

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 1 October 2008 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

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

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

ALSO PRESENT: Royston Town Councillor Robert Smith
Royston Town Councillor Lindsay Davidson
Andrew Emms – Reed Cricket Club
John Heslam – Reed Cricket Club
Hertfordshire County Cllr Doug Drake

6 members of the public.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Howard Marshall.

35. MINUTES – 30 July 2008

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Royston and District Committee Meeting held on 30 July 2008 be approved as a true record of the proceedings, and be signed by the Chairman.

36. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman announced that following the two items of public participation, these items would both be discussed by the Royston and District Committee after the remaining business on the Agenda, as two additional items.

37. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

She announced that Royston Town Council and Museum had achieved Accredited Status, and stated that a letter would be sent to them from Royston and District Committee offering warmest congratulations. **Action:** *Committee Administrator*

The Chairman announced that Les Baker, Editor of the *Royston Crow* would shortly be leaving, and she thanked him for his fair, unbiased and factual reporting, and support to herself and to the Royston and District Committee. She expressed best wishes for his future.

She went on to remind Members of the Royston and District Committee that any declarations of interest in respect of 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 also announced that Committee Members and members of the public were invited to attend the Annual Community Conference which would be held in the Spirella Ballroom on 10 November at 6 for 6.30p.m. The event would include the launch of the new Sustainable Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire and there would be displays.

This was an open event, but people were requested to book in advance so that catering and other arrangements could be planned. Interested parties were asked to contact Jim Brown, NHDC Policy Manager, on 01462 474835 for enquiries,

programmes and to register.

The Leader of North Herts District Council stated that he would be particularly pleased to see Royston residents attending this meeting, to create a fair representation of North Hertfordshire.

38. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were two items of public participation at this meeting:

Flooding in Royston

- 1) Royston Town Councillor Robert Smith addressed the Committee on the problems of flooding in Royston, with particular reference to the Twigden Estate. He informed those present that Oliver Heald MP has taken up the matter with Anglian Water. Cllr Smith stated that the inclusion of sewage in the floodwater could be symptomatic of a problem at the local pumping station. He revealed that when he visited the pumping station he found two engineers unblocking the pump and pulling out a lot of cotton fabric that appeared to have been flushed down into the drains. They told Cllr Smith that this was a common problem, and that residents should be told not to flush this material down the toilet. There appeared to be no evidence that the blocking problem had led to flooding, but Cllr Smith said that the design of the pumping station and the drains on the Twigden Estate should be able to deal with this problem. Cllr Smith tabled aerial photographs, showing two areas in which severe flooding had occurred: Pipit Close/Nightingale Way/Woodcock Road near the Royston Leisure Centre car park, and Corvus Close/Curlew Crescent. In both cases the drains appeared to be either unable to cope with heavy rainfall, or else were incorrectly sited.

Cllr Smith, with the permission of the Chairman, then asked Mr Raj Gauera of Corvus Close and Mrs Jude Fairbairn of Pipit Close to address the Committee, which they did, each describing how their properties had suffered from flooding on several occasions, ruining or destroying property and causing heavily inflated premiums on their insurance, together with much inconvenience and distress to themselves, their families and other neighbours who were not at the meeting. Mr Gauera told the Committee that contractors had extracted a large amount of builders' debris from the manhole at the front of his property, and also from other manholes, which appeared to prove that the builders were in the practice of putting the debris down into the sewers prior to vacating the site. Mrs Fairbairn had suffered similar problems, with floodwater coming at times to a depth of 12 inches in her home, as had many other residents of the roads in question, in one case also leading to the write-off of a brand new motor vehicle as well as ruining the internal décor and fixtures and fittings of the vehicle owner's home.

