



# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Cllr T McMahon**

Tel: 01582 708540

Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

Website: [www.houghtonregis.org.uk](http://www.houghtonregis.org.uk)

14<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

**To: All Town Councillors**

### Notice of Meeting

**You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the Houghton Regis Town Council to be held virtually on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020 at 7pm.**

This meeting is being held virtually via Microsoft Teams. If members of the public would like to attend, please click on the meeting link below and follow the online instructions:

[MEETING LINK<sup>1</sup>](#)

[MEETING GUIDANCE](#)

To assist in the smooth running of the meeting please refer and adhere to the Council's Virtual Meeting Guidance. To view the Virtual Meeting Guidance please click on the link above.

**Clare Evans**  
**Town Clerk**

***THIS MEETING MAY BE  
RECORDED<sup>2</sup>***

## AGENDA

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

<sup>1</sup> If you require a meeting link emailed to you, please contact the Head of Democratic Services at [louise.senior@houghtonregis.org.uk](mailto:louise.senior@houghtonregis.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Phones and other equipment may be used to film, audio record, tweet or blog from this meeting by an individual Council member or a member of the public. No part of the meeting room is exempt from public filming unless the meeting resolves to go into exempt session.

*The use of images or recordings arising from this is not under the Council's control.*

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In accordance with approved Standing Orders 1(e)-1(l) Members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

The total period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 15 minutes and an individual member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

### **3 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Under the Localism Act 2011 (sections 26-37 and Schedule 4) and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare any interests which are not currently entered in the member's register of interests or if he/she has not notified the Monitoring Officer of any such interest.

Members are invited to submit any requests for Dispensations for consideration.

### **4 MINUTES**

*Pages 4 - 12*

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

**Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.**

### **5 ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

*Pages 13 - 18*

To enable members to consider the Local Government Boundary Commission national electoral review in relation to Central Bedfordshire Council.

**Recommendation: To support the fundamental aims of the electoral review but object to the 2 identified variances between the CBC ward boundary and the parish boundary in Houghton Regis namely:**

- 1. The area around All Saints where the electorate would be represented at a CBC level by a ward councillor for the proposed Houghton Regis West and at a parish level by a ward councillor for Dunstable Town Council.**
- 2. The proposed boundary between Houghton Regis West and Houghton Regis East does not follow the parish ward boundary between Houghton Hall and Parkside.**

**It is felt that these discrepancies are nonsensical and may undermine the reputation of the democratic system and may lead to voter disengagement.**

**6 MEMBER IT PROVISION**

*Pages 19 - 22*

To enable consideration of the provision of IT for members.

- Recommendation:**
- 1. To purchase as required by individual members, a Microsoft Surface Go 2 Tablet with a 3 year support pack and email only to support members in performing their role and undertaking their responsibilities as a councillor;**
  - 2. To be funded through 199-4026 Computer Costs.**

**0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0**

**Town Council**  
**20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: T McMahon Chair  
D Abbott  
J Carroll  
Y Farrell  
S Goodchild  
D Jones  
R Morgan  
A Slough  
S Thorne  
K Wattingham

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk  
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 1

Apologies: Councillors: C Copleston

Absent: M S Kennedy  
D Dixon-Wilkinson

A minute silence was held in respect those suffering, and of lives lost, to Covid 19.

**11264 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Copleston.

**11265 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

A member of the public asked a question relating to a staffing matter, whether the council felt all vehicles and grass cutting machinery was necessary and was the council satisfied all procedures and working practices were beyond reproach.

It was advised that it was not suitable to respond to the query on the staffing matter. It was advised that all machinery was necessary for the upkeep and maintenance of the recreation areas, sports pavilions and the sports facilities that Houghton Regis Town Council have.

**11266 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Cllr Goodchild declared an interest in item 13, HRN2 Community Building, as this was a non-pecuniary interest she would remain for the discussion.

**11267 MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20th January and 18th March 2020.

Members were referred to Minute 11207.

Point 1 - provide delegated authority to the Mayor and the Town Clerk to undertake any measures / make any decisions deemed necessary to provide support to the community and to protect the health and wellbeing of councillors and staff based on government and NALC advice. As the council had now resumed its meeting schedule, albeit virtually, the council was invited to consider whether this delegation arrangement remained necessary. The potential removal of this delegation arrangement assumed that both nationally and locally the Covid-19 threat remained in check. As such it was suggested that this delegation remained in place to enable the council to respond should the need arise, and it not be possible to hold a council or committee meeting.

