



# Royston Town Council

## Annual Report 2021/2022

17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022



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Royston Town Council's Annual Report gives a review of the activities of the Town Council during the Civic year and the financial report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

The start of the Civic year coincided with a further easing of COVID restrictions which meant that Town Council properties could once again be used for normal community activities. Face to face meetings had resumed and took place throughout the year.

### **Statement from the Town Mayor 2022-2023**

#### **A message from our new Town Mayor, Councillor Mary Antony**



It is a great honour and a privilege for me to be elected as Mayor of the great town of Royston. I feel very positive and hopeful as I look forward to my term in office.

Now that elections are over, our councillors will rise above political and ideological boundaries. We will join our hands together to work for a better Royston. I am very confident that together we will make a difference.

Having been an educator for 28 years, I want to ensure that our children get support for a better education. Our elderly people are especially close to my heart and I want to work hard for enhanced healthcare and transport facilities. Transportation accessible to all will be a priority during my term.

A change of Mayor does not end the work being carried out by the previous administration. I will spend time looking at what was planned that would be beneficial to the people of Royston and we will work together to implement those plans, especially those that support our local businesses.

In the days to come I will make an effort to meet with all of you. I will keep you posted on all of the developments at the Town Council so that "together we can make a difference". I will be available and accessible to all and with the help of the team at Royston Town Council, we will work hard to address any of the concerns from our community.

My Mayoral Charities this year will be Make Lunch Club and The Mayor's Community Trust Fund.

I look forward to serving the Community of Royston as Mayor.

**Mary Antony  
May 2022.**

## **Royston Town Council**

There are three tiers of local government in Royston; Town, District and County.

A new website was launched in 2020 which provides a useful resource on Royston Town Council's activities, and offers access to information regarding the committees, meetings, minutes, Town Council news and other areas of interest. Information and links are also available for other Royston organisations and community associations.

[www.roystontowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.roystontowncouncil.gov.uk)

All Town Councillors serve in a voluntary capacity and are elected for a four year term of office. Councillors are not paid and do not receive any allowances for attending meetings. The Mayor is elected annually in May at the Annual Meeting of the Council. Ten Members serve on each principal committee: Finance, Planning and General Purpose & Highways.

The Town Council elections took place on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

The Councillors that held office during the year 2021/2022 were:

**Mayor:** Councillor Mark Hughes

**Deputy Mayor:** Councillor Marguerite Phillips

**Chairman Finance Committee:** Councillor John Davison

**Chairman Planning Committee:** Councillor Marguerite Phillips

**Chairman General Purpose & Highways Committee:** Councillor Mike Harrison

### **Royston Town West**

Cllr Ruth Brown (Liberal Democrats)

Cllr John Davison (Conservative)

Cllr Emma Squire-Smith (Liberal Democrats)

### **Royston Town South**

Cllr Tom Perry (Liberal Democrats)

Cllr Carol Stanier (Liberal Democrats)

### **Royston Palace**

Cllr Brian Bylett (Conservative)

Cllr Ian Coll (Conservative) Resigned 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Cllr Mark Hughes (Conservative)

Cllr Robert Inwood (Independent)

Cllr Iain Leggett (Conservative)

### **Royston Meridian**

Cllr Elizabeth Beardwell (Liberal Democrats)

Cllr Mike Harrison (Conservative)

Cllr Marguerite Phillips (Conservative)

Cllr F John Smith (Conservative) Died 25<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Cllr Philip Smith (Conservative)

Full Council meetings and principal committee meetings are open to all members of the public and the press. At the beginning of each meeting time is set aside to allow members of the public to make representation to the various committees about items on the agenda.

Copies of the agendas are posted on the Town Hall noticeboard and Town Council website. A calendar detailing the meetings for the coming year is also available on the web site.

The Town Council's Planning Committee is asked to respond as a consultee and makes recommendations on the planning applications for Royston. The Committee commented on over 100 applications throughout the year. Final decisions on all applications are made by North Herts District Council (NHDC).