Cllr Smith closed with a series of the issues in question, and recommendations for a course of action to alleviate the problems. He recommended that:

- a. Anglian Water should be requested to change the design of the pumping station and the drains on the Twigden Estate to cope with the number of dwellings, and that the residents should be educated not to flush inappropriate solid matter down into the drains;
- b. a CCTV survey or inspection should be conducted to determine where builders' debris has been deposited in the drains, to aid its extraction;
- c. a check should be carried out on whether the drains were sufficient for the number of dwellings on the estate – there was a question as to whether over 200 more dwellings were built after the infrastructure had been put in place;
- d. whether the storm drains laid down had taken into account the Royston Leisure Centre and car park, which put an additional burden on the drains on the Twigden Estate;
- e. a thorough evaluation of the sewer and storm drains should take place to identify a course of remedial action.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Smith and the Royston residents who had addressed the Committee, and assured them that they had the sympathy of the Royston and District Committee. The subject would be discussed by the Committee after the Budget item. She stated that the North Herts District Council (NHDC) officers were aware of, and were investigating the problem.

The Community Development Officer (CDO) confirmed that a report would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee on 26 November 2008. **Action:** *Community Development Officer to chase.*

Play Areas in Royston

- 2) Royston Town Councillor Lindsay Davidson gave a report on play parks in Royston. She had visited local schools in Royston as part of her School Council local democracy initiative, and one issue that arose at two different schools was the lack of play equipment for children aged between 7 and 12 years especially swings, in local play areas. This was borne out by Cllr Davidson's own inspection of all eight play areas in Royston, many of which had damaged equipment or none at all for that age group. In fact, only two out of the eight had equipment catering for 7-12 year olds.

Royston Town Cllr Davidson also revealed that many of the children she had spoken to in the schools had expressed a desire for nature/adventure parks, and she asked the Royston and District Committee if there was the possibility of them funding the creation of such a resource, and of providing more equipment for older children, together with maintaining the equipment already in the parks.

The Chairman thanked RTC Davidson, and said that this item would be discussed later on in the Agenda.

- 3) Andrew Emms, Chairman of Reed Cricket Club, addressed the Royston and District Committee on the subject of funding required to purchase new practice nets. They explained that the Club had over 150 members, including juniors, and undertook all their own ground and pavilion maintenance. They considered themselves a successful, self-sufficient, family club with many fathers and sons amongst their members.

John Heslam, Vice President of the Cricket Club, explained that the equipment at the Club that needed replacing included the practice nets and frames, which had been in use for many years. Quotes had been obtained, and members of Reed Cricket Club would erect them when they arrived, to cut down on labour costs. He stated that the Club now had a Third XI which had been playing elsewhere, but would now play permanently at Freeman College, Buntingford. The Committee were assured that with a grant towards the purchase of new nets and equipment, the Reed Cricket Club would continue to prosper and grow.

The Chairman thanked Mr Emms and Mr Heslam for their presentation, and assured them that their grant application would be considered later on the Agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Community Development Officer (CDO) would liaise with the North Herts District Council (NHDC) officers currently investigating the problem of flooding in Royston, and would present a report updating the Royston and District Committee at their next meeting on 26 November 2008.

39. FLOODING IN ROYSTON

Following the presentation by Cllr Bob Smith and the residents of the Twigden Estate, the Chairman opened the discussion by stating that there was plenty of evidence of flooding and possible causes in Royston.

- 1) Matters discussed covered:
 - a) The section of Royston Town Ditch that was not culverted causing the blockage problem;
 - b) Building material washed to the lowest point outside Greneway School being the cause in the past of Garden Walk and Garden Close being flooded (this had now been solved by the installation of several soakaways);
 - c) Several areas of the Twigden Estate being vulnerable to flooding in stormy conditions although building regulations had been met, and whether extra soakaways would solve the problem there;
 - d) The thorough examination and the cleaning out of building material and earth from drains and water gulleys throughout Royston, to help alleviate possibility of flooding residents' homes.

