

**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 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 7.30pm**

**Present:**

Royston Town Councillors:

Robert Inwood ( Deputy Town Mayor ), Les Baker, John Davison, Lindsay Davidson, Sarah Dingley, Paula McGlynn, Mike Harrison, Mark Hughes, Rod Kennedy, F John Smith, Rita Turner

RTC Officers: Susan Thornton-Bjork, Town Clerk, Caroline Mills, Deputy Town Clerk, Jenny Oxley, Museum Curator, Ian Eastwell Administration Assistant

North Hertfordshire District & Royston Town Councillors Peter Burt & Ben Lewis

North Hertfordshire District Councillors Bill Davidson, & Jean Green

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

Royston First Bid Company – Geraint Burnell

Approximately 45 members of the public

**1. APOLOGIES:**

Apologies were received from:

Royston Neighborhood Police Sergeant Guy Westwood

Leader North Hertfordshire District Council Cllr Lynda Needham

**1. MINUTES:**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 were signed as a correct record.

**2. ANNUAL STATEMENT FROM THE DEPUTY MAYOR, COUNCILLOR ROBERT INWOOD ON BEHALF OF THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR VICTORIA HULSTROM-ALLEN:**

A lot has happened since the last meeting. As a council we have come a long way since the last meeting. An election bringing new faces to the Town and District Council, the purchase of the market square, development of new housing not to mention the additions to the Priory Memorial Gardens including the very well received promise of a splash park for the families of Royston and surrounding areas.

As Mayor Victoria had the privilege of attending various civic events including the superbly organised Remembrance Day parade where we were honoured to have members of the Black Watch join us. She has attended services for the Anniversary of World War One and Holocaust Day as well as being able to participate in the Civic Service which saw us give thanks for all those who contribute to the rich community of Royston. Hand on heart she says that there are too many wonderful people and organisations to list this evening.

During her time as Mayor she has been fortunate enough to have received a wide variety of invitations enabling her to meet with members of our community from the young at the Children's centre fun day through to Christmas and New Year visits with our more senior residents as well as many more in between. We really are lucky to have such a diverse and busy town where there really is something for everyone. We are also very lucky to have publications in Royston, such as the Listing, to give a taste of what is going on.

This year her chosen charity is the Royston and District Girl Guides along with the Mayors community Trust Fund and she would like to take the opportunity to promote the forthcoming quiz on the 24<sup>th</sup> April – the last one was sold out with a waiting list so please book up quickly to avoid disappointment. Councillor Harrison promises us another fantastic quiz, her thanks go to Cllr Harrison for his help and support. There is also the Mayor's ladies night at our local Glazed Creations studio on the 8<sup>th</sup> May which promises to be a good night. Your support at events is very well received and really does go to fantastic causes as you will see later this evening.

Please give a warm support and applause to the recipients of the Mayors Community Service awards and please forgive my absence this evening. Every award here tonight has been hard earned and I am humbled to honour them.

I conclude by giving the Mayor's thanks to her fellow councillors, the Town Clerk, her secretary and Council staff for their continued support and guidance over this year and since my joining the council in 2010, your help is invaluable to me.

### **3. REPORT FROM GERAINT BURNELL, TOWN MANAGER:**

The Town Manager provided a progress report covering the past year detailing how Royston First continues to support the Town Council.

Firstly, Royston First continues to support the Royston Picture Palace, and is actively exploring scheduling options to maximize returns, such as having fewer films for longer, addition screenings over a single weekend for blockbuster films, flexibility to re-run sell-out films the following month. This is proving successful with January 2015 being the best month ever with 1664 attendees. This coming weekend there are 5 sell-out performances.

Secondly, the Youth Shelter at the Skateboard Park has been delivered and funding has been provided for a new clubhouse at the BMX Track.

A detailed parking survey has been completed in support of a Season Ticket Scheme for business employees. This is under consideration by the new portfolio holder at North Herts District Council.

The Visitor Information Centre at the Library is at design approval stage and should be delivered within the next 6 – 8 weeks. This will feature digital display. New materials are being developed/branded for display, including maps, accommodation guide, clubs & Societies and Town Trail.

In addition we have produced and about to release a new retail video as a follow up to our successful series of 3 shorts featuring the Town's eateries. These feature 83 retailers in less than 2 minutes. This will be released in the Royston Picture Palace by June 2015.

Other items worthy of note include the successful Pirate, Rudolph and Easter Trials, window dressing of empty shops in the High Street, New Bollards for the High Street which will be delivered soon, Free-After-3 Parking in the High Street continues in association with North Herts District Council. 1 Hour parking scratchcards for local businesses has seen a doubling of take-up and is still increasing. Operation Artemis continues with the Police. Negotiations with landlords are ongoing to set up a Pop-Up shop in the High Street for potential new retailers. There has been a good response to expressions of interest in this.

