



Royston Town Council Annual Report 2019/2020

13th May 2019 – 17th May 2020



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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 2020.

The Council was faced with unprecedented events during the civic year with restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. New legislation was introduced in March 2020 which gave the Council the option to retain the same Mayor and Deputy Mayor for another civic year as council meetings could not be held in person. It was decided that Councillor Robert Inwood would serve another year as Mayor to provide some stability during these uncertain times.

Statement from the Town Mayor 2020-2021

It gives me great honour to represent our town again for another year. At this difficult time I hope that by showing continued leadership, you will feel that the Town Council is stable, and you can rest assured that you have a Mayor whose heart is for Royston.

Firstly I want to praise many of you for having showed yet again the great Royston spirit that we have in our community, by helping one another out in many ways. I have sometimes found it so emotional that it has brought me to tears, but it has also brought laughter as well. We have seen bears and rainbows in windows and new groups being started such as Royston vs Coronavirus.

I know that many of you have been working during these challenging times. I wish to say a big thank you to all of the key workers. Many before this crisis were classed wrongly as low skilled workers but recent events have shown us that everyone has a role to play in our society and we should never look down on people. It has been great to see us united, clapping and saying thank you to the NHS and all other key workers on Thursday nights. I hope that in the future the respect continues and people remember those that put their lives at risk to keep us and our families safe and provided for. I feel that we have become a closer society and one that grows equally together.

My great aim for this year is to ensure that the voices of the youth are finally recognised by completing the setting up of the Youth Council, which was sadly delayed due to COVID-19.

I will also work tirelessly in helping local businesses, no matter how large or small, to prosper after this crisis is over. Local businesses will need you so let us try to spend our money locally and remember the shops that you visited while the crisis was happening and keep using local shops and businesses once they start to re-open.

I want to be a Mayor that is accessible to you, the people, and to fight for a better environment for all Royston people to live in. I also want to encourage people to be passionate and proud to say that they live in Royston, the best town in England, where we have great sporting teams, a passion for the arts and a great community spirit.

As a final point, I feel that there is one group who have been dramatically overlooked during the virus pandemic and that is the children. In particular the ones who are too young to really understand why there have been drastic changes. Their worlds have been turned upside down and they have dealt with it in their own unique ways. No longer can they play with their friends, hug grandparents, aunts and uncles, or spend time with familiar people outside of the family home.

I would like to say a massive thank you and well done to all of you. I am proud of each and every one of you.



Councillor Robert Inwood

Mayor of Royston 2020-2021

Royston Town Council

There are three tiers of local government in Royston; Town, District and County. Details of what each council is responsible for can be found on the Town Council's website at [Who does What-Council Services - Royston Town Council](#).

Also on our website, further details can be found about the Town Councillors, council meetings, minutes and other general information and useful links - 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 of the principal committees: Finance, Planning and General Purpose and Highways.

The Councillors that held office during the year 2019/2020 were:

Mayor: Councillor Robert Inwood

Deputy Town Mayor: Councillor Mark Hughes

Chairman Finance: Councillor John Davison

Chairman Planning: Councillor Marguerite Phillips

Chairman General Purpose & Highways: 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 Amy Bourke-Waite (Labour) until 3rd February 2020, seat now vacant
Cllr Ian Coll (Conservative)
Cllr Mark Hughes (Conservative)
Cllr Robert Inwood (Labour until 26/02/2020 and then Independent)
Cllr Iain Leggett (Conservative)

Royston Meridian

Cllr Mike Harrison (Conservative)
Cllr Marguerite Phillips (Conservative)
Cllr F John Smith (Conservative)
Cllr Philip Smith (Conservative)
Cllr Vera Swallow (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 notice-board and Council web-site. 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 all of 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 the onset of the Covid-19 epidemic. 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 either later in 2020 or in the early part of 2021.

Naturally Royston Working Party



Members of the Naturally Royston Working Party held another very successful stall at the 2019 May Fayre where they invited children to build 'Buggingham Palace' a super-sized bug hotel. Children had great fun creating this and the bug hotel was later placed in the wildlife area of Icknield Walk First School.

Naturally Royston also introduced a new project aimed at reducing the use of single use plastic in the town. They gave examples of how this could be achieved and asked individuals to pledge to make three differences in their households. An event was held in January at Royston Market to further promote the plastic free initiative and the group had some very encouraging responses from folks.

Unfortunately further meetings of the group had to be suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The group do have some interesting ideas for the future and hope to resume meetings when it is safe to do so.

Naturally Royston can be followed on their Twitter page @naturallyroys

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 2 to 3 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 becomes the centre of attention each year for the annual Remembrance Day Parade.