Point 3 – provided for existing arrangements to continue. Members were advised that the following arrangements were to continue:

The position of Mayor would continue to be held by Cllr Tracey McMahon

The position of Deputy Town Mayor would continue to be held by Cllr Sue Thorne

The following policies would continue to be in place:

- Committee Functions & Terms of Reference as confirmed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019
- Standing Orders as confirmed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019
- Financial Regulations as confirmed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019
- Scheme of Delegation as confirmed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Committee, sub-committee and working group membership including chairs and vice chairs would continue as appointed in May 2019.

Representatives on Outside Organisations were appointed in May 2019 would continue as existing.

Members were advised that Risk assessments had been prepared to enable the council to manage the risk posed by Covid-19 in relation to its services and facilities. These would be updated as time moved on.

**Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> January and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

## **11268 COUNCIL CALENDAR FOR 2020/21**

Members received the draft Council Calendar, including meeting dates, member briefing dates, and council and civic event dates, for 2020/21. Members were advised that in relation to council events, details were included but were subject to change as government guidance developed over the year due to the restrictions arising from Covid-19.

The approval of the calendar of council meetings, including the time and place of ordinary meetings of the council, up to an including the next annual meeting of the council was in accordance with Standing Order 4.j.ix.

Members requested that the AGM date be moved from 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**Resolved: To approve the Council Calendar for 2020/21 subject to the AGM being held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.**

## **11269 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**

In order for the Town Council to continue to use the General Power of Competence it needs to resolve that it met the eligibility criteria (specified below) as contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011:

- At least 2/3 of Members were elected at ordinary elections or at a by-election
- The clerk holds the following recognised qualifications
  - (i) The Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy;
  - (ii) The CiLCA module on the General Power of Competence

**Resolved:** To confirm that Houghton Regis Town Council meets the eligibility criteria for the General Power of Competence as contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

## 11270 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	25 <sup>th</sup> November, 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2019, 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 <i>11052 Scheme of Delegation</i> <i>11058 Communication Policy &amp; Communication Strategy</i> <i>11067 Officer/Member Protocol</i> <i>11068 Training Statement of Intent</i> <i>11069 Data Protection Policy</i>
Community Services Committee	28 <sup>th</sup> October, 4 <sup>th</sup> November 2019, 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
Environment & Leisure Committee	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 & 24 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
Planning Committee	6 <sup>th</sup> January, 27 <sup>th</sup> January, 17 <sup>th</sup> February, 9 <sup>th</sup> March, 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
Town Partnership Committee	29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019

To receive the minutes of the following sub-committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Office Provisions Sub Committee	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2019
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To receive the minutes of the following working group and consider any recommendations contained therein

Proposed New Cemetery Working Group	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
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**Resolved:** To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations contained therein as follows;

- *11052 Scheme of Delegation*
- *11058 Communication Policy & Communication Strategy*
- *11067 Officer/Member Protocol*
- *11068 Training Statement of Intent*
- *11069 Data Protection Policy*

**11271 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members were advised that a virtual quiz had been held which had raised £50 for the food bank, a garden plant sale which raised £18.00 for the food bank, and a pictorial quiz would be coming shortly.

Members were advised that although the chosen charities had not changed, the Mayor felt that the food bank, in the current circumstances, was a worthy and high priority cause.

**11272 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED**

Members were invited to provide verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Goodchild advised members that she had not attended any meetings, however updated members on SORTED and the facilities they had provided. Online counselling was available for young residents with accessibility until 10pm and webinars to enable young people to have their voice heard.

Cllr Farrell updated members on the Memorial Hall. A grant had been awarded for security improvements, and it was hoped that the Memorial Hall would reopen in September, subject to government restrictions arising from Covid-19.

Members were advised that repair works would be starting on the car park during August and it was hoped that these would be completed in September.

Cllr Jones advised members that he had attended two meetings at the Town and Parish Council Executive Committee, one in person, before the restrictions of Covid 19, and one virtually. Item of note was a draft Code of Conduct, comments on this had been requested by the Town Clerk for receipt by 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020 in order for a reply to be formulated. Members were advised that NALC conferences had been cancelled for 2020 and 2021. BATPC AGM was scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020, this was to be confirmed whether the meeting would be held virtually or in person.

Cllr Thorne updated members on Dial-a-Ride, they had felt financial repercussions during the restrictions of Covid 19, Cllr Goodchild advised members that grant money from Houghton Regis Ward Members had been awarded, which had totalled £1,000 to enable Dial-a-Ride to continue their service.

**11273 HOUGHTON REGIS: OUR 2020 VISION**

To report on the outcomes of the council's corporate plan, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision.

