



Royston Town Council

Annual Report 2022/2023

16th May 2022 – 15th May 2023



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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 31st March 2023.

Statement from the Town Mayor 2023-2024

A message from our new Town Mayor, Councillor Lisa Adams



It is truly a great honour to be given the opportunity to represent Royston as your Mayor. I am a Royston woman. I was born in Royston Hospital 50 years ago, and there is no other place that I am happier.

I had a wonderful childhood and have always felt fortunate to live in a place with such beautiful surroundings. Our historical town is known for King James I Palace and the Royston Cave. We have the Museum and the Heath, and many other places of interest to enjoy.

I've worked in Royston all of my life, starting with a paper round, then on Royston Market, and then various other jobs including working in a local care home and school.

My vision for Royston is to work alongside local businesses and organisations to develop more services for children and young people in our community. As Mayor I will continue to support local schools and focus on reviving youth provisions in our town. I'm also keen to work to improve resources for the elderly and I'm fully behind retaining the Royston Community Hospital.

I very much look forward to attending the many events that will be taking place here over the coming year and meeting more of our local residents. I will take on board your concerns and work together with my fellow councillors to help bring about the improvements for Royston that we all hope to achieve.

I am a people person, and I will be visible in our community spending time with local people, whether it be in our shops, visiting our parks and open spaces or dining out at some of our pubs or restaurants. My heart is in Royston, and I look forward to giving you my time so we can work together to make our town an even more marvellous place to live.

My nominated charities for the coming year will be the Mayor's Community Trust Fund and Pathways to Learning.

Councillor Lisa Adams
Mayor of Royston
May 2023

Royston Town Council

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

The Town Council's website is updated regularly providing a useful resource on Royston Town Council's activities, and offering access to information regarding the committees, meetings, minutes, Town Council news and other areas of interest. Some council meetings are now being live streamed via YouTube and the link can be found on the website. Information and links are also available for other Royston organisations and community associations.

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 Councillors that held office during the year 2022/2023 were:

Mayor: Councillor Mary Antony

Deputy Mayor: Councillor Ruth Brown

Chairman Finance Committee: Councillor Adam Compton

Chairman Planning Committee: Councillor Elizabeth Beardwell

Chairman General Purpose & Highways Committee: Councillor Mike Harrison

Royston Town West

Cllr Ruth Brown (Liberal Democrats)

Cllr Elizabeth Beardwell (Liberal Democrats)

Cllr Emma Squire-Smith (Liberal Democrats)

Royston Town South

Cllr Mary Antony (Royston Town Party)

Cllr Carol Stanier (Liberal Democrats) Resigned 6th February 2023

Cllr Elizabeth Freeman (Liberal Democrats) Elected 4th May 2023

Royston Palace

Cllr Lisa Adams (Royston Town Party)

Cllr Robert Inwood (Royston Town Party)

Cllr Bind Jani (Royston Town Party)

Cllr Lynsey Langdon (Royston Town Party)

Cllr John Rees (Labour)

Royston Meridian

Cllr James Birch (Royston Town Party)

Cllr Adam Compton (Conservative)

Cllr Mike Harrison (Conservative)

Cllr Luke Haugh (Royston Town Party) Elected 8th September 2023

Cllr Stephen Lockett (Labour)

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 website. Some meetings are now being live-streamed on YouTube and the link is both on the website and our social media platforms.

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 130 applications throughout the year. Final decisions on all applications are made by North Herts Council (NHC).

School Visits

Royston Town Council organised another successful round of visits to local schools during the autumn term of 2022. The schools visited this year were Icknield Walk First School, Roman Way First School, St Mary's Primary School, Tannery Drift First School and Studlands Rise First School. Town, District and County Councillors all took part and the children were well engaged and put forward several ideas which have been taken on board.

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 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.

The Council recognises the high demand for allotments and is actively seeking a new site.

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 13th November 2022 hundreds of people joined the parade from the British Legion to the War Memorial for the Remembrance Day Service.

Royston Town Market

The market enjoyed an extremely buoyant year in 2022 with busy shopping days and robust markets being a common feature. A significant number of markets saw full capacity in terms of trader numbers as a result of increased demand for pitches. The unprecedented fine weather which saw hot sunny days for many months from spring right through to the autumn helped and we had a busy period leading up to Christmas.

