

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE
(Royston and Ermine Ward – Parishes of Barkway, Barley, Kelshall, Nuthampstead,
Reed and Therfield)

**Meeting held at Icknield Walk First School, Poplar Drive, Royston
on 2 April 2008 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillors: Mrs F.R. Hill (Chairman), H.M. Marshall (Vice
Chairman), Mrs Liz Beardwell, P.C.W. Burt, A.F. Hunter, R. Inwood
and F.J. Smith

IN ATTENDANCE: Alan Fleck - Community Development Officer
Louise Symes – Projects Planning Manager
Susanne Gow – Committee and Member Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillor Doug Drake (for Royston)
Royston Town Councillor Bill Prime
Mr Ken Charles – Sport Royston
Beth, Ros and Olivia – Royston Youth Council
Mr Brian Haughey – Barley resident
Mr Terry Hutt – Pensioners Action Group
Mr Phil Gray and Dr Robert Davidson – Barkway residents
Royston Town Councillor Bob Smith
Royston Town Councillor Lindsay Davidson

19 members of the public

85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence from this Meeting.

86. MINUTES – 30 January 2008

The Chairman stated that the Minutes of 30 January 2008 would be signed as a true record subject to the following amendments, which she read out:

- Minute 75: The last item, on the letter of congratulation reference the Quality Council Award won by Royston Town Council, should be removed from this Champion News and made into a separate item. It was presented as a separate paragraph under Minute 73, Chairman's Announcements.
- Minute 83: The last sentence of the second paragraph should be taken out, and a new paragraph inserted as paragraph 3, reading "However, it was vital that this was eventually agreed, with amendments to the Committee's satisfaction, as the Parking Strategy would be used to inform the town Centre Strategy consultation.

In paragraph 5 of Minute 83, the last word "only" should be omitted.

Minute 83 was given a Resolution and a Reason for Decision as follows:

"RESOLVED: That a proposal be sent to Cabinet and Council, requesting a car parking charge of 10p for the first hour in part of the Town Hall car park for a trial period."

"REASON FOR DECISION:

To ascertain whether this produces an increase of shoppers coming into Royston Town Centre."

Royston Buses

This matter arose from the Minutes of 30 January 2008, and the Chairman asked Hertfordshire County Councillor Doug Drake to give an update on the local bus situation, as he had very recently been informed of some changes. He told the Committee that the 91 and 92 buses from Letchworth to Baldock would run 4 times a day in each direction from 2 April 2008. The Cambridge to Royston bus was still in

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service, and there will be a trial on the Royston bus which takes in Coombelands. The Chairman commented that this had overridden Resolution 2 of Minute 71, which suggested that Mr Keith White, Director of Transport at Hertfordshire County Council be invited to attend the April meeting of Royston and District Committee. The Chairman thanked Councillor Drake for this helpful information.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Royston and District Committee Meeting held on 30 January 20087, be approved as a true record of the proceedings subject to the above amendments, and be signed by the Chairman.

87. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman declared that the written Report on Car Parking Charges in Royston, Item 7A, would be taken after Item 6.

88. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. She reminded Members that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest, and they were required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest were to leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.

89. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were several items under Public Participation, and the Chairman stated that the presentation by Mr Phil Gray and Dr Robert Davidson would be taken as the last item under this heading. The items were taken in the following order:

- a) Mr Ken Charles of Sport Royston, informed those present of a Government initiative to set up a local sports council, which had resulted in the formation of Sports North Herts. This brought together the North Hertfordshire District Council, over 200 sports clubs, all school sports departments, local strategic partnerships, North Hertfordshire College, the Youth Service in North Herts, the Primary Care Trust, the community safety partnership, local contractors (DC Leisure in Royston and Stevenage Leisure in Letchworth/Baldock), disability-focused organisations and Sport Royston. Mr Charles' talk covered the history of Sport Royston, its present facilities and the need for further facilities for the broad range of sports, the areas which need attention, sport across all age ranges and disabilities, and the possibility of funding from Sport England. He declared that the aims were to raise the profile and voice of sport, to bond and feel the sporting experience together, to secure as many resources as possible supported by its many partners, and mentioned the need to attract sponsorship. He told those present at the Royston and District Council Meeting that there is a possibility that Sport England may give them £26,000 this year and so attract £58,000 to fund the Action Plan which is 26 pages long. Mr Charles defined the needs of Sport Royston, from the need to promote the separate sports, to the need to promote education and training for match officials, sports leaders, teachers and coaches. He also touched on the need to help sportsmen of all ages with equipment, travel and other necessary expenses, and to raise the awareness of the 2012 Olympics, which may use facilities in this part of the country for training purposes. Mr Charles thanked North Herts District Council for its past financial and officer support, and hoped that this would continue in the future. The Chairman thanked Mr Charles for his interesting speech, and for the good work he is doing for the sportspeople and potential sportspeople of Royston. This was reiterated by Members of the Committee.
- b) Royston Town Councillor Bill Prime addressed the meeting on the subject of the notice boards in Royston. He told the Members that he considered Royston Town Centre to be well served with notice boards, but those on the outskirts of the town were vital for advertising and information purposes. He declared that over the last 25 years he had seen both the notice boards and the supporting posts disintegrate, and he had attended this Committee Meeting to request that the Royston and District Committee consider a grant application