The Town Trail is being refurbished with new printed guides and refurbishment of plaques. This will feature in the Visitor Information Centre.

Finally, the latest edition of Royston Focus was delivered to 15,000 households.

In summary the Town Manager explained that, as these highlights show, this has been a very busy year.

#### **4. REPORT FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE SERGEANT GUY WESTWOOD:**

Councillor Smith read the following statement from Neighbourhood Police Sergeant Guy Westwood:-

Firstly, I must apologise for not being able to attend in person, I know it will be frustrating if you have any questions for me. Please still ask the questions via the Councillors and I will endeavor to get an answer to you as soon as I possibly can.

I am the new Royston Safer Neighbourhood Team Sergeant – Sergeant 1604 Guy Westwood, and I have taken over from Sergeant Steve Olliphant. We have swapped

roles and he now covers Hitchin Safer Neighbourhood Team, which is where I have come from.

I have been in post here at Royston since December 2014, and feel that I am getting the feel of the local issues now. I recognize that speeding is one of the concerns that raises its head both in town and in the villages, so with this in mind I am going to make it one of the local SNT priorities, and we will support the *Drivesafe* schemes that are set up in the area, and conduct our own speed enforcement at relevant locations. We do have a Traffic management Unit that we will always refer to in the first and they will deploy traffic monitoring equipment to give accurate readings for all traffic throughout the day over a certain period, so we can then establish if it is an actual speeding issue, or a perceived speeding issue due to traffic noise or the size of the vehicles. But where there is still concern, we will endeavor to carry out some speed enforcement work.

I also recognize that burglaries are an issue, with four recent dwellings burglaries in the Town. I will keep burglary as one of our priorities. I also realise that the vast majority of people in Royston want the ANPR cameras back, and believe that they would help keep crime low. I will do all I can to support getting the ANPR camera back, and work is already underway justifying their need in the area and what benefit they will be. Public opinion is noted, and I will update you all as soon as I know what is to happen.

My last priority will be ASB and Criminal Damage. There have been quite a few damages in and around town of late, and it seems to be a particular section of the youths in the community that are responsible. We are already working with our ASB unit, and with the NHDC and housing associations and we are giving any youths caught Acceptable Behaviour contracts, and having meetings with the parents. Hopefully this with increased patrols will cut the damage and ASB.

I am aware that antisocial parking is also an issue, and although not an official priority, we will respond as appropriate to any calls, and work with the Councillors to see what we can do. There is a specific issue round the new Tesco Express and their deliveries, and we are already working with them to see what can be done to prevent further issues.

The local priorities will be reviewed every three months, and are set up from what the local community want. So please let us know if there are any specific issues and they will be considered for the next set of priorities, and I will be consulting the local Councillors, so if you don't let me know, please let them know so they can inform me.

All crime is still low for Royston, by comparison to some other areas, and I believe this is a lot to do with how close knit the community is, and how people seem to care in the area. I want to help keep crime low, but need everyone to help. Please report things to us, if we don't know about something then we can't do anything about it. Please don't assume someone else has called us. 101 for non-emergency, and of course 999 for anything urgent.

My team is only small, myself, PC 2787 Mike Hardiman, PC 371 Mark Ellwood, PC 1838 Bridget Jones, PCSO 6522 Chris Brabrook, PCSO 6696 Sarah Lamb and PCSO 6531 Penny Tomsett. But with your help we can make a difference.

## **5. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

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

2014-2015 has been a year of steady progress for Royston and for our Town Council. The principal landmark has been completion of the purchase of the market and the market place on which it operates. This was achieved last summer after the Public Works Loan Board agreed to lend the Council the sum of £300,000 repayable over 25 years. Repayments of approximately £19,000 per annum have replaced our annual rent payments of £15,000 per annum to the previous owner. Income from market stalls and from parking charges levied on the market area are being monitored and seem reasonably satisfactory so far.

Our next major project is the new cemetery planned for Wicker Hall. We hope to get the site cleared ready for laying out the ground during next autumn/winter, when birds and no longer nesting. Improving the access by upgrading the lane forms the other major part of the scheme. Grave spaces are rapidly running out in the existing Royston cemeteries so it is essential that Wicker hall is not delayed. A loan for this work will be required.

Elsewhere in North Hertfordshire markets and cemeteries are being provided by the District Council but here in Royston we have ensured that these vital amenities are protected by being run locally. This also applies to maintenance of the toilets at the Cross, while the District as part of its policy of supporting only one set of toilets per town looks after the Fish Hill set.

Other properties that are run by the Town Council include the allotments and the plantations. We enjoy close cooperation with RAGA, the Royston Allotments & Gardens Association, and the allotments area is in very good heart. Stile Plantation and Green Walk Plantation require the service of tree experts and we have begun a programme to ensure that the trees are safe and in good condition.