As we entered 2023, it was clear that traders were concerned that the uncertain economic climate could impact their businesses adversely but footfall does not appear to have diminished. As we move into the summer months, trader numbers are returning to 2022 levels, and we anticipate a positive year.

Royston Museum

Since April 2022 Royston Museum has been owned and managed by the Royston Museum Trust CIO. Royston Town Council continues to provide core funding to the museum.

All information can be found on their website www.roystonmuseum.org.uk

Royston Annual May Fayre

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. This year, the Fayre had a Coronation theme to celebrate the approaching coronation of King Charles III.

The event was attended by large numbers of people who enjoyed mostly 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 Coronation Dog Show.

Free attractions, Professor Crump, Topper's Circus skills and Enchanted Brushes' face painting were provided thanks to funding from Royston Town Council. The council purchased 2,000 reusable cups to make the event more sustainable and these were a great success.

Running alongside the May Fayre was the Historical Car Show which was organised by the Rotary Club and judged by the Town Mayor.



Community Halls & Royston Picture Palace

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

Following the new kitchen facilities being fitted at the Town Hall, we now have plans to refurbish the kitchen at the Market Hill Rooms, with work scheduled to begin this summer.

The Town Council received notice from Saffron Screen on the 18th April 2023 that they intend to end their contract to run the Royston Picture Palace with the last film screening due to take place on the 28th May 2023. The Town Council's Finance Committee held a meeting regarding the matter and agreed to set up a working party, including members from the Royston First BID, which will look at establishing options for the future running of the cinema. As a first

step, an interim agreement with Saffron Screen will keep the cinema open until 15th October 2023, thereby allowing more time to find a sustainable solution.

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 £1,725.00 was awarded to 7 young people going on to further education. Details and an application form can be downloaded from the Town Council's website.

Mayor's Community Trust Fund

During her term as Royston Town Mayor, Councillor Mary Antony carried out over 80 engagements. In this time, she also hosted a Civic Service, a Charity Quiz Night, a Charity Dinner at Yuva Fine Fusion Restaurant in Bassingbourn and had a stall at the Royston May Fayre to raise funds for the Mayor's Community Trust Fund. Along with donations made throughout the year, the total amount raised for 2022-2023 was £1,649.06, split equally between the Trust Fund and her other nominated charity, Make Lunch Royston.

This year ten grants between £100 and £500 were awarded from the Mayor's Community Trust Fund to local charities and organisations including £500 towards the renovation of the Queen Victoria Memorial on Baldock Street.

Community Noticeboards



The Royston Town Council noticeboards were replaced this year and have 'self-healing' backing! This makes getting the drawing pins in and out much easier and we are pleased to be able to offer such a smart setting for local community organisations and charities to promote their events. A policy setting out more details on their use is now on the boards and on our website. No staples though please as these are very damaging.

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.

This year, work has been carried out to improve steps into Green Walk Plantation and following a Countryside Management survey carried out by Hertfordshire County Council on our behalf, 10 new bird boxes and 10 new bat boxes have been installed. We were also advised that clearing some cow parsley would encourage other wildflowers and a team of enthusiastic volunteers from Johnson Matthey came in mid-May to carry out this work.



Climate and Biodiversity Action

The Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in June 2022 and since then have been investigating ways to reduce their carbon emissions and increase biodiversity in the Plantations. Swift boxes were fitted to the Town Hall last year and the council wrote to other organisations in the town to encourage them to follow suit and make Royston a Swift Town. Investigations into fitting solar panels to the Town Hall are underway and 'Reuse or Return' cups were purchased and made available at the May Fayre in order to reduce the use of single-use plastics at the event.

Royston Cave

2022 marked 280 years since the discovery of Royston Cave and a year-long schedule of events and activities was designed to celebrate it.

This included the premiere of a bespoke piece of orchestral music, the permanent online display of the 3D virtual cave, a new quarterly newsletter delivering curated news and articles, a free online Collection facility collating documents and artefacts relating to or excavated from the cave, and online activities for children.

We introduced brand-new events for Summer Solstice, Halloween and Christmas, plus an open day of free tours for our community, so they could join in the celebrations with us. Our sell-out annual Cave by Candlelight event also returned. We commissioned new research, published 12 articles to our online archive, transcribed and published 5 old books and documents, and made 4 research and conservation reports available to all. It was our biggest offering in a single year ever.

