

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

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

ON WEDNESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2022 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Tony Hunter (Chair), Councillor Gerald Morris (Vice-Chair), Ruth Brown, Jean Green and Chris Hinchliff*

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

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

58 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 7 seconds

Before the meeting proceeded, Councillor Tony Hunter requested that, following the death of Councillor Judi Billing MBE on the 24 November 2022, Members and public join in a minute silence in remembrance.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Stanier and Adam Compton.

59 MINUTES - 12 OCTOBER 2022

Audio Recording – 1 minute 24 seconds

Councillor Ruth Brown noted there was an error in the Minutes for the Ward Matters and Outside Organisations Item and that it should read 'Aldi' not 'Audi' garage.

Councillor Tony Hunter proposed with the above amendment, as Chair, and Councillor Jean Green seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12 October 2022 be approved, as amended, as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

60 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 03 seconds

There was no other business notified.

61 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 10 seconds

(1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation.

- (2) 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.
- (3) The Chair advised those present that a consultation regarding the future of the Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin was due to commence from Monday 5 December 2022, following the Council's purchase of the lease.
- (4) The Chair advised that there was also a consultation ongoing in Cambridgeshire regarding the proposed Congestion Charge.

62 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 3 minutes 29 seconds

The Chair invited Ms Amanda Hourmand to give a verbal presentation for Home-Start Royston, Buntingford and South Cambridgeshire in support of their grant application. Ms Hourmand thanked the Chair for the opportunity and highlighted:

- This was the 39th year of Home Start offering support in this area, through both home visits and specialist family support groups.
- There was a necessity to work in partnership with others, such as GPs and schools, who make referrals to the service, but there had been an increase in families contacting the service directly, usually with concerns around poor mental health, drug abuse and domestic abuse.
- They have also begun to support families facing financial difficulties with the cost of living.
- Demand for the service had continued to grow in Royston and the surrounding villages and without the early support provided there would be further issues for the family, such as family breakdown or child abuse.
- The service had been provided match funding from County Councillors Locality Budgets.
- Families using the service meeting with a volunteer once a week and are provided with non-judgemental and free support, which is tailored to the needs of the family.
- Covid was still having an impact on the scheme and was causing issues with staff and volunteers.
- The service needed to raise £200k to meet family demand and cover costs and this application was part of ongoing fundraising, including from other organisations and additional fundraising events.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Gerald Morris

In response to questions Ms Hourmand advised:

- The service is not provided with any core funding.
- The cost of providing a child with support from Home Start was £37.85 per week, compared with £3331 per week for a child in care, according to a House of Commons report in April 2019.
- In the last 39 years Home Start had developed good relationships with partner agencies and this is the main way people access the service. Recently there had been an increased social media presence and this is believed to have contributed to the increase in the number of self-referrals to the service.
- Home Start UK is a national organisation, but the local Home Start schemes are financially independent. The local Home Start schemes follow the benchmarks of Home Start UK.

- Home Start offered a different service to those provided by statutory agencies, such as in home visits, but as budgets are cut at statutory services, Home Start has started to take some of these families on.
- The aim of the service is to work alongside the family to help them do what they need to do to achieve their goals.

Herts County Councillor Fiona Hill noted that an application could be made to the Buntingford County Councillor's Locality Budget, as the scheme covered that area too.

The Chair thanked Ms Hourmand for the presentation and invited Ms Carole Kaszak to give a verbal presentation for Royston Choral Society in support of their grant application. Ms Kaszak thanked the Chair for the opportunity and highlighted:

- The group had managed to approve a safeguarding policy in time to present at this meeting.
- The lockdown meant that the society could not meet in person and although they reformed in September 2021, they could still not rehearse or perform in the Royston church.
- Following the reforming of the group around 40 people returned and a trial concert was held at the church in Standon.
- This application was to support with the costs of the major concert the groups will put on and this will be a performance of 'The Creation' by Hyden.
- The group had now managed to return to the church in Royston for practices.
- The society commits to hold four concerts a year and there is usually one which requires a soloist or orchestra to support the members of the group.
- They are a registered charity and have received funding from Herts County Councillor's Locality Budgets to support the concert, which was expected to cost around £5-6k.
- The groups accounts are almost as they were before the pandemic, due to limited ability to perform during the lockdowns.
- They cover a whole range of musical genres, it is not limited to classical music.

