

MINUTES of the meeting of **ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Heritage Hall, Town Hall, Royston at 7.30pm on Monday 20th June 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor Antony (Mayor) in the Chair
Councillors Adams, Beardwell, Brown, Compton, Harrison, Inwood, Jani, Langdon, Rees, Squire-Smith and Stanier.

In attendance: Town Clerk
County Councillor Hill and District Councillor Green

Rev John Fidler from St John's Parish Church led the meeting in prayer.

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and informed those present that the meeting was being recorded.

62/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

There was none.

63/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Birch and Lockett.

64/23 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.

65/22 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Mayor reported that her first official engagement was to visit Royston market where she was given a tour by the market manager.

The Mayor also visited St Mary's hall where she met with the organisers of Royston Make Lunch and the families it supports, the fire station in Royston to mark the Jubilee celebrations, and the Police station where she met with Sergeant Jon Vine to discuss concerns and issues of residents of Royston.

She attended the Buntingford Civic Service, a performance of "Teechers" by the cast of Limitless Academy and judged Royston First's window display competition for the Queen's Jubilee celebration.

The Mayor has visited Royston Museum and attended the Creative Royston Management committee meeting on Zoom. A recent Royston Indian Food Festival that she attended raised £255.55 for the Mayor's charities.

The Mayor celebrated the Bloomsday Centenary at the Banyers and had a breakfast meeting with the members of the Royston Chamber of Commerce. She has also attended a Diversity Event Planning meeting on Zoom where she notified those present of the existence of the Royston Town Council Diversity Forum committee. The Mayor announced that Councillor Mike Harrison has volunteered to organise a quiz night to raise funds towards the Mayor's charity fund which has been suggested to take place in autumn.

66/23 MINUTES:

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16th May 2022 (minutes 1/23 to 23/23).
The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

67/23 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

It was **RESOLVED** that the following minutes, which have already been approved as a correct record, be adopted into the workings of the Council:

a) The meeting of the Planning Committee held on:

- 16th May 2022 (minutes 47/23 to 52/23)

68/23 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

It was **RESOLVED** that the following minutes, which have not already been approved as a correct record, be adopted into the workings of the Council:

a) The meeting of the Finance Committee held on:

- 16th May 2022 (minutes 24/23 to 40/23)

b) The meeting of the General Purpose & Highways Committee held on:

- 16th May 2022 (minutes 41/23 to 46/23)

c) The meeting of the Planning Committee held on:

- 6th June 2022 (minutes 53/23 to 61/23)

69/23 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF COUNCILLOR

The Town Clerk reported that Joey Horgan has not attended to complete his declaration of acceptance of office of councillor. This creates a casual vacancy on the council.

Councillor Inwood stated that he hoped that all of the parties would work together to co-opt a councillor rather than calling an election which would cost approximately £5,000. He thought that there were many people in Royston that would want to serve their community without being affiliated to a political party.

In response to a question, Councillor Inwood explained that Joey Horgan's personal and work circumstances had changed after the election which he felt would have compromised his ability to perform his role as a councillor.

Councillor Harrison spoke on behalf of the Conservative Party members and advised that they were happy to co-opt a new councillor to the council and wanted to save the potential expenditure on another election so soon after the last one.

Councillor Stanier stated that the co-option should take account of any skills needed at the council that are currently missing.

Councillor Rees said that there should be an election and the new councillor should not be co-opted. He thought that someone with a political alliance should be on the council.

70/23 PRAYERS AT FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the rota for prayers at Full Council meetings for the civic year. The rota consists of Royston Parish Church, Royston Evangelical Church and Trinity Life Church.

71/23 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT:

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the internal audit report for the year ended 31st March 2022 into the workings of the council. The Town Clerk and her staff were thanked for

achieving another clean audit with no matters to report requiring attention and no issues arising giving cause for concern.

72/23 ACCOUNTS 2021-2022:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022 and the supporting statement.

73/23 ANNUAL RETURN 2021-2022:

1. Members **RESOLVED** to agree the Annual Governance Statement (section 1) of the Annual Return and approve it for signing by the Chairman and Clerk.
2. Members **RESOLVED** to agree the Accounting Statements 2021-2022 (section 2) of the Annual Return and approve it for signing by the Chairman and Clerk.
3. Members **NOTED** the dates for the period for the exercise of public rights as Friday 24th June 2022 to Thursday 4th August 2022.

74/23 ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Report for publication.

75/23 SILVER SUNDAY EVENT 2022:

Members **RESOLVED** to agree to hold an event for Silver Sunday 2022.

