

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE ROOM 11, ROYSTON TOWN HALL, MELBOURN STREET,
ROYSTON ON WEDNESDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER, 2017 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Tony Hunter (Chairman), Councillor Bill Davidson (Vice-Chairman), Sarah Dingley, Jean Green, Fiona Hill, Ben Lewis (from 7.40pm) and Gerald Morris.*

In Attendance:

Ashley Hawkins (Communities Officer) and Ian Gourlay (Committee and Member Services Manager)

Also Present:

*Grace Doneghan (Anglian Water) and Hannah Wilson (Anglian Water).
At the commencement of the meeting, County Councillor Steve Jarvis
and 5 members of the public.*

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

33 MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Royston and District Committee held on 13 September 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

34 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

35 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially the representatives from Anglian Water;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded; and
- (3) The Chairman drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

36 PRESENTATION FROM ANGLIAN WATER

The Chairman welcomed Grace Doneghan and Hannah Wilson from Anglian Water to the meeting.

The Chairman explained that very unpleasant smells from the sewerage system had been experienced by residents in and around the Ivy Farm development in Royston. This had been going on for years and he was aware that Anglian Water had been working to rectify the problem, but he asked for a progress update and highlighted concerns over the proposed expansion of the overall Ivy Farm site with the addition of several hundred new houses. He

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commented that there were problems with the existing sewerage system and that there were concerns that this could escalate over the next few years.

Ms Doneghan provided an update on progress. Anglian Water had carried out odour logging in the area. McDonalds had a privately owned pumping station. Sewerage was pumped all the way to the manhole at the edge of Ivy Lane and then gravitated down towards Mackerel Hall.

Ms Doneghan stated that Anglian Water thought that McDonalds had been ill-advised in the design of the wet well in the pumping station. Anglian Water had been working with the McDonalds Maintenance Manager in order to improve the condition of the wet well.

Ms Doneghan advised that Anglian Water were also in the process of setting up a meeting with Redrow Homes to ensure that the pumping station on the Ivy Farm estate was working correctly. NHDC Environmental Health would also be invited to this meeting. Anglian Water would update local residents on the outcome once this meeting had taken place.

A resident who lived in Downlands advised that he had been in contact with Anglian Water and NHDC Environmental health regarding the matter, and that he was expecting them to have reported back to him some 4 months ago. He asked if the Ivy Farm and McDonalds pumping stations could be co-ordinated so that they vented out at different times, because when they vented at the same time the amount of sewage was so great that much of it ended up on Royston Heath. The Anglian Water representatives undertook to take this matter back to their HQ and provide a response.

Following a comment from a resident, Councillor Hill advised that she and the Committee Chairman had attended a meeting in London with Oliver Heald MP and various representatives from Anglian Water, and had raised the issue of sewage on Royston Heath. They were informed that this would be impossible as, due to changes in gradients in that location, the sewage would not be able to travel uphill.

Town Councillor John Davison, who also lived in Downlands, stated that that he had been in e-mail correspondence with Anglian Water for over 2 years. He had been advised by Anglian Water that Redrow Homes had not co-operated with Anglian Water and that the only time they had visited the site it had been unlocked. He was therefore surprised at any inference that the Redrow Homes pumping station was working correctly.

Ms Doneghan understood that there was going to be a site meeting to ensure that it was working correctly.

Town Councillor Davison resident did not believe it was working correctly. He had witnessed the discharge down the Mackerel Hall sewer at a colossal rate. This was the responsibility of Redrow Homes and the effluent was grey, odorous and travelling at high velocity. From his experience as an engineer (now retired), he considered that there were three problems. The first was infrequent pumping, and so the tank was septic. Secondly, the treatment regime was incorrect. Thirdly, it was pumping at too high a flow rate.

Town Councillor Davison had been advised by Anglian Water that McDonalds were co-operating in trying to resolve the matter. However, he suspected that the volume of sewage from McDonalds was relatively small compared to that from the Redrow Homes development.

Town Councillor Davison stated that the Water Industries Act had obliged Anglian Water to adopt private pumping stations that had been in place before July 2011. He asked if Anglian Water had any obligations to adopt pumping stations that had been installed since July 2011.

Ms Doneghan replied that the developer could put forward an application for Anglian Water to adopt their pumping station in accordance with the post-2011 rules. Anglian Water would

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inspect the design and installation and would look to adopt it when it was more than 50% complete.

Another resident stated that the Anglian Water representative he had been dealing with had advised him that Anglian Water were intending to adopt the pumping station within the next 18 months.

Ms Doneghan commented that she would need to check if an application had been made to adopt. She assured residents that, if so, there would be vigorous testing of the system by Anglian Water beforehand, in advance of formal adoption.