The cave was open for general admission every Saturday, Sunday and bank holiday from April through September. It was our first full season since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Tour capacities were increased to 12 persons, up from 8 in our limited 2021 season, with tickets continuing to be available to pre-book online. In total, we welcomed 3539 visitors across 58 open dates, 23 private tours and 5 events. We also engaged with approximately 125 people across 5 outreach talks.

Elsewhere, a 12-minute segment about Royston Cave was featured in a popular History Channel TV show called the Curse of Oak Island which aired around the world and saw engagement on the cave's website and social media increase significantly.

And, in November, the Cave Trust Fund agreed to fund the radiocarbon dating of some artefacts excavated from the cave, currently held in Royston Museum's collection. The chosen artefacts were taken to Oxford University's radiocarbon facility for sampling and testing and the results will be available towards the end of 2023.

Silver Sunday



SILVER SUNDAY

CELEBRATING OLDER PEOPLE

SUNDAY 2nd OCTOBER 2022

In October 2022 a Silver Sunday event was held in the Town Hall and almost 100 older people were welcomed to the event. A cream tea was served by councillors and other volunteers before guests attended the free screening of the film "The Duke".

Annual Town Meeting 2023

The Annual Town meeting was held in the Heritage Hall on 9th March 2023 and was attended by 40 members of the public. Guest speakers included Hertfordshire Police and Royston First BID.

Community Trust Fund Grants were awarded to:

ORGANISATION	PURPOSE OF GRANT	SUM REQUESTED
Royston Arts Society	Towards the cost of hiring Royston Town Hall for the Arts Festival Weekend	£300.00
Royston Community First Responders	Towards the cost of purchasing a Raizer 2 Lifting Chair	£500.00
Royston & District Community Transport	Towards running costs of wheelchair accessible vehicles	£500.00
Royston Speak Out Club	Towards the cost of the Club's annual summer outing	£300.00
Royston Community Association	To purchase leaflet racks for the Coombes Community Centre	£100.00
Royston Photographic Society	Towards the cost of hiring Royston Town Hall for the Arts Festival Weekend	£275.00
Home Start Royston, Buntingford & South Cambs	Home Start Summer Party at Royston Methodist Church	£157.50
Royston & Villages SEN Lego Club	Towards the cost of an Education Psychologist to offer support at the group	£400.00
Creative Royston	Towards the cost of a gazebo	£120.00
Royston Cricket Club	Towards the cost of redeveloping the pavilion at the Cricket Ground	£250.00

Community Service Awards were awarded to:

Make Lunch Royston – In recognition of their service that provides healthy, free of charge meals to families in Royston over the school holidays and a safe place for children to socialise and learn.

