

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**ROYSTON AND 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 13 June 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

**MINUTES**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Alan Fleck - Community Development Officer,  
Susanne Gow – Committee Administrator.*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *County Councillor Doug Drake  
Royston Town Councillor Mike Harrison  
Sergeant Clive Reader - Safer Neighbourhood Policing, Hertfordshire  
Constabulary  
Geraint Burnell – Royston Town Centre Manager*

**4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed all Speakers and stated that Councillor Mike Harrison would speak before Item 7 - Traffic Issues in Garden Walk, Royston.

**5. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no notification of other business.

**6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Mrs Liz Beardwell.

**7. MINUTES – 25 April 2007**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**8. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interests were made during the meeting.

**9. UPDATE ON SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING**

Sergeant Clive Reader, the Safer Neighbourhood Policing Officer from Hertfordshire Constabulary, updated the Committee on the “rebranding” in Hertfordshire from Community Policing to Safer Neighbourhood Policing. Royston now had a dedicated team of Sergeant Reader, two Constables and three Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), to support local efforts in Royston Town Centre to keep the peace.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had already been supplied especially for schools in Hitchin and Letchworth, and another will be supplied specifically for Baldock schools and one for Royston schools. The role of the School PCSO is to engender greater Police involvement with schools, and to complement Community Officers. They are supported by the School and Youth Officer for North Herts, Colin Mingay.

Sgt. Reader informed the Members that Inspector Camp is now Acting Chief Inspector Camp, and that a new Inspector is expected soon. Sgt. Reader gave names and roles of several new personnel, and revealed that Royston had extra police presence in the form of officers who came from Royston and know the town well.

Sgt. Reader said that his role is about to change, and he will be handling anti-social behaviour and licensing issues, supervising colleagues who deal with anti-social

behaviour orders (ASBOs) and behaviour contracts, and also the School PCSOs. He stated that there was a link between young people and alcohol-related behaviour, and it was part of his brief to solve these problems.

On 31 May 2007 a Neighbourhood Panel Meeting was held to discuss priorities, top of which was anti-social behaviour, closely followed by theft, both of which would link in with Sgt Reader's new role. The new system of policing will be operational by the end of June, and he is keen to see young people join the Panel.

Sgt. Reader provided some statistics, comparing the period of 1 April 2007 to the present, with the same period in 2006. The statistics showed, amongst others, that crime in general was marginally (0.1%) up this year, as was criminal damage, while violent crime, thefts from motor vehicles and car theft were down from last year. Sgt. Reader stated that the figures, when examined, are actually quite low and the fear of crime gives a bad impression of policing, and he would be making plans to address this.

The Chairman advised that her recollection was that the Area Committee had provided funding for a CCV camera specifically for use in Royston. Sgt. Reader stated that he had consulted the Manager of CCTV in Stevenage, who had assured him that the whole of North Herts area had six mobile cameras which were not allocated to any specific position, but that bids could be submitted and they would go where there was a need. At the present time there were two cameras in Royston, and bids could be submitted for a further camera if necessary. The Members confirmed that the Royston and District Committee had provided funds for one CCTV camera, and Councillor H.M. Marshall advised that some speed cameras were also funded by the Royston and District Committee, in the surrounding towns and villages, together with a mobile camera and a CCTV which was in the Burns Road area of Royston Town Centre. Sgt. Reader stated that the speed camera was in regular use. The Community Development Officer (CDO) was asked to find the relevant Minute and provide Sgt. Reader with the details. Councillor F.J. Smith commented that with North Herts District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Royston Town Council covering the outlay for a CCTV camera, it will be much cheaper for the Royston and District Committee, and the next step should be to identify a spot in which to situate it when the process of bidding to the CCTV Joint Board is complete and the camera was provided. Councillor Smith opined that the street lighting in Royston was now of the high standard necessary to ensure that the CCTV camera's photographs were clear, and therefore to make the best use of the apparatus.

Councillor H.M. Marshall asked Sgt. Reader if there were any changes to the Rural Advisory Group, and was told that in its current form there were not. Sgt. Reader will put the subject of the new format onto the agenda of the next Panel Meeting, and report back to the Royston and District Committee in due course.

Councillor A.F. Hunter mentioned that there was some concern about weekend police cover, as some citizens had mentioned to him that there was quite often nobody at the Reception Desk in the Police Station. Sgt. Reader assured the Members that Royston was covered by a dedicated shift of officers who work in pairs so there are time overlaps, and all are fully equipped, using four patrol cars and a PCSO car. There were also three civilian support officers who covered the front desk from 8am to 10pm daily, one of whom was unfortunately on long-term sick leave, and therefore on very few occasions the front desk had been unmanned, but there was always an officer in the back room who could be called upon for help. There were actually more police officers in Royston than before, and people found it reassuring to see the station fully manned. Sgt. Reader believed that a visible police presence had a good effect on youngsters. Councillors Inwood and Burt were complimentary about police officers with whom they had interacted, and gave Sgt. Reader very positive feedback, which he said he would pass on to the Royston team. The Chairman thanked Sgt. Reader for his presentation and stated that she hoped the Police would attend future meetings to update the Committee on the work the Police are undertaking.