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of £650 to replace two of the notice boards. The Chairman thanked Cllr Bill Prime, and said that the Grant Application would be discussed later in the meeting.

- c) Three members of the Royston Youth Council took turns to address the Meeting, in a well-prepared and rehearsed manner. They are all from Meridian School, but would really like to involve Greneway School and Roysia School in the Youth Council, together with young people who are employed, those who are unemployed, and students currently at college or educated outside Royston. They gave the Aims of the Youth Council as: obtaining a place in the centre of Royston for young people to meet; bringing down the price of admission to leisure centres for young people (they have already managed this at Royston Leisure Centre); obtaining affordable entertainment (cinema/theatre) for young people; organising events and activities for young people and arranging better publicity for local youth clubs. The Youth Council members informed the Committee that they will have a stall at the Royston May Fayre to publicise their aims and to recruit as many members and supporters as possible. They revealed that they wanted to extend the age range of their members in both directions, from young children to older teenagers and young people in their twenties. The Chairman thanked the members of the Youth Council and congratulated them on their hard work for the young people of Royston. She assured them that both the Royston and District Committee and the Royston Town Council wholeheartedly supported them in their aims, and would be pleased to be of assistance in achieving them. Discussion then ensued, with Members asking what help was required, and being assured that when assistance was needed, the Committee would be asked! Royston Town Councillor Lindsay Davidson, on being invited to speak by the Chairman, stated that she was extremely impressed by the three members of the Youth Council, and would be pleased to work closely with the group, and Hertfordshire County Councillor Doug Drake declared that he, too, was very impressed, and that as Hertfordshire County Council oversees all the youth groups and clubs, they were not to hesitate to contact him if he could be of any assistance.
- d) The Chairman invited Mr Andy Williams of The House to address the Committee Meeting, but he stated that he and his wife Viv had attended the meeting only to support the three members of the Royston Youth Council because of their work with the young people of Royston, and therefore were unprepared to speak.
- e) Mr Terry Hutt of the Pensioners' Action Group had registered to speak, and one of his colleagues, a lady aged 95, presented a survey and a petition of 150 signatures to the Chairman, asking that the No 17 bus route in Royston should not be cut. This subject was part of the information that had already been given by County Councillor Drake, and at the Chairman's invitation, he brought the members of the Pensioners' Action Group, who had arrived late to the Meeting, up to date with the news he had previously imparted to the Committee Meeting.
- f) Mr Brian Haughey, a resident of Barley, had also registered to speak at the Royston and District Committee Meeting, and eloquently presented the problem of speeding in Barley to the Royston and District Committee, together with a file of photographs, cases of speeding, road traffic accidents and traffic statistics generated by surveys, surveillance and thorough investigation into instances of accidents and the causes. Mr Haughey's investigations revealed that there had been 5,000 speeding offences in the space of one week, in an area where the Police had previously claimed there was no problem. Mr Haughey had come to the conclusion that the safest and most cost effective answer to this problem would be to install one or two chicanes in the village, which would slow down vehicles without disturbing the animals commonly transported through the village in horseboxes. However, the cost of installing one chicane was, he had discovered, £20,000, and he asked the Royston and District Committee if they were willing to fund or part-fund a chicane in the village of Barley which would help to save lives. The Chairman thanked Mr Haughey for speaking, and for presenting the data to the Committee, who then discussed the matter, and the suggestion was made regarding the installation of traffic lights at the dangerous crossroads. Mr Haughey replied that the

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Police and the Department of Transport had both recommended chicanes as the best way to deal with the problem, and the Committee suggested that the matter was put to the North Herts Highways Partnership Joint Membership Panel at their next meeting.

