

**North Herts Council
ROYSTON AREA FORUM**

**Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA
On Wednesday, 12th JULY 2023 at 7.30pm**

NOTES

Present: Councillor Ruth Brown (RB) (Chair), Councillor Chris Hinchliff (CH) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Matt Barnes (MB), Councillor Cathy Brownjohn (CB), Councillor Bryony May (BM), Councillor Gerald Morris (GM).

In Attendance:

Becca Edwards (BE) (Community and Partnerships Officer) and Shaun Greaves (SG) (Development and Conservation Manager)

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were 31 members of the public, including registered speakers.

Meeting started at **7.30pm**

1. Chair's Announcements

Cllr Brown welcomed everyone in attendance.

- Noted that she would be recording the meeting and asked if anyone had any concerns.
- Explained that the Town Talk and Area Committee have been amalgamated into the Area Forum.
- Highlighted that the Forum is an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.
- Members were reminded they are making recommendations and not decisions for grant applications.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adam Compton. Councillor Cathy Brownjohn was delayed.

2. Public Participation

Becca Edwards, the Community and Partnership Officer, updated Members of community grant budgets.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

Carl Filby (CF) presented the Creative Royston application

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- How the full cost of the performance had been raised
- The capacity of the event
- The festival's previous attendance figures

A member of the public asked what the Community Grant budget is for.

RB explained how the Community Grant budget is allocated to the Forums throughout the district and gave a brief overview of how the funds can be allocated. More information can be found [here](#).

Creative Royston vote

RB proposed.

CH seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending Creative Royston's application for £1,000 towards performances of The Weather Machine at Royston Arts Festival.

3. Information Note: Grants & Community Update

Becca Edwards, Community and Partnerships Officer, presented the Community Update.

RB noted that the Therfield Pavilion opening was very well attended, and shared info about other venues in the Royston area that have received Capital Grant funding.

RB also noted that Royston Town Council (RTC) has a community grant fund, and County Councillors have a locality budget.

4. Presentations

Shaun Greaves, Development and Conservation Manager at North Herts Council, gave a presentation about the planning process.

The Planning system dates from 1948 and is the process of managing land resources. It involves controlling existing and new developments, as well as strategy preparation to manage future requirements.

In Royston, North Herts Council is a local planning authority, along with Hertfordshire County Council, which deals with Minerals, Waste and County Development. Royston Town Council is a consultee on planning applications.

Development management controls existing and new developments:

- Planning applications;
- Listed building consent applications; and
- Planning enforcement.

Strategic Planning

- Recently adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan
- Supplementary Planning Documents

The Government produces national planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework which is material in the production of local plans and the determination of planning applications.

- Applications are determined in accordance with the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- Consultees and neighbours are asked for their comments
- Most applications are dealt with under delegated powers by officers, and larger applications as well as those called-in by Councillors are dealt with by the Council's Planning Control Committee.
- Applications can be refused or granted.
- Housing schemes over 10 units are required to provide 40% affordable housing and financial contributions may be sought to mitigate their impacts upon infrastructure and services.

RB added that RTC are statutory planning consultees but not the decision makers. Members of the public can register to speak at RTC or NHDC planning meetings. NHDC Members have a call-in right for their ward and refer some applications to the Planning Control committee for determination rather than officer delegated decision.

GM noted that he represents six rural villages of which several have inadequate sewage treatment plants. Planning goes in for houses and is granted even though there is insufficient sewage treatment. Is there anything that can be done as a planning officer?

SG sewage providers must provide adequate sewage provision. If developers can't provide then planning permission may be granted, but the buildings may not be built.

MoP1 enquired if the definition of affordable housing has been defined.

SG definition is 20% below market value. Social housing is 40% below market value. Our policy requires 40% of housing to be affordable – of that 40%, 65% should be for rent and the others for shared equity etc. There has been a housing crisis for several decades, which has compounded each year – demand outstrips supply, so prices have gone up.

Discussion was had around the Gladman group and the applications the organisation have submitted.

MoP2 noted that the current [Local Plan](#) runs from 2011-2031 and asked when the development of the next local plan gets underway.

SG explained that the local plan is required to be reviewed, and that this must commence within one year of adoption, which will commence this year. First step is to review policies in the plan, second phase is to see if there are further allocations needed for housing and employment.

SG further added that almost as soon as a local plan is adopted work on the next local plan starts.

RB asked when the call for sites will commence for the next plan.

SG stated that it would be in approximately a year's time, but it depends on the work that happens in the review.

MoP asked if the Council were involved with the Warren planning.

RB expanded on what the 'Warren' is and explained that initial conversations with officers about the area said permission was unlikely to be approved. However, the conservation officer deemed the area as previously developed land, so it was allowed.

