

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

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

**Meeting held at the Committee Room, Royston Town Hall, Royston
on 30 January 2008 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

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

IN ATTENDANCE: *Alan Fleck - Community Development Officer
Susanne Gow – Committee and Member Services Officer*

ALSO PRESENT: *Royston Town Councillor Doug Drake
Geraint Burnell – Royston Town Centre Manager
Mr John Gourd – Johnson-Matthey*

70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr H. Marshall.

71. MINUTES – 28 November 2007

The Chairman pointed out that the Minutes of 28 November 2007 had stated that Royston Parking Policy would be brought back to this Royston and District Committee Meeting, but this item had not been included on the Agenda for the Committee Meeting of 30 January, therefore the subject would be taken under Notification of Other Business, together with Tree Problems in Somerfield Car Park.

Royston Buses

The Chairman declared that following on from the Minutes of 28 November 2007, an update on the situation with Royston Buses was due to be revisited at this Committee Meeting, but was also not on the Agenda, therefore the Community Development Officer (CDO) would bring the Committee Members up to date at this meeting (30 January 2008).

The CDO stated that there was currently no change in the situation, and after some discussion, Members agreed that it was vital that this matter was not allowed to stagnate, but was moved along and that negotiations were held with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

On being invited to speak by the Chairman, Royston Town Councillor Doug Drake revealed that he has asked Keith White, Director of Transport at HCC, about the possibility of removing one trip on the No 16 route and replacing it with one journey in and out again to Coombeland. Cllr Drake asked the Committee, if they agreed with this solution, to back him up by writing to Keith White at Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford.

The Royston and District Committee approved Cllr Drake's actions, and it was agreed that the Committee would assist by writing to Mr White and endorsing Cllr Drake's suggestion, while asking him to ensure that the bus routes in Royston and the surrounding area were re-examined for any other possible options to this solution.

Cllr F J Smith suggested that since parts of the no 16 and No17 routes are identical, both services could possibly be amalgamated and renamed routes 16A and 16B.

The Members agreed to invite Mr White to a future Royston and District Committee Meeting, put their ideas to him and invite his response.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Minutes of the Royston and District Committee Meeting held on 28 November 2007, be approved as a true record of the proceedings, and be signed by the Chairman;
- 2) That the Royston and District Committee write to Mr Keith White, Director of Transport, Hertfordshire County Council, and invite him to the next Committee Meeting on 2 April 2008;
- 3) That the suggestions and comments from Councillor F J Smith be taken on board and presented during the discussions with Mr White of Hertfordshire County Council.

72. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman declared that the following subjects would be taken as separate items at the end of the other Agenda items at the current meeting:

- Royston Parking Policy and other Highways Issues
- Tree Problems in Somerfield Car Park.

The reason for urgency was that :

- The item on Royston Parking Strategy should have been included on the Agenda for the current meeting, as its discussion was vital to find an imminent solution to the problem;
- Somerfield had intimated that five healthy sycamore trees were to be removed to make way for the rebuilding of a wall, and it was essential that the Members arrived at a decision that included keeping the healthy trees alive.

73. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

She reminded Members that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest, and they were required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest were to leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.

The Chairman congratulated Royston Town Council on its recent Quality Town Council status and proposed that a letter of congratulations be sent from the Area Committee to the Town Council. This was endorsed by the other Members of the Committee.

74. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No items were presented for consideration by the Committee under Public Participation.

75. 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 28 November 2007.

This covered items listed in the report as follows:

- a) Students at Meridian School were very enthusiastic for the formation of a Royston Youth Council. The Committee suggested that Greneway and Roysia School students were also targeted, to prevent the Youth Council "belonging" to Meridian School. Suggestions were made to also target students at Frimm College, Buntingford College and John Henry Newman School in Stevenage. It was also agreed that all young people, should be invited to represent their peers, whether they be students, employed young persons or those excluded from education. A Committee Member proposed that the Youth Council members be invited to attend a meeting of the Royston and District Committee;
- b) A Royston Youth Network has been formed, involving organisations concerned with providing or delivering services to young people, to ensure that youth matters are properly co-ordinated. Representatives from the organisations concerned appeared to be very enthusiastic and eager to "pull together", and

were full of ideas to help the young people of Royston;

