

MINUTES of the meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSE & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE** held in Room 11 at the Town Hall, at 7:30pm on Monday 15th April 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor Harrison (Chair)
Councillors Antony, Beardwell, Brown, Freeman, Langdon and Rees
In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk
County Councillor Jarvis

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.

357/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

There was none.

358/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Birch, Compton and Inwood.

359/24 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.

360/24 APPROVAL OF GENERAL PURPOSE & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE MINUTES:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the General Purpose & Highways Committee held on Monday 19th February 2024 (minutes 292/24 to 300/24). The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

361/24 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTY MEETINGS:

Members received the notes of the Climate and Biodiversity Working Party meeting held on 15th February 2024 into the workings of the Council.

362/24 REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ROYSTON AREA FORUM:

The Chair added, on behalf of County Councillor Hill, that following confirmation from LINK in September 2023 that a recommendation had been made for a banking hub in Royston, Councillor Hill has suggested possible buildings to site the hub and raised the question of timescales. The general guideline from initiating the idea of a hub to finding a suitable location is around 12 months. She will continue to push for progress.

The Chair thanked the County Councillors and the Chairman of the NHC Royston Area Forum for their reports.

363/24 REPORT FROM DEPUTY TOWN CLERK:

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Town Council's application for the NHDC Shared Prosperity Fund had been submitted, however, they wouldn't be notified until after the May elections if their application had been approved. More information on the conditions for the next round of funding would be available after the elections. She had reported to County Councillor Hill that the signposts and railings at Princess Diana Memorial Gardens had been painted a bright blue which didn't match the other street furniture in the town. County Councillor Hill was investigating this.

364/24 UPDATE FROM CHAIRMAN:

The Chair reported that he attended a Sustainable Travel Town meeting at which bus routes to include the Ivy Farm and Redrow estates as well as Royston Gateway were discussed. Accessibility to the market square was also discussed and it was deemed that a more extensive feasibility study would be required. Hertfordshire County Council had asked if the Town Council would be willing to fund it and this would need considering at a future meeting. The Chair had also attended a Royston & District Community Transport meeting, a Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils (HAPTC) meeting and a meeting between HCC and HAPTC, but would give a report on these at the Full Council meeting in June.

365/24 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

There were none.

366/24 TOWN CENTRE AND RETAIL STUDY:

Members discussed and agreed the following responses to be submitted by the Deputy Town Clerk:

- How would you best describe the current commercial performance of your town centre? – Satisfactory.
- How does the current commercial performance of your town centre compare with the pre-Covid period? - About the same.
- Overall, the current commercial performance of the town centre is: - Steady.
- Key strengths and weaknesses?
 - Strengths – Market, strong community, sports clubs for adults and young people, churches and charity organisations, community clubs such as scouts, guides, cadets, Therfield Heath, Cave, Museum, Leisure Centre, and independent shops.
 - Weaknesses – Bus links, train station's location a bit far from centre, lack of youth facilities.
- How do you think the town centre's weaknesses can be overcome or what improvements do you think are needed?
 - Getting rid of business rates and implementing a rent cap
 - Opening a banking hub
 - More seating and less car traffic
 - Pedestrianise the High Street from John Street to the top of King's Street
 - Restrict loading times to before 10am and after 4pm

- Pay-on-exit parking
- Any other comments in relation to your town centre?
 - More planters/decorations in the town and more hanging baskets

Date of next meeting: 20th May 2024.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00pm.

Signed: _____

Date _____