

**Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA  
On Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 7.30pm**

## **NOTES**

**Present:** Councillor Ruth Brown (RB) (Chair), Councillor Chris Hinchliff (CH) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Cathy Brownjohn (CB), Councillor Bryony May (BM).

### **In Attendance:**

Becca Edwards (BE) (Community and Partnerships Officer), Cllr Steve Jarvis (SJ) (Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Green Spaces), PS Ryan Champion (RC), Inspector James Lant (JL)

### **Also present:**

At the commencement of the meeting there were 12 members of the public..

Meeting started at **7.33pm**

- 1. Apologies for absence**  
Cllr Matt Barnes, Cllr Cathy Brownjohn
- 2. Chair's Announcements**

### **Cllr Brown welcomed everyone in attendance.**

- Highlighted that the Forum is an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.

- 3. Grants and Community Update**

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

In addition to the Community Update:

- The Community and Partnerships Team facilitated the North Herts Heroes awards which was held as part of the Chair's Civic Event at Hitchin Town Hall on 1 March.
- Royston Museum, Home-start Royston & South Cambs, and Green Heat Coop were successful in their applications to the Community Investment Fund.

- As part of the Sustainable Travel Towns Programme input is being sought from a range of community interests who are invited to attend a bus workshop on Tuesday 12 March at the Town Hall.
- BE has a [new Facebook profile](#) which information will be shared through.
- Information was shared on grants awarded to Roman Way Supporters and Creative Royston.

#### 4. Presentation – Community Safety

##### **Neighbourhood Policing Team – James Lant and Ryan Champion**

**RC** explained the structure of the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

The current Neighbourhood Policing Team priorities are Youth Engagement and Crime Prevention.

The team are doing a lot of work around dangerous parking near schools and youth engagement, as well as working with local young adults. The team have done a huge football project with King James, engaging young people, including those who have a problem with homelife / engaging with school. Stevenage Borough FC are taking over the project.

Mini police @King James and some other school.

Crime Prevention – coffee mornings and safety talks, go into residential homes. Theft from motor vehicle prevention – please ensure you lock your car.

Regularly speak with police from other local forces. Special operation forces stepped up after a recent incident in Cambs.

Upcoming events – see slides at end of notes.

The team have done hundreds of speeding operations over the past 12months, there are many more coming up.

Crime stats – see slides at end of notes. Please note the figures are how many reports have been received, not necessarily crimes.

**JL** explained how priority setting is done. A survey is sent out asking what people want looking at. The police then work alongside cllrs every three months to choose the priorities.

**RC / JL** OWL network is closing and Herts Connected will be used from 1 April.

Those currently signed up to the OWL network will get a reminder to sign up for the new platform, users will not be automatically signed up. OWL is more than 20yrs old, the new tech is infinitely better than OWL. Way of using priority setting on the new system will be much more dynamic, the priority setting forums are moving to three times per year. JL sees the info across the CSP as a whole and some areas are very engaged, others not so much. There's some work to be done in some places.

**JL** Google Owl and you can sign up then get the reminder to Herts Connected.

**RB** what if someone doesn't have an email address?

**JL** with OWL they have to have an email address, but the new system may be able to sort that.

**RB** how do you find out about dates of events?

**RC** shared via Herts Connected and via Facebook.

**MOP** suggested council noticeboards.

**JL** Can follow NorthHertsPolice on Facebook or other social media platforms. No concerns of datamining. Facebook is the primary platform for connecting, need to look at how to connect with everyone youth / older people.

**MOP** noted that there is an issue with Newmarket Road parking.

**MOP** noted a lot of people speeding 6-7pm / evening. Performance cars.

**RC** normal cars can't catch them, but it has been flagged to **x** Traffic? team.

**JL** please report, sign up to Echo. Can give details or keep anonymous. People tell us in forums, but not when incidents / crimes are happening.

**JL** North Herts Police Echo and it will come up on Google.

**RC** you can also phone 101 if you struggle with tech, but Echo is much quicker.

**MOP** is there a facility to upload footage to support a report?

**RC/JL** yes, once reported officers can send a link to upload if there's an offense they will deal with it. If the evidence justifies it there will be a ticket, no officers involved.

**MOP** shared firsthand experience of the Echo system, noted that this works.

**MOP** (Royston Radio) one of our presenters is looking to do a piece for youth.

**RC** Chris Brabrook is attending an open event in Hitchin in a few weeks.

**MOP** (Royston Radio) Happy to share announcements on the radio station.

**MOP** you said you go to schools. Do you ever invite parents in?

**JL/RC** not really. Do lots of education with pupils and teachers.

**MOP** noted there have been a few issues around Sun Hill common.

**RC** there has been increased patrols.

**JL** officers are visiting homes to touch base with young people and guardians, sending letters which seem to be making a difference.

**MOP** do you have different ways of dealing with older youths?

**RC** the team does that on a regular basis. Initial contact with youth and parents, if that doesn't work we then take it to the next level, and possibly prosecute.

