

MINUTES of the meeting of **ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Heritage Hall, Town Hall, Royston at 7.30pm on Monday 16th January 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor Antony (Mayor) in the Chair
Councillors Adams, Beardwell, Brown, Compton, Harrison, Haugh, Langdon, Lockett, Rees and Stanier

In attendance: Town Clerk
County Councillors Hill and Jarvis
District Councillors Green and Hunter
1 Member of the Public

Revd 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. The Chair reminded Members to be mindful of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency declared by Royston Town Council when making decisions on behalf of the Council.

278/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

There was none.

279/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Inwood, Jani and Squire-Smith.

280/23 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.

281/23 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Mayor detailed her activities since the last Full Council meeting in November:

- Visited Aerospace Thermal Engineering & Sartorius
- Hosted the Mayor's Quiz Night which raised £607.45 towards the Mayor's Trust Fund and Royston Make Lunch, her chosen charities. The Mayor thanked Councillor Harrison for being the quiz master on the night.
- Attended the Christmas lights switch-on in Royston town centre.
- Attended the preview evening at Kelly's Kitchen and a charity football match at Royston Town Football Club.
- Visited the Christmas Lights at Blake Close, the proceedings of which were donated to Royston Make Lunch.
- Attended various Christmas events in Royston at the fire station, library, museum, Trinity Life Church and Fish Hill Square.
- Attended Christmas Eve celebrations at Royston Make Lunch and St John's Parish Church.
- Picked a winner for the Christmas Raffle at Royston Christmas Market.
- Visited the residents of St John's Nursing Home on Christmas Day.
- Met with residents of Mary Barfield House.

282/23 MINUTES:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 14th November 2022 (minutes 215/23 to 236/23).

283/23 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

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

- a) The meetings of the Planning Committee held on:
- 7th November 2022 (minutes 208/23 to 214/23)
 - 5th December 2022 (minutes 252/23 to 257/23)

284/23 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

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

- a) The meeting of the Finance Committee held on:
- 28th November 2022 (minutes 237/23 to 251/23)
- b) The meeting of the General Purpose & Highways Committee held on:
- 19th December 2022 (minutes 258/23 to 271/23)

285/23 BUDGET AND PRECEPT APPROVAL 2023-2024:

- a) Councillor Compton explained in detail why the overall budget has increased. He explained that there has been a drop in revenue from room hire since the COVID-19 pandemic as a few groups have now disbanded. There has been an increase in salaries in line with the national government agreement, an increase in IT costs for new equipment, an increase in utilities for all sites that the Town Council owns and cleaning contracts have increased in price. There have been additional costs added such as the Community Grants Fund and the new Senior Working Party Committee. There has also been a large increase in the payment to the Museum as the contract stipulates that the amount paid to the Museum Trust goes up in line with inflation which is currently very high.

An amendment was proposed to remove the funding for the Twinning Association and advise the group to apply for funding from the Town Mayor's Community Trust Fund or the Council's community grants fund. The proposal was seconded.

Councillors Antony, Brown and Compton then declared an interest in this item and left the room and took no part in the discussion or vote.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Haugh be elected as Chair for this item. A recorded vote was requested.

Councillors Adams, Harrison, Haugh and Langdon voted for the proposal and Councillors Beardwell, Lockett, Rees and Stanier voted against the proposal. The Chair used his casting vote to vote for the proposal.

The amendment was carried.

Councillors Antony, Brown and Compton then returned to the room and Cllr Antony resumed the role of Chair.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the amended budget with total expenditure of £553,154 and total income of £134,999.

- b) Members then discussed the level of precept to be raised. An amendment was proposed to take £20,000 from reserves and request a precept of £386,863 from North Herts Council. A further £11,292.09 would be received as Council Tax Reduction Scheme compensation making total council tax related funding received of £398,155.09. This would equate to an increase in council tax of 9.53% which is £4.97 per annum for a Band D property.

The amendment was seconded and the motion was carried.

Members **RESOLVED** to request a precept of £386,863 from North Herts Council plus £11,292.09 Council Tax Reduction Scheme compensation totalling £398,155.09 council tax related funding.

286/23 MEMBERS REVIEW OF THE 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 accept the recommendation of the working party to agree the level of Fidelity Guarantee insurance of £1 million for the year 2023-24.
- d) Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Risk Management 2023 document.

287/23 DISPLAY OF NOTICES ON TOWN COUNCIL NOTICEBOARDS POLICY:

There was a lengthy discussion.

An amendment was proposed to add "Public interest notices may include details of consultations and information for commenting on proposals. This list is not exhaustive. No notices of a party-political nature will be allowed" to section 4 of the policy. The amendment was seconded and carried.

A further amendment was proposed to add "unless the events are deemed to be good for the community" to section 7 of the policy.

The amendment was seconded and carried.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the amended policy for adoption into the workings of the council.

288/23 HERTFORDSHIRE PENSION FUND, LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS):

- a) Members noted the draft employer results and 2022 actuarial valuation of the Hertfordshire Pension Fund for Royston Town Council.
- b) Members **RESOLVED** to remain in the Parish and Town Council's Pooling Fund for the next three years when another review will take place.

289/23 COMMUNICATIONS WORKING PARTY:

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillors Haugh and Stanier to the Communications Working Party.

290/23 MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT:

Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement into the workings of the council.

291/23 MINUTES OF ROYSTON & DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION:

Members **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Royston & District Twinning Association meeting held on 2nd November 2022 into the workings of the Council.

292/23 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT:

Councillors Harrison and Compton thanked the staff for their hard work and success in obtaining another clean audit.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the interim internal audit report 2022-2023 into the working of the council.

293/23 COUNCILLORS' REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

There were none.

294/23 CLERK'S REPORT:

There was none.

Date of next meeting: 20th March 2023.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date _____