

MINUTES of the meeting of **ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Heritage Hall, Town Hall, Royston at 7.30pm on Monday 24 March 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor John Rees (Mayor) in the Chair
Councillors Lisa Adams, Mary Antony, Elizabeth Beardwell, Ruth Brown, Elizabeth Freeman, Mike Harrison, Luke Haugh, Bindi Jani, Lynsey Langdon, Stephen Lockett and Emma Squire-Smith

APOLOGIES: Councillors Adam Compton and Robert Inwood

IN ATTENDANCE: David Ashlee (Locum Proper Officer)
Six members of the public

Before the meeting started Peter Chapman from the Trinity Life Church led the meeting in prayer.

The Mayor introduced David Ashlee (Locum Proper Officer) to the Council and informed them that David will be acting as the Council's Proper Officer until the middle of May, giving remote support to the Council as and when necessary. During this time meetings of the Council will be suspended unless necessary decision making is required. All Council payments are to be agreed by the Council's bank signatories.

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

275/25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Councillor Tim Johnson (North Herts Council) spoke to give his support for efforts to try and re-open the Palace Cinema scheme. He also gave his support for the Council's efforts to secure the retention of the 'free after 3' parking scheme. He then informed the Council of the North Herts Council's budget of £50,000 to upgrade the town band stand and hoped the two Councils could work together on this.

276/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Adam Compton and Robert Inwood

277/25 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.

278/25 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Mayor reported that he had attended eight separate town events and activities since the last meeting. He also gave a brief update on office working arrangements whilst vacant posts were being recruited to and reminded all members that normal service from the Council will be affected during this period of time due to the shortage of staff.

Members thanked the Mayor for all of his efforts to support the Council operations during this period of staff shortages.

The Chair brought forward item 10, Grant Application for discussion as the next item.

279/25 COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME APPLICATION:

A representative from Royston Cricket Club presented the Clubs application for grant aid to support the purchase of a replacement mower. The application received unanimous support.

Members **RESOLVED** to award a £500 grant to the Royston Cricket Club from the Community Grants Scheme.

280/25 MINUTES:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 20 January 2025 (minutes 275/25 to 284/25) pending the amendment of apologies given in the minutes from the November 2024 Council meeting and the amendment to minute 263/75 which should have recorded that a meeting between North Herts District Council and the Royston Bid was to be arranged to discuss the 'Free after 3' parking scheme.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 27 January 2025 (minutes 271/25 to 274/25).

281/25 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

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

- a) The meeting of the Finance Committee held on:
 - 27 January 2025 (minutes 275/25 to 284/25)
- b) The meeting of the Planning Committee held on:
 - 3 February 2025 (minutes 285/25 to 291/25)

282/25 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

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

- a) The meeting of the General Purpose and Highways Committee held on:
 - 17 February 2025 (minutes 292/25 to 300/25)

283/25 ROYSTON MUSEUM TRUST'S REPORT:

Members noted the report supplied by the Museum Manager

284/25 MEMBERS REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT CONTROLS

Members considered the enclosed papers relating to the Councils systems of internal control. The point was made that all members needed to ensure that their own declarations of interest were up to date and pending this:

Members **RESOLVED** to approve:

- a) The Councillors' Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control report
- b) The Royston Town Council Annual Review of the System of Internal Control report
- c) To accept the recommendation of the Working Party to agree the level of Fidelity Guarantee insurance of £1million for the year 2025/26.
- d) The Risk Management 2025 document

285/25 COUNCIL INSURANCE

Members **RESOLVED** to enter into a new 3 year agreement for insurance with Zurich Municipal Insurance PLC from 1 April 2025.

286/25 FREE AFTER THREE CAR PARKING:

Councillor Emma Squire-Smith presented her report on the ‘free after 3’ parking scheme. The report proposed that the Council should offer a £20,000 subsidy (already budgeted for 2025/26) to North Herts District Council to help continue the scheme. The Royston Bid have already indicated that it will part fund the scheme with £15,000.

Members **RESOLVED** to offer £20,000 to part fund the ‘free after 3’ parking scheme for 2025/26 on the understanding with North Herts District Council that the scheme would remain free after 3.00pm and that should the scheme costs less than £35,000 then the Town should receive a proportionate rebate.

287/25 ROYSTON PICTURE PALACE:

Councillor Ruth Brown presented her report proposing that the Council allocates up to £7,000 to fund a company to procure a contractor to operate the Royston Picture Palace community cinema scheme. In light of the Council’s current shortage of staff: It was **RESOLVED** to allocate up to £7,000 from the Council’s General Reserve to fund the appointment of a procurement company to tender for a community cinema operator to run the Royston Picture Palace at the earliest appropriate time.

288/25 COUNCILLORS REPORTS ON TOWN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND AS REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

Councillor Mike Harrison gave an update on activities relating to the Royston day Centre and the Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish Council’s.

289/25 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.

290/25 STAFF MATTERS

The Chairman presented his report on a range of staffing matters.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree all proposals with final pay rates to be agreed by the Chairman in consultation with the Locum Proper Officer.

Date of next meeting: **Full Council Monday 19 May 2025**

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date _____