**MOP** what do you do if you find older youths (16-18) hanging around doing things they shouldn't be, being in areas they shouldn't be.

**RC** We try to find out why they're there, sometimes by visiting home. Might find out that they can't be at home, we then contact social workers and other partners to try to help divert the young person. If there is anything criminal, we will hit it hard.

**RB** heard about Limitless Academy. What about Herts Youth Services, they only have two projects running, they are engaging with young people but it is limited.

**JL** we try to take a holistic approach, trying divert / help before escalating. Mental health CAMHS etc. Don't just criminalise.

**MOP** I look after a cricket ground in Therfield, there's a challenge around theft from rural sports clubs etc. Is there work going on around trying to support that? Mowers, roller...

**RC** work closely with cross borders Cambs, E Herts, Beds. We know if there's trends in other areas, but it is difficult to always be in the right place at the right time.

**JL** rural crime remains a challenge, Royston has a lower amount than the Hitchin side. In rural Royston, there has been reduction of 40%. Countywide there has been a rise.

**JL** it's hard to track a hotspot, because the thefts are normally spread across N Herts.

**RB** you used to do tool marking...

**JL** not anymore.

**GM** you used to have a get together with farmers.

**RC** we had one recently. NFU organised it. Tom Woollard gave a presentation. It was well attended, 50+ attendees.

**CH** thanked the Neighbourhood Policing team for their hard work, on ASB especially. Query regarding fly tipping, a similar issue to cross border.

**RC** still working in partnership with the council, it needs reporting. More reports the better.

**MOP** do you have a database of companies / people who have cameras?

**RC** no access to Ring doorbells. However, Herts Connected will ask if you can share info about cameras that you have so the new system will help with this.

**JL** NHC have a map where they plot reports of fly tipping. There's more closer to Luton. It would be great to do more joined up working with NHC.

**RB** with fly tipping it is important to report the location, maybe use what3words. Other good news - we are prosecuting more people as a Council. The Gov have put the max fine up from hundreds to £1k.

**RB** I welcome more joined up working, we need to have conversations.

**MOP** how many officers do you have?

**JL** neighbourhood team is one of the best staffed in the whole county. Not enough overall, never... We can move resources to areas where they're needed. Under policed in the rural areas, but as always it's a budget thing. Have 5 intervention teams which are well staffed, but not always enough everyday due to court visits / illness etc. More officers yes, back to 2011 levels, but not enough.

**RB** police can't be everywhere all of the time. Please report.

## **5. Presentation - Green Space Management, Cllr Steve Jarvis**

North Herts Council manages its own green spaces – parks, play areas, football pitches, skate parks and incidental bits of green space. Also manages highway verges in towns (not outside

towns), A505 for example would be Herts County Council (HCC). NHC has a deal with HCC to do highways in town but not outside, we also cover some things for settle, but not trees.

All areas are managed in slightly different ways. There is just one organisation covering the upkeep, John O'Conner, which makes it more cost effective. They also sort the splash parks, booking of sports pitches and more.

Management of green spaces is largely about cutting grass and trees (but not HCC or settle trees). Historically managing grass was about cutting to a certain length. Past few years there is more emphasis on what the area is used for – which effects how long the cut will be. There's also wildflowers, cutting some areas later in the season when the flowers have seeded. Some places across the district have been identified to be kept short (pitches / visibility) other land there is little scope for introducing biodiversity, whereas there are other areas which are great for increasing biodiversity. The council owns less green space in Royston than it does in other towns, which is largely due to there being a town council. Royston's largest green space is the Heath, which isn't managed by the council.

We've been gradually rolling out the increase of biodiversity – there have been comments that 'nothing has happened' - this is because where we're allowing biodiversity to be natural it takes years so there's nothing pops up overnight. Some people comment that they do want areas to continue to be cut, which is listened to and assessed.

Other initiatives – bee corridors. John O'Conner have started in Letchworth and have done some work on encouraging individual homeowners to plant with bees in mind, then JoC has hit the spaces in between. NHC is now putting some money into spreading this to other towns.

Management of play areas falls under green space – there's regular management, reviews and updates. In the past all pieces of play equipment have been replaced when some pieces started to become unsafe, but that has now been finetuned – Serby Ave is soon to have some pieces replaced, other will remain.

The skate park will be updated, designed and built. More detailed work is needed, then the build will commence.

**GM** with the bee corridors, how is the message to householders being shared?

**SJ** leafletting & door knocking, via a big team of John O'Conner and council staff in Letchworth.

**MOP** Previously there has been free tree sample giveaways. What about bushes / flowers etc. Where I live lots of trees, soil is poor quality.

**SJ** NHC / HCC want to encourage tree planting in general, NHC doesn't have enough land to plant on. Bushes and flowers are more difficult.

**MOP** Trees are a good thing, but might not be in the right place. Trees improve climate and mental health among other things. Would be helpful if we could understand which land is owned and managed by the council, and what isn't, then it links into what can be done.

