

**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 31 January 2007 at 7.30 p.m.**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Ros Allwood (Cultural Services Manager), David Miley (Democratic Services Manager), Tom Rea (Area Planning Officer), Alan Fleck (Community Development Officer for Royston) and Donna Levett (Committee & Member Services Officer).*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *County Councillor Doug Drake, Royston Town Councillor Mike Harrison, and 3 members of the public.*

**88. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**89. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman expressed her disappointment that, in a letter to the local press, Mr Terry Hutt had stated that the petitions he presented to the Committee were only “noted” and no action taken. The Chairman stated that the petitions were forwarded to the appropriate officers for action, and highlighted the referral to the petitions presented by Mr Hutt in the Minutes just approved by the Committee as an example of this course of action.

**90. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman agreed consideration of the following additional item:

- a) Rail Service Provision - First Capital Connect. This item to be considered as Agenda Item 12.

**91. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Liz Beardwell declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 – An Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire - as she was a member of Royston Town Council’s Museums Committee, who would be involved in the consultation process on the Strategy and any actions arising from it. Councillor Beardwell reserved her right to speak and vote on this matter.

With regard to Agenda Item 9 – Area Committee Development Budget 2006/2007: Grant Application from Royston Town Council – Councillors Liz Beardwell, P.C.W. Burt and R.E. Inwood all declared personal interests as Members of the Royston Town Council. All the Councillors reserved their right to speak and vote on this matter.

**92. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No items were presented by members of the public for consideration by the Committee under public participation.

However, the Chairman informed the Committee of a petition that had been received from the residents of Hollies Close and Tall Trees, Royston. This petition expressed the residents' concerns over the hazardous and obstructive manner in which commuters parked their vehicles in both of those roads, especially at the junction of the two roads and the junction of Newmarket Road and Hollies Close. This resulted in both junctions being obscured to both pedestrians and vehicles. The Petition called for urgent consideration of introducing some form of residents priority parking control, perhaps similar to that already existing in other roads on the periphery of the town centre, allowing residents to use the roads they lived in and preventing serious accidents.

Councillor F.J. Smith informed the Committee that, at its meeting on the previous evening, the Cabinet had recommended a further parking enforcement zone in each town in the District, and Newmarket Road and the roads leading off of it (including those mentioned) had been identified as the priority for implementation in Royston. It was therefore hoped that this work would be implemented early in the new financial year.

The Committee expressed their support for this action as the area identified was known to have a problem with commuter parking, and the Chairman also suggested to Town Councillor Harrison that he could raise this issue at the next meeting of the Town Council's General Purposes & Highways Committee, of which he was Vice-Chairman.

**93. AN ARTS, MUSEUMS & HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE**

The Cultural Services Manager presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee which informed the Committee of the development of an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire and invited comment on the draft Strategy prior to its final consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 March 2007 and Council at its meeting on 29 March 2007. The draft Strategy was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cultural Services Manager informed the Committee that the Strategy needed to include consideration of the London 2012 Olympics as this was required for all funding applications and, due to its proximity to London, the general increase in sporting activity and number of tourists likely to be staying in the region as a result of the events would have an impact on the District's facilities.

The Cultural Services Manager also confirmed that the closure date for representations on the draft Strategy was that day (31 January), and that one of the most frequent comments made was that the document was too long. In response to this, the Strategy document was being reviewed to make it a much shorter, "snappier" document, ensuring that it covered all strategic points but unnecessary background information was removed and inventories were separated into separate documents.

The Committee expressed their support for the Strategy and the associated work that was being carried out.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the following key issues raised and comments made by the Royston & District Committee be incorporated into the final report to be considered by Cabinet and Council at their respective meetings in March 2007:
  - That care needs to be taken to ensure that the rich history and heritage of the rural areas and villages are taken into consideration, not just the towns.
  - That a lack of studio space is resulting in many artists leaving the District to work elsewhere, so additional provision should be investigated.

