

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH OCTOBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Tony Hunter (Chair), Bill Davidson (Vice-Chair), Ruth Brown, Jean Green, Gerald Morris and Carol Stanier*

In Attendance: *Louise Symes (Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager), Daniel Washington (Transport Policy Officer), Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Audio Recording – 4 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual Royston and District Committee meeting that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call and gave guidance as follows:

The meeting was being streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel. If live streaming failed the meeting would adjourn. If the live stream could not be restored within a reasonable period then the remaining business would be considered at a later date.

If for any reason the meeting was not quorate an Officer would notify attendees by interjecting the meeting. The meeting would adjourn immediately. Once the meeting was quorate the meeting would resume. If connection could not be restored within a reasonable period, then the remaining business would be considered at a later date.

Only Members present for the entire debate and consideration of an item were entitled to vote.

If technology failed for a Member during the debate and they rejoined the meeting, they would not be able to vote on that item.

Electronic devices should be muted and all present should have the mute button on their tablet or computer activated when not speaking.

The raise hand button should be used to alert the Chair that you wish to speak. Please wait for the Chair to invite you to speak before doing so.

Voting would be undertaken using the Green Tick for "Yes", Red Cross for "No" and Blue Raise Hand for "Abstain. To enable the votes to be counted, votes should not be cleared until requested to do so.

Details of how Members voted would not be kept or minuted unless a Recorded Vote was requested or an individual requests that their vote be recorded, and it will not be heard or seen on the audio and YouTube recordings of the meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Tony Hunter started the meeting proper.

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 41 seconds

There were no apologies for absence.

14 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 47 seconds

No other business was notified.

15 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 52 seconds

- (1) The Chair thanked those who had attended the Town Talk which had been held prior to the Committee meeting and welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give updates to the Committee;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, this meeting was being audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to view on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.
- (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.

16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – 5 minutes 38 seconds

There were no presentations by members of the public.

17 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 5 minutes 43 seconds

The Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update together with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 – 2020/21 Financial Year Budget Sheet.

He advised Members that:

- The Committee had £4,700 remaining in its budget to allocate for the year;
- £1,250 had been awarded to NESSIE via delegated decision as funding was needed prior to the meeting;
- A refund of £375 had been proposed in respect of the “Free After Three” parking initiative due to the impact of Covid-19 and significant reduction of parking in Royston from March – June 2020;
- Due to Covid-19, Councillors Surgeries had not been able to take place every six weeks as planned, and would now take place virtually online;

- He continued to support the local coronavirus community support groups and the Royston Community Transport as a volunteer driver;
- There had been plans to hold a “Street Food Heroes” event at the Coombes Community Centre but due to issues with the street trading licence this had not been possible - it was hoped this event would return next year;
- The Royal British Legion project for a new centre had commenced and would now be carried out in one phase at a total project cost of £53,000 (£49,000 of which was being funded by the Council);
- A new bus shelter was being considered on Melbourn Street. The contractor had provided some costings to survey the land for two possible sites. The funding would be covered by Section 106 monies;
- Following a site visit by interested parties, a company was being sought to install new cycle racks;
- Youth Connexions were holding remote workshops with young people in Royston;
- Royston Town Council were looking to set up a Youth Council;
- Works had commenced on the outside classroom at Therfield First School;
- Royston Day Centre had made an application to the Covid-19 Support Fund for £2,000 for essential PPE. This had been considered at the Grant Panel meeting on 23 September and had been agreed.

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Carol Stanier

County Councillor Fiona Hill informed the Committee about the North Herts Youth Council which was run by Youth Connexions and advised that they were looking for representatives from Royston. She advised meetings were held on a Monday and that she could provide more information if required.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the award of £1250 via Delegated Authority to North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service (NESSIE) to assist with costs associated with providing the on-line and telephone counselling service be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Engagement Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Royston be endorsed;
- (3) That the refund in relation to the ‘Free After Three’ parking initiative in Royston, due to this initiative not being used during the Covid-19 pandemic, be returned to the Committee’s budget;
- (4) That the Community Engagement Officer be requested to circulate the proposed refund figures for the ‘Free after Three’ initiative by email to Committee Members, County Councillors and Royston First;
- (5) That the Councillor Surgeries in Royston for the remainder of 2020 be held as virtual events on Zoom with the intention of reverting back to face-to-face surgeries in 2021.
- (6) That it be noted that Member-led surgeries would continue to be held as virtual events on Zoom on the first Saturday of every month;

- (7) That the Community Engagement Officer be requested to liaise with the relevant parties to invite those involved in the Royston Youth Council to attend the virtual Youth Democracy event taking place in November 2020;
- (8) That Members be requested to advise County Councillor Fiona Hill of any individuals who may wish to represent Royston on the North Herts Youth Council.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Officer.

18 HIGHWAYS ISSUES

Audio recording 23 minutes 58 seconds

The Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager gave the Committee a verbal update on the Parking Review.

She advised that:

- WSP had been appointed from a framework with Hertfordshire County Council as consultants to undertake the Royston Parking Review;
- The project had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but the consultants were now on site looking at Scheme 1 (York Way Industrial Area/Rock Road Residential Area) and Scheme 2 (Gower Road/Queens Road/Mill Road);
- Options for various schemes would go out for pre-consultation to all residents and businesses in the designated locations;
- It was anticipated that feedback would be able to be provided to the Committee in December;
- Plans for the Briary Lane/Princes Mews area would then follow at the end of the year;
- The last area to be looked at would be Eastfield Road/Newmarket Road;
- The work was being project managed by Marie Pritchett;
- WSP already worked with Hertfordshire County Council which was the Highway Authority in relation to traffic regulation orders, so it was hoped that this would streamline the process;
- There would be some difficulty in knowing what impact Covid-19 would have on commuter behaviour in the future, and this would have to be taken into account in the review;
- Pre-consultation would be followed by formal consultation before schemes were implemented.

