

**MINUTES** of the meeting of **ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL** held virtually via Zoom at 7.30pm on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

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

**In attendance:** Town Clerk  
County Councillors Hill and Jarvis, District Councillors Green and Hunter  
4 members of the public

**150/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

There was none.

**151/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies were received from Councillor Squire-Smith.

**152/21 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.

**153/21 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The Mayor had nothing to report as his activities had been affected due to Lockdown restrictions.

**154/21 MINUTES:**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (minutes 126/21 to 143/21).

**155/21 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 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (minutes 119/21 to 125/21) into the workings of the council.

**156/21 TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF COMMITTEES WHICH HAVE NOT ALREADY BEEN APPROVED AS A CORRECT RECORD:**

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 (minutes 144/21 to 149/21) into the workings of the Council.

**157/21 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEE AND WORKING PARTY MEETINGS:**

- (a) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the 4 Year Working Party meeting held on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020 into the workings of the Council.
- (b) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Royston Town Centre Working Party meeting held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 into the workings of the Council.

- (c) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the 4 Year Working Party meeting held on Tuesday 26th January 2021 at 2pm into the workings of the Council.
- (d) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Sustainable Travel Town Working Party meeting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 into the workings of the Council.
- (e) It was **RESOLVED** to receive the notes of the Markets Working Party meeting held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021 into the workings of the Council.

**158/21 BANK RECONCILIATION AND INCOME AND EXPENDITURE:**

- a) Members received and noted the bank reconciliation for January 2021.  
In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk clarified that a donation of £500 had been made to the Mayor's Trust Fund.
- b) Members received and noted the January 2021 Income and Expenditure reports compared against budgets for 2020-2021.  
In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk explained that it was not possible to make an accurate forecast on income and expenditure for the current financial year at the moment as it has been an extremely abnormal year due to the pandemic.

**159/21 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the January 2021 accounts for payment and the transfers between the Town Council accounts.

In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk clarified that waste collections had been suspended for all council properties for several months. The collection at the Town Hall will be restarted soon as it is now being used as a vaccination centre.

**160/21 INTERIM AUDIT REPORT:**

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the interim internal audit report 2020-2021 into the workings of the council.

Members congratulated the Town Clerk and her staff on the successful completion of another clean audit with no issues raised or items of concern.

**161/21 MEMBERS REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT CONTROLS:**

- a) Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Councillors' Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control report.
- b) Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Royston Town Council Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control report.
- c) Members **RESOLVED** to agree the level of Fidelity Guarantee insurance for the year 2021-2022 at £500,000.
- d) Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Risk Management 2021 document.

### **162/21 HERTFORDSHIRE DRAFT WASTE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION:**

Members **RESOLVED** to send the following response to the consultation:

- 1) The County Council should lobby or work with producers to make packaging and products more environmentally friendly to dispose of.
- 2) The Council should consider building its own recycling facilities, not just energy from waste facilities, rather than relying on commercial providers, to encourage further recycling to occur. They should consider the whole lifecycle of products.
- 3) Sites for waste disposal do need strategic consideration and should be included in all local plans and neighbourhood plans which might help to avoid NIMBY mentality.
- 4) No further landfill sites should be planned. Other solutions must be found.
- 5) Anaerobic digestion should play a role.
- 6) An executive summary would be a useful addition to any strategic document of length.

### **163/21 REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NHDC ROYSTON AREA COMMITTEE:**

Members received a report from County Councillor Hill:

- Councillor Hill reported that the vaccination programme was going extremely well having begun with the main centre for vaccinations at Robertson House and has now been rolled out to GP practices. She congratulated all the staff for their work. The Council has managed to maintain the opening of libraries for Ready Reads and collections and is considering opening for IT use if it can be done safely.
- Waste and Recycling Centres - Royston is open but Buntingford is not as the site is more restricted and therefore it is harder to comply with restrictions. The queues can be monitored online. Councillor Hill pointed out that the Council was given the full Draft Waste Local Plan document so that it could comment on the whole strategy rather than just seeing an overview. Some points which came up via scrutinies and cabinet panels are being considered but some rely on the government changing the law. There had been planning applications for two Energy from Waste sites in the County, but these had been refused.
- The IP plan and budget comes before the Full Council at HCC tomorrow for the 2021/22 year. HCC has a Sustainability Strategy and both NHDC and HCC have declared climate emergencies. She was pleased to see the installation of the dual recycling bins in Royston which were initiated by the very well-respected Councillor Peter Burt. Cycle racks and cycle shelters are also being installed, partly funded by S106 money, government grants and HCC funding. Clearly there is lots of support for the sustainability agenda. Pram crossings are to be put in towards the retail park and industrial park to make it easier for mobility scooters and prams to access. It had come to HCC's attention that, since Morrisons closed, more people were going there by foot and struggling with crossings. HCC is also working with RTC, NHDC and Royston First on becoming a Sustainable Travel Town as Royston was one of the three towns selected to take part in the County. HCC is also working with stakeholders on social distancing measures in the Town Centre and there is a bid in for funding for demand responsive transport.

- Drainage and flooding – due to the excessive recent rainfall there have been issues with flooding and pooling. These areas are on the radar and have been reported for drain clearance, but not all the issues are blocked drains and areas have been identified that need more complex work including Green Street, Morton Street, Stamford Avenue, Mill Road, Queens Rd and Old North Road. Blocked drains can be caused by accumulation of leaves particularly around Green Street/Morton Street, Stamford Avenue/Mill Road and Councillor Hill has been in contact with NHDC officers to ensure these areas are monitored and cleared as necessary.
- Traffic Regulation Orders went out to consultation regarding certain areas in the town with regard to safety issues and these measures are now in place in the Grange Estate, the Ridings Estate and Green Street.
- Old North Road – the scheduled resurfacing near the railway station and Queens Rd will now take place in the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> March, planned to be between 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> depending on weather.
- The weight limit for Melbourn Street, Baldock Street and Baldock Road remains on the list of pending schemes and depends on the outcome of the A507 consultations.
- Speeding is a big issue in the town and villages – a speed and volume survey has been carried out in Burns Road. A feasibility study has also been completed by HCC and recommendations for safety and mitigation measures are awaited. Speed and volume surveys are also planned for Melbourn Road, Newmarket Road and Mill Road and speed indicator devices are now in place and working on the A10 at Reed and has been turned on Newmarket Road. Drive Safe is currently suspended due to Covid but is still in place. There has been a study on the A505 from Granta Park in Cambridgeshire to Luton with the two counties working together. Progress has been made with the safer crossing over the A505/A10 and it is now agreed in the Melbourn Greenway. Safety measures have been carried out near McDonalds and Odsey/Slip End, including cutting back foliage, kerbing and new signs, road markings. Work is due to be carried out next at the Litlington junction.

Members received a report from County Councillor Jarvis:

- Councillor Jarvis added that in respect of the Waste Local Plan, HCC had 2 responsibilities related to waste, one is disposal of waste that NHDC collects and the other is planning infrastructure for waste and this is what the Plan relates to rather than where the lorries take the waste.
- Bus services – There is a proposal to combine the 127 and the 91 to provide a better service between Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It was originally planned for last summer and has now been delayed again due to the provider offering a cheaper service to Cambridgeshire villages than to Hertfordshire ones.
- Highways – although work has been going on, there have been a number of delays partly due to weather and partly due to contractors having to adopt new ways of working. This has affected resurfacing work on Baldock Street and Green Drift. It may result in delays on the pedestrian crossing islands on Baldock Road as well. Some work has begun on the A505 to address the problem of people driving the wrong way down the dual-carriageway. A more substantial improvement at the Litlington junction will

mean cars have to turn towards Royston. The bulk of the work is scheduled for the autumn.