It was stated that Anglian Water and Herts Highways were responsible for adopted roads, but Twigden Homes were responsible for unadopted roads. It was also noted that large amounts of money had been spent by Hertfordshire Highways (HH), but there is confusion as to where the responsibility on this lies – between HH and Anglian Water. Changes in Government planning regulations and whether these might contribute to the problem were discussed, as was the comment that flooding appeared to have become more frequent. It was agreed that Royston and District Committee should support those residents who had spoken at the Committee Meeting, and it was suggested that a representative from Anglian Water be invited to attend a Committee Meeting and explain their views of the residents' problems. **Action:** *Committee Administrator*

- 2) The suggestion was made that the Committee has sight of:
 - a) Sight of a survey of all drains on the Twigden Estate once it had been carried out and assurance that maintenance would be carried out after the survey had been done, together with sight of the maintenance programme;
 - b) Proposals for how additional drains could be added to the present system if necessary, to help carry the excess storm water;
 - c) Responses to the questions proposed by the speakers.

It was evident that the pumping station on the Twigdens Estate was becoming blocked on a regular basis, and clarification was needed as to why it was happening. The Committee agreed that their Member of Parliament should be made au fait with the whole situation. It was therefore decided that copies of letters to Anglian Water and Hertfordshire Highways should be sent to Oliver Heald MP and County Cllr Doug Drake. **Action:** *Committee Administrator*.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a report on the current situation of the possible causes of flooding at the Royston Leisure Centre and the Twigdens Estate and answers to the questions raised by residents be brought back to the next meeting of the Royston and District Committee on 26 November 2008;
- 2) That confirmation in writing of ownership of the Royston Town Ditch be received by the Royston and District Committee;
- 3) That a report is brought back to the Committee on any investigative and maintenance work which has been carried out on general flooding in Royston, together with any proposals for work planned.
- 4) That a representative from Anglian Water be invited to attend the next Royston and District Committee Meeting on 26 November 2008 and explain their views on the residents' problems.

40. PLAY AREAS IN ROYSTON

Following the appeal for funds by Royston Town Cllr Davidson, the Chairman said that she sympathised with RTC Davidson's views, and that the Royston and District Committee needs to see the costings for the equipment and maintenance required. The Community Development Officer suggested that the category of some of the play areas involved may be of importance to obtaining Government grants, and this would affect the equipment to be installed. He would check this with the relevant NHDC officers, and bring back a report to the Committee.

It was proposed that equipment for the 7-12 year age group was added to the majority of the play areas, to bring them all to the same high standard of repair and equipment. This was agreed by the Royston and District Committee.

RESOLVED: That Royston Town Councillor Davidson and the CDO should liaise and bring back a proposal for funding to the Royston and District Committee.

41. HIGHWAY ISSUES

The Community Development Officer presented the report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services and the Head of Planning and Building Control Services. The Committee then discussed the report, and made appropriate suggestions, such as:

- a) bringing English Heritage into the equation relating to the preservation of Royston Cave;
- b) the safety of, and congestion in Melbourn Street;
- c) these issues should be incorporated into the Royston Town Centre Strategy;
- d) the Royston and District Committee, the CDO, Herts County Councillor Drake, the Royston Town Clerk and relevant Royston Town Councillors visit the site together to consider the options.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a report is brought back to the Committee on speeding in Barkway Road, York Way and Twigdens Estate, together with the left hand turn in Garden Walk, linked to the Safer Routes to School project;
- 2) That Members of the Royston and District Committee, together with the CDO, Herts County Councillor Drake, the Royston Town Clerk and relevant Royston Town Councillors should visit the site at 10am on Saturday 18 October 2008 to be apprised of the exact safety situation in Melbourn Street, and to examine the area for illegal parking and damage to Royston Cave;
- 3) That the results of the monitoring following recent TROs in Newmarket Road, King James Way and Rock Road be reported back to the Royston and District Committee to ascertain the impact on other roads in Royston.

