

**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 15 November 2006 at 7.30 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** *Councillors Mrs F.R. Hill (Chairman), H.M. Marshall (Vice-Chairman), Liz Beardwell, A.F. Hunter, R.E. Inwood, and F.J. Smith.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Barrie Jones (Head of Financial Services), Tom Rea (Area Planning Officer), Alan Fleck (Community Development Officer for Royston) and Donna Levett (Committee & Member Services Officer).*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *Councillor R.A.C. Thake (Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport), Roger Harrison (Head of Communications, NHDC), County Councillor Doug Drake and 13 members of the public.*

**57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P.C.W. Burt.

**58. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

**59. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman agreed consideration of the following additional items:

- a) Proposals from Royston Town Council's Highways & General Purposes Committee. This item to be considered as Agenda Item 13.
- b) Traffic Issues in Garden Walk, Royston. This item to be considered as Agenda Item 14.

**60. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Mrs F.R. Hill declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 12 – Funding for Footpath Provision – Jacksons Lane, Reed - as she was a member of the Parish Challenge Panel which would determine the grant application. Councillor Hill withdrew from the meeting for the duration of this item and Councillor H.M. Marshall took the Chair for the duration of that item.

Councillor R.E. Inwood declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 – Proposals from Royston Town Council's Highways & General Purposes Committee - as he was a member of that Committee. Councillor Inwood reserved his right to speak and vote on this matter.

Councillor Liz Beardwell declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 – Proposals from Royston Town Council's Highways & General Purposes Committee - as she was a member of that Committee. Councillor Beardwell reserved her right to speak and vote on this matter.

**61. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Terry Hutt, Chairman of the Royston Pensioners' Action Group, had given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting and present petitions on two matters: parking charges and proposed reductions to bus services.

### **Parking Charges**

Mr Hutt informed the Committee that residents and visitors in Royston had become increasingly angry since parking charges in the town had been increased, which had led to reduced use of the town centre. He stressed the need for Councillors, MPs and businesses to work together for the benefit of the community, before the situation deteriorated further.

Mr Hutt suggested that the Council set up a stall alongside the market to provide traders and members of the public with an opportunity to make representations about the situation. He then presented the Committee with a 1,528 signature petition.

### **Bus Services**

Mr Hutt also addressed the Committee about the proposal to reduce bus services from half-hourly to hourly. He highlighted the effect that these reductions would have on the elderly and vulnerable residents who were reliant on those buses to travel into and around the town. Mr Hutt also questioned the sense of issuing free buses to elderly and disabled residents and then reducing the bus services, preventing many of those residents travelling.

Mr Hutt then presented the Committee with a 245 signature petition.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hutt for addressing the Committee and accepted the petitions on their behalf. She informed Mr Hutt that these petitions would be forwarded to the Strategic Director of Customer Services (Parking Charges petition) and the Transport Policy Officer (Bus Services petition).

## **62. CHAMPION NEWS**

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Royston since the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2006, and brought to their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer for Royston to promote greater community capacity and well-being for communities in the Royston & District area be endorsed.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To keep members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Royston & District area.

## **63. ANNUAL GRANTS AND DEVELOPMENT DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2004/05**

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the budgetary situation for the Committee, together with 2 additional grant applications that had been received.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted;
- (2) That the sum of £300 be allocated for the replacement of two trees in Champion Way, as set out in Appendix C to the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

- (1) The report was intended to apprise Members of the financial resources available to this Committee. It drew attention to the current budgetary situation, assisted in the effective financial management of the Committee's budget and ensured actions were performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance contained in the Grants procedure;
- (2) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

**64. GRANT APPLICATION – HOME-START ROYSTON & SOUTH CAMBS**

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £658 be awarded to Home-Start Royston & South Cambs as a financial contribution toward the cost of a Domestic Violence Awareness Training Day.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

**65. CAR PARKING IN KNEESWORTH STREET, ROYSTON**

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services which sought the Committee's authorisation for submission of a request to the Highways Authority to return three car parking spaces in the vicinity of 43 Kneesworth Street from prohibited parking to restricted parking. This report had been prepared at the request of the Committee at its meeting held on 4 October 2006 (Minute 55 refers).