Town Councillor Davison advised that the Anglian Water representative had been endeavouring to arrange a meeting with Redrow Homes for two years, and so he wished her good luck in her latest attempt to arrange such a meeting. He explained that the odour issue in Downlands was as a result of the vented manhole covers. It was a very old sewerage system, and the vents had been filled with black plastic bags and bitumen. He asked if Anglian Water had plans to replace all of those manholes with sealed manholes.

Ms Doneghan replied that she would need to take that issue back to the Anglian Water Maintenance Team for a response.

A resident who lived at the top of Ivy Lane was of the view that it appeared to be a constant "make do and mend" culture. The odour never disappeared, it merely varied in its intensity. In the summertime it was at its worst. He felt that the system was not fit for purpose, and considered that whatever seemed to be done to alleviate the problems had little or no effect. He and his neighbours wished to see the system fixed properly, particularly in the light of all the additional houses proposed to be built in the vicinity in the future, and before any planning permission was granted for these extra dwellings.

Town Councillor Rod Kennedy commented that he had objected to the original planning permission for the Ivy Farm development as there was no proper sewer along Baldock Road. He had first complained in 2013 and the smell from the sewer had been very odorous for over 2 years. He lived in Heathfield, next to Ivy Lane, which had no sewers as the properties all had septic drainage systems. The existing sewer primarily served the Heath Sports Club. When the pump sewer was built, a pipe was installed which he described as about 4 inches in diameter, running down Ivy Lane and Baldock Road, connecting where the Sports Club system joined the sewer. That sewer was never designed to carry the amount of sewage it was expected to handle now.

Town Councillor Kennedy considered that the primary fault was that the pipe and sewer was not large enough for its purpose. A completely new sewer was needed, but of course that would cost money, which developers were not always keen on funding. He re-iterated the comment that it was imperative that no further planning permission be granted until there was a proper pipe, with a large enough diameter, to carry away all the sewage emanating from the Ivy Farm site. He felt therefore that the problem could not be resolved by fixing a pumping station, but by the installation of a new sewer and he was not sure whose responsibility it would be to carry out such a scheme.

Ms Doneghan circulated an analysis carried out by Anglian Water of development sites that had or were about to come forward in Royston. It showed the site of the dwellings just approved for Ivy Farm, plus the extra 279 dwellings for which a planning application had recently been submitted. In respect of the latter, Anglian Water had suggested that they would wish to see a foul water condition imposed on any grant of planning permission because they considered that any additional flows from that site would lead to flooding.

In respect of the proposed development of 279 new houses, Ms Doneghan advised that Anglian Water Liaison Managers were aware of this development and were going to make contact with the applicant to ensure that when any planning decision Notice was published

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there would be early engagement with the developer in order to produce a feasible drainage strategy and solution for the site, which may involve a new sewer system or upgrades to the existing system to enable the additional flows from the site to be managed.

Hannah Wilson added that, in accordance with Planning law, Anglian Water was unable to ask for “betterment” when commenting on planning applications. Developers could not be asked, through Planning, to improve existing issues with systems. Anglian Water could suggest conditions and design and model solutions for each development.

Town Councillor Davison commented that he had been given information that Anglian Water had a plan in mind which would not connect to the Baldock Road or the Mackerel Hall sewer. He asked if that was still the case.

Ms Doneghan was unable to commit to any kind of strategy or solution at the current time.

Town Councillor Davison understood that the Anglian Water engineer present at the meeting in London referred to earlier had unequivocally stated that the sewerage relating to the proposed new development of 279 homes would not connect into the Baldock Road or Mackerel Hall sewer. This was confirmed by the Committee Chairman, who had also been present at that meeting.

Ms Doneghan commented that if Anglian Water were aware of issues with the existing system then they would not wish to connect to it and cause further problems for any residents. She was unable to confirm that Anglian Water would definitely install a new sewer for the 279 homes, but they would ensure that there was a feasible drainage strategy and solution, whether that be upgrading the existing network or on-site storage.

Town Councillor Davison asked why Anglian Water appeared reluctant to involve NHDC Environmental Health in trying to resolve what was clearly a major environmental issue, in order to ensure that Redrow Homes co-operated with Anglian Water, as Environmental Health Officers had separate powers under various other environmental legislation.

Ms Wilson replied that Anglian Water could only ask and advise other bodies, such as Environmental Health, and it was for those bodies to determine whether or not they wished to take action under their own powers.