The Royston & District Museum and Art Gallery continues to flourish. We have a new curator and she is supported by a keen team of volunteers, by the Trustees who technically own the collection, and by the Friends of the Museum. Together with the Royston Cave, the town can be assured that its heritage is both unique and protected.

Our Town Hall complex and the Market Hill Rooms are well used and are in good order, although we have had to replace parts of the heating systems. Use of the Town Hall as the Royston Picture Palace is proving to be very popular and the number of showings is

increasing. Here again I would like to thank Royston First for its support and also thanks are due to the team of volunteers who operate our bijou cinema.

Royston First is of great value to the Town and I hope that its project to stimulate tourism by provision of an information centre comes to fruition.

Now let me turn to our finances, which are healthy. The net precept for 2015-2016 is £257,856, which translates to a Band D call of £42.18, an increase of £1.06 on 2014-2015, that is to say approximately 2p per week or 2.59%. The reason for the increase is to service the loan of £200,000, repayable over 25 years, that I mentioned earlier, thus enabling the work on the new cemetery to proceed.

Royston is thriving and the Town Council will continue to do all in its power to maintain this state of affairs. Refurbishment of town centre properties shows progress – one can point to the old post office converted to the “The Jolly Postie”, to the completion of Austin Corner, to the new store of Market Hill, to the building on the sites of closed public houses, and to new housing. Let us look forward together to another year of development.

### **Report of Cllr Lindsay Davidson, Chairman of the Planning Committee**

It has been an extremely busy and some may say somewhat stressful year on the Town council Planning Committee since I took over as Chair last May, whether there is any coincidence in that I am not sure but we have been working extremely hard to represent the best interests of the Town to Planning at the District Council at every opportunity.

We have had some very important Planning applications come before us, which will have huge effects on Royston, starting with the new Royston Gateway project in August 2014 which will bring a Waitrose Store to the outskirts of Royston with direct access off the A505 and which a public online survey held by the Developers showed a very high proportion of support from over 2,000 residents who responded.

Also the further development of the Ivy farm sites with the second phase is now under way, but we raised various issues with NHDC concerning this site, such as the closure of the railway crossing there, and the moving of the 30mph speed restriction to at least 100m west of any development to name but a few.

The proposed development of the Newmarket Road Hoy Land has understandably proved to be very unpopular with local residents, especially those living near the site and also caused us serious concerns with regards to the proposed access off the Newmarket road in particular, which we felt to be totally unsuitable and indeed dangerous.

Highways also had concerns over the proposed access on to Newmarket Road and have been in consultation with the Developers. Subsequently the access proposed now has been altered to create an access off the A505 with a roundabout and appropriate highway

adjustments, they also took on board other issues that had been raised by residents and Town Council alike and submitted a much improved plan earlier this month.

We have also seen some of our local pubs and hotels either being demolished to make way for flats and houses like the North Star and the White Bear or given very welcome radical rebuilds and modernization like the Banyers Hotel and what was the Old Post Office pub and is now the Jolly Postie. Further flat accommodation has been built on our High Street on first and second floors and one shop returned to its original status as a House.

We were also very pleased to see the final completion of the extremely well designed North Herts Homes development on the old Priory Cinema site, which had lain derelict for so many years, providing much needed low cost homes for local residents.

All signs of a much changing and growing town and while many of us may not want to see so much extra housing being imposed on us, (as it is in many other places across the country), we can only object as a Town Council when we have strong planning reasons to do so and our main priority has always been to get the best deal we can for our residents when plans are submitted. Our comments are highly valued by District planning officers and we often point out various issues which they have then taken up and subsequently supported.

Finally two vitally important Local plan consultations have also come before us, one for Cambridgeshire and one for North Hertfordshire which again will have a huge impact for many years to come when both are finally completed and approved.

The Cambridgeshire plan will see thousands of new homes built in and around Cambourne which may well have a major effect upon our traffic flows into and out of Royston along the A1198 and A10 approaches and we have strongly voiced these concerns and others we had, to our Cambridgeshire colleagues

The North Hertfordshire preferred options plan arrived on our doorstep in January and the Planning committee spent many hours studying these before coming together to work out our response to them. We were always keenly aware of the extreme importance of fully reflecting the many and diverse views of the committee (and also Royston residents) so a multi-faceted response was put together which we hope fully reflected these varying views. Our formal response listing all the points we made can be seen in the minutes of our Planning meeting held in January but there was one over-riding issue with which we all agreed, The piecemeal development that has been steadily taking place in Royston in recent years, has meant that the population of Royston has increased by approximately 12% between 1991 and 2011, and is one of the fastest growing towns in Hertfordshire

We strongly urged North Herts District Council to take this into account with regards to our special infrastructure needs, so that all future developments are fully sustainable. And we emphasized that we must have a good quota of affordable homes that would provide local homes for local people.