- That the disappointing lack of involvement of Royston in the North Herts Book Festival should be avoided in future through better partnership working with other agencies in the town to ensure required facilities can be provided.
- That consideration should be made of the best way to promote the numerous landmarks in Royston – such as the Cave, Museum, Town Tapestry etc – and utilise such resources for the best tourist attraction possible.

- (3) That the Committee's congratulations be expressed to the Royston Town Council for the excellent achievements made in the success of the Museum and the consistently high standard of exhibitions and staff.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To ensure that a wide consultation was undertaken on the Art, Museums and Heritage Strategy.

**94. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report of the Returning Officer and Chief Executive to the Committee, which invited them to consider revisions to the polling districts and polling places within the Committee's area following the boundary review for North Hertfordshire. He explained that a polling place was a sub-division of a polling district, and that polling stations were then distinct locations within the polling place, and illustrated the alterations to boundaries in Royston using a map.

The Democratic Services Manager informed the Committee that the recommendation was to define the polling places as being the same as the polling districts, which would give officers the ability to change the venue of polling stations within that Ward as required. He confirmed that this action was not taken unless absolutely necessary, particularly as voters got used to voting at a particular location, and would only be taken in consultation with the Ward Councillor(s) and the Group Leaders.

Whilst expressing their disappointment that the boundary changes had occurred despite representations in opposition to them, the Committee supported the alterations of the polling districts and polling places as proposed in the report, although all Members stressed the importance of preserving the current locations of polling stations wherever possible.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the establishment of polling districts as described in Appendix A be agreed;
- (2) That the definition of polling places within the area of the Committee in such a way that they are coterminous with the polling districts be agreed.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Council to review the Authority's polling districts in light of the District of North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2006.

**95. 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 20 December 2006, and brought to their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

In addition to those items set out in the report, the Community Development Officer for Royston also informed the Committee that the Parish Challenge Panel had granted the funding application for the provision of a new footpath in Jacksons Lane, Reed, as submitted by Reed Parish Council and supported by this Committee at its meeting on 15 November 2006 (Minute 69 refers). Funding had also been granted to Barkway Village Hall.

**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.

**96. AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT BUDGET 2006/2007**

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 a request for ratification of expenditure and one additional grant application that had been received.

The Community Development Officer for Royston drew the Committee's attention to Appendix B to the report, which was a request for grant aid for the Royston May Fayre. The suggested level of support was £550, increased by 10% on last year's contribution to reflect increased costs of compliance with licensing and health & safety issues.

The Community Development Officer for Royston drew the Committee's attention to Appendix C to the report, which was a request for ratification of expenditure. He explained that shortly before Christmas the spotlight illuminating the clock of Royston Parish Church was attacked by vandals and had been replaced. The cost for the contractors to complete this work was £250.

The Community Development Officer for Royston also asked the Committee to consider their intentions for funding of hanging baskets and planters in Royston for 2007. He informed them that the cost would be £130 for each hanging basket and £411 for each planter which, if the same number of each item were provided as in 2006, would result in a total cost of £8,014. Whilst no funding decision needed to be made overall yet, the Community Development Officer informed the Committee that, whilst £12,000 had been allocated for such items in 2006, only £8,000 had spent, leaving a surplus of £4,700 to be reallocated and suggested that the Committee consider allocating those funds toward their provision in 2007. A formal report on the provision for 2007 would be brought to the Committee's meeting to be held on 14 March 2006.

The Chairman also reminded all Members that the remaining funds in the Committee's budgets would need to be allocated at the meeting to be held on 14 March 2006, and asked Members to consider potential projects for funding prior to that meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted;
- (2) That the expenditure of £250 by the Community Development Officer for Royston to repair the spotlight illuminating the clock of Royston Parish Church be ratified;
- (3) That the outstanding balance of £4,666 from funds allocated by the Committee for the provision of hanging baskets and planters in the town during 2006 (Minute 116 refers) be reallocated for the provision of hanging baskets and planters in the town during 2007.

**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.

**97. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL**

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £550 be awarded to the Royston Town Council as a financial contribution toward the Royston May Fayre.