It's been quite a year for the Museum. In July 2019, after nearly three decades of dreaming, planning, and working hard, we unveiled the completed Royston Tapestry. We were thrilled to share this masterpiece with the Town, and glad to welcome former staff, lifelong volunteers, and thousands of Roystonians to the exhibit. At 83.5 feet, the Tapestry is too long to display in the current Museum, and in September, our Committee unanimously voted to pursue re-development. With the support of the Local History Society and the Friends of Royston Museum, we began pursuing this plan in earnest.

We began by trialling some new ideas and initiatives throughout the existing museum. We rearranged several exhibits to increase accessibility, and developed a ground-breaking Virtual Reality exhibit in partnership with the Royston Cave. We increased our online offerings, and continued work on rationalising and caring for the future of the Collection.

Of course, Covid-19 has changed our plans a bit. We are, like all museums across the United Kingdom, closed for the foreseeable future. However, we've realised that we can use this time to focus on offering accessible, varied digital content. We're also undertaking a lot of messy, behind the scenes work. When we are able to safely reopen, we will be pleased to share many newly cleaned, redisplayed exhibits with you. In the meantime, do join us across our social media channels, @roystonmuseum.

Royston Annual May Fayre

Unfortunately the May Fayre had to be cancelled this year due to the ban on mass gatherings introduced by the Government. The event was due to be themed to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day. Thanks go to the council staff and volunteers that had already put in many hours of work arranging the licences and planning the event before it was sadly cancelled. Hopefully the event can return on 3rd May 2021.

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.

The Town Hall is used as a state of the art, digital cinema on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year. Our thanks go to the many volunteers who give up their time to help put on the performances; without them the show could not go on.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the halls and cinema have been closed to the public from 23rd March 2020 until further notice. At the time of publication, they remain closed.

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 £1,150 was awarded to 5 young people going on to further education.

Details and an application form can be downloaded from the Town Council's web-site.

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. The Town Council have added information boards and benches to the sites and have undertaken some additional tree planting, using hazel trees donated by a local resident, to compensate for the natural loss of some of the woodland.

Royston Cave

As a world famous heritage site, the mystery of Royston Cave continues to attract interest from across the globe. Open every Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday, from Easter weekend until the end of September, Royston Cave opened for general admission across 56 dates in 2019, welcoming a total of 3068 visitors; a 3% increase on 2018 despite 11 fewer open days. Admission prices remained the same at £5 for adults, £4 for seniors and £2 for children, and this year saw the introduction of a £4 student ticket option.

An additional 270 people visited across 21 private tours, and the annual return of the Cave by Candlelight event in December welcomed a further 125 visitors. Private tours were made by arrangement and charged at £80 for standard tours and £40 for youth groups, increasing to £120 and £80 respectively from October 2019.

In April 2019, the development of an arts project with Kettles Yard Cambridge began, as part of a large-scale artistic commissioning project in the East of England called New Geographies. Kettles Yard and Royston Cave have spent the past year engaging with community groups and the project will culminate in a film exploring current issues facing Royston residents, using the cave as a vehicle to do so. The film will be shown nationally and internationally, but, with filming scheduled for April this year, due to coronavirus, this has been postponed until further notice.

In September 2019, funding was agreed to create a 3D, 360 degree, interactive virtual tour of Royston Cave. Housed on Royston Museum's touchscreen, this is to be used as an educational tool and provides access to the cave to those with reduced mobility. Software development began

in October and was due to be launched at the museum in March this year, alongside a brand new permanent Royston Cave exhibition. Due to coronavirus, this has been postponed until further notice.

Like all heritage sites, Royston Cave closed its doors in March to safeguard our staff and visitors against the outbreak of COVID-19. It will remain closed until further notice. In the meantime, we are working hard to connect with the community and potential visitors on social media to maintain interest until a time that we are able to reopen; posting images, interpretation and live Q&A sessions.

For more information, visit roystoncave.co.uk.

Annual Town Meeting 2020

Unfortunately, the Annual Town meeting due to be held on 19th March 2020 had to be cancelled at short notice due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Community Trust Fund Grants were still awarded to:

