

**MINUTES** of the meeting of **ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL** held virtually via Zoom at 7.30pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillor Hughes (Deputy Mayor) in the Chair  
Councillors Brown, Bylett, Coll, Davison, Harrison, Leggett, Perry, Phillips, P Smith and Stanier.

**In attendance:** Town Clerk  
County Councillor Hill, District Councillors Green and Hunter  
1 member of the public

**126/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

There was none.

**127/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies were received from Councillors Inwood and Squire-Smith.

**128/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS:**

Members were advised to declare any interests at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. No requests for dispensations were received.

**129/21 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The Deputy Town Mayor commented that the new year is beginning with a degree of optimism that was lacking last year, and there is light at the end of the tunnel and hopefully there will some degree of normality later in the year.

**130/21 MINUTES:**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (minutes 92/21 to 111/21).

**131/21 TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF COMMITTEES WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN APPROVED AS A CORRECT RECORD:**

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (minutes 112/21 to 118/21) into the workings of the council.

**132/21 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEE AND WORKING PARTY MEETINGS:**

- (a) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Sustainable Travel Town Working Party meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020 into the workings of the Council.
- (b) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Environmental Policy Working Party meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 into the workings of the Council.

**133/21 BANK RECONCILIATION AND INCOME AND EXPENDITURE:**

- a) Members received and noted the bank reconciliation for November 2020.
- b) Members received and noted the bank reconciliation for December 2020.
- c) Members received and noted the November and December 2020 Income and Expenditure reports compared against budgets for 2020-2021.

In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk clarified that the receipt of grants was included in the other income section as it was unbudgeted income that had been received.

#### **134/21 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the December 2020 accounts for payment and the transfers between the Town Council accounts.

In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk clarified that the payment for SLCC covered membership for the Clerk for one year. When the Assistant Town Clerk qualifies, it would be investigated whether an additional membership would be beneficial or a single membership would suffice for the council.

#### **135/21 BUDGET AND PRECEPT APPROVAL 2021-2022:**

Councillor Davison thanked the other members of the Budget Working Party for their work producing the proposed budget.

He drew attention to the revised budget expenditure forecast for the current year of £432,000 reduced from £468,000. This saving was partly due to the lack of spending as a result of Coronavirus on three items which had been budgeted for; £10,000 on updating the Museum, £10,000 for a Projects Coordinator and £10,000 for refurbishment of properties. He also highlighted that projected income has fallen from £139,000 to £69,000 although grant income of £30,000 has also been received. Due to the latest restrictions there will be no further income received from hall and room hiring and therefore the potential overall loss will be between £14,000 and £20,000 rather than the £4,000 previously expected. Council reserves will be lower than in other years due to the effect of the current financial year.

The budgeted non-precept income for the next financial year is approximately £109,000 which is fairly optimistic and assumes that things will return to normal in late spring. Total net annual expenditure for the year will be £342,648, an increase from £329,231 in the previous year.

The precept request represents a 4.97% annual rise in the yearly cost per Band D household compared to the previous year, which equates to an increase of £2.41 per annum and a total yearly charge of £50.90.

- a) Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation from the Budget Working Party and approved the proposed budget for 2021-2022.
- b) Members **RESOLVED** that the precept demand be set at £342,648, representing a yearly cost per Band D household of £50.90, for 2021-2022.

In response to a Member's question, Councillor Davison explained that the number of Band D households had fallen due to an increased number of people claiming council tax benefit.

The Chairman thanked the Budget Working Party for their work on the 2021-2022 budget.

#### **136/21 MOTION FOR TOWN COUNCIL ON PLASTIC-FREE ROYSTON:**

Members **RESOLVED** to support the following three statements:

- 1) The Council must lead by example to remove single-use plastic items from their premises.
- 2) Council to encourage plastic-free initiatives, promoting the campaign & supporting events.
- 3) A representative of the council must be named on the Plastic Free community steering group.

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Stanier as the Town Council representative on the Royston Environmental Group.

#### **137/21 POLICY ON RESERVES AND BALANCES:**

Members discussed the policy and suggested two amendments:

1. To add Human Resources to the Financial Risk section.
2. To add 'grounds' to the unexpected buildings and properties maintenance costs section.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Policy on Reserves and Balances, subject to the proposed amendments, into the workings of the council.

#### **138/21 EMPLOYER PENSION DISCRETIONS – STATEMENT OF POLICY:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Employer Pension Discretions – Statement of Policy into the workings of the Council.

#### **139/21 4 YEAR PLAN WORKING PARTY:**

Councillor Davison reported that there had been a meeting with a contractor who would be sending a quote for the groundworks for the bicycle shed in the Market Place, so it should be proceeding soon. Details have also been obtained of utility services in the area. When the working party last met, Members had discussed the installation of a bandstand in Priory Memorial Gardens. NHDC are positive about the idea and it would be funded by S106 monies which had been agreed for the development North of Baldock Road which included £200,000 for community facilities.

Members asked about the plans for the bandstand including costs, size and structure and also what would happen to the existing bandstand. Councillor Davison responded that NHDC are requesting budget to dispose of the current bandstand which has an air raid shelter beneath it, but building a new one could go ahead beforehand. It is estimated that the project will cost in the region of £100,000 due to the substantial groundworks required. The bandstand would be wrought iron and in a Victorian style.

Councillor Leggett added that the bandstand would be between six and seven metres in length and should be large enough to accommodate the Town Band. The bandstand will be open fronted.

**140/21 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Environmental Policy into the general policies of the Town Council.

**141/21 THE HERTFORDSHIRE (VARIOUS ROADS, ASHWELL, ROYSTON AND BALDOCK) (RESTRICTION OF WAITING) ORDER 2021:**

Members **RESOLVED** that they had no objections to the proposal as outlined.

**142/21 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:**

Members received two reports from Councillor Phillips regarding Creative Royston and the Coombes Community Centre.

Councillor Phillips attended the AGM of Creative Royston for the first time as the Town Council representative. She found them very well organised with several enthusiastic members managing the arts and cultural events in Royston. Councillor Phillips looks forward to the next meeting and also taking part in the "Window Walk" initiative to brighten up the winter for children during the half term holiday, details of which can be found on their website [creativeroyston.org](http://creativeroyston.org).

Coombes Community Centre have recently appointed a new Chairman. The centre is being helped by council grants and the government furlough scheme but hopefully hirers will soon be able to return. The centre is still being used by the NHS for donating blood and the committee have agreed that it would be an ideal site as a COVID vaccination centre if necessary.

**143/21 CLERK'S REPORT:**

The Town Clerk reported that she had been working closely with the NHS and Royston Health Centre to set up the Town Hall as part of their vaccination centre. Vaccinations will commence on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Date of next meeting: 22nd February 2021.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.42pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman

Date \_\_\_\_\_