

## **Royston Town Council**

### **General Purposes and Highways Committee 17th February 2025**

#### **County Councillor's Report**

The County Council has published its budget proposals for 2025/26 including savings of £42 million, increasing to £95 million by 2028/29 and assuming that the council tax will be increased by 5% each year.

The majority of these savings come from proposals to make improvements to adult care services and children's services to reduce costs and reduce demand for these services. There are also assumptions that the increase in demand will level off. How realistic this is remains to be seen.

Regrettably there are no such improvements suggested to improve the effectiveness of the highway service and reduce the need for pothole repairs by reducing the number of potholes. Apparently the strategy is to do a little less each year as costs increase.

A small part of the savings that will have a local effect is the proposal to require users of the household waste and recycling centres to book in advance before visiting. It is difficult to see how this will save any money, but it will certainly make the service more difficult for people to use. Elsewhere in the county there are plans to reduce the number of days that these centres are open, but these do not affect Royston.

Despite another spell of work (and yet more temporary traffic lights) the new street lights in Baldock Road were still not working at the time of writing. I am continuing to pursue this, so I hope that they may be working by the time of the meeting.

I have allocated the first tranche of highways locality funding for the next financial year (the remainder is allocated after May's County Council election). This will include works to footways in London Road and Phillips Avenue and a feasibility study for improvements at the junction of London Road and Sun Hill.

Local government continues to be pre-occupied with the government's plans for reorganisation. Hertfordshire is not in the first tranche and is not therefore in the list of places where elections have been cancelled. There will, however, need to be some interim proposals by March and a final proposal (unless the government changes its mind again) by November. These will have to involve the replacement of Herts County Council and the ten district councils with some number of "unitary" councils, plus a mayor. The mayor may cover Hertfordshire or some larger area.

None of these changes will improve the condition of the roads, services for children with special needs or care for adults with disabilities. Indeed in the short term they are likely to divert resources from doing any of these things or any of the others that local government is responsible for.

Given larger unitary councils it will be important to consider the role that Town, Community and Parish councils play, but there is no indication that the government intends to do this.

Steve Jarvis

**County Councillor for Royston West & Rural**

**February 2025**

# **REPORT TO ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL GP AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**

## **HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (HCC)**

### **Overview**

Hertfordshire County Council is now working on the Integrated Plan process for 2025/26 and the IP Scrutiny has taken place. The IP is proceeding through the Cabinet Panels and the final budget will be agreed at Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February. The highest areas of spend (excluding Education) will remain on Adult Care Health/Wellbeing and Children, Young People and Families' budgets.

The HAPpy Camps Programme took place during the Christmas holiday period. These sessions were extremely popular and provided activities and a meal for children attending.

The Winter Reading Challenge in Royston Library ran until the end of January. Participants have until 17<sup>th</sup> February to enter the prize draw for the chance to win an iPad. The library has now reopened following its closure for building works.

### **Highways/Transport**

The Royston Sustainable Travel Town proposal is continuing to move forward with our next scheduled meeting due on 26<sup>th</sup> February. Works are due to take place in Royston High Street/Melbourn Street imminently.

The speed mitigation measures in Burns Road, around the entrance to Shakespeare will be implemented in Spring this year.

Pothole repairs have been carried out on the Old North Road/York Way/Burns Road roundabout.

A full list of potential road and footpath schemes in my division that have taken place or are to be programmed is available on the Hertfordshire County Council website.

The new bus shelter is in place in Priory Lane (A10) outside Priory Memorial Gardens and was officially opened on 6<sup>th</sup> February.

I attended the AGM of the A10 Safer Crossing/Cycle Group in January and the bridge across the A505 is still a reality. The Annual Awareness Ride will take place again in the Summer.

### **Schools/Education**

I have been in discussions with HCC and residents regarding the proposed car park at the former Roysia School site in Burns Road. The agreement is for a temporary car park for contractors' vehicles whilst construction work is being carried out. I have raised various Planning and Highways issues and am currently awaiting answers. I have also questioned the engagement process with relevant stakeholders.

The final annual joint school visits (Town, District and County Councillors) have now been conducted. The students were extremely well engaged and raised many issues, plus they shared ideas of what they would like to see in Royston. We have taken up these points and will put forward the ideas.