The Chairman thanked Ms Doneghan and Ms Wilson for their attendance at the meeting. He summarised the themes raised throughout the debate, following which the Committee,

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Anglian Water be requested to provide answers to the questions raised at the meeting and a definitive statement to the Committee in respect of their position regarding the sewerage situation at the Ivy Farm development and the surrounding area;
- (2) That, when received, the above answers and statement be conveyed to all interested parties, including the residents in attendance at the meeting; and
- (3) That the Committee send a letter/e-mail to the local MP with a view to a change in legislation to give water companies the powers to adopt sewerage systems from developers.

REASON FOR DECISION: To take steps towards an expectation that the sewerage problems in the area will be resolved.

37 HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Committee was informed of ongoing and forthcoming highways matters in the Royston area.

Councillor Hill advised that the following Highway Schemes were being put forward to be carried out in 2018/19 for funding from her Hertfordshire County Council Highways Locality Budget: the second part of Valley Rise; Poplar Close; Newsells Road (Barkway); Newmarket Road/Dacre Green; footpaths in Burns Road; drainage in Newmarket Road; bollards near Fish Hill Funeral Directors; viability studies re: traffic calming near Coombes Community Centre in Burns Road; possible Traffic Regulation Orders in John Street and Limekiln Road; possible additional speed indicator devices.

Councillor Hill stated that three schemes which were not completed, but which would be funded from the 2017/18 year were signage near Coombes Community Centre; and signs in Newsells and Nuthampstead.

As Councillor Steve Jarvis was in attendance at the meeting in his role as County Councillor, the Chairman invited him to advise the Committee of any updates on highways matters in his County Division. Councillor Jarvis advised that his 2018/19 Highways Locality Budget would definitely include the resurfacing of Downlands and the possibility of speed indicator devices on Baldock Road or Baldock Street.

The Chairman was not sure if the scheme was on the current Integrated Works Programme (IWP), but he noted that the highway surface Coronation Avenue and Sun Hill was in a poor condition. In respect of Coronation Avenue, Councillor Jarvis commented that this had been deferred as water utility works need to take place first, and that the works to Sun Hill would be a potential inclusion in his 2018/19 Highways Locality Budget, if not included in the IWP.

Councillor Green was disappointed that it had proven unfeasible to place some barriers between the bollards opposite the entrance to John Street. Councillor Hill advised that this had been investigated.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update on highways issues be noted.

38 GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - PROGRESS: INFORMATION NOTE

The Committee considered an Information Note prepared by the Parks and Countryside Manager in respect of progress regarding the Green Space Management Strategy.

The Committee was informed that work was ongoing to secure possible sources of alternative funding for the retention of the Farrier Court and Betjeman Road play areas.

RESOLVED: That the Parks and Countryside Manager be advised that the progress statement for the Farrier Court play area should be identical to that for the Betjeman Road play area.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comment on the Green Space Management Strategy Information Note.

39 COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Communities Officer presented the report of the Communities Manager entitled Community Update and drew the attention of Members to the current level of unallocated funds in the Development Budget.

The Communities Officer advised that there had been no grant applications since the last meeting of the Committee. However, there was the annual request for the allocation of funds

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of £1,500 from the Committee's budget in support of the "Free after 3pm" parking initiative scheme for Royston in 2018/19.

The Communities Officer reported that the Royston Means Business Christmas Event on Royston High Street, scheduled to take place on Saturday, 2 December 2017, had been cancelled.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actions taken by the Communities Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Royston and District be endorsed; and
- (2) That the release of £1,500 be agreed for 2018/19, in support of the "Free after 3pm" parking initiative scheme for Royston, to be combined with funding from Hertfordshire County Councillors' Locality Budgets and Royston First.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Royston and District area.

40 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

A number of Members updated the Committee on Ward and Outside Organisations, as follows:

Royston Schools Academy Trust consultation on changes and mergers

Councillor Hill advised that the deadline for responses to the above consultation was Friday, 1 December 2017. The Trust was looking to move onto two sites (Greneway/Meridian School site).

With the Committee's support, the Chairman, in consultation with Councillor Hill, undertook to submit a generally positive response to the consultation, along the lines of the Royston Town Council response, but with concerns over some highway issues in the vicinity of the site. The important thing was that the Trust maintained an excellent level of education for the children of Royston.

School Visits

Councillor Morris raised the issue of visits by councillors to schools in the Ermine Ward, and was encouraged by the Committee to contact the schools to arrange such visits.

Coombes Community Centre

Councillor Davidson advised that the Coombes Community Centre's AGM was to take place on Monday, 4 December 2017. It was the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Centre, and hence a plaque would be unveiled and refreshments provided. He commented that all Members of the Committee would be welcome should they wish to attend the event.

The meeting closed at 8.31 pm

Chairman