

MINUTES of the meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSE & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE** held in Room 11 at the Town Hall, at 7.30pm on Monday 20th February 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor Harrison (Chair)
Councillors Adams, Beardwell, Compton, Langdon and Rees.

In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk
County Councillors Hill and Jarvis
District Councillors Green and Hunter
1 member of the public.

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and informed those present that the meeting was being recorded. The Chair reminded Members of the Climate & Biodiversity Emergency declared by Royston Town Council and asked Members to be mindful of this when making decisions on behalf of the Council.

314/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Councillors received a brief presentation from an officer from HCC on the High Street Recovery Project in Royston. He compared pre-pandemic and post-pandemic figures for footfall in the town centre, reporting that footfall had been steadily increasing since March 2022. He went on to report that the HertsLynx bus service was being well used both within Royston and to other towns such as Bishop's Stortford.

Councillor Rees asked if he thought greater bus availability would encourage greater bus usage and in turn less cars on the road.

The officer responded that he couldn't comment on this, but he thought that this idea would make sense.

Councillor Beardwell queried if there was any evidence of more people walking into the town centre rather than driving and parking.

The officer said that there is no definitive data on this for now. However, he stated that less tickets were issued in the car parks located in the town centre post-Covid, indicating that people are choosing to walk into town rather than drive. He also mentioned that the figures on footfall show that there is a spike at lunchtime in the town centre and this is speculated to be from people who work from home walking into town on their lunch break.

Councillor Harrison asked whether more residents were making their own way to the train station via car, bicycle or foot as the bus service that stops at the train station has changed from a half-hourly service to running every 45 minutes.

The officer explained that he didn't have the data for this but highlighted that Royston is a great place to go by foot or bicycle due to its small size so thought that this was likely.

Councillor Compton questioned the correlation between the increase in parking charges and the dwell times in the town centre.

The officer said that the increase in the 1 hour charge has increased dwell times as most people now choose to pay for 2 hours and spend more time in the town centre as a result.

The Chair thanked the officer for his presentation.

315/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown and Haugh.

316/23 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.

317/23 APPROVAL OF GENERAL PURPOSE & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE MINUTES:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the General Purpose & Highways Committee meeting held on Monday 19th December 2022 (minutes 258/23 to 271/23). The minutes were signed by the Chairman. The Chair brought forward agenda item 5 for discussion as the next item.

318/23 REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ROYSTON & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE:

County Councillor Jarvis gave a report:

- Extensive works will take place on Baldock Road to create two entrances to the Hedera Gardens housing estate. The works will provide more street lighting, right-turn lanes into the estate and a 40mph speed limit will be put in place.
- Highways have been looking at making London Road more pedestrian friendly to residents of Layston Park and there will be a meeting next week to discuss this.
- The advisory 20mph speed limit in Tannery Drift is scheduled to be implemented soon.
- North Herts Council are looking at extending waiting restrictions in Orchard Road to cover a greater area.

County Councillor Hill gave a report:

- The speed indicator device on Melbourn Road has been helping to reduce speeds. The police have been asked to conduct speed checks along this road and Baldock Street to supplement this.
- The Integrated Plan will be decided later this week.
- Libraries have been successfully acting as warm hubs and as meeting spaces for local organisations.
- All projects under the Highways Locality Budget for this year have been completed.
- The final works under the Integrated Works Plan are being carried out along Parthia Close, Serby Avenue, Masefield Way, Thackeray Close, Tennyson Close and Wordsworth Close.
- Next year's Integrated Works Programme is currently being drafted and agreed.
- Under next year's Highways Locality Budget, footpaths in Morton Street, Honey Way and Shaftesbury Way will be assessed for upgrades. A new road surface will be laid down in Serby Avenue.
- The dangerous situation on the A10 involving fencing near Royston Hospital has been fixed.

District Councillor Hunter gave a report:

- The 3% Council Tax increase is to be approved by the District Council at the next budget meeting.
- Residual waste will be collected every 3 weeks with the possibility of this reducing to every 4 weeks.
- North Herts Council have implemented the increase in the 1-hour parking charge in all their car parks across North Herts including those in Royston.
- The Local Plan has been approved.
- Nine new wilding areas are going to be trialled in Royston.
- North Herts Council & Settle have carried out landscaping work on Shakespeare.
- There is a consultation on changing Area Committees into Area Forums.
- The parking review consultation has been released and is open for comments until 9th March.
- The North Herts Community Engagement Officer has been made redundant.

Councillor Hunter noted all the hard work and help he had given Royston.

Councillor Harrison proposed that Royston Town Council should write to the Community Engagement Officer to thank him for all his work in Royston.

The proposal was seconded and duly carried.

319/23 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTY MEETINGS:

Members received the notes of the Climate and Biodiversity Working Party meeting held on 23rd January 2023 into the workings of the Council.

320/23 SEATING:

Members discussed the proposed locations and felt the location on Phillips Avenue was not suitable. Members discussed the feasibility of either a seat or bus stop on Kneesworth Street and proposed that the Deputy Town Clerk investigate the feasibility of siting a seat in the area on Kneesworth Street near the veterinary surgery or at the bus stop. The installation of a bus stop could be investigated later.

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- a) approve the installation of a Forest Saver seat with armrests in the suggested location on Melbourn Road, facing south and for the Deputy Town Clerk to investigate installing the other seat on the east side of Kneesworth Street, in the area near to the veterinary surgery or at the bus stop.
- b) to recommend to the Finance Committee the use of reserves to cover the costs.

321/23 PARKING CHARGES:

Members noted that there was a service level agreement with North Herts Council from 2013 which states that NHC will set the charges for the car parks at Market Place and Angel pavement in line with other car parks in Royston.

322/23 ROYSTON PROJECT BOARD REPORT:

Members discussed the report at length.

Members **RESOLVED** to agree to make the trialled changes in the Royston High Street area permanent and for the Project Team to develop proposals and seek funding to deliver longer-term potential improvements.

323/23 NHC SHARED PROSPERITY FUND:

Members discussed ideas for projects.

Members **RESOLVED** to submit the following ideas:

- a) **painting the street furniture in the High Street**
- b) **deep cleaning the town centre**
- c) **physical pigeon deterrents.**

324/23 MARKET PLACE ACCESSIBILITY RAMP:

Members **RESOLVED** to request the scope of the feasibility study to cover the area between the cycle racks and the flower shop adjacent to the A10.

325/23 CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION WORKING PARTY:

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Beardwell to the Climate and Biodiversity Action Working Party.

326/23 BIRD AND BAT BOXES FOR THE PLANTATIONS:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the installation of new bird and bat boxes in Green Walk and Stile Plantations.

327/23 ILLEGAL PARKING ON MELBOURN STREET:

Members proposed to refer the issue of drivers parking on the zigzag lines leading to the pedestrian crossing to the police and request them to act.

328/23 UPDATE FROM CHAIRMAN:

The Chair gave a brief report from a meeting that he had attended with Councillor Hunter at North Herts Council regarding public transport on trains. He detailed that a new footbridge will be installed at Royston station. Passenger levels on weekdays are approximately 72% of pre-Covid levels due to more people working from home, however there are more people travelling by train at the weekends now than pre-Covid. Councillor Harrison also attended a meeting on the HertsLynx bus service. There have been 25,732 trips on the HertsLynx service and 6,232 of those journeys have travelled through Royston, accounting for 25% of all journeys.

329/23 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

There were none.

Date of next meeting: 17th April 2023.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.28pm.

Signed: _____

Date _____