

Royston Town Council

Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement

Adopted: 20th June 2022

Minute number: XX/23

Review date: June 2024

Introduction

Royston Town Council is committed to high standards of engagement with its community. Our council is part of a tier of local government which belongs to, is part of and is directly accountable to its local community. Councillors play an important role as they are elected to make decisions on matters affecting our town.

Our Community

We believe our community is everyone within the boundaries of our town and includes all ages, any organisations, groups and individuals and the business community within it. We also recognise that residents pay for the activities of the town council and that visitors to our community form an important part of the vibrancy of community life. We understand that there are certain bodies that are crucial to local quality of life and we will strive to achieve excellent working relationships with these bodies which include local organisations, the Police, neighbouring councils and other tiers of local government.

Aims

Royston Town Council aims to make a measurable difference to the quality of life of the community we serve and to be responsive to the needs of our community. Our aim is to engage with our community and encourage participation in decision making, securing better services, being engaged with local democratic process and to create a more active and informed community.

The council strives to enable an informed, involved, empowered community by undertaking the following:

To communicate information to our community clearly and factually through:

- a. Maintaining an up to date, user friendly website detailing all council services and activities, agendas, minutes, annual reports, policies and other relevant information. The website can be found at www.roystontowncouncil.gov.uk
- b. Producing a quarterly newsletter which is sent out to every household, published online and available to collect from the council offices.
- c. Publishing of agendas and other council news on the Town Council notice boards.
- d. Publicising events and meetings through local media channels.

To provide opportunities for our community to be actively involved with the council through:

- a. Inviting residents to take part in our Council meetings via the public participation forum.
- b. Inviting residents to attend the Annual Town Meeting which takes place between 1st March and 1st June each year. The meeting will be widely publicised.
- c. To encourage residents to both stand for and vote for the Town Council in local elections.

- d. Inviting residents to regular councillor surgeries held in the town centre.
- e. Inviting residents/community groups to provide information for the Council website.
- f. Issuing press releases covering the activities of the Council.
- g. Encouraging the Mayor to actively represent the community.

To communicate with our partners and co-ordinate our community engagement efforts:

- a. Maintain working relationships with other tiers of local government and other local bodies and institutions. To support the role and functions of strategic partners.
- b. The council has representation on many local organisations:

- Friends of Royston & District Museum
- Royston Community Transport
- Royston Coombes Community Association
- Royston Day Centre
- Royston Army Cadet Force
- Royston & District Scouts Council
- Royston and District Town Twinning Association
- Conservators of Therfield Heath
- Creative Royston
- Royston, Buntingford and South Cambridgeshire Home Start
- Royston Museum Trust CIO

The council intends to maintain and foster these relationships. The council will also seek opportunities to provide representation on other organisations in Royston.

To enable Councillors to maximise their potential to serve their community as elected representatives:

- a. Councillors will be provided with a new members pack and are encouraged to undertake training for their roles.
- b. Councillors are encouraged to attend meetings regularly; council meetings and those of organisations and residents associations in their respective wards.
- c. Councillors' details are published on the website and at the Council offices for members of the public to contact them to discuss relevant issues.
- d. Councillors are encouraged to take up places on community groups and organisations.

Specific Areas for Community Involvement

There will be occasions where specific community involvement will be required. Matters may arise where Royston Town Council will provide additional information sheets, call additional public meetings or ask for opinion by way of surveys, questionnaires or website response forms. Members of the community may also be asked to join working party groups.

Any action plans created by the council will consider the ways that the council will work to enhance the quality of life for residents.

Review date: June 2024, or earlier if legislation dictates.

Agenda Item 15 – Honorary Freeman/Freewoman Policy

**Royston Town Council
Honorary Freeman/Freewoman Policy
Approved by Full Council on 20th June 2022
Minute number XXX/23**

POLICY

Royston Town Council wishes to recognise the efforts of individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to the wellbeing of Royston. The Town Council will do this for special individuals who meet the criteria of this policy by awarding to that individual the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of Royston.

BACKGROUND

From 12th January 2010 all local councils may exercise powers to confer the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman to persons of distinction and those who, in the Town Council's opinion, have rendered eminent services to the local community (Local Government Act 1972, Section 249 (5) and (6)).