**RESOLVED:** That the County Council be requested to investigate the basis of the change to the current parking regime at this location and seek to remove it.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable car parking at this location for the benefit of residents and visitors to the town.

**66. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**RESOLVED:** To determine the applications as set out in the report of the Head of Planning & Building Control as submitted to the Committee in the following schedule:

**SCHEDULE**

<b>Reference Number</b>	<b>Description of Development and location</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>06/00555/1</b>	<b>Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston</b> Erection of 56 dwellings comprising 6 x 1 bedroom units and 50 x 2 bedroom units in two and a half and three and a half storey buildings (including use of roof space); 56 basement (largely underground) car parking spaces and associated infrastructure following demolition of existing office building (as amended by drawing Nos. 99A, 100A, 101A, 201A, 202A, 204A received 11 July 2006).	<b>GRANTED</b> (see (a) below)
<b>06/01112/1CAC</b>	<b>Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston</b> Demolition of Heath House office building.	<b>GRANTED</b> (as per report)

- (a) When determining planning application reference 06/00555/1, the Area Planning Officer asked the Committee to consider the sunlight and shadowing study that had been undertaken, the improvement to quality of design and appearance in the proposed development from the existing office building, and its relationship with surrounding properties.

The Committee noted that the sunlight and shadowing study had shown that the proposed development would cause no demonstrable harm to the surrounding properties. It was also noted that the Highways Authority had made no objection to the proposed development. However, concern was expressed that the height of the building would have a significant negative impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. This was felt to be an especially important consideration due to the historic nature of the town.

The Committee also asked that an additional condition be imposed, should the application be granted, ensuring the affordable housing required under the permission was provided in more than one single block, preventing the creation of a "ghetto" block.

On putting to the vote the officer's recommendation with an additional condition requiring the optimum distribution of the affordable housing units, three Members voted in favour and three against.

Before the Chairman used her casting vote, the Area Planning Officer highlighted the consequences of refusing the application and the potential penalties should it go to appeal. In light of the remaining concern being the height of the 3.5 storey eastern block, the Area Planning Officer suggested 2 alternative courses of action that the Committee could take: to defer determination of the application until the meeting of the Committee to be held on 20 December 2006 to allow further negotiation with the applications with regard to that matter, or to grant the application subject to a further additional condition requiring details of the eastern block to be brought back to the Committee for approval.

On putting to the vote again the officer's recommendation with only an additional condition requiring the optimum distribution of the affordable housing units, three Members voted in favour and three against. However, when the Committee voted on the officer's recommendation with both the additional condition requiring the optimum distribution of the affordable housing units and the condition requiring details of the eastern block to be brought back to the Committee for approval, four Councillors voted in favour and two against.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that, with regard to planning application 06/00555/1, planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the applicant entering into a Section 106 Obligation and the conditions as set out in the report of the Head of Planning & Building Control, and the following additional conditions:

21. The proposed affordable housing units shall be provided in more than one of the proposed buildings.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate mix of private and affordable housing is provided throughout the development.

22. Notwithstanding the information shown on the application plans, the roof over Block A shall be constructed in accordance with details first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the details as approved.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate scale and form of development in accordance with Policy 57 of the District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations.

The Committee requested that the condition regarding revised details to the roof of block A be reported back to the Committee for consideration once revised drawings had been submitted.

<b>06/01998/1</b>	<b>Kings Ride Stables, Baldock Road, Royston</b>	<b>GRANTED</b>
	Change of use from agricultural land for horse training purposes and the erection of additional horse training facilities, including 46 stables, indoor training menage, staff and visitor accommodation and construction of an "all weather" gallop and associated infrastructure.	(as per report)

**67. PLANNING APPEALS AND ENFORCEMENT**

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that the following planning appeals had been lodged since the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2006:

Appellant	Mr and Mrs P. Meritt
Reference number	06/00093/1LB
Address	21 Baldock Street, Royston
Proposal	Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing rear projection and internal alterations to form utility room
Method	Written Representations

The following appeals had been determined since that meeting:

Appellant	Mr J. Fuller
Reference number	05/01365/1
Address	Land Adjacent to 2a Lower Gower Road, Royston
Proposal	Detached dwelling (outline application)
Decision	Appeal Allowed

The Area Planning Officer confirmed that no enforcement action had been authorised or taken since the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2006.

