

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE

(Royston and Ermine Ward – Parishes of Barkway, Barley, Kelshall, Nuthampstead, Reed and Therfield)

**Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston
on 1 June 2005 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors Mrs F.R.G. Hill (Vice-Chairman), P.C.W. Burt, H.M. Marshall and F.J. Smith.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Planning Control and Conservation Manager, Community Development Officer (Royston area) and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

ALSO PRESENT: *County Councillor D. Drake, Mr H. Grace (Thames Water).*

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the Councillors and members of the public to the first meeting of the Royston & District Committee for the Civic Year 2005/2006.

The Chairman expressed the Committee's thanks to Councillor A.F. Hunter for the hard work and dedication he had shown in the four years he had been Chairman of the Royston & District Committee.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor W.M. Davidson. In his absence the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mrs F.R. Hill, took the Chair for the duration of the meeting.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillors R.E. Inwood and A.F. Hunter.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 20 April 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager informed the Committee of subsequent developments in relation to the proposed enforcement action in respect of land adjacent to Clock House Cottage, High Street, Barley agreed at the Committee's meeting on 20 April 2005 (Minute 119 refers). She informed the Committee that a further site meeting had taken place and agreement had now been reached in relation to the positioning and extent of hedge replanting that needed to take place on the site, and that planting would take place at the beginning of the next planting season.

3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman agreed consideration of an item in relation to the Royston, Buntingford and Bishops Stortford Primary Care Trust. This matter would be considered as Agenda Item 11.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor P.C.W. Burt declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation: Royston Town Council – as he was a member of the Royston Town Council. Councillor Burt reserved the right to speak and vote on this matter.

Councillor Mrs F.R.G. Hill declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation: Royston Town Council – as she was a member of the Royston Town Council. Councillor Hill reserved the right to speak and vote on this matter.

Councillor F.J. Smith declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 – Nuisance Odour in Royston as he was a senior member of the National Society for Clean Air. Councillor Smith reserved the right to speak and vote on this matter.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Town Councillor Lynn Berry had given due notice that she wished to address the Committee on behalf of the Royston Town Council in relation to the proposed installation of a CCTV camera in the Priory Memorial Gardens, Royston.

Town Councillor Berry informed the Committee that many complaints had been received by the Town Council in relation to the increasing levels of anti-social behaviour in the Priory Memorial Gardens. She stated that several meetings had been held to discuss the situation which PC Colin Mingay had attended, and it had been agreed that the optimum resolution would be the installation of a “rapid response” CCTV camera in the Gardens. However, the existing lampposts in the Gardens were not in a suitable position for locating the camera, and so an additional pole would have to be installed by North Hertfordshire District Council. The request had been made to North Hertfordshire District Council to install this pole as soon as possible, but the Town Council wanted the Royston and District Committee to support their request, in the hope of a rapid response by North Hertfordshire District Council.

The Chairman thanked Town Councillor Berry for addressing the Committee and expressed the support of the Committee for the proposed installation of a “rapid response” CCTV camera in the Priory Memorial Gardens.

Mrs Caroline Coates had given due notice that she wished to ask a question at the meeting regarding the nuisance odour experienced in Royston, following on from the question she submitted to the meeting of the Committee held on 20 April 2005 (Minute 108 refers). Mrs Coates submitted the following written questions:

Could the Chairman tell me please:

- a. what is the target time for North Herts to respond to enquiries, and would the Chairman agree that to have to wait more than a month for a letter, which was promised at the last Area Committee meeting, falls short of a good service?*
- b. Would the Committee also agree that Councillors visiting the Royston Sewage works, as reported in the press, is not going to progress the problem of the smell, since it has always been maintained that the smell does not emanate from the sewage works?*
- c. Is Cllr Davidson, Environmental Portfolio Holder, aware that there continue to be complaints about the smell, in Milton Close and Jeffrey Close, as recently as 21/22 May?*
- d. The smell, according to Town Councillor Harrison, was first brought to your attention in December (his words), so would the committee admit that, nearly six months later, although the Committee may be nearer to understanding the problem, you are in fact no nearer to deciding what measures to take to protect the people of Royston from having to suffer the smell in the future?*

The Chairman thanked Mrs Coates for her question and read out the following written response to Mrs Coates' questions which had been provided to Mrs Coates by officers:

1. NHDC aims to acknowledge all enquiries within four working days and, where possible, provide a response within ten working days. Where this is not possible, the enquirer will be informed of the likely delay and an answer provided as soon as possible.

Your enquiry, presented in the form of a question to the Royston & District Committee under Public Participation at its meeting on 20 April 2005, was acknowledged at that meeting and you were informed that a written response would be provided as soon as the answers to your questions were available. These answers have been delayed due to very slow responses from the outside agencies involved.