- g) Mr Phil Gray and Dr Robert Davidson, representing the residents of Barkway, had brought to the Committee Meeting a Powerpoint presentation they had prepared, entitled "A response to the proposed Travellers' search areas". Mr Gray made the presentation, covering the criteria for gipsy sites, and concluding that such a site in Barkway would have a huge negative impact on this rural village and the agricultural land in which it is set. He stressed that it is vital for the gipsies themselves to be consulted – as around 40 gipsy sites in Great Britain were unused. This meant that the local financial and physical resources used to create them had been wasted, because the position of these sites had not been discussed with the gipsies, who did not want to live in the depths of the countryside, far away from facilities such as shops, schools, transport and health facilities. Mr Gray read out a letter from the oldest representative on the Gipsy Council, who declared that gipsies must not be forced onto sites located where they did not want to live. Mr Gray stated that besides the aforementioned waste of resources and problems arising from the unsuitable location of a gipsy site at Barkway, such a scheme would also infringe the human rights of this minority group. The Chairman thanked Mr Gray and Dr Davidson for their interesting presentation, and the Leader of the Council declared that Parish Councils in North Hertfordshire had been invited to the Cabinet Meeting on Tuesday 8 April 2008, when this subject would be discussed.

90. ROYSTON AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE AND AREA VISIONING BUDGET 2007/2008

The Community Development Officer (CDO) took the Committee through the Royston and District Budget Statement for 2007/2008, and advised the Committee that there was just one grant application for determination, which was deferred from the last Committee Meeting on 30 January 2008, having been received again from Royston Town Council after receipt of additional information.

It was suggested that the Capital Visioning budget could include funds for Garden Walk, street furniture (and their maintenance), and match funding for a chicane in Barley. It was also proposed that the Hertfordshire Highways contribution to match funding for Barley should be checked. It was therefore suggested that Mr Haughey from Barley was invited to the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel to put forward his case for the installation of chicanes in Barley.

Royston Town Councillor Doug Drake then raised the subject of the soiling caused by pigeons, of areas of Royston. It was declared that some retailers are becoming desperate about the mess they make, with at least one retailer considering closing their shop and moving away due to this problem.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the current expenditure and balance of the Area Committee Development Budget be noted;
- 2) That the Committee allocate funds in the sum of £650 to Royston Town Council for the replacement of two notice boards;
- 3) That the Committee allocate remaining unallocated funds and the under-spend from the VASS project, to Youth Projects, to be determined after discussion with the Youth Council.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and to further the aims and strategic priorities of North Herts District Council.

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91. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL FOR PROVISION OF TWO NOTICE BOARDS

A similar grant application for £930 had been made at the Royston and District Committee Meeting on 30 January 2008, but had been deferred. However, Royston Town Councillor Bill Prime had appealed for funds to the tune of £650 to fund the replacement of two notice boards in Royston. The provision of an additional notice board on the Templars' Gate estate, which he described as vital for community communication purposes would be funded elsewhere. The Committee discussed the grant application and agreed to award the sum of £650 to Royston Town Council towards the replacement of two notice boards, one in Coombelands and one at Icknield Walk.

RESOLVED: That the sum of £650 be awarded to Royston Town Council to fund the costs of replacing two notice boards.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To allow the Royston and District Committee to continue with its support to local voluntary and community organisations and events, and to further the aims and strategic priorities of North Herts District Council.

92. ROYSTON TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

The Royston and District Committee had been circulated an Information Note to update them on progress in dealing with the Revised Royston Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) following public consultation. The Information Note covered key issues emerging from the consultation process and the planned next steps to be taken. It recommended that the Committee Members note its content and agree the next steps, as laid out in Para 4 of the report. The Projects Manager, Planning Services, reminded the Committee that the Royston Town Centre Strategy will be coming before the Committee for agreement at the next Royston and District Committee Meeting on 11 June 2008. She confirmed that key organisations in Royston have responded well to the Strategy.

The Chairman thanked the Projects Manager for submitting the Information Note, and for attending the Royston and District Committee Meeting to offer any clarification needed.

93. REPORT ON CAR PARKING CHARGES IN ROYSTON

Car Parking Trial

The Head of Leisure and Environment had submitted a written report to update the Royston and District Committee Meeting at the request of the Chairman, on the issues regarding car parking charges in Royston. The basis of the report was Minute 83 from the Royston and District Committee Meeting dated 30 January 2008.