I would finally like to thank all the members of my Planning committee for their hard work and commitment over this past year, and also our Town Clerk, Susan Thornton-Bjork and all our office staff for their support, advice and admin expertise which has enabled us to work so efficiently with the many planning applications that have come before us.

### **Report of Cllr Mike Harrison, Chairman of the General Purpose & Highways Committee**

The Royston In Bloom Sub Committee reports back to this Committee updating us on their activities. In addition the Town Centre Working party reports back to us. One of the initiatives of the Town Council this year was the setting up of a working party to look at improvements to the town centre.

It looked at all aspects of the town centre environment and especially the needs of the High Street.

There were a number of meetings between the working party and District Council officers to discuss the implementation of improvements and several tours were made of the town centre to identify the problems.

All this resulted earlier this month in a deep clean being carried out in the town centre and other refurbishment work to be undertaken shortly.

Other work on repairing paving in the High Street is under discussion, but the working party hopes that it will soon be scheduled in to take place.

Councillors also visit local schools and I have been given their report also. Royston Town Council has just completed its annual round of visits to 7 local Royston schools.

A team of Royston Councillors from Town, District and County Councils, have had another very successful and enjoyable few months, where we have listened to the young students' concerns and suggestions for Royston's improvement. We have also explained about our various roles as local Councillors and discussed democracy and citizenship issues with them. We have always found the students to be extremely interested in their local community and it has always been very encouraging to see how many of them enjoy living in Royston.

Our sincere thanks go to the Councillors on the team, led and managed by Councillor Lindsay Davidson, for their hard work and commitment to this project which has been running for 6 years now and also to our schools for inviting us to visit their students every year.

Our County Councillor, Fiona Hill, always gives us a report on Highways issues, and this can deal with various issues such as bus routes, buses using Tannery Drift, street lights,

cycle ways, and the work to be do carried out on the Highways themselves, and 20 mph areas near schools.

We have also discussed Local Government Boundaries, as these may need to change as Royston grows, and the population will merit greater representation.

A South/East bypass has been discussed. As areas of South Cambridgeshire grows on our doorstep, traffic on our borders and in the town will increase and this does not take into account further housing in our town. We have written to Hertfordshire County Council and Sir Oliver Heald MP on the issue for his support.

The Library service has been discussed and we asked that Royston should have a vibrant service as it is essential to the community.

Heavy Goods Vehicles using the town roads instead of the current A505 bypass was discussed, and local companies whose vehicles were involved have been written to.

Pedestrian access at roadworks has received attention, after incidents in the Burns Road and Newmarket Road areas during extended works recently, and the need for mobility scooters not have to go in the road to get past road works.

I would like to thank our County Councillor, Fiona Hill, for all her help over the past year and the District Councillors who attend our meetings and who offer help and advice if required. It is good to see County, District and Town councilors working together for the benefit of our town.

I must also that my Deputy, Councillor Peter Burt, for all his hard work and assistance over the year together with all the Councillors on the Committee for their hard work also.

Finally I must thank the Town Clerk, Susan Thornton-Bjork, and her assistant Caroline and the other members of staff without whom we could not operate as Councillors - without them our task would be impossible. Thank you to them all.

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

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

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
Royston Arts Society	To assist with the cost of hiring the Heritage Hall for Art Exhibitions as part of the Royston Arts Festival	£100

Royston & Area Integrated Care Community Interest Company	To assist with funding for setting up a website which will benefit the community by facilitating integrated care for the town.	£150
Royston & District Volunteer Centre	To assist with funding the cost involved in changing branding following a competition	£94.80
Rotary Club of Royston	To assist with funding the 'Youth Makes Music' concert held in March 2014 at West Road Concert hall, Cambridge	£150
Royston Electralites	To assist with the purchase of equipment needed to perform throughout the year.	£50
First Royston Scout Group	To assist with the purchase of a second hand box trailer to transport camp equipment	£250
Royston Methodist Church	To assist with the costs of running a Holiday Club during half term for the children of Royston aged 4-11	£100
Priory Quilters	To assist with the cost of charges to hire a hall for the Exhibition of Quilting in conjunction with the Royston Arts Festival	£100
Ignite Youth Group	To assist with the purchase of craft materials and games for and Easter community event	£150
Frank Letts Blind Fellowship	To assist with the cost of the Fellowship's summer outing; lunch and transport to the Cambridge Motel	£200
Lions Club of Royston	To purchase raw materials for a Kite Making Workshop at the Royston Kite Festival	£150
Royston Photographic Society	To fund the cost of hiring the Hardwicke Hall for an exhibition for the Royston Arts Festival.	£100

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Inwood, then presented Community Service Awards to:

**Graham Palmer – Royston Arts Festival**

In recognition of his services to Arts within Royston, in particular being Chairman of the Royston Arts Festival since 2010. Under his leadership, the festival has grown in size and stature, pulling in large crowds with many groups and organisations being involved and attracting several famous faces to take part. Graham's contribution to the Arts within Royston has been most significant.