2. *Councillors visited the Royston Sewage Works at the invitation of Anglian Water. This visit was designed to confirm to them that the smell was not emanating from the Sewage Works, and outlined the procedures followed on the site to ensure that no odour would emanate from it.*
3. *Both Councillor Davidson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste Management, and the Environmental Health Officers at North Hertfordshire District Council have been aware of further complaints of nuisance odours in the Royston area since those discussed at the meeting on 20 April 2005. Where these odours have been reported to the Environmental Health department they have been logged, and the cause of these odours investigated.*
4. *The ongoing problem with nuisance odours in Royston has been actively investigated by officers at all times since they were made aware of it. The believed cause of the original problem – an exposed Terra Eco System stockpile of treated waste product – was addressed as soon as it was identified, through implementation of an improved covering, containment and handling method. This method has been in place since this date, and no further problems are believed to have emanated from this source. This is the “event” or one-off mistake previously referred to.*

Anglian Water and Thames Water (together with their subsidiaries Nutri-Bio and Terra Eco System) were both invited to attend the meeting of the Royston & District Committee held on 20 April 2005. As you are aware, representatives of Anglian Water (and their subsidiary Nutri-Bio) were in attendance at that meeting, where they explained the processes and controls used in their activities on and around the Royston Sewage Works site. Unfortunately, no representative of Thames Water was able to attend that meeting.

A representative from Thames Water (Terra Eco System) will be present at the meeting of the Royston & District Committee to be held on 1 June 2005. He will explain the working practices and control measures used by those companies, and the background and result of the “event” earlier this year.

Officers and Councillors have continuously worked to “protect the people of Royston from having to suffer the smell in the future”, including ongoing consultation with both Thames Water (Terra Eco System) and Anglian Water (Nutri-Bio), and always respond to any complaints reported to them.

The Chairman drew Mrs Coates' attention to Agenda Item 6 – a presentation by a representative of Thames Water, and further emphasised the commitment of both Councillors and North Hertfordshire District Council officers to combating any problems with nuisance odours, in Royston and throughout the District.

NUISANCE ODOUR IN ROYSTON

Mr Henry Grace from Terra Eco Systems, a subsidiary of Thames Water Plc, addressed the Committee in relation to the problems experienced with nuisance odours in the vicinity of Royston.

Mr Grace explained the work of Terra Eco Systems to the Committee and the regulations and codes of practice which the company followed in all their work. He also informed the Committee that their product was currently used as fertiliser on over 17,000 hectares a year throughout the Home Counties area, and that very few complaints were received by Terra Eco Systems in relation to this usage.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Grace explained that the additional stockpiles had been created in the area as a result of major engineering problems at the company's Beckton Sewage Works in London. This had meant that product from that area which was usually incinerated had instead been treated to make safe and then stockpiled for use in agriculture. However, this product had a stronger odour as it had not been fully treated promptly and so additional measures had had to be taken to address this, including:

- a) whilst filling stockpiles, potassium permanganate was sprayed onto the stockpile at the end of every day to kill any bugs that would be responsible for producing odours;
- b) static perfumers were used throughout the day whilst filling stockpiles;
- c) covering the stockpile with sheeting or chopped straw to totally contain the smell after filling.

Mr Grace further explained that the following measures would be taken when spreading the stockpile, as it was inevitable that the spread over a larger area would result in an odour over a larger area:

- a) every field that would have product spread in it had had a plan produced for the conditions under which the product could spread (including factors such as rainfall, heat and wind direction);
- b) arranging contractors to assist farmers without adequate resources to plough the product into the ground as quickly as possible, to minimise odours;
- c) investigating the use of a field-sized sprayer to spread potassium permanganate over the entire surface of the field once the product has been ploughed in.

In response to questions from the Committee Mr Grace explained that, whilst the effects of using potassium permanganate in a small, concentrated area was known, the effectiveness and potential effects of this on the environment and flora and fauna in the area was at present unknown. Terra Eco Systems had therefore to get approval from the British Crop Protection Council before using the chemical in that way. He also confirmed that the ploughing in had to take place within a fairly short timeframe, reducing the amount of time it would be exposed on the farms and fields.

Mr Grace confirmed that the stockpiles had been in place (and causing some odour) since winter 2004, but that the engineering problems at Beckton Sewage Works had now been resolved, so no additional stockpiles would now be produced. He also confirmed that any problems with regard to odours reported to Thames Water Plc were quickly investigated and resolved where applicable and stated that, following recent complaints of such odours in Royston, works at the stockpile and vehicle movements to and from it had been checked, and there had been no cause for odours emanating from the site on those occasions.

The Chairman thanked Mr Grace for his attendance at the meeting, and for the information provided.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of Thames Water Plc/Terra Eco Systems be noted;
- (2) That a letter be sent from the Committee to Thames Water Plc/Terra Eco Systems requesting the following information:

- a) When Thames Water Plc/Terra Eco Systems were aware of the planned stockpiling of the treated product in the vicinity of the Royston Sewage Works, did they inform the Environmental Health Officer for North Hertfordshire District Council as well as South Cambridgeshire District Council (in whose District the site is located)?
 - b) Could the potassium permanganate used for disinfection of the stockpiles also be used over the surface of fields where the product has been spread?
 - c) The locations at which the stockpiled product would be spread, and the proposed timetable for these activities so that local residents could be made aware of the likelihood of any problems with odours in their area;
- (3) That a letter be sent from the Committee to Anglian Water requesting the following information:
- a) When were the Royston Sewage Works built, and what was the population size that the Works were designed to cater for when they were built?
 - b) What was the capacity of the Royston Sewage Works?
 - c) Was the capacity of the Royston Sewage Works adequate to cater for the increasing population of Royston as a result of the extensive building works taking place in the town?
 - d) Had there been recent problems with the Royston Sewage Works that could, at least in part, be responsible for some of the nuisance odours experienced in the Royston area?

