

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE HARDWICKE HALL, ROYSTON TOWN HALL, MELBOURN
ROAD, ROYSTON**

ON WEDNESDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Tony Hunter (Chair), Councillor Sarah Dingley (Vice-Chair), Adam Compton, Jean Green and Gerald Morris*

In Attendance: *Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting County Councillor Fiona Hill. There were no public or registered speakers in attendance.*

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 47 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Stanier and Ruth Brown.

16 MINUTES - 9 JUNE 2021

Audio Recording – 59 seconds

Councillor Tony Hunter, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Gerald Morris seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 June 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

17 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 1 minute 22 seconds

There was no other business notified.

18 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 minute 27 seconds

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chair 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.

- (4) The Chair advised that the Boundary Review consultation was ongoing from 4 October 2021 to 8 November 2021. The Chair encouraged all, Members and public, to get involved and contribute to the review.

19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 5 minute 7 seconds

There was no public participation.

20 GRANT APPLICATION - HOME-START ROYSTON, BUNTINGFORD AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Audio recording – 24 minutes 9 seconds

The Community Engagement Officer presented a written submission from Home-Start Royston, Buntingford and South Cambridgeshire regarding their grant application. He advised:

- Previous grant of £1050 had been made in 2019 for a similar project and the group had also received funding of £1885 from the Covid Support Fund in 2020.
- The group were expecting to see an increase in need and families being referred to them for support.
- The request was for £1221 to cover the cost of counselling support for 9 months for a vulnerable family in Royston. The group would also be contributing £300 of their own funds.
- Confirmed that the remaining balance would be £3351 following the approval of this grant request.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Gerald Morris

In response to questions Councillor Tony Hunter advised:

- Home-Start was a national charity.
- They worked on both a request and referral system which allowed referrals from various places, e.g. schools, GPs, County Council and for individuals themselves to request access to services.
- Revenues at Home-Start were reasonably good, but they were expecting more demand this year and fear funds could be stretched due to this.
- They usually do a lot of fundraising themselves, but have seen opportunities diminish due to Covid restrictions.

Councillor Tony Hunter, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Sarah Dingley seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,221 be awarded to Home Start Royston, Buntingford and South Cambridgeshire to assist with costs for providing counselling support to one vulnerable family from Royston for a period of 9 months as outlined in 8.1.1 of the Grants and Community Update.

REASON FOR DECISION: The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims of the Council Plan.

21 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – 30 minutes 35 seconds

The Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled 'Grants and Community Update' and advised:

- Royston Choral Society had a grant application in the pipeline but was not ready to be presented at this meeting.
- A new bus shelter had been installed on Icknield walk and a further shelter planned for Melbourn Street, expected between mid-November 2021 and mid-January 2022.
- New bike racks had been installed at Therfield Heath.
- Refurbishment works at Trinity Life Church were expected to begin in mid-October 2021 and completed by January 2022. The Community Engagement Officer would release grant funds on completion of stages of the works.
- Officers at NHDC were working with the Walkandtalk Initiative to create a 5km and 10km signed route.
- Therfield, Royston and Kelshall Sports Association (TRAKSA) was required to reapply for grant funding, following issues with match funding and Land Lease. Funds would be released following successful match funding being found.
- An application from St John The Baptist Church had been delayed until later in the year due to gaps in the application paperwork.
- New signage to discourage littering had been purchased and were in place at identified sites in Royston.
- Several projects had been completed and more in progress using the section 106 money available for the area.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Sarah Dingley
- Councillor Adam Compton

In response to questions, the Community Engagement Officer advised:

- Lease issues at the Therfield Cricket Ground had been resolved and a new 30 year lease had been granted.
- The Walkandtalk Initiative in Royston was not part of a wider organisation, but the possibility of linking with other groups could be looked into by Community Engagement Team.
- TRAKSA had secured match funding for the grant application, but the Community Engagement Officer would look at remaining Section 106 funds and see if that could be used for this project.

Councillor Tony Hunter, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Adam Compton seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Royston.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Officer.

- (2) This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. This ensures that all actions are performed in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020.