## **10. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Royston Town Councillor Mike Harrison addressed the meeting about parking issues in Royston. As a result of consultation with several residents in the Newmarket Road, Hollis Road and Tall Trees areas, and following a 10-day survey carried out both

morning and afternoon, he stated that the General Purposes and Highways Committee of Royston Town Council were calling for a full review of parking in Royston. A meeting was held between three Royston Town Councillors, Geraint Burnell the Royston Town Centre Manager and Terry Nickolls and Louise Symes from Planning Policy at North Herts District Council (NHDC) which the Area Committee Chairman also attended, and it was suggested that a Strategy Committee be set up to look at the parking situation in Royston. Councillor Harrison blamed the high parking charges for the fact that potential visitors to Royston were either not coming into the Town Centre or not using the car parks when they do, therefore losing NHDC revenue. Councillor Harrison added that losing visitors to Royston also adversely affected the retail outlets.

Councillor Harrison closed by asking the Royston and District Committee for their assistance in dealing with this problem. The Chairman proposed and the Committee unanimously agreed to accept this proposal.

**RESOLVED:** That the Royston and District Area Committee and the Community Development Officer assist Royston Town Council in the procedure for setting up a Strategy Committee to examine the parking situation in Royston Town Centre.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To confirm the support of the Royston and District Committee for Royston Town Council in searching for a solution to the parking issues in Royston Town Centre.

**11. TRAFFIC ISSUES IN GARDEN WALK**

Councillor F.J. Smith stated that a resident in Garden Walk had drawn to his attention the severe traffic difficulties with having two large schools in Garden Walk, and the attendant problems of picking up and dropping off children. Councillor Smith said that it was apparent that traffic issues had increased and would continue to do so, especially traffic leaving Garden Walk to feed onto the A10 trunk road. At present there was a tendency for those wishing to turn right to wait for a gap in the traffic in both directions before crossing the carriageway to continue with their journey, which caused severe congestion behind them amongst those waiting to exit Garden Walk for the A10 in both directions.

The most useful suggestion was for traffic to be able to turn left only onto the A10 leaving Garden Walk, and for those wishing to turn right to go via a roundabout (on turning left onto the A10).

Another suggestion was to make Garden Walk a one-way street, but the general opinion of the Committee was that this was not a practical solution.

Councillor A.F. Hunter gave his opinion that this problem should be passed on by the Committee to the Highways Partnership to examine and cost. The Members agreed with this suggestion.

**RESOLVED:** That the Community Development Officer enter into discussions with the Highways Authority for a review of the traffic problems in Garden Walk, Royston. On conclusion of this review that the Community Development Officer be requested to report back to the Royston and District Committee with the results of their investigations, and with a quotation for a No Right Turn solution.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To confirm the support of the Royston and District Committee for sound traffic management control to be placed at the junction of Garden Walk and the A10 for the benefit of local residents and in the interests of traffic flow and highway safety.

**12. GENERAL PARKING IN ROYSTON TOWN CENTRE**

On the subject of general parking in Royston Town Centre, Geraint Burnell, the Royston Town Centre Manager, referred to the 15 March 2006 meeting of the Royston and District Committee, when a proposal to improve Royston Town Centre and car parking facilities was made (Minute 120 refers), and reinforced later that year.

However, to date nothing had been done about the problem. He asked the Royston and District Committee to ensure that something is done soon. Mr Burnell said that the car parking improvement measures outlined in the Minutes of 15 March 2006 should have been completed by now, and wondered what was the cause of this lack of action.

The Chairman opened the debate by voicing her deep concern that items previously agreed by the Area Committee had not been actioned. Councillor F.J. Smith confirmed that Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock also have outstanding issues due, he believed, to lack of sufficient North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) staff to deal with them. He stated that this situation should be put right as soon as possible, as there was so much work to be done that it was beyond the capacity of the current level of staffing. Councillor A.F. Hunter said that raising Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) was taking too long, resulting in a dire situation which was affecting businesses in Royston, so anything that could be done to increase short-term parking would be ideal. Councillor Hunter said that the high parking charges were resulting in more money for the Council, but a worse situation for Royston. It was suggested that the Committee ask for the TROs to be implemented, as it had already taken over 15 months and nothing had been done.

