15/01/2020

**Royston Town Talk**

Present:

* Cllr Tony Hunter (chair)
* Cllr Fiona Hill (County Councillor)
* Cllr Ruth Brown (NHDC)
* Cllr Carol Stanier (NHDC)
* Cllr Steve Jarvis (NHDC & County Councillor)
* Cllr Thomas Perry (Town Council)
* Cllr Marguerite Phillips (Town Council)
* Cllr Gerald Morris (NHDC)
* Lea Ellis (Community Engagement Officer)
* Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer)
* **MOA = Member of Audience**

Cllr Hunter welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Lea Ellis explained the idea of Town Talk and its current format used in Letchworth and Hitchin.

**MOA** -Christmas events and lights in Royston, can we have some? We have nothing like as good as Hitchin and Letchworth for example.

**Cllr RB**- Royston Bid and Town Council Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 working group already want to do something for Christmas. Who would be interested in taking part?

**Cllr TH-** Bear in mind funding sources in Royston are different to Hitchin and Letchworth.

**MOA**- Regarding Royston allotments, there is a waiting list at the moment and can we have more allotments?

It was acknowledged that there is about a three year waiting list currently for an allotment, but the issue is finding suitable land.

**Cllr GM-** However there are eight plots available at the Barkway allotments at an annual cost of around £30.

Cllr RB has raised the issue of setting aside land for allotments when considering new developments such as the Burloes at Planning Committee.

**MOA-** Parking issues

Parking problems regarding Chilcourt, Briary Lane, Minster Road, Orchard Road and streets close to the station.

**Cllr SJ-** We are hoping to put double yellow lines on Layston Park from the County Locality Budget.

**Cllr TH-** There is a parking review under way which will then be followed up by a consultation. People are parking on The Cross, the areas are being addressed but it’s taking time. Another problem is parking around the station. Survey work is being carried out although the review is taking a long time.

**MOA-** Layston Park does not have its own allocated car parking. Could NHDC issue concessions to local residents, similar to residential parking permits? The Health Centre and The Warren car parks are never full. Could the Town Council look at this and in the future maybe issue a parking permit to use for the car parks.

There was a general agreement by Councillors that this was a sensible suggestion which should be considered by NHDC.

**Clive (MOA) -** The retail situation in Royston has become worse and worse, people are beginning to see lots of service shops e.g. Café’s and Nail bars. Most of the trade is now on the industrial estate, there is a bus stop outside Morrison’s which takes people out of town to the new Aldi. The Town Centre Manager doesn’t come and visit the shopkeepers anymore.

It was acknowledged that many High Streets across the country are facing the same issues, mostly due to the convenience of online shopping. High costs, lack of footfall and expensive parking, is forcing people out to the retail parks and away from town centres.

**Josh (MOA) -** Josh is the owner of a new coffee shop in the Town Centre. He envisages his venue as a community hub: quiet spaces at the back for business calls and meetings; spaces for local artists to exhibit; a venue for local community groups to meet.

**MOA-** There is a lack of free parking in the Town Centre which is keeping people out of Town.

Cllr RB – Royston BID have lost the membership of many of the smaller businesses in the High Street which has lead to the bigger organisations having more of a say on infrastructure and has changed the emphasis of spending away from the town centre.

**MOA-** I’d like to encourage public transport rather than more cars coming in.

**Cllr SJ –** Work is being done for more bike racks in town.

**Cllr TH-**The Car Parks are still free after 3pm, due to the Free after Three funding. The Area Committee put in £1,500 and two Councillors each put in £1,500 out of their locality budget as well as the contribution from Royston First.

**MOA**- Pedestrians are being obstructed by cars parked on pavements

**Cllr SJ**- This could be dealt with by a Fixed Penalty Notice. This is something we are looking into.

**MOA**- The hedges in Priory Lane are too wide and obstruct the path.

**MOA-** Why are fees different in different car parks?

**Cllr TH-** Overall charges are cheap.

**Cllr FH-** Town Hall (Civic Centre) Car Park charges are lower because residents visiting the NHS Health Centre and the acknowledgement that they may go over their allotted time.

**MOA-** Why don’t the machines in the Car Parks work properly?

**Cllr RB-** The card facilities for the Car Park machine are not working. The machine for The Warren Car Park has been fixed for cash payments but no longer has a card payment facility.

**MOA-** in 2015/2016 there was a budget increase for the cemetery. What happened to the money?

**Cllr CS-** We are looking for land and funding for cemeteries. Cllrs CS and RB will look into this and inform the MOA.

**MOA-** The pavement entrance to The Health Centre is not good; I am concerned that someone will have an accident.

**Cllr CS –** This issue was raised at Councillors Surgery so they are looking into it. The entrance belongs to the NHS. There is a natural slope outside of the Health Centre which is an issue.

*\*Since the meeting Cllr RB reports that works have now been completed to address this issue.*

**MOA-** Underpass rubbish and weeds?

**Cllr RB-** The Town Council Working Party have discussed this issue and reported this to NHDC for street cleaning.

**MOA-** What is happening with the Electric Car Charging points?

**Cllr TH –** Electric Car Charging points were funded by the government although as technology keeps evolving these charging points need to be updated. Very soon they will become obsolete.

**MOA-** The charging points are too expensive to use. Nobody is using them as it’s cheaper to pay for parking and re-charge at home.

**Cllr SJ-** The Council objective is to increase charge points. We need new up to date chargers.

**MOA-** The current chargers only charge for 3 hours which is not long enough for full charge.

**Cllr SJ-** Ideally all the new builds have chargers. The Town Centre has none. As part of the Cabinet Panel for the Environment this is being looked at and a current Parking Policy is currently being developed. NHDC have recently employed an Officer designated to Parking Issues.

Residents were invited to contact lea.ellis@north-herts.gov.uk regarding tonight’s Town Talk.

\**indicates an update that has occurred since the meeting*