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Tony Hunter.
- Councillor Ruth Brown;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Carol Stanier;
- Councillor Gerald Morris.

Members expressed concern that, due to the uncertainty of the future brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic as commuter numbers were currently greatly reduced and this would not result in a meaningful report and asked how much funding had been ringfenced for the project.

The Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager assured Members that any work previously undertaken regarding parking over a number a years would be included.

The Transport Officer gave the Committee a verbal update on transport matters including:

- Bike racks – new cycle stands had been installed in locations around the town centre funded by Hertfordshire County Council with funding received from the Department for Transport as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund to encourage people to avoid public transport during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The last set of cycle stands would be going in adjacent to the North Hertfordshire District Council car park on Fish Hill;
- The amount of S106 funding currently held for sustainable transport schemes in Royston was £119,082.30 (cycle stands and bus shelter to be funded from this total);
- The Transport Officer was liaising with the public transport team at Hertfordshire County Council to clarify S106 amounts from new housing developments for public transport improvements, likely to be the No. 16 Royston Town bus service;
- An application had been submitted by the Town Council for Royston to become a sustainable travel town – Hertfordshire County Council were delaying the decision regarding this until December 2020;
- The project looking at amalgamating the 915 and 127 bus services has been re-started, which was looking to improve the bus service between Royston and Letchworth – there would be no reduction in the new service which was hoped to commence in April 2021.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Hunter.

County Councillor Fiona Hill gave the Committee a verbal update on highways issues including:

- Hertfordshire County and District Councillors had been invited to join the Strategic Steering Group looking at the A505 corridor from Royston to Granta Park in Cambridgeshire. This work linked in with the study Hertfordshire County Council has been carrying out from Royston to Luton covering the whole A505 corridor;
- A safer crossing over the A505 is being developed – further funding is needed;
- Localised flooding has been a problem, including in Barley – work is being done to clear ditches and drains and in Burns Road (bus turning point);
- Highways Locality Budget Schemes – a full list will be sent for the minutes. The HLB scheme for Brampton Road Footpath is scheduled for the 14 – 16 October;
- Yellow lines have been installed on the Ridings (Valley Rise and Studlands Rise), Green Street and roads off Barkway Road;
- DriveSafe has taken place in Newmarket Road and Melbourn Road, with other locations planned;
- Some of the speed indicator devices will be turned around and new ones installed on the A10 at Reed and in Nuthampstead;
- Speed and volume surveys are scheduled for Melbourn Road, Newmarket Road and in the villages.

Councillor Ruth Brown thanked County Councillor Hill for the work done on the yellow lines which had much improved the area around Green Street for cycling.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager be requested to re-circulate details of the Parking Review schemes to Committee Members and County Councillors to remind them of the programme and cost of the project.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Committee is informed of the work being carried out under the Parking Review.

19 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio Recording 55 minutes 19 seconds

The following matters were discussed:

Citizen's Advice North Herts

Councillor Ruth Brown advised:

- They had an AGM the following week;
- They were starting to return to office-working following the Covid-19 pandemic and were looking at opening the Royston office one day per week;
- In future they would be looking at delivering a blended service using telephone, online and face-to-face contact;
- They were looking for medium to long-term sustainable funding.

Royston BID

Councillor Ruth Brown advised:

- The BID had agreed with North Hertfordshire to take over the grant for the Christmas Tree on The Cross and funding for this would be transferred;
- It was also organising the lights and possibly another Christmas Tree in the park in collaboration with the Town Council;
- It was in discussion with the District and County Councils over how to maintain the planters that were going to be placed in the High Street.

Twinning

Councillor Ruth Brown informed Members that:

- Bands from Royston's twin towns of Großalmerode in Germany and Villanueva de la Cañada in Spain had contributed by video to the Arts Festival Finale Concert;
- The Arts Festival had been a successful event, despite the pandemic, and had been viewed 5000 times online.

North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Service (NHCVS)

Councillor Hunter advised that:

- He had attended the AGM for the NHCVS;
- They continued to do sterling work in the community helping many residents with their transport needs;
- They were now working from the office on certain days.

Remembrance Sunday

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that:

- It had been difficult to establish exactly what commemoration events were being held this year due to the Covid-19 restrictions in place and limitations on numbers of people gathering;
- The Royal British Legion nationally had advised not to hold large ceremonies or parades;

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- A small ceremony was due to take place in Royston with a very limited number of people;
- Official details were yet to be confirmed but it was planned that Councillor Hunter would lay a wreath as a representative from District Council and County Councillor Hill would lay a wreath as a County Councillor;
- Members who were not directly involved were encouraged strongly not to attend these events due to the restrictions on numbers of people gathering during the current phase of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Members would be kept informed of when and where events were happening.

Councillor Stanier advised that it was planned for the event to be live-streamed if possible and Members could direct others to this service once the online location of the live-stream had been confirmed.

Royston Community Transport

Councillor Hunter advised that:

- The Royston Community Transport AGM would be held on Tuesday 13 October at 3.30pm in the Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.36 pm

Chair