- Traffic regulation orders – In Layston Park HCC is trying to address the issue of parking on the sharp bend as you go up the hill. Some residents thought the proposed measures too much, others too little. There will be some revised proposals which will try to ensure some of the unintended effects will not inconvenience the residents.
- A507 weight limit – proceeding extremely slowly due to additions made in Baldock and the police saying they are unable to enforce it. Councillor Jarvis was not sure when this will move forwards. The police enforcement issue may be a problem when it comes to the roads in town too.

Members received a report from District Councillor Hunter:

- Councillor Hunter reported that the Parking Review now had a dedicated officer but regrettably it has stalled again due to the pandemic. The consultants are waiting for restrictions to be lifted in order for them to do their work, though much of the previous work done by consultants is still in the frame.
- Councillor Hunter is delighted to see the installation of the dual recycling bins in the Town Centre which were the brainchild of Councillor Peter Burt.
- The Local Plan is still awaited. It was delayed by a suggestion, then a proposal and an amendment from some of the councillors at NHDC, this was rejected but the inspector then rescheduled. He hoped we would see a conclusion by year end as the delay has seen one or two speculative developments in the Royston area.
- The Budget was agreed by the Full Council on 14<sup>th</sup> February. The Council Tax was increased by the maximum allowed without the need for a local referendum which is likely to lead to an increase of £5 on a band D property and everything else will be pro rata.
- The Capital Budget reinstated the expansion of the Skate-park in Newmarket Road and Royston councillors thanked officers for listening to them. Leisure facilities were also supported at a previous meeting, which is a risk due to the pandemic, he hoped the service provider, Stevenage Leisure, would survive.
- NHDC received complaints about litter quite frequently in the Gateway area and an NHDC litter pick would be going ahead in April. The landowners have submitted a proposal to eradicate the problem which includes a 2m high fence. Unfortunately the upward trend in fly-tipping has continued, it was up about 40% on last year. Councillor Hunter hoped this would go in the other direction sooner rather than later. Lastly, he joined RTC on the consultation on the social distancing measures in the High Street and they submitted their recommendations to HCC who are acting on behalf of the government. Councillor Bylett asked if, regarding the local plan, end of year meant December 2021. Councillor Hunter hoped so.

**164/21 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Disciplinary Procedure into the general policies of the Town Council.

**165/21 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Grievance Procedure into the general policies of the Town Council.

**166/21 DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY:**

Members discussed the policy and suggested an amendment to the email section which should detail that emails should be retained for 3 years unless earlier deletion is required under another category or longer retention is required to fulfil other purposes.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Document Retention Policy, subject to the proposed amendment, into the general policies of the Town Council.

**167/21 VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY:**

Members discussed the policy at length.

Cllr Stanier proposed an amendment of not adopting the policy but adding a paragraph to the current Complaints Policy and referencing the ICO policy on vexatious complaints on the council website.

Members voted on the proposal but the vote was lost and the motion was not carried.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Vexatious Complaints Policy in its original format into the general policies of the Town Council.

**168/21 ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL PRIVACY NOTICE:**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the Royston Town Council Privacy Notice into the general policies of the Town Council.

**169/21 TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY:**

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

**170/21 CLERK'S REPORT:**

The Clerk had nothing to report.

**171/21 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:**

There were no reports.

**172/21 STAFF MATTERS:**

The Chairman of Human Resources informed Members of the resignation of the Finance Officer for personal reasons. The post has been advertised and the applications received will be reviewed this week with a view to short-listing and interviewing. Until someone is recruited this will mean an increased workload for the Town Clerk as she will be doing 2 jobs. Work will be assessed and prioritised. Members were asked to share any ideas to alleviate the current situation and they will be investigated. Members should support the Town Clerk as much as possible and the Mayor thanked her for all she does.

Members thanked the Finance Officer for her hard work and wished her well for the future.

Date of the next meeting: 29th March 2021.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.11pm.

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_