**Rev John Fiddler – St John The Baptist Parish Church**

In recognition of serving the Parish Church of St John the Baptist and the community of Royston for over 28 years, serving under four successive incumbents. All this time, he has held down a full-time secular job. His Ministry and work is valued by very many, not just in the Parish Church but also by the People of Royston.

**Denise Graham – Royston & District Volunteer Service**

In recognition of her services to volunteering, having been manager at the volunteer centre since 2005. Her enthusiasm and commitment to volunteering in Royston and District is huge and she has been responsible for many new initiatives over the years to raise the standard in volunteer management and recruitment. She has also been involved in both the Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire volunteer centres groups for many years.

**Bridget Matthews – Frank Letts Blind Fellowship of Royston**

In recognition of her many years of dedication to the Frank Letts Blind Fellowship, having been secretary for the last 11 years. She has been totally committed to her work and without this the Fellowship would not function as well as it does. She is responsible for all the administrative work, and has been known to organize her own family commitments around the lunches and meetings.

**7. REPORT FROM HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR FIONA HILL**

Mr. Deputy Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to update the meeting on County Council issues. The Council continues to face challenging times but has been prepared for a reduction in expenditure, combined with the need to make savings. For the first time in several years, the Council will be increasing Council Tax by 1.99% in order to continue with front line services and protect reserves in line with requirements.

Last year I reported that a consultation on the future of libraries had been carried out. Royston Library underwent a refurbishment which has proved very successful and will soon be undergoing further improvements, in partnership with Royston First, as an Information Centre. This will result in further additional opening hours.

A consultation took place with regard to Children's Centres in the County and we should all be very proud of the facility near the Burns Road Schools in Royston which has

recently been awarded “Good” in an Ofsted inspection. The new arrangement means that Royston will be joined with Buntingford and will service Royston, Buntingford and the surrounding villages. The Children’s Centre works in partnership with many organisations such as Home Start, the Schools and the health sector to support families with very young children.

Education remains one of the key responsibilities of the County Council. The relationship between local schools, the County Council and County Councillors remains strong even though the Royston Middle and Upper schools are now a Federated Academy. Standards remain high with pupils achieving well and all schools have Good or Excellent Ofsted results. Schools continue to participate in inter school sports activities with excellent results and again participated in Youth Makes Music, Youth Speaks and the Technology Tournament, arranged by the Rotary Club. School planning is constantly monitored and there are currently consultations taking place for expansions to Roman Way and Tannery Drift First Schools.

Healthcare in Royston remains high on the agenda and the regular briefing sessions set up for the local MP Sir Oliver Heald and County Councillors with the Clinical Commissioning Group, GP’s, NHS England and Propco and have now been widened to include District and Town Councillors, the CIC, Friends of Royston Hospital and the Royston Hospital Action Group. Options are being considered with commitment continuing to retain at least the current healthcare services, together with a care/nursing home in Royston. Public Health is now a responsibility of the County Council and there has been excellent joint working with the District Councils to deliver a preventative service. Working in partnership with the Fire Service and Police remains a high priority for the County Council and there is also joint working with the Armed Forces and other stakeholders, through the Hertfordshire Covenant Board, to help support veterans in the County.

Highways continues to be a key function for the County Council. There has been a good delivery of road resurfacing schemes in Royston through the Asset Management Programme and the County Councillor Locality Budget scheme. I am delighted that the footpath on Baldock Road is currently being constructed and crossings will also be delivered in the area. We are strongly pursuing a permanent solution to the surface of the High Street, although any urgent faults should continue to be reported and these will be repaired as a matter of urgency.

The initiative for free salt, for use in the community, continued again this winter and I would again like to thank Royston Town Council for storing and co-ordinating the orders and Councillors Bill Davidson, Tony Hunter and Gerald Morris for their help in distribution. I am also delighted that a number of community groups have come forward to request additional bins to assist in their roads.

Following construction of the Underpass, there has been further work on cycle links in the town with the completion of the link along Burns Road and Old North Road. Working with Tony Hunter and our colleagues in South Cambridgeshire, together with

County Council officers in Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, we are continuing in our quest for safer crossings over the A505 – not just near the A10 but also the A1198 and behind Ivy Farm. There are also plans for traffic management surveys to assess the impact on the roundabouts in these areas as a result of the increased traffic through Royston from Cambridgeshire. We have strongly expressed our concerns regarding traffic through Royston, particularly with all the additional housing planned in Cambridgeshire and the wish for a by-pass to alleviate the traffic. I am delighted that the crossings in Old North Road and Melbourn Street are now complete.