### **School Visits**

School visits were unable to take place due to continuing COVID 19 restrictions. These are seen as an important annual event, engaging with the community, and involving Town, District and County Councillors. It is hoped that these visits can be undertaken in 2023.

### **Green Street Allotments**

The allotment site in Royston is owned and managed by the Town Council. There are no vacant plots at the moment, if you are interested in obtaining a plot contact the Town Council by email [enquiries@roystontowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@roystontowncouncil.gov.uk) or call 01763 245484 to be added to the waiting list, it is approximately 3 to 4 years wait for a plot. You must be a Royston resident to rent an allotment.

### **Royston War Memorial**

Royston War Memorial in Melbourn Street was erected in 1922 in memory of the Servicemen of the town killed in the First World War. Later it was extended to include those who were killed during the Second World War. It is now a listed monument and was extensively repaired and refurbished by the Town Council in 2018.

On 14<sup>th</sup> November 2021 a large number of people joined the parade from the British Legion to the War Memorial for the Remembrance Day Service.

### **Royston Town Market**

After two years during which the composition of the market was repeatedly affected by COVID restriction, the past 12 months has shown just how well it can perform under normal circumstances.

Thankfully, the increase in footfall enjoyed throughout the pandemic (a result of the community supporting local businesses while also enjoying the relative safety of outdoor shopping) has showed no signs of abating. New trader applications have been significantly high and so the number of people working on the market has increased.

In addition to all the regular food staples which constitute the back-bone of the market, we now have even more street-food on offer, a cheesemonger and charcuterie stall, a ladies fashion stall, a large unit selling and renting lawnmowers and other garden accessories along with an array of craft and giftware stalls which complete what is becoming an increasingly diverse shopping offer.

However, for the market to enjoy any lasting success it is imperative that our community understand its importance to the Town generally and continue to support it. With few exceptions, local businesses all state that they experience an uplift in trade on market days and it is an asset which we should value.

Helen Giles was hired to provide curatorial support and help the Museum Assistant, on a one-day-a-week basis. Helen's work involved answering enquiries, caring for and managing the Collection, curating small-scale displays and applying for funding. She also worked with existing volunteers and recruited and trained new volunteers.

The condition of the costume collection was checked, more of the Collection was photographed and new displays were exhibited, including an updated timeline, a case about Royston's railway and an exhibition about Royston Cave.

Having been closed for so long due to COVID-19, volunteers and the printing, drawing and knitting groups were also welcomed back to the museum. At the end of July, the museum was opened to the public on Saturdays during the summer and autumn months.

A recovery grant was used to fund a bespoke, museum quality display case to replace an old case that proved a health and safety risk. The museum was also awarded a small grant by Herts Association of Museums which was used to purchase a photo scanner, to enable the better digitisation of the photograph and document collections, increasing their accessibility. The Friends of Royston Museum kindly funded a new laptop to be used alongside it, improving efficiency and productivity.

A designer was commissioned to create interpretation panels to tell the story of the Royston Tapestry and a photographer captured a high-resolution version of the tapestry which will be available to view online and onsite using the interactive touchscreen.

The Royston Museum Trust was established and the museum became an independent charity. Royston Town Council continue to provide vital core funding, via a service-level agreement, so that the museum can continue to operate. A new full-time Museum Manager and a part-time Curator were appointed and development of the building, exhibitions and administration got underway.



### **The Queen's Green Canopy**

In March 2022 Royston Town Council planted a tree for the Queen's Green Canopy to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. The specimen Liriodendron (Tulip Tree) can be found in the Priors Memorial Gardens and viewed on the official [Queen's Green Canopy Map](#).



## **Royston Annual May Fayre**

It was wonderful to be able to run this much loved annual event again. In partnership with other organisations and volunteers, the Town Council runs this yearly event in the Priory Memorial Gardens which takes place on the first Bank Holiday in May. It gives local charities and voluntary organisations a chance to fund raise for themselves.

Admission to the event is free. The event was attended by large numbers of people who enjoyed the perfect sunny weather and the wide variety of food offered. There was fun for all the family with the Town Band keeping the crowds entertained with their music and regulars such as the miniature railway, the Punch and Judy show and the Novelty Dog Show. Free attractions, Professor Crump and 'Last Man Standing' were provided thanks to funding from Royston Town Council. Running alongside the May Fayre was the Historical Car Show which was organised by the Rotary Club.