In response to questions from Councillor Gerald Morris Ms Upton advised that there were around 60 people attending the society from the community. Not all attendees are from Royston and the surrounding villages, but many were and the Choral Society acted as the 'town choir'. They had previously been granted funding from the Committee in 2016 and 2018, but found it too difficult to establish and run an online meeting during the pandemic.

The Chair thanked Ms Kaszak for the presentation and invited Ms Laraine Upton to give a verbal presentation for Royston Community First Responders in support of their grant application. Ms Upton thanked the Chair for the opportunity and highlighted:

- The First Responders were made up of 6 volunteers and was part of the East of England Ambulance Service.
- The role of the First Responders is to be sent to the most urgent 999 calls within the community they are in to assist with the incident, usually before an ambulance is sent to the scene.
- The Royston First Responders were in two teams of 3 people, with a fully stocked bag for each team, with medical supplies such as AED, sucrose machines, bandages, etc.
- Each bag has a communication device included, but only one of the bags has a smart phone which has an app installed which manages jobs, tracks responders and acts as a silent alarm to alert police and other crew. The other phone is a Nokia pay-as-you-go which is not suitable for the technology.
- The First Responders are also able to support people who have fallen in the community, with a raiser chair to lift people back onto their feet, but there is only one of these and it was hoped the team could fundraise in the future for a second chair.
- This application was for a new phone to be included with the second bag.

- The responders are all volunteers and there is no financial support provided by the East of England Ambulance Trust. This included new uniforms, which had to be paid for by responders, and the funding for uniform forms part of this application.
- There had been funding provided from Herts County Councillors Steve Jarvis and Fiona Hill.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Chris Hinchliff

In response to questions Ms Upton advised:

- The number of people treated by the First Responders had risen so far this year, with a further rise in the last month with the team now responding to category 1, 2 and 3 999 calls.
- The team are all laymen with no medical experience, other than a little training, and have other jobs outside of being a First Responder.
- The group is on call all year, at any time of day.
- They have tried to recruit further volunteers and adverts have gone out for this, but the volunteers have to be within the community they serve.
- Call handlers in Bedford would alert the Community First Responders when there is a 999 call they are required to attend.
- The raiser chair would cost around £4k and is put together around the fallen person, which then assists with lifting them up to their feet.
- The Trust provides everything in the first bag, but volunteers have to pay for all items in the second bag.
- Training is paid for by volunteers themselves.

The Chair thanked Ms Upton for the presentation.

Herts County Councillor Fiona Hill noted that the contributions from Locality Budgets had been provided from both herself and Councillor Steve Jarvis.

63 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – 31 minutes 54 seconds

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

- Should funding for the three applications be approved, this would leave £3319 for the final meeting of the civic year.
- It was expected that at the final meeting there would be one potential applicant for a £500 grant, as well as the £1500 grant to support the Free after 3pm parking scheme in Royston.

Councillor Tony Hunter proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee allocated £1,221 to Home-start Royston, Buntingford and South Cambridgeshire to assist with costs for providing support service to one family in Royston as detailed in 8.1.1.

Councillor Tony Hunter proposed that the amount granted to the Royston Community First Responders be increased by £240, this was seconded by Councillor Chris Hinchliff and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee allocated £980 to Royston Community First Responders to assist with costs for new uniforms and a mobile phone with contract as detailed in 8.1.9.

Councillor Tony Hunter proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee allocated £750 to Royston Choral Society to assist with costs for putting on a performance of Haydn's Creation, including publicity costs and venue hire costs as detailed in 8.2.4.