- c) The Chairman invited Royston Town Councillor Drake to comment on disparities in Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. He confirmed that the Improvement Plan is to be started in south Hertfordshire, and that practical work is now in hand, although legal work on footpaths is approximately "10 years behind". On being asked when an improvement in the north of the County is likely to be seen on footpaths and bridleways, Cllr Drake suggested that Royston and District Committee put this subject on their Committee Meeting agenda and press for an improvement/maintenance scheme in this area. One Member suggested that it would have a better effect if the Committee nominate particular items to be targeted in the first instance, and another put forward the idea that the parishes should be asked for their observations on this, as it would be useful to know if they had any problems. A Committee Member who is also a Member of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) declared that he had been assured that an HCC officer had been allocated to deal with Health and Safety issues, and that financial resources had been found to rectify any problems;
- d) The Community Development Officer (CDO) was still in the process of offering administrative assistance to the Baldock Town Partnership (BTP), and had taken several photographs to be uploaded onto the BTP website;
- e) Discussions are still taking place regarding future developments at the Coombes Community Centre;
- f) Other work in which the CDO was engaged had been related to supporting the Royston Town Centre Partnership on behalf of the Royston and District Committee;

RESOLVED: .

- 1) That the Committee endorsed the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being;
- 2) That the Chairman, on behalf of the Royston and District Committee, thanked the Community Development Officer for all his hard work on their behalf and for the people of Royston.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To keep Members of the Royston and District Committee apprised of the work of the Community Development Officer and the latest developments in community activities in the Royston and District area.

76. ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE AND AREA VISIONING BUDGET 2007/2008

The Community Development Officer (CDO) took the Committee through the Royston and District Budget Statement for 2007/2008, and advised the Committee that there were now six grant applications for determination, one having come in late for Royston in Bloom.

RESOLVED: That the current expenditure and balance of the Area Committee Development Budgets 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.

77. GRANT APPLICATION – NHDC LEISURE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR PROVISION OF A YOUTH SHELTER IN PRIORY MEMORIAL GARDENS

The Royston and District Committee considered the application from North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) Leisure and Community Development for the sum of £5,500 to provide a commercially available youth shelter with a tarmac base, together with adjustment to the wall of the multi-use games area, and provision of an additional litter bin. After some discussion, the Committee decided to defer the decision on this grant application until this project had been considered by the Royston Town Council.

RESOLVED: That a decision on the provision of a youth shelter adjoining the multi-use games area be deferred until after this project is presented to the Royston Town Council for their comments.

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

78. GRANT APPLICATION - NHDC LEISURE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR INSTALLATION OF FENCING AND A GATE IN FISH HILL

The Committee considered this grant application, which had arisen from discussion at the Royston and District Committee Meeting on 28 November 2007, for the installation of fencing on top of the walls flanking the Fish Hill gate, and a small gate to be installed in the entrance, at Priory Memorial Gardens at a cost of £2,770. The question of who would be liable if a young person scaling the fence slipped and fell was raised, and the CDO will consult with Legal Services to obtain an answer to this question. After some debate, the Committee fully supported this application.

RESOLVED: That the maximum sum of £2,770 be awarded for the installation of fencing on top of the walls flanking the Fish Hill gate into Priory Memorial Gardens and the provision of a gate in the entrance.

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

79. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE REPLACEMENT AND PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL NOTICEBOARDS

This grant application was to cover the replacement of one notice board at Coombelands and one at Icknield Walk, and the provision of an additional notice board on the Templar's Gate estate at a total cost of £930. Councillors Beardwell, Burt and Inwood declared a personal interest as they were also Members of Royston Town Council, but elected to remain in the room and speak if deemed necessary. In fact, one of these Members considered that not only was the price for these three notice boards too high, but also that he did not consider replacement of the one at Icknield Walk to be wise as it was frequently vandalised. It was suggested that this grant application be deferred and referred back to Royston Town Council as their responsibility.

RESOLVED: That the Royston and District Committee defer this grant application and refer it back to Royston Town Council as the provision, replacement and upkeep of notice boards in Royston are considered to be the Town Council's responsibility.

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

80. GRANT APPLICATION – BARKWAY VILLAGE HALL

The Royston and District Committee considered the grant application for the sum of £2,270 as part funding for the sanding and re-sealing of the Village Hall floor. As the Hall is used by a large proportion of the local community, the Committee agreed to grant part of this sum to Barkway Village Hall.

RESOLVED: That Barkway Village Hall be awarded the sum of £1,250 as part funding for the sanding and re-sealing of the Barkway Village Hall floor.

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

81. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL FOR ROYSTON MAY FAYRE

The Committee discussed the grant application and agreed to award the sum of £670 requested towards the running and administrative costs of the Royston May Fayre.

RESOLVED: That the sum of £670 be awarded to Royston Town Council in part funding of the costs of the Royston May Fayre.