## **Community Halls & Royston Picture Palace**

The Town Council provides public halls which can be hired, namely the Town Hall and Market Hill Rooms. Our two community halls are hired out to various local organisations, community groups and privately to members of the public for children's parties, fitness classes and social events such as quizzes.

During the Civic Year of 2021-22 we were able to fully re-open all of the halls and rooms following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. The majority of our regular hirers have returned along with some new organisations now using the halls and rooms on a weekly or monthly basis. Occasional hirers for parties, meetings and other social events are getting back to the pre-pandemic levels. The kitchen at the Town Hall was fully refurbished in December 2021 making it a much more accessible space. The kitchen and bar area is now light and spacious with all new appliances and we have had a very positive response to the improvements.

The Town Hall is used as a state-of-the-art digital cinema on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year by Royston Picture Palace, who aim to show a wide and diverse programme of films and special events to suit all audiences and ages in our local communities. The cinema is fully wheelchair accessible, and a range of drinks and refreshments are available at every screening. Ticket and refreshment prices are kept low for the benefit of all, and parking is free from 3pm - and all day on Sundays. The cinema is run by a wonderful team of paid employees and volunteers to whom we are very grateful – without them, the show could literally not go on.

## **The Leete Charity Trust**

The Town Council is the sole Trustee of this charity. The charity provides grants towards further education for students who live, or attend a school, in Royston. The grants are made from the interest earned on the Trust's investments. During the last year, a total of £1925.50 was awarded to 6 young people going on to further education.

Details and an application form can be downloaded from the Town Council's website.

## **Bus Shelters in Icknield Walk and Melbourn Street**



The project to install new bus shelters in the town was instigated by the late Councillor FJ Smith in 2019. Working with North Herts Council, the first bus shelter was installed at Icknield Walk in June 2021. The installations suffered delays due to the pandemic but the bus shelter on Melbourn Street has now also been completed and users have commented on how much they like it. Both projects were funded by Section 106 funds (money negotiated between housing developers and the Council to help fund community infrastructure projects) held by NHDC for sustainable transport projects.

## **Green Walk Plantation & Stile Plantation**

Two small plantations link the town centre to open countryside and footpaths. These plantations are a hidden secret of the town and are used for walking and wildlife spotting. Royston Town Council received 60 whips (very young trees) from North Herts Council which were planted in the plantations during early spring 2022.

Unfortunately, the plantations suffered some damage during storm Eunice and subsequently the Council commissioned an independent survey to assess further work needed. The urgent work was completed in early May and other work will be carried out in September. New information lecterns made from recycled materials have been ordered and will be installed in June 2022.



## **Royston Cave**

Royston Cave remained closed for the majority of 2021 due to COVID-19. Instead, efforts were focused on engaging with visitors online by adding content to the website. This included continuing to publish educational articles to the cave's archive, and launching an activities page with free resources such as colouring pages, downloadable wallpapers and crafts.

On site, the cave's visitor entrance was decorated, its handrails were smoothed, and new anti-slip treads were attached to the steps. New visitor access resources were introduced, including a Visual Story and Sensory Map, and a site-specific environmental policy was established, to commit to a more environmentally-friendly and sustainable future.

After 16 months of closure, Royston Cave reopened to the public in August 2021. Tours were limited to 8 persons and the season ran through until the end of October. For the first time in the cave's history, tickets were available to book online, so visitors could buy tickets ahead of their trip. In total, we welcomed 708 visitors across 25 open dates.

In September, we collaborated with Royston Museum to co-launch The Royston Cave Exhibition; a new display showcasing artefacts excavated from the cave, including bones, nails and shells. We also installed The Royston Cave Virtual Experience, a 3D digital replica of Royston Cave, on their touchscreen.

Our annual Cave by Candelight event returned in December and sold out within a week, with more tours and spaces added to accommodate.