ELIGIBILITY

The following will be taken into account when consideration is given to granting the honour of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the Town:-

1. Preference will be given to a person who performs in a voluntary capacity, but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to a person whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected from their occupation.
2. The award is open to all, including Town Councillors or Town Council staff, but nominations of such individuals will not receive any preferential consideration.
3. Any nominated Town Councillor should have retired from the post.
4. The contribution to the wellbeing of the community must involve one or more of the following factors:-
 - (a) A significant allocation of the person's time in serving members of the community for the improvement of their wellbeing.
 - (b) The promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal contribution has been made.
 - (c) Whilst difficult to define, the contribution must be outstanding in that it can be seen to stand above the contributions of most other persons.
 - (d) Someone who has excelled in a specific role or work area that brings respect to the Town and acts as a role model for the young people of Royston.
 - (e) Someone who champions Royston and is a credit to the town.
 - (f) Someone who has served Royston as a local councillor for a period of at least 20 years and made an outstanding contribution, or rendered eminent service, to the local community through their activities on local councils during their term of office.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE

There is no limit to the number of nominations or holders of the title, but the nature of the nomination criteria means it is unlikely that the honour will be frequently awarded and will therefore remain distinctive.

1. Nominations must be made in the strictest confidence without the nominee's knowledge. Any resident or elector of Royston may make a nomination but it must be sponsored by a Town Councillor.
2. Nominations must be made in writing to the Town Clerk. The submission should be evidence-based by outlining the voluntary service provided by the individual to the community and any other examples of 'community spirit' to justify the honour.
3. Members may conduct enquiries to verify the merits of a nomination.

CONSIDERATION OF NOMINATIONS

At an Ordinary Meeting of the Full Town Council, at the given agenda item, the following procedure shall be adopted:

1. The Chair shall open the agenda item and remind Members of this policy document giving guidance on those criteria for suitable nominations.
2. The Chair shall invite the sponsoring Member to present the application for nomination.
3. The Chair shall invite all Members to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
4. The Chair shall then invite the Council to pass the resolution, which should recite the particular grounds upon which the Council have come to their decision and details of the public services rendered by the recipient.
5. No fewer than two-thirds of the Town Councillors must agree the nomination and pass a resolution (Local Government Act 1972 s 249 (8)).
6. The resolution shall be recorded in the Council minutes in the usual way.
7. The decisions of the Council on all nominations (whether affirmative or negative) are final.

AWARD

Following a resolution by Full Council that an award is justified, the recipient will receive a letter from the Town Clerk notifying them of the nomination and inviting them to accept the honour in writing.

The title of 'Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the Town' will be granted by the Town Mayor and the recipient presented with a certificate at the Annual Town Meeting.

ENTITLEMENT

The title is entirely honorary and there are no rights and privileges arising from the award other than the following:

- The right to designate himself/herself Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of Royston for life
- Invited to be present at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council
- Invited to all subsequent civic events and functions hosted by the Town Council
- Be placed in the civic procession with the Town Councillors

WITHDRAWAL

Any person nominated who is deemed by the Council to have brought the office into disrepute may have the designation withdrawn. No less than two thirds of the Town Council, at a formal vote, must agree the withdrawal.

Review date: June 2024, or earlier if legislation dictates.

Agenda Item 17 - Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in Royston

Climate change refers to the long term shift in the Earth's weather patterns and average temperatures. For the past 250 years, humans have contributed to the increased release of carbon dioxide, alongside other greenhouse gases, which causes an increase in global temperatures.

Burning fossil fuels, such as coal, produces energy while releasing greenhouse gases. The long-term challenge is addressing this build-up of greenhouse gases and ensuring a clean future for future generations. For example, according to the MET Office, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere rose by 40% during the 20th and 21st centuries and is now over 400ppm (parts per million). This level of carbon dioxide is higher than at any time in the past 800,000 years. The IPCC have published a special report on the impacts of 1.5°C global warming above pre-industrial levels; this demonstrates that change is needed now if we want to ensure quantity and quality of life for future generations and associated wildlife.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

Local individuals, businesses and councils all have a part to play in improving our environmental circumstance and mitigating future issues. People look to councils for leadership on key issues and climate change and biodiversity loss are no exception to this.

Local councils have many powers to do things that can help mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss.