20 mph signs will soon be in place in Garden Walk and we continue to seek a replacement Crossing Patrol outside the Greneway School. Parking restrictions are being considered at the Melbourn Road end of Garden Walk and also in Burns Road, near the schools and in Lumen Road which is being severely impacted by dangerous commuter parking.

There is also a consultation currently in progress regarding bus services/subsidies and I would encourage as many residents as possible to participate.

The Locality Budgets have been very successful again this year and will continue next year. Joint funding with Tony Hunter, County Councillor for North Herts. Rural, has increased the amount of funding given to various organisations for the benefit of residents in Royston and the villages, including the contribution to Free After 3 and the excellent events provided by the Rotary Club for schools in Royston and the surrounding villages.

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

Mr. Deputy Mayor this concludes my report. Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Deputy Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you all for attending the joint Annual Town and District Council meeting. We feel it continues to be effective in engaging with the community in Royston and the surrounding villages. Our open air surgeries in Angel Pavement are also continuing to be well attended and a valuable source of feedback for the Council.

The Area Committee has received presentations from Royston and District Twinning Association, Royston Runners, Royston Arts Festival (now Creative Royston), Therfield and Kelshall Sports and Social Club, the Ambulance Service, the Police, CVS, CIC, Trinity Life Church, Home Start Royston and South Cambs., Reed Cricket Club and Ignite Youth Group. Many of these organisations have also benefited from the Discretionary Grants which the Area Committee allocates.

In addition, we have received presentations from Councillor David Levett, Portfolio Holder at the District Council for Planning and Enterprise, with regard to the Local Plan and also updates on the forthcoming North Hertfordshire Museum which will be a fantastic facility for use by all residents in the District.

Members of the Committee have had input into the District Council Budget. The Area Committee has always resisted blanket increases in car parking charges across all car parks in the district and there has been a full review, car park by car park, town by town which, following intervention from local District Councillors, has resulted in a trial period decrease in one band of the Civic Centre car park in Royston. There has been no increase in the short term charges to assist with encouraging footfall into the town centre. The Committee has continued to provide a grant to support the Free After 3. There will be a parking review this financial year in Royston to try and resolve some of the parking issues due to commuter parking in residential areas of the town.

The annual school visits have continued again this year in Royston, organised by Councillor Lindsay Davidson and these continue to be very successful. The children always put forward a wide range of excellent ideas and issues that concern them. We have been delighted to announce this year that one of the facilities loved by children and their parents, namely a Splash Park, is coming to fruition and a consultation is currently taking place. Please participate. The plan is for the facility to be up and running by Summersummer 2016.

The Big Town Tidy Up last year resulted in a new Town Centre Working Party being set up and work has taken place in the town centrecentre, such as installation of cigarette bins and a deep clean. Funding has also been allocated towards painting of the street furniture in the summer months.

Schemes from the County Councillor Highways Locality Budgets have again been discussed with Town and District Councillors, before being agreed for implementation. There has also been input from local residents, which ensures the views of the community are considered. The Committee has also pushed for action with regard to the haul road being completed on the A505 to alleviate the problems of large construction lorries accessing Burns Road. This is now finally completed, after a delay caused by utility companies. The Committee has been lobbying our local MP Sir Oliver Heald with regard to a change in the law so that utility companies are more accountable for their actions, following work on the roads and also street light repairs and this is continuing to be pursued at Government level.

Following the allocation of Section 106 funding, via the District Council, the Priory Cinema has had another successful year and the BMX track is upgraded and going from strength to strength as a national facility. Grants have also been provided to organisations including the Volunteer Centre, numerous Sports Clubs, Home Start, Royston Museum and Royston Open Secrets.

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

I will conclude by thanking all the Council officers for their invaluable help and advice, particularly Ashley Hawkins (Community Officer) and Susanne Gow our Committee Clerk. I would also like to thank Councillor Bill Davidson, Vice-Chairman of the Committee and all other colleagues on the Area Committee, for their support and contributions throughout the Civic year. Thank you also to Susan Thornton-Bjork, (Town Clerk, Royston Town Council) and all her staff, members of the Town Council and members of the public who have attended our meetings.

Mr. Deputy Mayor this concludes my report. Thank you.

### **QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS:**

Addo Addison: Would like to see the ANPR cameras reintroduced in Royston to combat the spate of burglaries in the town.

Councillor Hill responded by stating she also supported the reintroduction of the ANPR cameras as did the Area committee, it was not their decision to remove them.

