market and why the Farmers Markets were stopped. Councillor R Smith said it was because the number of traders and customers had declined. It was difficult to get traders to come when they were not getting enough customers. The Charter market on Wednesday and Saturday will continue.

Bridget Matthews asked if the CAB office in Royston was closing. The Mayor said that the council was not involved with the CAB and would look into this.

Neil Guttridge asked if NHDC had reduced the funding to CAB; Councillor Hill said yes, there had been a reduction to their funding.

Mr. Kennedy asked what was happening about the closure of the cemetery, Councillor Burt said that the town council has set up a working party and they are trying to resolve the situation and are asking residents for any suggestions.

There being no further questions the Mayor thanked everyone for attending and those who participated and closed the meeting at 9.45pm

DRAFT