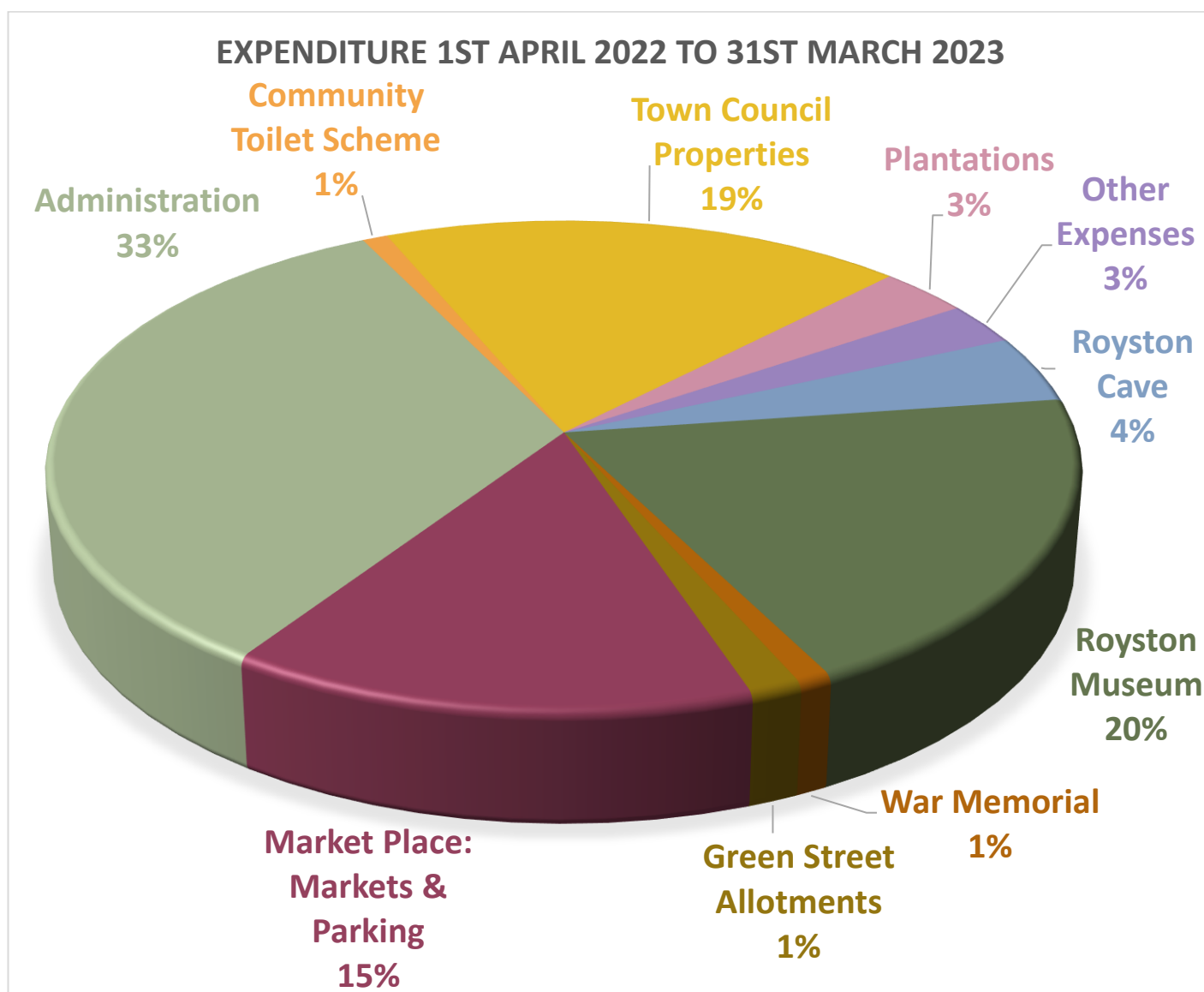
Joanna & Rebecca Abrams – In recognition of their voluntary work and dedication in their roles to keep Royston & District Girlguiding running and the opportunity that they have given to Rainbows, Browns & Guides alike.

David Smyth – In recognition of his work at Royston First BID for the last 14 years which has brought prosperity to businesses, the town centre and the community itself.

Graeme Fell & Ian Woodall – In recognition of their contribution to the May Fayre both as Marshalls & members of the May Fayre Committee for the last 20 years. Their experience has been invaluable to all those involved.