Geraint Burnell supported the comments made by Councillor Hill and added that the decision to remove the ANPR cameras was based on the opinion of the Information Commissioner's Office that the number of cameras was disproportionate based on the historical low level of crime in Royston. The question as to how much crime would need to increase to get the ANPR cameras back was not clear. There is still however a civil liberties issue which needs to be resolved.

Councillor Hughes added that the matter has been raised with the Chief Constable to overturn the Information Commissioner's decision and he believed the Chief Constable was able to do this if operational reasons supported this. Councillor Hughes encouraged concerned members of the public to also contact the Chief Constable. He also mentioned that Sir Oliver Heald MP has been contacted for his support and when a response is received this will be promulgated and an on-line petition will be considered. Other members of the public then voiced their support for the re-introduction of the ANPR cameras, giving an example of suspicious vehicular activity which they believed ANPR cameras could have deterred.

Peter Franks asked whether Councillor Hill could check the current situation on the drainage project in Kneesworth Street. Councillor Hill confirmed that she would investigate.

John Meadows: Offered his congratulations to all concerned for the achievements in respect of the A10 corridor cycling campaign but asked for better cycling facilities within the Town. Fiona Hill thanked Mr Meadows and noted his comments.

Councillor Kennedy then raised with the Council Leader, Councillor Smith, the issue of the proposed new cemetery at Wicker Hall, and expressed his serious concerns about the suitability of this site – especially in view of potential water contamination issues. After setting out his concerns Councillor Kennedy asked whether members of the public present at the meeting tonight, who he suggested also shared his concerns, could be given the opportunity to vote on this matter and if the majority of votes cast were against the new cemetery at Wicker Hall, would the Town Council agree to look at another site?

Councillor Smith responded by explaining that the Town Council had a responsibility to provide a new cemetery and that it is imperative that it is built without any undue delay. He then asked Councillor Burt to explain the position further. Councillor Burt explained that the cemetery space in Royston was running out with only 40 spaces left, which will be used by around 8 new burials a year, and all possible sites for a new cemetery were considered. It was the decision of the Working Party set up by the Town Council that Wicker Hall was the most suitable site. The land has been purchased and planning permission to build the new cemetery there has been obtained. Consultations with District Council are still ongoing. Councillor Burt stressed that the Environment Agency would not have given planning permission if there was any risk of water contamination. In conclusion Councillor Burt pointed out that there is only one site available for the new cemetery – Wicker Hall – and it must be supported.

Several members of the public then voiced their concerns about this development including Mr Matthews who sought clarification of access issues; Mr Burns who voiced concerns about the suitability of building a cemetery high on a hill – which would mean the elderly and infirm would have trouble visiting the cemetery; Elaine Blatchford who also had concerns about vehicular access to the Cemetery via Briary Lane; Don Shewan who felt the sums already spent on this development were inappropriate as the whole site was not fit for purpose and demanded another site be considered.

Councillor Smith then responded by stressing that townsfolk needed to realize that the Town Council did previously consider twelve sites for the new cemetery and Wicker Hall was the only

one deemed suitable and that as mentioned before it is imperative that work starts on this project immediately.

Mr Gould and other members of the public then asked why the new cemetery could not have built on the Hoy Land instead and felt the Town Council had been less than open with regards the suitability of other sites. Councillor Smith stated again that other sites had been considered but were found unsuitable. Councillor Davison stated that Councillor Kennedy was already aware that North Herts District Planning had ruled out using the Hoy land above the 80 meter contour for a cemetery and carpark. Councillor Hunter reminded the public that North Herts District Planning had not yet made a decision on the application for housing at the Hoy Land site.

Several members of the public then requested clarification of why Wicker Hall was deemed suitable and the detailed reasons why the eleven other sites were deemed unsuitable. Some members of the public stated they had not previously seen any details of this. Councillor Burt pointed out that the information on all other sites was available in the public domain.

Councillor Hughes then stated that clearly no progress was going to be made this evening on this matter.

Councillor Kennedy repeated his request for a vote to be taken re the location of the proposed cemetery and there followed a vote which indicated a small majority against the cemetery at Wicker Hall. Reverend John Fidler and several other members of the public objected to a vote taking place as such a plan had clearly not been advertised prior to the meeting. The Town Clerk pointed out that some of the votes were from members of the public who were not Royston electors and therefore not entitled to vote.

Councillor Kennedy then proposed a Parish Poll was called, no vote was taken on this.

The Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Inwood, suggested that as this issue had generated such considerable interest and diverging views - which were clearly not going to be resolved satisfactorily that evening - it would be sensible to convene a future public meeting – so the concerns of members of the public could be aired and their questions answered. The date/time of the meeting would be advertised in the local press. This meeting would have to be after the District Council Elections on 7 May 2015 as until then Councillors were in purdah and unable discuss such matters. Members of the public welcomed such a public meeting but asked that prior to this full details of all twelve sites considered be publicised so as to aid the discussions.