Members agreed that, if possible, the date of the event should be 2nd October 2022 and if this is not possible then it will be held on either the preceding or following weekends. The event would be the showing of a classic film with town councillors serving cream teas to attendees. The event should include as many different groups of people as possible, including those living on their own and those in care homes. Royston and District Community Transport will be used to provide transport to and from the event. Members agreed a maximum budget of £1500 for the event which will be taken from general reserves. If possible, any resources used should be sourced locally. Tickets should be offered to Royston residents first and if there are any spare then they can be offered to residents of the villages.

76/23 STATEMENT OF INTENT AS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement into the workings of the Council.

77/23 HONORARY FREEMAN/FREEWOMAN POLICY:

Cllr Compton proposed that the policy was adopted into the workings of the council. Cllr Brown proposed that the policy was not adopted into the workings of the council.

A lengthy debate ensued.

The first proposal was seconded, put to the vote and carried.

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Honorary Freeman/Freewoman Policy into the workings of the Council.

78/23 TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the amended Tree Management Policy to include "Inspections by an independent consultant will be carried out every 3-5 years or as

advised by the consultant. In addition, our contractor will inspect trees on a regular basis” in the inspection of trees section, into the workings of the Council.

79/23 CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY EMERGENCY:

Councillor Brown proposed an amendment to the proposal under e) to “work in partnership with all other relevant bodies including North Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council”

Councillor Compton proposed an amendment to the proposal under b) to “make all reasonable efforts to reduce carbon emissions from the council with the working party to investigate the feasibility of the Council being net zero by 2030”.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the amended proposal to declare that Royston Town Council declares a climate and biodiversity emergency.

Councillor Inwood placed on record his thanks to Councillor Stanier for preparing the proposal.

80/23 LIVE STREAMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS:

Councillor Stanier reported that public participation had increased greatly during lockdown when meetings were held on Zoom and having an online platform for people to watch from would be good for engagement. Only a simple system should be used with minimal equipment and cost.

Members **RESOLVED** to agree to instruct staff to investigate and cost suitable options for live streaming/recording of meetings on Youtube or a similar channel. The decision on which system to use should be brought back to council at a future meeting.

81/23 EQUIPMENT FOR COUNCILLORS AND STAFF:

Councillor Compton raised a concern that members being asked to purchase a device and be reimbursed by the Clerk would mean that the equipment would still be owned by the councillor even after resigning from their post. He suggested that the council purchases the equipment instead and lend it to the councillors so the council would retain ownership of the equipment. This would also resolve issues with benefits in kind and VAT.

Councillor Brown proposed an amendment to remove the word “staff” where it appears in the proposal as they already have the necessary equipment to do their jobs.

It was noted that councillors mainly use their devices to read papers and therefore a relatively cheap solution should be possible.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the amended proposal to instruct officers to investigate possibilities for provision of equipment to all councillors who require it and do not have access to it. The possibilities and costs will be brought back to a future council meeting for discussion and for a decision to be made.

82/23 ROYSTON AND DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION:

Councillors Antony, Brown, Compton, Inwood, Squire-Smith and Stanier declared an interest in this item.

Councillor Brown exercised her councillor’s right to speak and informed members of the role of the Twinning Association and its links with Royston Town Council. Councillors Antony, Brown, Compton, Inwood, Squire-Smith and Stanier then left the room for the duration of the debate and vote.

Members **RESOLVED** that Councillor Harrison be appointed as chair for the remainder of this item.

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the future minutes of the Royston & District Twinning Association management committee into the workings of the Town Council.

Members **RESOLVED** that the Town Council, in principle, allocates an annual budget for civic functions of the Royston and District Twinning Association. However, before agreeing a sum more information is required including the amount, costings, and details of what the funding will be spent on.

Councillors Antony, Brown, Compton, Inwood, Squire-Smith and Stanier then returned to the room and Cllr Antony resumed chairmanship for the remainder of the meeting.

83/23 CLERK'S REPORT:

The Town Clerk asked councillors to notify her when they'd completed part 1 of their new councillor training as she'd only received one response and part 2 needed to be arranged. She also asked councillors to let her know if any more training is required. The Town Clerk informed councillors that the Town Council will be taking over the responsibility for flying flags in Grossalmerode Gardens. She reported that a Pride flag has been requested and will be flown for International Pride Day on Monday 27th June.

84/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC:

Members **RESOLVED** that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, in the public interest, the public and press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting under the provision of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

85/23 30 KNEESWORTH STREET:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve a new lease of the property to the existing tenant for 10-12 years with incremental increases in the rent charged up until year 4 of the lease when current market rental will be charged.

Date of next meeting: 12th September 2022.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.25pm.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date _____