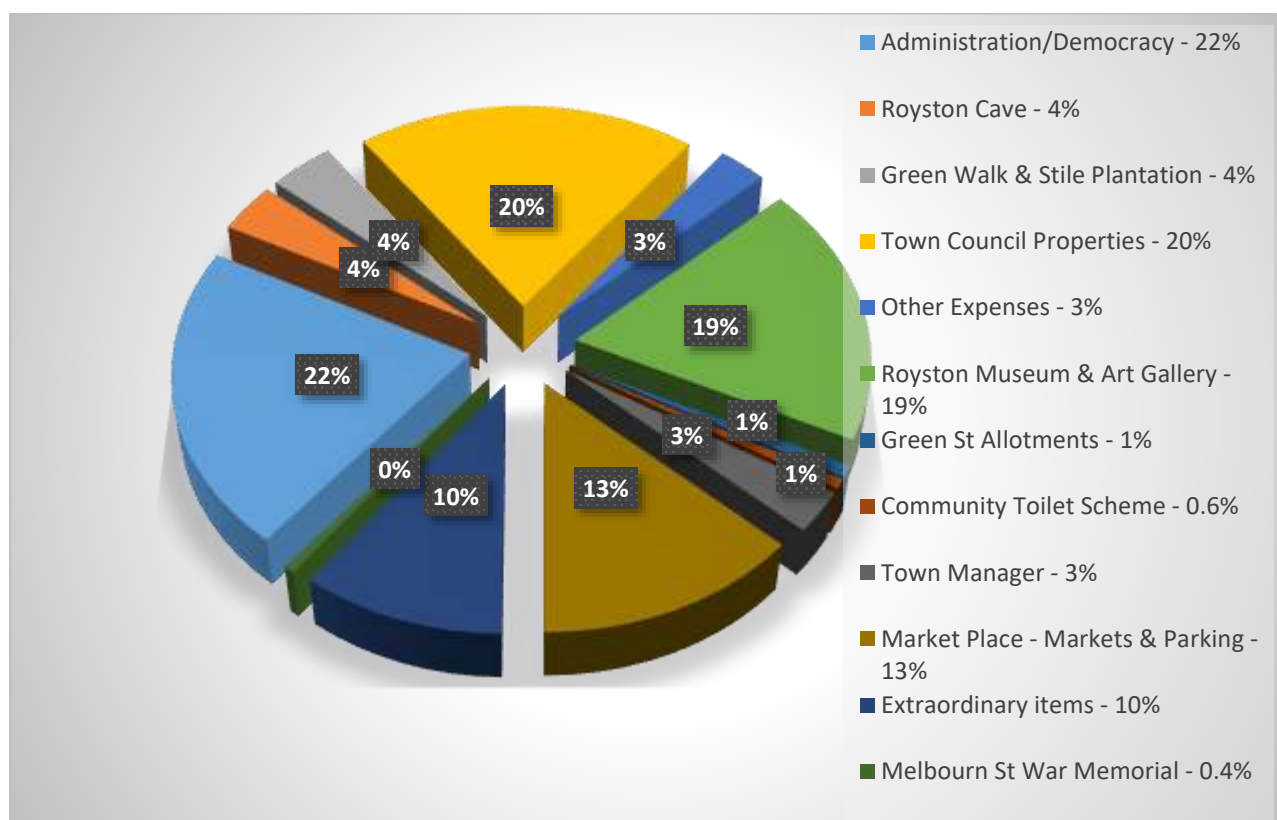
ORGANISATION	PURPOSE OF GRANT	AMOUNT AWARDED
Home-Start Royston and South Cambs.	To run a summer session of the Royston Family Support Group	£254.80
Royston and Villages SEN Lego Club	To assist with the costs of running the club at Coombes Community Centre	£300.00
Royston Speak Out club	To assist with the cost of a summer outing to Woburn Safari Park.	£300.00
Royston Arts Society	To assist with the cost of hiring the Heritage Hall for the annual autumn art exhibition which forms part of the Royston Arts Festival.	£255.00
Royston Army Cadets	To assist with the purchase of IT equipment	£500.00
Royston Repair Cafe	To cover the cost of insurance for the next year	£230.00
Rotary Club of Royston	To assist with the cost of providing tables for the schools Technology Tournament.	£250.00
Royston Choral Society	To assist with publicity for their spring performance	£50.00

Nominations were received for three very deserving local residents for Community Service Awards and these will be carried forward and presented at the 2021 Annual Meeting.