RECOMMENDED TO THE HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS – JOINT MEMBER PANEL:

- 1) That the Committee seek the support of the North Herts Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel for a feasibility study for a one-way traffic flow along Melbourn Street and/or other physical measures such as bollard/pinch points or pavement widening in the vicinity of Royston Cave, and to also look at possible weight limit restrictions and other options in the area;
- 2) That the North Herts Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel be requested to investigate the feasibility of introducing a Traffic Regulation Order that would restrict the parking of vehicles in Garden Walk from the junction with Melbourn Road eastwards to Perry Drive;
- 3) That a report is brought back to the Royston and District Committee meeting on 26 November 2008 on speeding in Barkway Road, York Way and the Twigdens Estate, together with the proposed left hand turn in Garden Walk linked to the Safer Routes to School project.
- 4) That a report is brought back to the Committee meeting on 26 November 2008 on parking problems and Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in Royston.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To improve and conserve Royston Cave, and ensure safety in Melbourn Street and other roads in Royston.

42. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) took the Royston and District Committee through the activities and schemes with which he had been involved since the last meeting on 2 April 2008, and brought to their attention some important community-based activities which will take place over the next few months.

Young People's Activities

The Royston Youth Council had organised a Music Festival on The Heath on 23 August with help from Rap Aid, the Royston Extended Schools Coordinator, the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services. There was a lower turnout than had been hoped, but it is hoped to repeat the event next year.

Town Ditch

The issue of ownership of the Town Ditch had been discussed with Hertfordshire

Highways, who were to provide written evidence of Anglian Water's ownership and therefore responsibility for the Town Ditch.

Coombes Community Centre

Work on the refurbishment of the Community Centre was on track to complete on schedule. These included provision of a disabled toilet, treatment to the hall floor and sound-deadening treatment to the hall ceiling, to attenuate the lively echo.

Reed Village Hall

Works to upgrade the building were in progress, including the new front extension to the building and fitting out the new kitchen. Further Building Control regulations had been added, but the hall had been in use during the refurbishment, minimising the impact on the hall's ability to attract income. Work should be completed by the end of October.

RESOLVED:

That the Royston and District Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and wellbeing.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the Royston and District Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.

43. ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT AND AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2008/2009

The Community Development Officer (CDO) took the Committee through the Royston and District Budget Statement for 2008/2009, and advised the Committee of the following grant applications for determination: from Reed Cricket Club for £1,250; for Barkway Village Hall for £1,235; from Royston Town Centre Forum for a trial bus service (£550 requested and £275 awarded) and Barkway Parish Council for help with funding a promotional leaflet (£512 requested and £256 awarded). A Declaration of Interest was declared by the Chairman in respect of the trial bus service coinciding with the Royston Farmers' Markets, as she was the Royston Town Council representative on the Royston Town Centre Forum.

Members were asked to note the information in Appendix 1, which related to Area Committee Budget balances for the Financial Year 2008/09, the pre-allocations carried forward from 2007/08, and the balances allocated to Visioning Budgets available to respective wards within the Royston and District area.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the budgetary expenditure, current balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets 2008/09, the Small Area Grants Budget and the allocated Discretionary Budgets be noted;
- 2) That the Committee consider the grant applications from Reed Cricket Club, Barkway Village Hall, Royston Town Centre Forum and Barkway Parish Council.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

To award financial assistance to voluntary and community organisations and groups.

44. GRANT APPLICATION – REED CRICKET CLUB

RESOLVED: That the sum of £1,250 be awarded to Reed Cricket Club, to make safe and upgrade the practice nets on the village green for the benefit of both young people and adults.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The allocation of funds would improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups available for the benefit of the community at large.

45. GRANT APPLICATION – BARKWAY VILLAGE HALL

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree financial support to the tune of £1,235 towards provision of a storage shed for the village hall.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The allocation of funds would improve the services provided by the local organisations

and groups available for the benefit of the community at large.

46. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON TOWN CENTRE FORUM

RESOLVED: That the sum of £275 be allocated to the Royston Town Centre Forum to support a trial bus service to coincide with Royston Farmers' Markets on the first Sundays in October, November and December 2008.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The allocation of funds would improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups available for the benefit of the community at large.

47. GRANT APPLICATION – BARKWAY PARISH COUNCIL

RESOLVED: That the sum of £256 be awarded to Barkway Parish Council to assist with funding of a promotion leaflet for local walks.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The allocation of funds would improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups available for the benefit of the community at large.

The meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.

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Chairman