**68. SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING – SAVINGS & GROWTH 2007/2008 TO 2011/2012**

The Head of Financial Services presented a report of the Strategic Director of Financial & Regulatory Services to the Committee, which sought their views on the provisional savings and growth items as part of the consultation process on Service and Financial Planning for 2007/2008 onwards.

Appended to the report were the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Savings – Service Options
- Appendix 2 – Savings – Income Increase Options
- Appendix 3 – Growth – Revenue Options
- Appendix 4 – Growth – Capital Options
- Appendix 5 – Cabinet Comments on Savings Proposals (17 October 2006)

The Head of Financial Services confirmed that all feedback from the Committee would be presented to Cabinet before it set the draft Budget on 19 December 2006.

With regard to Service-Related Revenue Saving Reference SG13, the Committee expressed concerns about the potential health and safety risks of moving to alternate week collection of residual waste (AWC), particularly in relation to information published recently in national newspapers on the subject. The importance of implementation of kitchen waste recycling prior to the implementation of AWC was

stressed, which the Committee was informed could not take place until Hertfordshire County Council had established suitable premises. The Head of Financial Services informed the Committee that it was anticipated that a report would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting in December which would set out the current situation with regard to negotiations with the Council's current waste and recycling collection contractor on how to introduce changes to the collections to accommodate plastic, cans and tins recycling in 2007, alternate weekly collection and the impact on kitchen waste recycling when the County Council has established the appropriate facilities.

When discussing Service-Related Revenue Saving Reference SG20, the Committee referred to the petition that had been presented by Mr Hutt (Minute 61 refers) which demonstrated that residents would be very unhappy with any reductions in service that resulted from the withdrawal of the Council's subsidies for bus routes in the Council. The Committee also expressed great concern about the potential effect of withdrawing the subsidies on the elderly and vulnerable residents in the District who relied on those routes.

With regard to Income Increase Option Reference SG23, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport informed the Committee that, following the retirement of the Chief Engineer, a review of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) had been conducted across the District. This review had clearly demonstrated that the current budget for implementation, administration and enforcement of the Zones fell far short of requirements. As a result, the Council was investigating other methods for addressing an increasingly problematic issue for residents in and around the town centres of the District, such as the use of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs).

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report of the Strategic Director of Financial & Regulatory Services be noted;
- (2) That the following comments and recommendations made by the Committee be considered when formulating the draft Budget:
  - SG13 – the majority of the Members of the Committee could not support fortnightly collections under current circumstances and felt that the proposed alternate week collection of residual waste would not be feasible until plastic, cans, tins and kitchen waste could be recycled as part of the Council's kerbside collection scheme.
  - SG15 – that Area Committee Budgets should not be reduced as they provided an important means of supporting the local community.
  - SG16 – if delivery of playschemes was to be undertaken by the voluntary and community sector, it was important to ensure that the current service level was maintained.
  - SG18 – the handyperson scheme was an important service for elderly and vulnerable residents in the District and should not be removed without careful consideration of the impact of such action.
  - SG20 – the removal of the Council's subsidy for bus routes in the District could result in routes being withdrawn which elderly and vulnerable residents were reliant on. It was therefore vital that Area Transport Plans be produced or updated for each of the towns and rural areas in the District to ensure that provision was made for all residents.
  - SG21 – the Dial-a-Ride scheme provided specialist transport for vulnerable groups who could not use public transport and it was therefore important to ensure alternative provision was made prior to withdrawal of the Council's contribution.
  - SG24 – the majority of the Members of the Committee could not support this proposal, and felt that this decision should not be made automatically as policy but should be made following consultation with the Area Committees to ensure that local knowledge is applied to allow the impact of any changes to be assessed.

- SG29 – any increase in pest control fees should be carefully limited to ensure the Council's fees remained competitive with those of private providers.