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Members discussed the successes of the Town Council, these included:

- The development of the Neighbourhood Plan
- The promotion of local retail & businesses to encourage an increased footfall
- In partnership with other organisations, worked to highlight our historical buildings; All Saints and Red House
- Developed a good working relationship with Central Bedfordshire Council planning officers
- Enviro crime reporting facilities for councillors to report graffiti, fly tipping & other nuisance activities
- School parking projects, this was a working progress
- The purchase of two additional redeployable CCTV cameras totalling three throughout the town.
- Subsidised bulk waste removals – progress held up by Covid 19
- Updated residents on strategic growth in the town through website, planning agendas and the Town Crier
- The installation of a family games area on the Village Green
- The installation of adult exercise equipment on the Village Green and orchard close
- The installation of enhanced seating and lighting at the skate park
- Two new events were launched; Houghton Rocks and firework display
- Collaborated with Beds FA for a sports club at Tithes Farm Road Recreation Ground
- Continued to provide community grants to community groups
- Provided an enhanced youth service through pop up café and holiday clubs
- Reviewed the corporate and democratic structure for improved working within the Town Council
- Installed energy efficiency measures in Houghton Regis Town Council buildings
- Raised the profile of the Town Mayor
- Developed two apprenticeship roles
- Promoted links to local charities and non-profit groups

Members requested that the previous council be thanked for their work on the 2020 vision and their contribution to the success of the vision.

**Resolved: To note the successes arising from the work undertaken in delivering the council's corporate plan, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision.**

#### **11274 OUR VISION OUR TOWN (2020/2024) HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN**

Members were presented with the outcomes of the consultation on the council's draft corporate plan, Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024) and requested to confirm final approval.

Special thanks were given to those councillors who were involved in the consultation process, for their dedication in the development of this plan and giving their time to visit school councils.



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Thanks were given to all councillors for their help, time and commitment in developing Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024).

A member suggested that councillors be involved in promoting the town to new residents by distributing the new resident welcome pack as the town's population grows.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To welcome the support shown through the consultation process for the Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024)**
  - 2. To approve the Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024)**

#### **11275 SICKNESS POLICY**

The Council was presented with the recommendation from Corporate Services Committee (8<sup>th</sup> June 2020) to approve the Sickness Management Policy.

- Resolved: To approve the Sickness Management Policy.**

#### **11276 HRN2 COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Members advised that they were pleased to have received a draft expression of interest from the Churches Group, points to note in the expression of interest was that this building was hoped to develop the community; and to build a welcoming and inclusive place, open to those of all and of no faith.

Members advised that the Town Council were keen to play an active part in the development of the Community building and were eager to visit buildings of similar use.

Members were advised that this expression of interest had been submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council.

#### **11277 REVISED BUDGET 2020/21**

To provide members with a revised budget for 2020/21 reflecting predicted changes in income and expenditure arising from the implications of Covid-19.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To thank the Town Clerk for her efforts in producing the Revised Budget 2020/21 to advise members of the various impacts on the Council of Covid-19.**
  - 2. To approve the Revised Budget 2020/21 and to adopt it as official guidance to the Council in managing its finances for the remainder of the financial year.**
  - 3. To confirm that the Budget 2020/21 agreed on 20th January 2020 will remain the base on which the budget for 2021/22 will be constructed.**
  - 4. To approve the virement of £18,000 from 302-4226 Youth Services into 191-4001 (£11,000), 191-4002 (£2,000) and 191-4003 (£5,000)**

to reflect the decision of the Community Services Committee (Minute 11152) to deliver the Pop-up Cafe and support for the Youth Council inhouse. The virement shall apply to both the Revised Budget 2020/21 and the Budget 2020/21 agreed on 20th January 2020.

5. To note the provision of £6,000 in 199-4026 Computer Costs for tablets/laptops for members and to require a report on the sourcing, support and cost of these items to be brought before the next Corporate Services Committee or Full Town Council meeting for approval.
6. To confirm that whether or not to accept the provision of the IT equipment will be a decision for each individual Councillor.
7. To write to Andrew Selous MP to advise him of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council and to outline, in consultation with the Town Mayor and the Chair of Corporate Services Committee, longer-term financial concerns arising from the pandemic.

#### **11278 YEAR END ACCOUNTS**

Members received a report providing brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members were invited to raise any queries relating to the process. No queries were raised.

#### **11279 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019 / 2020 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019 / 2020**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members were presented with the completed Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

Members were advised that the internal auditor completed the year end internal audit on 18th June 2020.

There were no recommended actions to be considered, therefore no action plan was required.

**Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20.**

#### **11280 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019 / 2020 SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 was received for consideration and approval.