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

82. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON IN BLOOM

The Community Development Officer presented a late grant application from Royston Town Council for financial assistance in the sum of £8,000 to be spent on floral hanging baskets and their maintenance for the summer of 2008. Councillors Beardwell, Burt and Inwood again declared a personal interest as they were also Members of Royston Town Council, but elected to remain in the room and speak if deemed necessary. The Royston and District Committee discussed this grant, the majority of which, it was revealed, would go on maintaining the baskets rather than buying the plants, and the general consensus of opinion was that the floral hanging baskets were a benefit to Royston, as they improved the look of the town during the summer months. A suggestion was made and then discussed, which was to dispense with the two planters, but to retain all the hanging baskets. The Committee agreed to award the sum recommended to Royston Town Council, less the cost of the planters.

RESOLVED: That the recommended sum of £8,000 be awarded to Royston Town Council to fund the hanging baskets required for Royston in Bloom 2008, less the cost of the planters.

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

83. NOTE: ROYSTON PARKING POLICY AND OTHER HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Chairman introduced a discussion on the proposed trial reduction in car parking charges in one of the Royston car parks.

She began by reminding the Royston and District Committee that they had rejected the Royston Parking Strategy proposed by Martin Hempell of MVA Transport Consultancy at the Royston and District Committee Meeting on 28 November 2007.

However, it was vital that this was eventually agreed, with amendments to the Committee's satisfaction, as the Parking Strategy would be used to inform the Town Centre Strategy consultation.

The Chairman proposed that there was a trial for two to three months in a designated car park, with the first hour costing 10p and thereafter reverting to the standard charge for that car park. This would also be beneficial to people using the Health Centre and Town Hall.

The Committee, together with the Royston Town Centre Manager at the Chairman's invitation, discussed this suggestion, and Members agreed that a report should go to Cabinet to request agreement to undertaking a reduced rate of parking charge in an area of the Civic Centre Car Park, for a trial period.

It was noted that any decision made would have to go to Cabinet first, and then to the full Council Meeting.

The Leader of the Council suggested that to demonstrate that Royston is a special case to the other North Herts District councillors, they should all be invited to visit Royston to familiarise themselves with the area and the problems Royston is currently undergoing.

The Committee decided that they needed a report back on the facts and figures of the free Christmas parking, and if it proved to be a successful event, it would be made a permanent feature of Royston Town Centre at Christmas and publicised as such.

Royston and District Committee were informed that Cabinet had agreed to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in Rock Road, and it was suggested that Briary Lane and Sun Hill were also given TROs. The advertisements would go out in the first week of February 2008, subject to the finance being available.

One Member had an issue with parking on the length of carriageway in Orchard Road from Minster Road, but this was subject to a separate investigation.

It was noted that the original proposition to free up some loading and unloading bays for short-term parking was made in March 2006, and it was agreed that this should be pushed to be dealt with imminently. The Committee authorised the Chairman to get this actioned without delay.

A Member mentioned that the damage to Melbourn Street above Royston Cave had made the national news. Discussion followed on ways to alleviate further damage, and suggestions were made, including: smaller lorries only being allowed to use this stretch of road; goods lorries parking elsewhere and moving the goods to retail outlets using moveable cages along the pavement; the use of a fence, raised kerbstones or black metal bollards to discourage vehicles parking with their wheels on the pavement in the area; and the construction of a low road bridge to take the weight off the part of the carriageway above Royston Cave. It was noted that general traffic pauses close to the Cave at traffic lights, and the constant vibration of their engines and the continual effect of exhaust fumes could also be damaging to the Cave.

The Chairman concluded that whatever decision was made, a weight limit should be imposed on the relevant stretch of carriageway.

It was decided that the Community Development Officer and the Town Centre Manager should try and speak to the drivers whose vehicles appear to be doing the damage in Melbourn Street.

RESOLVED: That a proposal be sent to Cabinet and Full Council, requesting a car parking charge of 10p for the first hour in part of the Town Hall car park for a trial period.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ascertain whether this produces an increase of shoppers coming into Royston Town Centre.

84. NOTE: TREE PROBLEMS IN SOMERFIELD CAR PARK

The Royston and District Committee were informed that the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling had attended a meeting with the management of Somerfield in Royston, and discussed the rebuilding of the damaged wall in the car park.

Somerfield agreed to rebuild the wall, but stated that this would necessitate the removal of five young sycamore trees nearby.

However, an arboriculture expert, when consulted, held the view that the trees were not the cause of the damage to the wall, and it was suggested that they were retained and added to the Risk Register. In the discussion that followed, Members suggested a Tree Preservation Order be made on the five sycamores, and it was unanimously agreed, although this would need the co-operation of Hertfordshire County Council, on whose land the trees stand. It was also suggested that the trees be pruned and "tidied up" rather than felled, but this again would be a matter for Herts County Council, to whom the trees belonged.

All Members present agreed that this matter should be investigated more fully.

The meeting closed at 8.53 p.m.

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Chairman