See for example:

- <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/climate-change/3598-what-can-local-councils-do-on-climate-change-2021/file>
- <https://climate.friendsoftheearth.uk/solutions/climate-action-plan-parish-and-town-councils>
- <https://bassingbournparishcouncil.gov.uk/climate-emergency-group-report-to-the-annual-parish-meeting-17-05-22/>

I propose that Royston Town Council declare a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency tonight and agree that this means:

- a) Always bearing in mind the climate and biodiversity emergency when making any decisions about the town or council business.
- b) To make all reasonable efforts to reduce carbon emissions from the council with the goal of the Council being net zero by 2030.
- c) To estimate the Council's current carbon footprint, perhaps using a calculator such as <https://impact-tool.org.uk/> or <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/sme-carbon-footprint-calculator> or by engaging a consultant to give a baseline of what changes may need to be made.
- d) To make all reasonable efforts to preserve and enhance biodiversity currently present on Town Council land.
- e) Setting up a working group on Climate and Biodiversity Action to agree further strategy and actions towards these goals. Working group proposed terms of reference should include: At least 4 RTC members of the working group, 3 to be quorate. Can invite/co-opt interested parties/experts from the town and surrounds as needed.
- f) To communicate these goals with the wider town by means of regular updates on a dedicated "Climate and Biodiversity" page on the Town Council website as well as via other channels.
- g) To take every reasonable opportunity to inform townspeople of the importance of the climate and biodiversity emergency and what they can do to help mitigate the situation.
- h) To educate and lobby for a net zero town by 2040, in line with aims set out by North Herts Council in 2019, and to work with other councils and local businesses to achieve this.

Cllr Carol Stanier

June 2022

Agenda item 18 - Live streaming of council meetings

During the lockdown, when it was permitted for council meetings to take place via Zoom, public attendance at and participation in council meetings increased. It is desirable to facilitate greater transparency and accessibility of council activities

I therefore propose that Council instruct staff to investigate and cost suitable options for live-streaming/recording of meetings on YouTube or a similar channel. These recordings should be accessible from the Council website alongside agenda/minutes for as long as the minutes are available.

A decision on which system to use should be brought back to a subsequent meeting for Council to agree.

Cllr Carol Stanier, June 2022

Agenda item 19 - Equipment for councillors and staff

It is important to ensure that all councillors have the ability and equipment necessary to perform their roles to the best of their abilities, irrespective of personal circumstance. The cost of purchasing this equipment may be an obstacle to some councillors in going about their duties, and to possible candidates hoping to become councillors. We aim to be an inclusive council that represents all members of the community so removing such obstacles to participation is vital.

Working party meetings currently often take place remotely for the convenience of all involved. Virtual meetings, though not currently legally allowed to be decision-making meetings, nevertheless play an important part in allowing collaborative discussion and preparation to be done so that a formal decision can be made in a formal council meeting. Papers are sent out electronically where possible, saving time and money for the council as well as reducing the carbon footprint.

To this end it is desirable that all staff and councillors have a device that enables them to read documents electronically and attend virtual meetings.

We propose that the clerk and staff are instructed to investigate possibilities for provision of such equipment to all staff members and councillors who require it and do not have access to it otherwise. These possibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Members/staff as individuals being asked to purchase a device and provide receipts to the clerk for reimbursement
- A bursary system being put in place with a set budget per person for those who require it
- The Council agreeing a support/maintenance contract with a local ICT provider

The possibilities, costs and suggested guidelines for implementation should be brought back to a subsequent full council meeting for discussion and for a decision to be made.

Councillors Inwood and Stanier

June 2022

Agenda Item 20 – Royston and District Twinning Association

Royston & District Twinning Association works on behalf of Royston Town Council to foster friendship and promote and encourage as many links as possible between the people of Royston and the surrounding area and the peoples of Großalmerode in Germany, La Loupe in France and Villanueva de la Cañada in Spain

It seeks to achieve this by:

- promoting understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures
- engaging a diverse membership from our local community
- encouraging openness to new and unique experiences
- collaborating with other local organisations.

Town twinning in Royston and the surrounding villages has been going strong since 1974 when a formal agreement was signed between the Mayors of Royston Town Council and Rathaus Großalmerode in Germany. Subsequently, formal twinning agreements have been signed with the Town Councils of La Loupe in France and Villanueva de la Cañada in Spain.

Town twinning is a civic function. The Town Mayor is president of Royston & District Twinning Association and there are two additional Town Councillors on the Twinning Management committee.

I therefore propose that:

1. Minutes of the Royston & District Twinning Association management committee be adopted into the workings of the Town Council
2. The Town Council allocates an annual budget for civic functions of the Royston & District Twinning Association

Cllr John Rees

June 2022