**SJ** It is likely that wrong trees may have been planted in the wrong place in Royston. There is difficulty with dealing with the tree planting from the past. People complain when things are cut down, but management includes cutting down. It's hard to explain it's not always the wrong thing to do to cut down trees / hedges. Leaving things can lead to more issues.

There are some estates in Royston that NHC has managed, but has been found out it doesn't own due to break down in historic paperwork so this is creating current difficulties.

**SJ** have given away seeds – bee bombs to encourage planting. Giving away plants would be much more difficult,

**MOP** seedling bushes would be great.

**SJ** that would be hard. To plant and keep a tree alive for a few years costs hundreds, to give a tree away costs £2.

**RB** when we're looking at new developments, we are now looking at the management of green spaces and who is responsible.

**GM** A14 is a classic.

**RB** trying to address issues going forwards.

**SJ** the right kinds of things will survive, chalk grasslands can produce an enormous range of species, but need to plant the right things.

**MOP** if the contractor does all the mowing and uses a roller mower, it then mashes up rubbish which goes into the soil etc.

**SJ** they are supposed to pick up, but it is possible that some gets missed.

**MOP** is there a published strategy which states the management in what area?

**MOP** not aware of much active management near where I live – Stile plantation. Have tried looking on the website for something specific. I've found a general doc, but nothing more specific.

**SJ** for larger areas there is, but the small areas there won't be any. The medium sized areas aren't as obvious, so we could be clearer on that. They get inspected yearly.

Bury plantation is managed by NHC. The other by the Town Council, there are measures put in place.

**RB** please report any issues on the NHC website, will pass info on to RTC if necessary.

**CH** Serby playground – would like the spinny thing replacing.

**SJ** the rotting bit is being replaced.

**CH** raised the issue of hedgerow management. A hedgerow was cut during nesting season when it shouldn't be.

**SJ** there is a fairly small window when cutting can be done. Happy to raise again.

**MOP** The maintenance of Priory Memorials Gardens by John O'Conner is brilliant. However, the children's play area surface is very poor, have reported on multiple occasions. Also, the maze is very popular, but there are some bare areas in there that could be planted up.

**SJ** there is a planting programme for annuals – autumn and spring. The number of places that have annuals planted have been reduced.

**RB** I suggest hedgerows

**CH** herbs.

**MOP** the maze is very popular with young children.

**SJ** a team of John O'Conner staff just work in Royston and they do really well. There may be a reason they haven't done that.

**MOP** really pleased the skate park is being improved. However, there's a shortage of allotments. Royston falls short of the standards for parks and gardens. The Heath - more than ¾ is in unfavourable condition. Roysia could be turned into football pitches.

**RB** there is a waiting list for allotments, which more than four years. They are the responsibility of Royston Town Council. Trying to get land for more allotments – there is a proposal for a development off Barkway Road. RTC have an in-principal objection against the development, but they have said that if it does go ahead they want allotments and the relevant equipment for them.

Cemetery – some money was raised by Royston Town Council for the cemetery but has not been used yet.

**SJ** All North Herts towns have cemeteries that are full or nearly full. There are no spaces that aren't paid for in Royston. Needs a single cemetery – Wilbury Hills in Beds meets the need, but it isn't in Royston. Space in cemeteries is a big issue.

**MOP** what are plans for Roysia school?.

**SJ** HCC hasn't decided what they want to do. I suspect it will be houses eventually.

**SJ** there is a site for school in Hedera Gardens, no school at the minute. Could maybe use as allotments in the interim and let ploholders know they may get a 5yr warning if a school is built.

**GM** there are several empty allotments in Barkway, they are never fully subscribed.

**RB** will let Town Council know.

**GM** suggest emailing parish clerk as a start.

**MOP** in terms of playgrounds, is there an online available database?

**SJ** the locations are on the NHC website, but not what the equipment is.

**MOP** would be useful to have the info available what is where.

**RB** concurs.

## **6. Ward Matters and Outside Activities**

**BM** pleased to see the 40mph signs up along Baldock Road.

**RB** no plan for more trees to come down. Some trees will replace those that have come down.

**SJ** there are more signs to be put up. Works are being done by a contractor employed by Redrow. It has been an issue, the contractor did the work slowly and not as thoroughly as would have been liked.

**RB** local plan has now been adopted, higher standards are expected and developers will be expected to meet them. We are improving planning and enforcement.

**MOP** the sports centre contract is coming to an end. If you have a gym membership etc, if it goes on after the contract ends you will have to get your money back.

**SJ** a monthly membership will roll on. However, swim tickets need using or refunding.

**MOP** anything about the prices etc under the new management as yet?

**SJ** not yet, issued 1 April.

**RB** noted there is an annual Town meeting next week. Police, HCC etc. Held downstairs in Royston Town Hall 14 March 7.30pm. Mayor's community awards, community trust fund.

**Closed 21:22**



Presentation for  
Royston AGM 6th Apr