22 S106 OBLIGATIONS ANNUAL UPDATE

Audio recording – 5 minutes 15 seconds

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled 'Section 106 Obligations for Royston and District Area' and advised:

- The first Infrastructure Funding Statement was published in December 2020, with another to be published in December 2021.
- At the Cabinet meeting in March 2021 it was agreed not to pursue Community Infrastructure Levy's (CILs) as these were seen as too complex, not suitable for the rural nature of North Herts and uncertainty around the process.
- A Master Plan would be developed to help to shape developers ideas rather than reacting to plans.
- In Royston a large number of plans are already in action.
- Remaining Section 106 funds are generally for Community Open Spaces and Health. The surrounding villages also have small sums remaining.
- Future reports from the Development and Conservation Manager would be presented as an overview of the Master Plan, rather than focus on decreasing funds.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Sarah Dingley
- Councillor Adam Compton
- County Councillor Fiona Hill

In response to questions the Development and Conservation Manager advised:

- The 'Live to be Allocated' funds were available for use, but must be spent on the area and topic the funds were received for – not always a demand for these.
- Money for Health can only go to the NHS and often there are difficulties in ensuring this money is used, as the time and space is not available across the NHS to support this.
- Section 106 funds cannot be spent on salaries or ongoing costs.
- Have previously looked at using the money on a digitalisation programme for patient records.
- Interest raised from these funds is used as revenue by the Council and is spent across the district.
- The monitoring of funds close to expiry is managed by Officers at NHDC and ensure that money available is spent and does not have to be returned.
- Confirmed that the agreement for Health funding at the Newmarket Road, Royston site has been sufficiently negotiated that should the Royston Health Centre move, close or merge services, the funds available could be spent at another location or on other healthcare needs.
- The Council can request a variation of funds.

Councillor Tony Hunter, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Sarah Dingley seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Members note the content of this report.
- (2) That Members agree that a report shall continue to be presented on an annual basis to the Area Committee, which sets out full records of all Section 106 activity for the preceding financial year and which reflects changes in legislation and practice.
- (3) That, other than where a contribution has been negotiated for a specific purpose or project, Ward Members of the area where the Section 106 Obligation or Unilateral Undertaking funding is generated and the Area Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocated away from that area. Members must note that the discretionary funds are rapidly diminishing and will not be replaced under current legislation and practice, for reasons that are set out in this report.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106 Obligations and Unilateral Undertakings, that records activity for each financial year and is placed in the public domain.
- (2) To ensure that the process is kept under constant review and Member scrutiny and that the risk associated with this activity is managed in an appropriate manner.

23 HIGHWAYS ISSUES

Audio recording – 38 minutes 31 seconds

The Chair led a discussion regarding Highways Issues.

Herts County Councillor Fiona Hill gave the Committee a verbal update on some of the major highways works and projects which were underway, including:

- HertsLynx bus service, launched by HCC on 19 September 2021, between Town Hubs and Villages, had proved successful so far and the buses were being recognised by residents.
- Liaison with the police, PCC, District and County Council Officers and other stakeholders, including DriveSafe and Royston Town Council, regarding speeding and parking issues was ongoing and the new safety camera van had been out in the area.
- Improvements to the Littleington junction on the A505 had been completed. The impact of the improvements will not be known for a while.
- Most safety schemes (yellow lines), funded through the Herts Locality Budget, in Royston had been completed. Work in Layston Garden was still ongoing.
- Consultation regarding the Royston Parking Review was ongoing.
- A meeting had been held regarding ongoing utility issues on the Ridings Estate and the gas company took on board the issues raised.
- A10/London Road drainage scheme had been completed and investigation works were planned for Queens Road and other locations.
- There were several local improvements planned including; resurfacing at sites across the area, signal improvements, a new street light and pram crossings at Mill Road/Lumen Road area.
- Discussions had been held around moving the speed indicator signs on the A10 to Reed.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Jean Green

In response to questions, Councillor Fiona Hill advised:

- Congestion in Royston had been caused by issues with traffic signals caused by utility companies and there were two locations which had been affected.
- Utility companies have a long period in which they can repair any damage caused and Central Government would have to change the current legislation to deal with the problem.
- Work had been carried out at Reed End to attempt to stop flooding, but further work is required with consent of the landowner. The current situation will be investigated further.

24 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 47 minutes

Councillor Tony Hunter advised that he had recently attended the Home-Start AGM and Citizens Advice Bureau meeting and informed the Committee that both organisations were expecting to see a drastic uptake in requests and referrals to their services over the coming winter months.

Audio Recording of Meeting

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm

Chair