The report revealed that there is currently a parking trial taking place in Royston, and that car parking will be considered as part of North Herts District Council's Fundamental Service Review, from which will come recommendations and guidance towards an integrated approach towards car parking, allowing the Council to review the charges and how they relate to transport and town centre parking.

The Projects Manager declared that the basic issue was that it was too late to alter the budget considerations for this financial year, but that the Committee should look towards the next financial year's considerations.

The report stated that if there were two trials running concurrently, it would be difficult to tell which one had caused more shoppers to come into Royston. Discussion ensued, and the Committee resolved that it is possible to run two trials and obtain separate statistics from each, but it would not be easy. The concern was that at the current rate of deterioration there would not be much left of Royston Town Centre for shoppers to visit, and it was considered that to run one trial after the other would take too long, but the first trial which is currently in progress was welcomed. Both trials would need to run together.

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The Committee believed that car parking charges in Royston would be looked at differently in the future, and supported the idea that different charges could be used in different car parks. What is required is a broader view of the problem. There should be serious consideration as to whether the present system is correct for Royston and whether expansion of the Town Centre will be affected by car parking charges.

The Committee asked for clarification of paragraph 4.4, as one of the dates taken into account was a Sunday, on which no car parking charges are levied. The Community Development Officer offered to seek clarification on this and report back to the Royston and District Committee.

Christmas Car Parking

In recent years, Royston has offered shoppers free parking in all their car parks for the three weekdays just prior to Christmas Day. The Committee wanted to know whether this offer of free parking had been successful, and the general consensus of opinion was that it had been. During the discussion which followed, it was suggested that, with Christmas Day 2008 falling on a Thursday, not just the three weekdays before Christmas Day, but also the Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week before should share the free parking. Therefore this would affect Thursday 18 and Friday 19 December and Saturday 20 December, followed by Monday 22, Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 December. All Members agreed with this suggestion, and it was further proposed that this scheme was given better publicity as a special event, advertised well beforehand, and the car parking machines need to be labelled at least a month in advance of the period of free car parking.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee does not agree that two car parking trials cannot work together, and would still like its proposed trial to be considered by Cabinet/Full Council.
- 2) The Committee considers that the Report is positive, and that in the North Herts FSR mentioned in paragraph 4.3 and the Car Parking Strategy, requests that the Council:
 - a) Looks at different systems within the Royston car parks when setting charges (suggesting free or lower charges in certain car parks) and treating each car park in Royston Town Centre on an individual basis;
 - b) Treats each town in North Hertfordshire individually and on their own merits when considering changes ("one size does not fit all");
 - c) Looks at various systems (e.g. barrier systems and change from the machines) within the Royston car parks;
 - d) Considers carefully the number of spaces allocated in Royston town within the Car Parking Strategy.
- 3)
 - a) That the free Christmas parking charges for 2008 should apply on Thursday 18, Friday 19, Saturday 20, Monday 22, Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 December 2008;
 - b) That publicity for the free Christmas parking charges is implemented at least one month in advance of the period agreed.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

The Committee feels that Royston needs imminent action on car parking to improve the vitality of the Town Centre.

94. CHAMPION NEWS

The Royston Community Development Officer (CDO) provided a review of his activities since the last meeting of the Royston and District Committee, held on 30 January 2008.

The items listed in the report were as follows:

- a) The Royston Youth Council, initially formed at Meridian School, attended several meetings including with its Steering Group in the Royston Town Council Offices on 4 February (the next one was to be held on 3 April); in

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Priory Memorial Gardens to discuss the erection of a youth shelter there, resulting in the intended circulation of a questionnaire to the young people of Royston to gauge their interest, recommendation and therefore “ownership” of the youth shelter. The Youth Council had also successfully negotiated a 28% discount in subscription rates and session charges for young people, and intended to have a stall at the Royston May Fayre and to take part in the Royston Arts Festival later in 2008. The Community Development Officer (CDO) was very impressed by the comments given by the Royston Youth Council representatives during the Committee Meeting, and suggested taking on board the views of the Youth Council and other young people of Royston, with regard to the youth shelter;