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**13. TOWN CENTRE PARKING ISSUES**

During the discussion held on the report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services, it was established that actions were either taking too long, or not happening at all. The Committee suggested that if this was due to staff shortages, they should be advised, but a lack of information was not acceptable. They agreed that they should ask for a list of priorities and help to set them to get things moving.

County Councillor Doug Drake, when invited by the Chairman to comment, stated that in his opinion Royston Town Centre was in serious decline, with a large number of empty shops. He opined that the footfall had fallen dramatically, and was now just 50 per cent of what it was two years ago. County Councillor Drake was sure that changes to the loading bays could be an important factor in increasing trade in the town, and the implementation of a discounted ticketing scheme should be put into operation as soon as possible. He stated that the current situation is unacceptable, and he saw the Strategy Parking Committee as yet another hold-up. The Committee agreed with Councillor Drake's comments.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Members supported the views of the Town Centre Forum, and requested Officers to devise appropriate means to facilitate urgent implementation;
- (2) That an official review of the Royston Town Centre parking issues was requested by the Royston and District Committee, to be immediately expedited, the results to be brought back to the next meeting of Royston and District Committee on 18 July 2007;
- (3) That the answers to questions asked by Royston Town Council should be notified to the Town Council Clerk as well as to the Royston and District Committee, and that the Community Development Officer (CDO) be tasked to investigate and to come back to the meeting on 18 July 2007;
- (4) That Councillor F. Hill was authorised by the Royston and District Committee to allocate £400 from the Area Committee Development Budget to deal with adjustments to ticket-issuing machines to enable use of tickets discounted by local traders. If a larger sum was required, it should be referred to Councillors R. Thake (Portfolio for Planning and Transport) and T. Hone (Portfolio for Finance) for their attention;
- (5) That the Chairman, the CDO and the Town Centre Manager arrange a walk around Royston Town Centre to identify issues of concern to all.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To urgently facilitate the implementation of decisions already taken.

**14. CHAMPION NEWS**

The Royston Community Development Officer (CDO) provided a review of his activities since the last meeting of the Royston and District Committee, held on 25 April 2007.

The Chairman thanked the CDO for a very interesting report, and commended him for

his efforts on behalf of Royston.

**RESOLVED:** That the Royston and District Committee endorse the actions taken by the Community Development Officer for the promotion of greater community capacity and well being.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To keep members of the Royston and District Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Royston and District Area.

**15. AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS 2007/2008**

The Community Development Officer (CDO) advised the Committee that there were four grant applications for determination.

Members were requested to note the information in Appendix A, which related to Area Committee Budget balances for the Financial Year 2007/08, the pre-allocations carried forward from 2006/07, and the balances allocated to Visioning Budgets available to respective wards within the Royston and District area.

**RESOLVED:**

That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and to further the aims and strategic priorities of North Herts District Council.

**16. GRANT APPLICATION – TANNERY DRIFT PLAYGROUP**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Tannery Drift Playgroup be awarded the sum of £250 to part-fund their children's fun day on 23 June 2007.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and further the aims and strategic priorities of North Herts District Council.

**17. GRANT APPLICATION – REALIGNMENT OF WAYMARKERS ON TOWN TRAIL**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Royston Town Trail be awarded the sum of £350 to adjust some of the way markers on the Town Trail.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and further the aims and strategic priorities of North Herts District Council.

**18. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON DAY CENTRE**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Royston Day Centre be awarded a grant of £1000, sought to offset the increased costs for handicraft courses provided by North Herts College.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and further the aims and strategic priorities of North Herts District Council.

**19. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON KITE FESTIVAL**

**RESOLVED:**

That a sum of £750 be awarded to the Rotary Club of Royston to support the annual Royston Kite Festival on 5 August 2007.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and further the aims and strategic priorities of

North Herts District Council.

**20. COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2007/2008**

Members of Royston and District Committee discussed the number of meetings they required during 2007/2008, and the suggestion was made that just four meetings were needed. However after some discussion, it was agreed that the nominated number of six meetings be adhered to, perhaps using one or two of the meetings for discussing rural area matters, budgets, schools, Police, the Youth Service (to set up a Youth Council), highways, or the Civic Centre of Royston (including the future of the Town Hall and Royston Hospital). Other subjects suggested for the "spare" meetings were discussions on: the Highways Integrated Works Programme (IWP) for the forthcoming year; the public consultation document; re-alignment of services across the area; and the roles for the local community of Lister Hospital, Stevenage and Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge.

In addition to discussing future dates, the Chairman suggested a discussion on how future meetings should run, and suggested that Youth, Health, Rural and other community issues should be accommodated in the meetings.

After the discussion, the following dates were agreed :

Wednesday 18 July  
Wednesday 26 September  
Wednesday 28 November  
Wednesday 30 January  
Wednesday 26 March

The meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.

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Chairman