- (3) That the Head of Financial Services and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport be thanked for their attendance and input into the Committee's discussions.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

- (1) To ensure that all Members were consulted on the proposed savings and growth bids and afforded the opportunity to comment before Cabinet set the draft Budget on 19 December 2006.
- (2) To ensure that the Council was able to adjust its base expenditure downwards to narrow the gap between our 2007/2008 District Requirement figure, as adjusted for anticipated capping limits, and our service spending requirements.

**69. FUNDING FOR FOOTPATH PROVISION – JACKSONS LANE, REED**

*Councillor Mrs F.R. Hill withdrew from the meeting for the duration of this item and Councillor H.M. Marshall acted as Chairman.*

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report to the Committee which sought funding to support the construction of a footpath in Jacksons Lane, Reed. This report had been produced following discussion of this project at the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2006 (Minute 56 refers).

The Community Development Officer informed the Committee that their agreement for the allocation of £8,000 was sought in order that, in the event of Reed Parish Council's Parish Challenge grant application being unsuccessful, this important project could still proceed without the loss of matched funding from Hertfordshire Highways. Should the Parish Challenge grant application be successful, no funds would be required from this Committee.

Whilst the Committee were supportive of the project, they expressed concern that their agreement to financially support the project should the Parish Challenge Panel chose not to may prejudice the Panel's decision. It was therefore considered appropriate to defer consideration to allow the Panel to decide the application, whilst ensuring a decision would be made within the timetable set by Hertfordshire Highways' financial year.

**RESOLVED:** That consideration of the grant of the sum of £8,000 to Reed Parish Council for the construction of a footpath in Jacksons Lane, Reed, be deferred to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 20 December 2006, to allow the Parish Challenge Panel to determine the application before them.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** The improvement of road safety outside Reed First School, Jacksons Lane, Reed.

**70. PROPOSALS FROM ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL'S HIGHWAYS & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to letters that had been received from the Clerk to Royston Town Council in respect of proposals from their Highways & General Purposes Committee, copies of which had been tabled for Members' information. These letters sought the Committee's support with the following proposals:

- London Road, Royston – the installation of a further flashing speed enforcement sign on London Road, where there was considerable speeding.
- Barkway Road/Barkway Street – installation of a roadside barrier where these roads meet to provide a safety barrier for properties and pedestrians.
- Civic Centre Car Park, Royston – provision of family parking spaces

With regard to the first two items, the Committee noted that funds had already been committed to implement these proposals, and they had been referred to the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel. It was therefore considered that it would be appropriate for a letter confirming this to be sent to the Royston Town Council's Highways & General Purposes Committee.

With regard to the provision of family parking spaces in the Civic Centre car park, the Committee also noted the letter from John Parkinson, Parking Services Manager at NHDC. Whilst the Committee expressed some support for the Town Council's proposal for the provision of family parking spaces, they stressed the need for this proposal to be investigated as part of the ongoing review of parking provision across the District.

**71. TRAFFIC ISSUES IN GARDEN WALK, ROYSTON**

Councillor F.J. Smith drew the Committee's attention to representations that had been made about problems with traffic in Garden Walk, Royston. A child who attended a school in the road had been injured in an accident in the road at the beginning of the autumn term, and the heavy traffic in the road before and after school was very dangerous for all road users.

Councillor Smith also informed the Committee that, due to its nature as a long, straight road, Garden Walk experienced frequent speeding outside of school hours, causing further danger to road users.

To address these problems, Councillor Smith **PROPOSED** that the Committee request that Hertfordshire County Council, as the Highways Authority, be encouraged to review the road in line with the County Council's Safer Routes to School programme, with a suggestion that speed calming measures such as a speed table be implemented. This proposal was **SECONDED** by Councillor A.F. Hunter and, on putting the proposal to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED:** That Hertfordshire County Council be encouraged to investigate the implementation of speed calming measures in Garden Walk, Royston, in line with the Safer Routes to School programme.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To address safety concerns due to traffic problems in Garden Walk, Royston.

The meeting closed at 9.48 p.m.

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Chairman