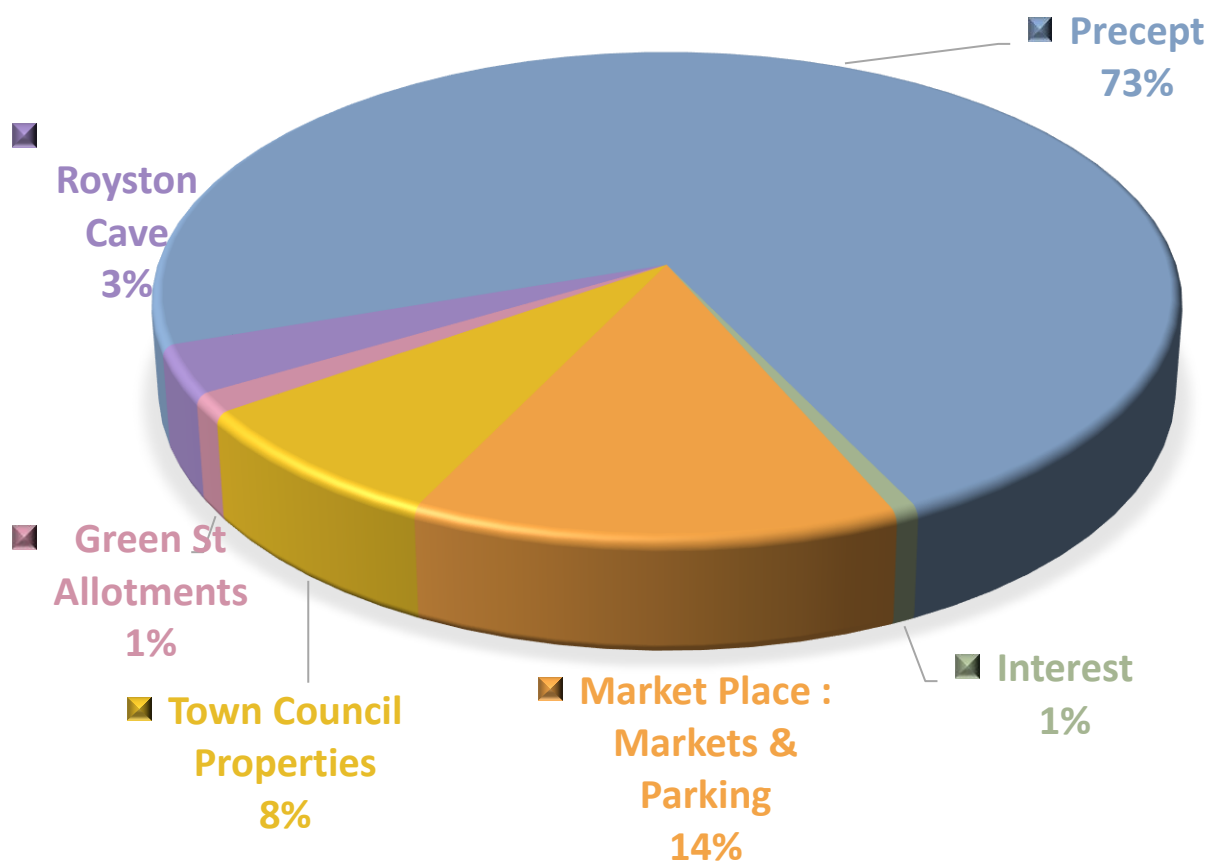
Royston Town Council Finances 2022-2023

<u>EXPENDITURE 2022-2023</u>	Budget	Actual
Administration/Democracy	144,541	156,191
Royston Museum & Art Gallery	91,000	92,235
Town Council Properties	102,366	88,025
Green Walk & Stile Plantation	20,878	15,158
Other Expenses (Civic, May Fayre, Christmas Lights etc.)	16,286	12,969
Royston Cave	21,117	20,698
Green St Allotments	6,761	6,793
Melbourn St War Memorial	4,101	4,358
Community Toilet scheme	3,939	4,244
Market Place - Markets and Parking	73,167	68,825
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	484,156	469,496



INCOME	Budget	Actual
Interest	200	3,240
Market Place - markets/parking	60,000	67,383
Town Council Properties	54,590	39,025
Green St Allotments	5,600	6,349
Royston Cave	7,500	15,722
Precept	356,266	356,266
TOTAL INCOME	484,156	487,985

INCOME 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023



Royston Town Council Finances 2023-2024

The Royston Town Council part of the Council Tax for 2023-2024 is £57.12 per Band D household.

Royston Town Council Budget & Precept 2023-2024

Expenditure

Admin/Democracy	151,339
Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery	100,000
Royston Town Hall	68,162
Priory Centre Rooms	26,446
Market Hill Rooms	37,995
Green Walk and Stile Plantations	21,329
Other Expenses	23,083
Royston Cave	22,568
Green St Allotments	7,205
Royston War Memorial	4,405
30 Kneesworth St	1,194
Public conveniences	4,089
Markets and Parking (Market Hill/Angel Pavement)	85,339
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	553,154

Income

Interest	2,500
Royston Town Hall	22,000
Priory Centre Rooms	1,000
Market Hill Rooms	12,000
Green St Allotments	5,900
30 Kneesworth St	17,599
Royston Cave	14,000
Markets and Parking (Market Hill/Angel Pavement)	60,000
TOTAL INCOME	134,999
Net Expenditure	418,155

Precept	386,863
CTRS Grant	11,292
Taken from reserves	20,000
	418,155