REASON FOR DECISION: To apprise the Committee of the methods and controls employed by Thames Water Plc and their subsidiaries when dealing with treated waste products to prevent any nuisance to residents.

7. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral representations regarding the following:

Application Reference 05/00243/1 – 9 John Street & 1 Market Hill, Royston

- a) Mr Kul (objector)

Application Reference 05/00493/1 – The Maltings, Green Drift, Royston

- a) Mr Airey (objector)

RESOLVED: To determine the applications as set out in the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager, as indicated in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and location	Decision
05/00441/1	Mitre Works, Priory Lane, Royston Use of part of existing retail floorspace as a refreshment kiosk as a variation to condition 3 of planning permission 1/29/88 granted 17 February 1988.	GRANTED (as per report)
05/00243/1	9 John Street & 1 Market Hill, Royston Change of use from Recruitment Agency (Class A2) to Coffee Shop (Class A3)	GRANTED (as per report)
05/00493/1	The Maltings, Green Drift, Royston Change of use of Units 1 and 2 from B1 to use Class D1 (day nursery with the use of six on site parking spaces) for a temporary period of 3 years.	DEFERRED (see (a) below)

- (a) **RESOLVED:** That with regard to planning application reference 05/00493/1, consideration of the application be **DEFERRED** until the meeting of the Committee to be held on 13 July 2005 to allow for a further assessment of this site by Hertfordshire Highways.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Committee could make a fully informed decision in relation to this application which took account of the safety of current and prospective users of the site and their visitors.

8. PLANNING APPEALS

The Area Planning Officer reported that the following Appeal had been determined since the last meeting of the Committee:

Appellant:	Mr D Tait
Reference Number:	04/01397/1
Address:	Reed House Jacksons Lane Reed Royston SG8 8AB
Proposal:	Outline application for the erection of 24 detached and terraced dwellings with garaging, open space, estate roads and formation of vehicular accesses onto Jackson Lane and The Joint.
Decision:	Appeal Dismissed

9. CHAMPIONS NEWS

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Strategic Director of Customer Services which provided a brief overview of the activities undertaken by him since the last meeting.

The Community Development Officer for Royston provided the Committee with an update in relation to paragraphs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 (Diversionary Activities Project). He informed the Committee that problems had been encountered with the project in Bushey but that a pilot project was now being initiated, following which further details of costings etc would be brought to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Strategic Director of Customer Services be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer for Royston be supported.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities.

10. ANNUAL GRANTS AND DEVELOPMENT DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2005/06

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented the report of the Strategic Director of Customer Services which advised the Committee on expenditure to date and the current balance of the Committee's delegated funds.

The Community Development Officer for Royston further explained the situation in relation to the Royston Community Association Social Club grant application, as outlined on the grant application form appended to the report.

RESOLVED: That the current expenditure and balance of the Committee's Development Budget be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary and community organisations.

11. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

RESOLVED: That the sum of £400 be awarded to the Royston Community Association as a contribution toward the costs of redecorations/carpet at the Association's Social Club.

12. UPDATE FROM THE ROYSTON, BUNTINGFORD AND BISHOPS STORTFORD PRIMARY CARE TRUST

Councillor F.J. Smith informed the Committee that there had been increasing concern and confusion amongst residents in the Royston area as to the Royston, Buntingford and Bishops Stortford Primary Care Trust's plans for health care provision in the Royston area, with particular reference to the future development of the Health Centre and Royston Hospital sites. Councillor Smith echoed the concerns of residents and suggested to the Committee that representatives of the Primary Care Trust be requested to attend the meeting of the Committee to be held on 13 July 2005, in order to provide an update to the Committee and the public.

County Councillor Drake informed the Committee that he sat on the Primary Care Trust Scrutiny Joint Member Panel, and he had also experienced consistent difficulty getting any answers from the Trust despite tabling questions at every meeting. He stressed that this was particularly problematic since the Trust had been extended to include areas around Cheshunt and Hoddesdon, which had aggravated an already difficult budgetary situation. County Councillor Drake further suggested that it might be beneficial to invite representatives of Royston medical practitioners to the meeting as well, to apprise the Committee of the situation from the "front line" perspective as well.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That representatives of the Royston, Buntingford and Bishops Stortford Primary Care Trust be requested to attend the meeting of the Committee to be held on 13 July 2005 to provide an update on the situation in relation to NHS health care provision in the Royston area;
- (2) That health care providers in the Royston area be invited to attend the meeting of the Committee to be held on 13 July 2005 to provide an update on the situation in relation to NHS health care provision in the Royston area from the users' viewpoint.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide members of the Committee with a balanced picture of the current situation in relation to NHS health care provision in the Royston area.

The meeting closed at 9.21 p.m.

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Chairman