**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.

**98. 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>06/02617/1</b>	<b>17 Queens Road, Royston</b> Change of use of Shop (Class A1) on ground floor and first floor residential accommodation (Class C3) to Dental Surgery (Class D1).	<b>GRANTED</b> (as per report)

**99. PLANNING APPEALS**

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that no planning appeals had been lodged since the meeting of the Committee held on 20 December 2006. However, the following planning appeal had been determined since that meeting:

Appellant	
Reference number	
Address	11 Perry Drive, Royston.
Proposal	
Decision	Appeal DISMISSED.

The Area Planning Officer also confirmed that no enforcement action had been authorised or taken since the meeting of the Committee held on 20 December 2006.

**100. RAIL SERVICE PROVISION - FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT**

Councillor F.J. Smith referred to recent press coverage about the changes in train service provision for passengers from Ashwell & Morden and Baldock stations as a result of First Capital Connect's alterations to the timetables. He informed the Committee that he had spoken to Councillor A.D. Young, who was working with those affected by the changes, to ask him what the effects were likely to be on Royston. Councillor Smith read to the Committee an e-mail he had received in response, which contained a letter from the Ashwell & Morden Rail User Group with further information received following a meeting with representatives of First Capital Connect (FCC). The following are key points raised in that e-mail:

- FCC had clearly indicated that their aim was to provide more trains and more seats for passengers boarding at Cambridge, which they stated would benefit the whole network, and the timetable for passengers boarding at Ashwell & Morden (and other intermediate stations) was being sacrificed “for the greater good”.
- The proposed new timetables went to the Department of Transport before Christmas and FCC were waiting for ratification – rather undermining any “consultation” argument put forward now, demonstrating that FCC gave the appearance of listening but clearly had no intention of making any changes.
- Service levels for Royston were also going to degrade significantly – the current fast service would no longer run and the semi-fast trains originating from Royston would now start from Cambridge - a train which was already standing room only at Letchworth.
- The planned new timetable was reliant upon FCC winning a bid for 4 new trains – no indication had been given of what the impact will be upon the timetables if the bid was unsuccessful.

Councillor Smith expressed great concern at the content of this letter and the potential extremely serious impact for the residents of Royston and the surrounding area who used services from Royston station. He therefore **PROPOSED** that the Committee sought confirmation of the situation from FCC, wrote to Oliver Heald MP seeking his continued support in the bid to preserve such a fundamental service to the people living in the area, and to ask full Council to facilitate a meeting with representatives of FCC and those affected by the proposed changes to establish the true extent of the proposals and their impact.

The Committee expressed their agreement with the statements made by Councillor Smith, and added their concerns about the impact of such changes on the town and surrounding area, which had a lot of residents who were commuters. Concern was even expressed about the impact such changes could have on house prices in the area, as many people moved to North Hertfordshire because of its proximity to London and the direct rail link with regular commuter trains and, if this was removed, many of those people may move and new residents may be more difficult to attract. It was also noted that the changes were being made purely because of FCC’s perception that they could make more income from those passengers boarding in Cambridge, causing them to focus on Cambridge and ignore all other stations. Since the implementation of changes at Ashwell & Morden station, it had also been noted that more commuters were driving to Royston to catch the train and parking on-street in Royston, causing problems in the town, and this situation would only be made worse with increased cuts in the timetables.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That confirmation of the proposed changes to train provision from Royston station be sought from First Capital Connect;
- (2) That the Chairman write to Oliver Heald MP on behalf of the Committee, seeking his continued support in the bid to preserve such a fundamental service to the people living in the area;
- (3) That copies of the e-mail referred to above be circulated to all Members of the Committee, the Royston Town Clerk, County Councillor Doug Drake and Oliver Heald MP for information.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** That a meeting be requested with First Capital Connect and all key stakeholders to establish the proposed alterations to timetables and service provision in North Hertfordshire.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To apprise all key stakeholders in the District of the proposals and establish the effects such changes will have on residents.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

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Chairman