MoP asked for definition of previously developed land.

SG explained that previously developed land is land that has been built on in the past and land associated with that building and there is a definition within the Annex to the National Planning Policy Framework. Planning permission can be approved in a conservation area, but there is a requirement that the development will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

MoP Section 106 can you explain how its negotiated and spent?

SG Quite often there are discussions with applicants and consultees who may ask for a contribution from a scheme. Example in Hitchin, HCC have asked for funding towards schools. However, a development in Norton in Letchworth didn't need a contribution towards primary or secondary schools as there is currently capacity in Letchworth. HCC have guidance and apply a formula relating to the services and infrastructure that they are responsible for, who then advise NHDC how much to request from the developers. Developers may agree or raise viability issues. The contributions sought must be to mitigate the impact of the proposed development and not to address a current shortfall.

5. Proposed Car Parking Tariffs 2023

Cllr Ruth Brown presented a report on the proposed Off-street, Car Parking Charges across North Herts, highlighting the areas of the report relevant for the Royston area forum. The report can be found [here](#) on pages 15-23.

RB added that HCC, NHDC and RTC are working together for Royston following the successful application by RTC to become part of the HCC Sustainable Travel Town (STT) programme – which will hopefully lead to increased bus and train services, as well as a cycle bridge.

Concerns raised by Councillors and members of the public:

- Rural residents won't be able to cycle into the centre of Royston
- Price rises/eliminating free parking/losing spaces makes it harder for residents to park.
- Concerns about the area that the planters are currently blocking.
- People who are unable to get disabled badges and have issues walking struggle to get into the centre from the nearest car park.
- Issues with car parking machines taking 50ps.
- Interest in more on information about Sustainable Travel Town

There was also discussion around Free After 3.

RB noted that local mobile phone and car park usage/income data show that since the 1 hour rate for parking was raised last year, more people are visiting the town centre and staying

longer. The Free after 3 scheme will continue this year but is under review. Royston First Bid and NHDC are undertaking surveys during June/July to provide evidence on the effectiveness of the scheme in supporting local businesses. Members of the public present expressed their support for Free After 3.

6. **Let's Talk: Royston Survey**

Andrea Grosbois and Anita Howard from NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICB presented information about the Royston needs survey they are running.

More information can be found: [Let's Talk: Royston | CPICS Website](#)

Survey: [Let's Talk: Royston Survey \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](#)

Councillors and members of the public noted/suggested:

- It would be useful to have a public meeting solely about health services.
- More printed copies available in a wider range of places – eg library.
- The need for diagnostic equipment in Royston was stressed.
- The hospital is there, but not being utilised.

A member of the public asked what the position of RTC is on the state of the hospital site in Royston.

RB noted that the meeting is a NHDC meeting, but as she is also a town councillor her understanding is that RTC is broadly supportive of retaining the hospital site for health services.

The member of the public added that he felt it key that all councils work with the ICB. Herts often doesn't have Cambs involved so it would be good for to be informed what is going on.

County Councillor Fiona Hill, a member of the audience, noted that it is her understanding that cross party discussion is in hand.

7. **Ward Matters/AOB**

Royston Picture Palace

Royston Town Councillor Stephen Lockett, a member of the audience, explained that he is sitting on the Royston Picture Palace Working Party.

The cinema is open again until the middle of October and encouraged everyone to visit and support.

The working party is now looking for a long-term solution to keep the community cinema running.

MoP suggested the choice of films has contributed to the demise of the cinema, and that films appealing to the older demographic might help the cinema.

RB suggested that if there is a sustainable solution beyond October, then there would be more local control over films.

Trip Hazards on the High Street

MoP enquired who is responsible for trip hazards on the high street.

RB and County Councillor Fiona Hill explained that there is a meeting coming up on Monday (17 July) to discuss the issue. District Council are responsible for street cleaning, HCC for pavements. Please report issues online or to councillors.

Newsells Park Stud

GM shared the information that Newsells Park Stud, who rear and sell racing horses, have planted a vineyard and have now put in a planning application for a winery. They will take a couple of years to be built and fruit, but it is great news as there will be more jobs etc.

Shaftesbury Way, Shephards Close

RB noted there has been a problem concerning trees – a developer put up for sale the amenity areas, the grassy bits between houses which have trees on. Officers have got a group tree preservation order. There is now a survey to find out who owns the various amenity areas across the district to ensure this situation does not happen again.

8. Topics for Future Area Forums

Suggested themes/topics to be discussed included:

- Outcome of the ICB consultation.
- Waste & recycling
- Leisure centres

Meeting closed 9.30pm.