

ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL GP AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY 2024

INTEGRATED PLAN (IP)/BUDGET

The IP process for 2024-25 has been taking place with scrutiny meetings through January and discussions at all the Cabinet Panels. The recommendations have been discussed at Cabinet and the Council will make a final decision at its meeting on 13th February. Full details of the budget proposals are available on the County Council website but, again, the highest spend (excluding schools) remains on caring for Children and Adults. Included in the budget is a proposal for further investment into roads and footpaths. The budget seeks to maintain frontline services with no planned closures of libraries or fire stations.

SCHOOLS/EDUCATION

King James Academy Royston (KJAR) suffered considerable damage in the storms that took place in early January. I have been working with the school and HCC/DfE to resolve the issues and ensure the children are back into full time face-to-face teaching as soon as possible. The staff in the school have been working incredibly hard to address the issues, since the beginning of term. Teaching is continuing on the Junior site and Year 11 has been on the Senior site. Various buildings are being used across Royston and in surrounding villages/towns. A temporary solution has been found and should be fully in place in the near future, while the work takes place on the damaged buildings.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has put further additional funding into SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). The recruitment and training of new staff is ongoing and HCC continues to commit to deliver around 1,000 additional specialist provision places by 2026/2027. The Valley School in Stevenage, for children with SEND, moved into its brand-new building in January this year.

LIBRARIES

Royston Library continues to host the Police and Barclays Bank for drop-in sessions, together with many other new activities, in addition to the regular activities that exist throughout the year. The Winter Reads Challenge event runs until Saturday, 24th February 2024 and anyone completing the challenge can enter the prize draw.

ARMED FORCES COVENANT

The Christmas Card competition was, again, an enormous success with huge participation from schools across Hertfordshire. Judging took place prior to Christmas and the cards were distributed to military personnel away from home at Christmas. Presentations are currently taking place to the winners at their schools.

I attended the Royal British Legion Hertfordshire Annual County Conference in Stevenage on Saturday, 27th January.

HIGHWAYS/TRANSPORT

A meeting of the Sustainable Travel Town working party was held in January and the next is scheduled to take place in March.

The following schemes have been completed or are scheduled under HLB (Highways Locality Budget) and IWP (Integrated Work Programme) for completion 2023/2024: -

The Traffic Scheme Consultation (speed mitigation proposals on Burns Road/Shakespeare junction) has taken place and responses are currently being analysed.

Kneesworth Street and Grange Bottom - Drainage works have taken place.

Eliot Road/Grays Close - Carriageway prep works have been completed.

Melbourn Road - Surface inlay works are scheduled, during March 2024.

Shaftesbury Way - Footpath works are scheduled.

The 40-mph limit is now in place from the A505 roundabout along Baldock Road, following previous proposals that this should be 50 mph and objections from both County Councillors, supported by our MP, Royston and District Area Committee and Royston Town Council. There remains a need for a weight limit on Baldock Road, Baldock Street and Melbourn Street, together with close monitoring of speed/congestion on the A10 and A505 and possible mitigation measures. These roads cross both County Council Divisions.

GENERAL/COMMUNITY ISSUES

There is an issue with land lease rates for some community organisations and I am working with them to resolve the issues.

I attended the Holocaust Service in Priory Memorial Gardens on 27th January. The service was very poignant.

I attended the 10-year Celebration Event of Royston Repair Café on 10th January. The organisation provides an invaluable service in the town.

Hertfordshire and Cambridge County Councils have now fully resolved the issue so that residents in both counties can use the recycling centres at Royston and Thriplow. Residents will be asked for ID at both sites.

Fiona Hill

County Councillor for Royston East and Ermine

12th February 2024

Royston Town Council

General Purposes and Highways Committee 19th February 2024

County Councillor's Report

The County Council has submitted an action plan to the Department for Education to address the failings in services for children with special educational needs and disabilities that were highlighted in last year's Ofsted report. This plan to address some of the most serious failings in the next few months but is still anticipating falling short of legal requirements for producing education health and care plans for such children, which is clearly a concern.

Work has now been done on Baldock Road by Redrow to complete most of the first entrance and introduce the long awaited 40mph speed limit. However, it appears that once again not everything has been completed and at the time of writing some of the speed limit signs are missing. I have asked highways officers to get Redrow to complete the works, but at least some progress has been made.

The work on Baldock Road being done by Redrow to create entrances for the Hedera Gardens development causes continuing problems. The two traffic islands that have been constructed have been left unlit and unsigned which has resulted in a number of accidents. The developers have been required to ensure that any temporary signs are in place and are more robust than those previously used. There is also a meeting between Redrow and the County Council's highways officers (scheduled at the time of writing but which will have taken place by the time of the Committee Meeting) to ensure that a plan is put in place to ensure that the outstanding work, including completion of the existing entrance, construction of the other entrance to the development, installation of street lighting and introduction of a 40mph speed limit is completed without further unnecessary delay.

I am pursuing the much-publicised issues with Royston Town Bands rental of their building from the County Council with the council's director of property. It appears that there has been a change of policy regarding rents to non-commercial organisations that was not made clear to or agreed by members of the council, which is regrettable. I am investigating what can be done about this.

Finally, I am sorry to report that, at the time of writing, the council has decided to half the county councillors' locality budget, which having been £10,000 for many years (except for a temporary increase during the pandemic) is now to be cut to £5,000. This will greatly restrict our ability to provide grants to local organisations who do so much for the culture and welfare of the town. There will be a proposal at the county council's budget meeting to retain the grant budget at £10,000. By the time of your meeting we will know whether this was successful.

Steve Jarvis

County Councillor for Royston West & Rural

February 2024

Report for Royston Town Council

GP & Highways committee

19th February 2024

North Herts Council Royston Area Forum

Community grants

The Community Investment fund was oversubscribed three times and several Royston based organisations have been short listed for grant awards. The entire Royston Area Forum grant budget has already been awarded for this civic year.

Leisure Centre

The new Leisure Contract has been awarded to Everyone Active and will start from April 2024. It includes a gym extension and the possibility of a learner pool at Royston. The Council is still awaiting the decision from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for match funding to install solar panels on all leisure centres.

Royston First BID

Local businesses voted overwhelmingly to support the BID levy in the November 2023 ballot and therefore the BID will be renewed for another 5 years from April 2024. Expiry of scratch cards offering 1 hour's free parking has been extended by 6 months to June 2024.

Health care motion

A motion was passed at Full Council on 25th January which included a request for representation of Royston residents on Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICB.

KJAR storm damage

North Herts have inspected the site and allowed retrospective planning permission in order to expedite the installation of temporary classrooms.

Waste & Recycling

The proposals for the new waste contract, due to start in April 2025, have been updated in response to resident and member feedback. The current proposal is to continue collecting food waste weekly and one other bin per week of residual (purple), mixed recycling or paper & cardboard on a 3 weekly cycle. A new full size lidded bin will be provided for paper and cardboard to replace the existing paper box. Soft plastics will be included in mixed recycling and a trial for this is currently underway in Knebworth. Garden waste will continue to be collected fortnightly from households that subscribe to the service.

50th Anniversary

North Herts Council is celebrating 50 years on 1st April and is keen to hear from other local organisations that may have events planned or memories to share.

Ruth Brown Chair, Royston Area Forum