- b) A Royston Youth Network had been set up, modelled on the former Royston Community Network, and operated with an open agenda, aiming to make sure that those offering services to young people in Royston could co-ordinate their activities. The group hoped to organise an event for young people in the summer;
- c) The CDO was still in the process of supporting both the Royston Town Centre Partnership and the Baldock Town Centre Partnership;
- d) The CDO had investigated the effect of erecting graffiti walls in other towns, in response to a query by Royston Town Council, and in the three authorities who had responded fully, it was found that: (i) the first wall considered had been in place for two years. Early enthusiasm had waned, and the quality of work had deteriorated, but the wall appeared to have reduced the level of graffiti; (ii) the second wall studied had been in place for three years, and graffiti in the local area was much reduced, possibly as much as 90%. The few culprits who were still ‘tagging’ were, however, proving hard to catch. Workshops had been run for young people at the ‘launch’ of this wall, and the local authority were considering erecting a second wall, although the officer responsible felt that the correct location was vital to the wall’s success; (iii) this wall had been in place since May 2007, and it was felt that the level of graffiti had been reduced in residential areas. A group of previously problematic young people had been commissioned to create a piece of artwork in the city centre. Erection of the graffiti wall was considered to be a success. The CDO concluded that a graffiti wall worked best and gave better results when it was ‘managed’ with training and events, and that costs related to the wall should include the events and maintenance. He suggested that the Royston Youth Council could look for potential sites for the wall in Royston and might later consider taking on a supervisory role. The Royston and District Committee agreed that it was vital that the wall was not sited in the Priory Memorial Garden. They also voiced the worry that encouraging graffiti by erection of a wall would encourage this ‘environmental crime’ elsewhere in the town, although this had not been the case in the local authorities canvassed by the CDO;
- e) The CDO had been helping to update the NHDC Village Hall Handbook;
- f) Work was currently in hand to replace four missing markers and realign others on the Royston Town Trail;
- g) The CDO had helped Leisure Direct compile a database of their clients.
- h) The CDO reminded the Royston and District Committee that they had been asked to review the information at Appendix A, and after the Chairman had led a debate on potential highway projects and/or traffic management schemes associated with the themes at 1.1 (8) in the Appendix, to refer those considered suitable for joint funding to the JMP Discretionary Budget 2008/2009;
- i) Members were also asked to list the location for disabled parking bays identified at 1.7 (6) in Appendix A. Green Street was mentioned.

The Chairman asked the Members to give these last two items their consideration and respond with any comments/suggestions in addition to those already agreed by the Committee, to the Community Development Officer or the Planning Projects Manager by 11 April 2008.

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The Committee agreed that the following matters needed action:

- The CDO gave an update on the problem at Royston Cave, for which the implementation of a weight limit had been suggested. He declared that a rather unhelpful letter from Hertfordshire Highways appeared to deny that there was any problem with the weight of lorries parking near Royston Cave, and that it was not vibrations but water that had affected the Cave. **ACTION:** *The Committee requested that a **letter** was sent to **Hertfordshire Highways** stating that this view was unacceptable to the Royston and District Committee and suggesting that further investigation was undertaken;*
- The subject of inviting other North Herts District Councillors to visit Royston was raised and reaffirmed. **ACTION:** *A **letter of invitation** was to be sent to all NHDC Members, inviting them **to visit Royston**;*
- It was mentioned that the Royston Town Trail was being re-examined, but it was also pointed out that the accompanying leaflet would have to be reprinted. **ACTION:** *The **leaflet** was to be **proofed** and a **quotation for printing** obtained before the printing stage;*
- Several Royston residents had suggested that the Roys Stone should once again be the base for a cross as in ancient times, and the Members agreed that this was an idea certainly worth considering. **ACTION:** *The **feasibility** and **cost of inserting a cross into the stone** was to be **investigated**;*
- The question as to the progress on the Speed Activated sign for the A10 road was raised. **ACTION:** ***Progress on provision of the sign** was to be **looked into**, together with the **problem in Somerfield car park** regarding the broken wall and the trees, mentioned in the Committee Minutes of 30 January.*

The Chairman thanked the Community Development Officer for his efforts for the Royston and District Committee and for the residents of Royston.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee endorsed the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being;
- 2) That the Chairman, on behalf of the Royston and District Committee, thanked the Community Development Officer for all his hard work on their behalf and for the residents of Royston.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To keep Members of the Royston and District Committee informed of the work of the Community Development Officer and the latest developments in community activities in the Royston and District area.

The Chairman thanked all Members and officers for their support, contributions and attendance during the Civic Year.

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.

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Chairman