There were no further questions.

The Deputy Town Mayor then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.40 pm.  
**QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS:**

~~Addo Addison:—Would like to see the ANPR cameras reintroduced in Royston to combat the spate of burglaries in the town.~~

Councillor Hill responded by stating she also supported the reintroduction of the ANPR cameras, as did the Town Councillors and the Town Manager, and it was not their decision to remove them.

Geraint Burnell supported the comments made by Councillor Hill and added that the decision to remove the ANPR cameras was based on the opinion of the Information Commissioner's Office that the number of cameras was disproportionate based on the historical low level of crime in Royston. The question as to how much crime would need to increase to get the ANPR cameras back was not clear. There is still however a civil liberties issue which needs to be resolved. Councillor Hughes added that the matter has been raised with the Chief Constable to overturn the Information Commissioner's decision and he believed the Chief Constable was able to do this if operational reasons supported this. Councillor Hughes encouraged concerned members of the public to also contact the Chief Constable. He also mentioned that Sir Oliver Heald MP has been contacted for his support and when a response is received this will be promulgated and an on line petition will be considered. Other members of the public then voiced their support for the reintroduction of the ANPR cameras, giving an example of suspicious vehicular activity which they believed ANPR cameras could have deterred.

Peter Franks then asked a question about drainage problems along Kneesworth Street, despite a lot of money having already been spent on this project.

Councillor Hill noted the comments made and pointed out the project has not been completed yet.

John Meadows: Offered his congratulations to all concerned for the achievements in respect of the A10 corridor cycling campaign but asked for better cycling facilities within the Town.

Fiona Hill thanked Mr Meadows and noted his comments.

Councillor Kennedy then raised with the Council Leader, Councillor Smith, the issue of the proposed new cemetery at Wicker Hall, and expressed his serious concerns about the suitability of this site—especially in view of potential water contamination issues.— After setting out his concerns Councillor Kennedy asked whether members of the public present at the meeting tonight, who he suggested also shared his concerns, could be given the opportunity to vote on this matter and if the majority of votes cast were against the new cemetery at Wicker Hall, would the Town Council agree to look at another site?

Councillor Smith responded by explaining that the Town Council had a responsibility to provide a new cemetery and that it is imperative that it is built without any undue delay. He then asked Councillor Burt to explain the position further.— Councillor Burt explained that the cemetery space in Royston was running out with only 40 spaces left, which will be used by around 8 new burials a year, and all possible sites for a new cemetery were considered.— It was the decision of the Working Party set up by the Town Council that Wicker Hall was the most suitable site.— The land has been purchased and planning permission to build the new cemetery there has been obtained.— Consultations with District Council are still ongoing.— Councillor Burt stressed that the Environment Agency would not have given planning permission if there was any risk of water contamination.— In conclusion Councillor Burt pointed out that there is only one site available for the new cemetery—Wicker Hall—and it must be supported.

~~Several members of the public then voiced their concerns about this development including Mr Matthews who sought clarification of access issues; Mr Burns who voiced concerns about the suitability of building a cemetery high on a hill—which would mean the elderly and infirm would have trouble visiting the cemetery; Elaine Blatchford who also had concerns about vehicular access to the Cemetery via Briary Lane; Don Shewan who felt the sums already spent on this development were inappropriate as the whole site was not fit for purpose and demanded another site be considered.~~

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~~Councillor Hughes then stated that clearly no progress was going to be made this evening on this matter.~~

~~Councillor Kennedy repeated his request for a vote to be taken as did several members of the public. Several other members of the public objected to a vote taking place as such a plan had clearly not been advertised prior to the meeting. —\*\*\*I cant remember who agreed to a vote/what was the motion/ what were the terms eg advisory/etc\*\*\*\*\*There then followed a vote among members of the public which appeared indicate a small majority against the cemetery at Wicker Hall. \*\* who pointed out\*\*\* that some of the votes were from members of the public who were not Royston electors and therefore not entitled to vote.~~

~~The Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Inwood, suggested that as this issue had generated such considerable interest and diverging views—which were clearly not going to be resolved satisfactorily that evening—it would be sensible to convene a future special public meeting—so the concerns of members of the public could be aired and their questions answered.—The date/time of the special meeting would be advertised in the local press. This meeting would have to be after the District Council Elections on 7 May 2015 as until then Councillors were in purdah and unable discuss such matters.—Members of the public welcomed such a public~~

~~meeting but asked that prior to this full details of all twelve sites considered be publicized so as to aid the discussions.~~

~~There were no further questions.~~

~~The Deputy Town Mayor then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9:40 pm.~~