The arrival of 2022 marked 280 years since the discovery of Royston Cave and a year-long schedule of events and activities was designed to celebrate it, with new things launched each month. So far, this has included the permanent online display of the Virtual Experience; a new quarterly newsletter delivering curated news, topical articles and exclusive access to early-bird ticket sales; and premiere of a piece of orchestral music especially composed for the cave by an award-winning Hertfordshire composer. These have sat alongside the publication of themed articles and transcriptions of early cave texts.

We also welcomed specialists from Hertfordshire Geological Society to extract small samples of the cave's chalk, which were analysed to determine the geology of the bedrock in which Royston Cave sits. The samples identified the chalk's age, fossil content and provenance, which were released in a report in April. The chalk was established to have been formed in the Early Turonian period, 92 million years ago.



## **Annual Town Meeting 2022**

The Annual Town meeting was held in the Heritage Hall on 10th March 2022 and was attended by 30 members of the public.

Community Trust Fund Grants were awarded to:

<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF GRANT</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
Home Start Royston & South Cambs.	To hold a Summer Party for 20 local vulnerable families	£250.00
Royston Arts Society	Towards the cost of hiring Royston Town Hall for the Arts Festival Weekend	£285.00
King James Academy Royston	Development of a designated wellbeing centre to support pupils.	£250.00
Royston Speak Out Club	For a trip to Anglesey Abbey for a Summer Day Out	£300.00
Therfield Regulation Trust	To help towards cost of renovating the Queen Victoria Memorial on Baldock Street	£500.00
Royston Photographic Society	Towards the cost of hiring Royston Town Hall for the Arts Festival Weekend	£275.00

Community Service Awards were presented to:

**Sharon Redrup** – in recognition of her commitment to her role as the Manager of Royston Old Barn Day Centre for the benefit of the clients and local groups that have access to this invaluable service.

**Victoria Green** – In recognition of her voluntary work at Royston Rugby Club for the benefit of the players and their families.

**Councillor F John Smith** – In recognition of his extraordinary public service to the town of Royston for more than half a century.

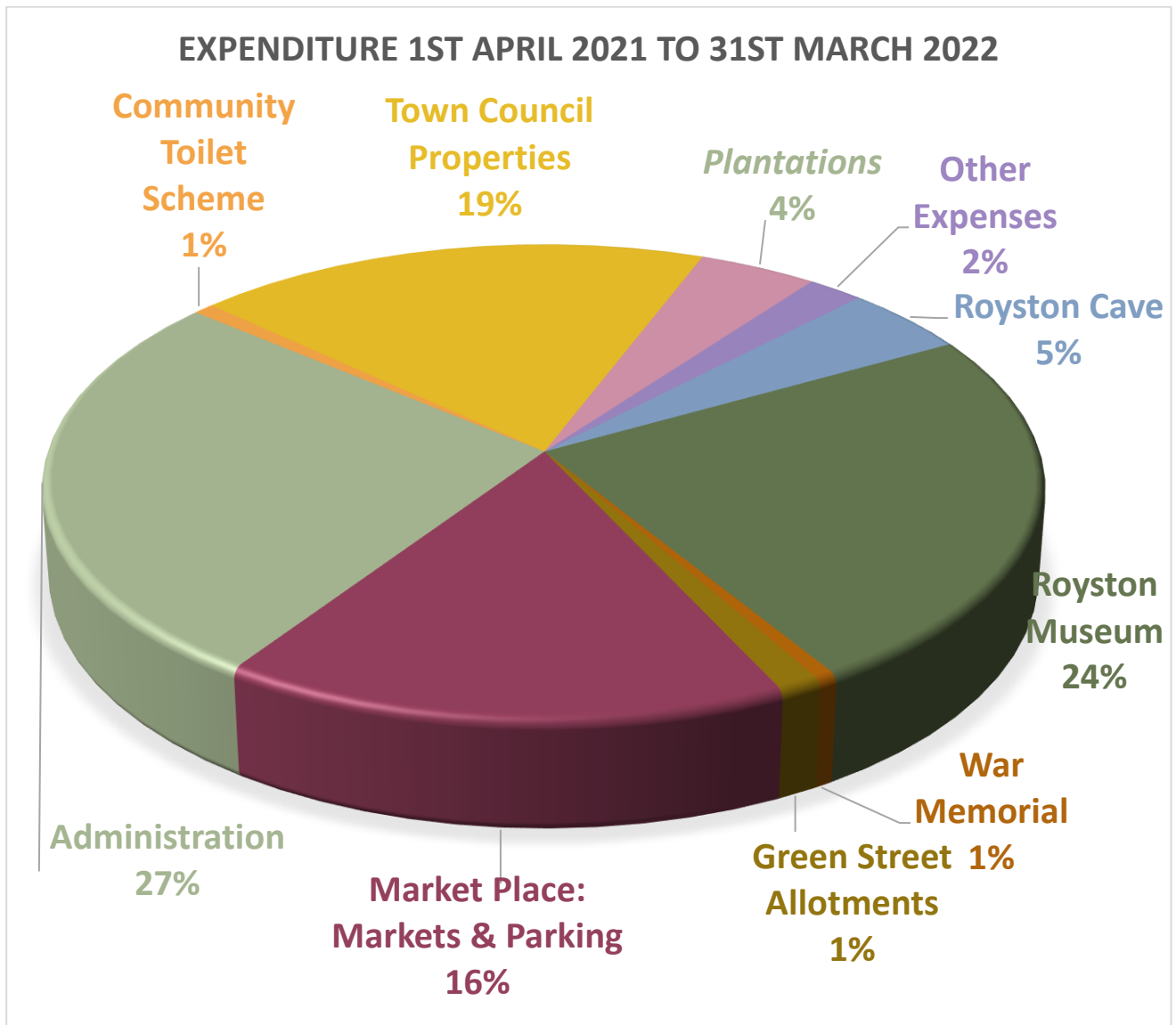
**Amy Murphy** – In recognition of her services in organising the Remembrance Sunday Parades and Remembrance Day ceremonies on behalf of Royston Town Council.