## **Health**

The health sector continues to be under severe pressure for the winter season, with acute hospitals trying to cope with exceedingly high numbers of patients. Visiting hours have been reduced in the hospitals to try and control infections. We are continuing to work with the NHS/GPs for improved services locally and a bespoke facility for residents in Royston and the surrounding villages. There are signs of positive progress.

## **Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant**

The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board is due to meet again in March. The presentations are currently taking place for the winners of the Christmas Art competition and I am delighted that one of the winners is from a school in Royston.

## **Community/General**

I attended an Awards Evening on 29<sup>th</sup> January plus a Parade and Service on 2<sup>nd</sup> February for 2484 Bassingbourn Squadron ATC. Both were wonderful events and it was so good to see the work and success of the cadets.

Councillors' Surgeries have taken place, since the last meeting, in Royston Town Centre and in Ermine Ward.

I have submitted my response to the consultation on Proposed Parking Tariff increases by North Hertfordshire (District) Council in 2025/26, objecting to the increases.

I responded to the consultation on the Proposed NHDC Off Street Parking Place Traffic Regulation Order Consultation.

I have also sent a submission (objecting) to North Hertfordshire (District) Council regarding the planning application for up to 280 houses on the site off Barkway Road.

I have received a vast number of grant applications for this year's Locality Budget. A full list is available on the Hertfordshire County Council website.

Fiona Hill

County Councillor for Royston East and Ermine

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

# **Report for Royston Town Council**

## **GP & Highways committee**

**17<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

### **North Herts Council Royston & Villages Community Forum**

#### **Budget**

The Local Government financial settlement for 2025/26 is £19.721m (7.9% increase on 24/25). The cost of the Employer NIC increase is £370k and the government have awarded £157k to compensate for this. The proposed Revenue budget for 2025/26 is £22.792m and will be balanced using £2.9m of reserves. Council tax is expected to rise by the 2.99%, the maximum allowed without a referendum.

The proposed Capital investment budget for 25/26 includes an allocation of £4m for Museum storage over the next 2 years and nothing for the Royston Learner pool (estimated cost £3m).

#### **Leisure Centre decarbonisation**

The cost of the scheme to replace gas boilers with heat source pumps and install solar panels, has increased three times since the award of £7.7m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding in February 2024. Capital funding of £6.3m (up from the original estimate of £3.3m) has been approved to continue the project at all 3 Leisure centres.

The works to extend the gym at Royston Leisure centre are planned to take place at the same time and the extension will be built to net zero carbon standards.

#### **Parking**

New parking tariffs will be finalised at Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February and are due to be implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. Current proposals include 4% inflationary increase and flat rate tariffs after 3pm in Royston, Letchworth and Hitchin. The proposed flat rate in Royston has been reduced from £1 to 50p and further subsidy options are due to be discussed with Royston BID and Town Council.

The option to charge for evening and weekend parking, in addition to any increases agreed by Cabinet, will be debated at Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

New parking payment machines, with contactless 'tap in/tap out' facility, are due to be installed in Royston from 10<sup>th</sup> March. Machines will be located at the pedestrian exit points and will be ticketless, with contactless, cash, tap in/tap out and pre-pay options. Customers will be required to enter their car registration number for all sessions.

#### **EV charging points**

EV charging points, funded by OZEV, are expected to be installed in the Warren and Civic Centre car parks between March and May 2025.

## **Banking Hub**

Cash Access UK have agreed terms on permanent premises for a banking hub in Royston. The temporary arrangements at the Town Hall annexe have been extended until 19<sup>th</sup> August 2025 to ensure continuity of service.

## **Royston Health Hub**

This has moved a step closer, as Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICB have recently allocated two people to this project, who are working closely with Granta Medical Practice to deliver a purpose-built facility, including a diagnostic centre, on a new site.

## **Royston & Villages Community Forum**

The next meeting is on 26<sup>th</sup> March, when the local Police will be presenting. We will also be discussing Developer Contributions and have invited the applicant for the proposed Barkway Road development to attend.

## **Community Governance Review**

The draft includes proposals to redraw the Royston Town Council boundaries to create 3 wards as for District, to reduce the number of Councillors from 15 to 13 (Heath:4, Meridian:5, Palace:4) and to align the electoral cycle to coincide with District elections. The final draft for public consultation is due to be approved by Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The changes are due to come into effect for the 2026 Town Council elections.

*Ruth Brown*  
*Chair*