Following the approval of the grant applications, the Community Engagement Officer continued and advised that the Royston Town Council were in support of the feasibility study to install a ramp on Market Hill Car Park, but requested it be closer to the road. It was deemed that this was not suitable following the site visit therefore the original plan would be followed.

There was a discussion amongst Members on the ramp installation, which included the following points:

- The Town Council had asked for the feasibility study to be widened, but the financial support was not dependent on that.
- The people in attendance at the feasibility study, including county, district and town Councillors, viewed the whole area and there would have been several issues with the proposals from the Town Council.
- The feasibility study would have to have been extended to cover the whole area, as opposed to just the one site, and this would cost more to conduct.
- Any wider works required would cause further delays, cost more and would not necessarily be safe for users.
- It would be too much work, and cause too much disruption, to remodel Market Hill and the A10.

Following this, the Chair requested that the Community Engagement Officer speak with the Town Council to update them on this progress and explain that the only feasible site is by the steps.

The Community Engagement Officer updated Members on Section 106 funds, which had been agreed to support the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Town Hall and the refurbishments of the Coombes Community Centre.

Councillor Tony Hunter proposed and Councillor Jean Green seconded and, following a vote, it was:

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

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (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 July 2021.

- (3) 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.

64 HIGHWAYS ISSUES

Audio recording – 46 minutes 43 seconds

The Chair invited Herts County Councillors Steve Jarvis and Fiona Hill to provide the Committee with an update on Highways Issues.

Councillor Steve Jarvis advised that:

- A small set of works were ongoing on the Baldock Road footpath.
- In January works were due to start past the Hedera Gardens development, including the installation of traffic islands, right turn lanes and streetlights. It was expected this would take 6 months to complete. The works would start at the end of the road closest to the town centre, then the middle section and this would see the introduction of the 40mph limit.
- Discussions had taken place with Therfield Parish Council and the Police regarding speeding through the village.
- Most projects had now been completed for the year.

In response to a question from Councillor Ruth Brown, Councillor Jarvis advised that there would be traffic lights along Baldock Road during the 6 months work, but it would not be in place for the whole period.

Councillor Fiona Hill advised that:

- Mill Road footpath had works scheduled for January 2023.
- The footpath works in Serby Avenue and Parthia Close were to be programmed.
- Works on Macefield Way and Newmarket Road were to be programmed.
- The trial from Covid recovery was still in place on the High Street.
- There were new salt bins to be installed in Coombelands and Studlands Rise.
- Centrebus had been accepted as the new bus operator to replace the 915 bus.
- There had been a speed indicator installed on Melbourn Road and the indicator in Reed had been turned around and should now be working.
- There were drainage works on going in the surrounding villages.

The Chair thanked both Councillors for providing the update.

65 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 51 minutes 03 seconds

The Chair advised that the Service Director – Resources had notified him that there was an ongoing review of the CCTV cameras and requested suggestions from Members on where they could be located in problem areas within the town. There were two proposed in Priory Gardens and he had requested further cameras behind Coombes Community Centre and the car park behind the Town Hall.

Councillor Fiona Hill suggested that, if the current camera in the underpass was not working correctly, this should be repaired or replaced if repair was not possible.

Wednesday, 30th November, 2022

The Chair requested that if Members had further suggestion that they let him know.

Royston First

Councillor Ruth Brown provided an update for Members including:

- Ad boards were going ahead and would be installed by The Bull and on Angel Pavement. There would be leaflet holders fixed to these for relevant paper literature.
- The Christmas light switch on was a success with around 600-700 people in attendance. The road closures were supported by an officer from the Town Council and the BID.
- There was an ongoing review of the signage on the industrial estate, with a view to install proper indication to sites.
- The process of the renewal of the Royston BID was beginning, with the renewal vote due to take place in January 2024.
- The Halloween Trail was run digitally this year and the number of entries had increased by 10%.

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm

Chair