**Royston Repair Café** – In recognition of their help to local residents in repairing items that are broken or faulty and would otherwise end up in landfill.

## Royston Town Council Finances

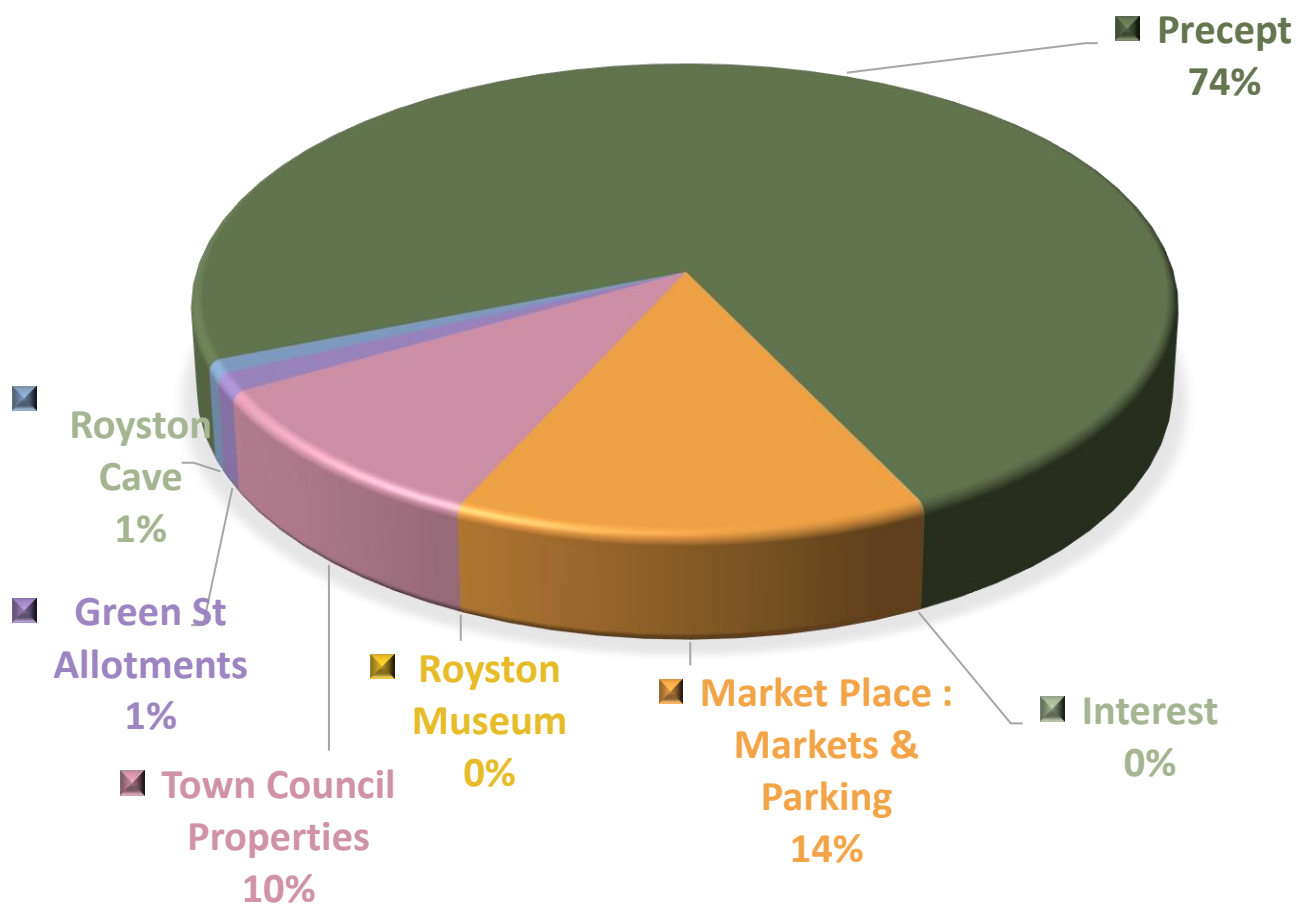
### EXPENDITURE 2021-2022

	Budget	Actual
Administration/Democracy	129,571	106,883
Royston Museum & Art Gallery	91,666	97,364
Town Council Properties	95,451	75,594
Green Walk & Stile Plantation	19,080	17,352
Other Expenses (Civic, May Fayre, Christmas Lights etc.)	15,543	8,193
Royston Cave	20,032	18,610
Green St Allotments	4,465	4,993
Melbourn St War Memorial	2,423	2,224
Community Toilet scheme	2,913	3,019
Market Place - Markets and Parking	70,734	65,717
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>451,878</b>	<b>399,949</b>



<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Interest	300	133
Market Place - markets/parking	54,000	65,354
Royston Museum & Art Gallery	750	63
Town Council Properties	38,580	46,330
Green St Allotments	5,600	5,938
Royston Cave	10,000	4,260
Precept	342,648	342,648
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>451,878</b>	<b>464,726</b>

### INCOME 1ST APRIL 2021 TO 31ST MARCH 2022



## **Royston Town Council Finances 2022-2023**

The Royston Town Council part of the Council Tax for 2022-2023 is £52.15 per Band D household.

### **Royston Town Council Budget and Precept 2022-2023**

#### **Expenditure**

Admin/Democracy	144,541
Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery	91,000
Royston Town Hall	62,038
Priory Centre Rooms	15,491
Market Hill Rooms	23,728
Green Walk and Stile Plantations	20,878
Other Expenses	16,286
Royston Cave	21,117
Green St Allotments	6,761
Royston War Memorial	4,101
30 Kneesworth St	1,109
Community Toilet Scheme	3,939
Markets and Parking (Market Hill/Angel Pavement)	73,167
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>484,156</b>

#### **Income**

Interest	200
Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery	0
Royston Town Hall	28,000
Priory Centre Rooms	1,000
Market Hill Rooms	10,000
Green St Allotments	5,600
30 Kneesworth St	15,590
Royston Cave	7,500
Markets and Parking (Market Hill/Angel Pavement)	60,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>127,890</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>356,266</b>

Precept	345,133
CTRS Grant	11,133
	<b>356,266</b>