Royston Town Council Finances

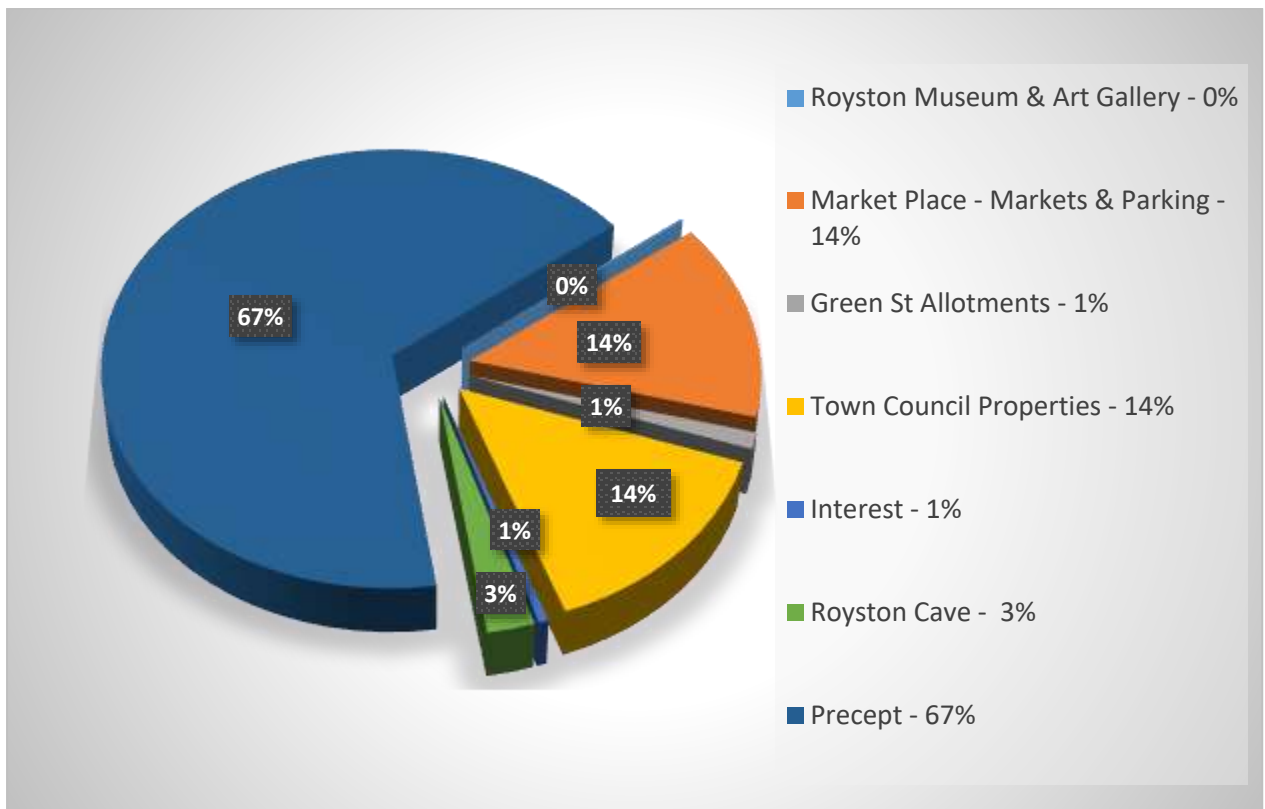
Royston Town Council Finances 2019-2020

<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	Budget £	Actual £
Administration/Democracy	110,957	96,707
Royston Museum & Art Gallery	88,254	83,841
Town Council Properties	86,080	90,303
Green Walk & Stile Plantation	17,776	17,304
Other Expenses (Civic, May Fayre, Christmas Lights etc.)	39,796	13,115
Royston Cave	19,290	16,029
Green St Allotments	4,146	3,847
Melbourn St War Memorial	2,953	2,416
Town Manager	10,000	13,200
Community Toilet scheme	5,263	3,095
Extraordinary staff costs	0	45,345
Market Place - Markets and Parking	63,673	59,788
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	448,188	444,990



INCOME

	Budget	Actual
	£	£
Interest	1,500	2,482
Market Place - markets/parking	57,000	68,707
Royston Museum & Art Gallery	1,000	749
Town Council Properties	54,250	67,857
Green St Allotments	5,100	5,631
Royston Cave	12,000	11,871
Precept	317,338	317,338
TOTAL INCOME	448,188	474,635



Royston Town Council Finances 2020-2021

The Royston Town Council part of the Council Tax for 2020-2021 is £48.49 per Band D household.

Royston Town Council Budget & Precept 2020-2021

<u>Expenditure</u>	£
Admin/Democracy	117,443
Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery	100,819
Royston Town Hall	57,337
Priory Centre Rooms	14,428
Market Hill Rooms	23,853
Green Walk and Stile Plantations	18,039
Other Expenses	35,385
Royston Cave	19,224
Green St Allotments	4,409
Royston War Memorial	2,864
30 Kneesworth St	2,010
Cross Public Conveniences	5,084
Markets and Parking (Market Hill/Angel Pavement)	67,200
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	468,095

<u>Income</u>	£
Interest	1,500
Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery	1,000
Royston Town Hall	22,600
Priory Centre Rooms	6,200
Market Hill Rooms	14,600
Green St Allotments	5,399
30 Kneesworth St	15,565
Royston Cave	12,000
Markets and Parking (Market Hill/Angel Pavement)	60,000
TOTAL INCOME	138,864
Net Expenditure	329,231

<u>Precept</u>	£
Precept	317,910
CTRS Grant	11,321
TOTAL	329,231