**Resolved: To approve Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.**

#### **11281 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019 / 2020 SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 was received for consideration and approval subject to external audit.

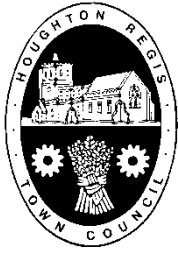
**Resolved: To approve Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 subject to external audit.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.19pm**

**Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of August 2020**

**Chairman**

DRAFT



**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**Title:** ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

**Purpose of the Report:** To enable members to consider the Local Government Boundary Commission national electoral review in relation to Central Bedfordshire Council.

**Contact Officer:** Clare Evans, Town Clerk

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## **1. RECOMMENDATION**

**To support the fundamental aims of the electoral review but object to the 2 identified variances between the CBC ward boundary and the parish boundary in Houghton Regis namely:**

- 1. The area around All Saints where the electorate would be represented at a CBC level by a ward councillor for the proposed Houghton Regis West and at a parish level by a ward councillor for Dunstable Town Council.**
- 2. The proposed boundary between Houghton Regis West and Houghton Regis East does not follow the parish ward boundary between Houghton Hall and Parkside.**

**It is felt that these discrepancies are nonsensical and may undermine the reputation of the democratic system and may lead to voter disengagement.**

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) is carrying out a national electoral review. This includes an electoral review of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). The LGBC Summary Report for CBC is attached for information.

The aim of the electoral review is to ensure:

- The wards in Central Bedfordshire are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across Central Bedfordshire ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

The Commission has a dedicated section on its website where people can see the detail of the proposals and the background papers and responses to the review:

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/bedfordshire/central-bedfordshire>

Members are specifically requested to consider pages 24-27 of the LGBC Draft Recommendations.

Consultation responses on the names of wards, their boundaries and the number of councillors per ward can be made by following this link:

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/have-your-say/18789>

### **3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

The following proposals are being put forward and are subject to consultation until 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020:

Across CBC the LGBC is proposing:

- Central Bedfordshire should be represented by 63 councillors, four more than there are now
- Central Bedfordshire should have 29 wards, two fewer than there are now
- The boundaries of 18 wards should change; 11 will stay the same.
- There would be 12 three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and seven one-councillor wards;

Specifically relating to Houghton Regis:

The LGBC are recommending a three-councillor Houghton Regis East ward and a two-councillor Houghton Regis West ward, with forecast electoral variances of -6% and -10% by 2025 respectively.

To achieve this, an area around All Saints will change from being within CBC Northfields ward to being within the proposed CBC Houghton West ward. This is shown on the attached plan.

For the area around All Saints, the electorate would be represented at a CBC level by a ward councillor for Houghton Regis West and at a parish level by a ward councillor for Dunstable Town Council.

Members are also advised that the proposed boundary between Houghton Regis West and Houghton Regis East does not follow the parish ward boundary between Houghton Hall and Parkside. Currently in the parish ward boundary of Houghton Hall are the Sandringham estate and the Painters estate plus Halley's Way and Windsor Drive.

The parish boundary and the parish ward boundaries are not subject to review under this process.

Whilst it appears that the aims of the LGBC review are met through their recommendations, it is suggested that it is nonsensical to have an area of the Northfields parish ward within a CBC Houghton Regis ward. For the electorate living within this area, this electoral arrangement would appear absurd and would have the potential to undermine the democratic reputation. In practical terms parish and unitary elections are held on the same day, this arrangement would bring voting complications which may discourage voter engagement to the detriment of the democratic system.

CBC have been developing their response to this consultation. The formal response is due to be considered at the CBC General Purposes Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> August. Due to the timing of this agenda it is not possible to advise members of the CBC draft response. Members are encouraged to consider the CBC agenda report via the CBC website prior to the HRTC meeting. Members may also like to consider whether they would wish a representative from HRTC to speak at the CBC meeting to put forward the views of HRTC.

The final recommendations of the LGBC are due to be published on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

#### **4. COUNCIL VISION**

##### **Aspirations**

A2 To effectively and proactively **represent** our community

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Corporate Implications**

- There are no arising corporate implications.

##### **Legal Implications**

- There are no arising legal implications.

##### **Financial Implications**

- There are no arising financial implications.

##### **Risk Implications**

- There are no arising risk implications.

##### **Equalities Implications**

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

##### **Press Contact**

There are no arising press implications.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**





Whilst the aims of the electoral review are supported the 2 identified variances between the CBC ward boundary and the parish boundary in Houghton Regis are nonsensical and may undermine the reputation of the democratic system and may lead to voter disengagement.

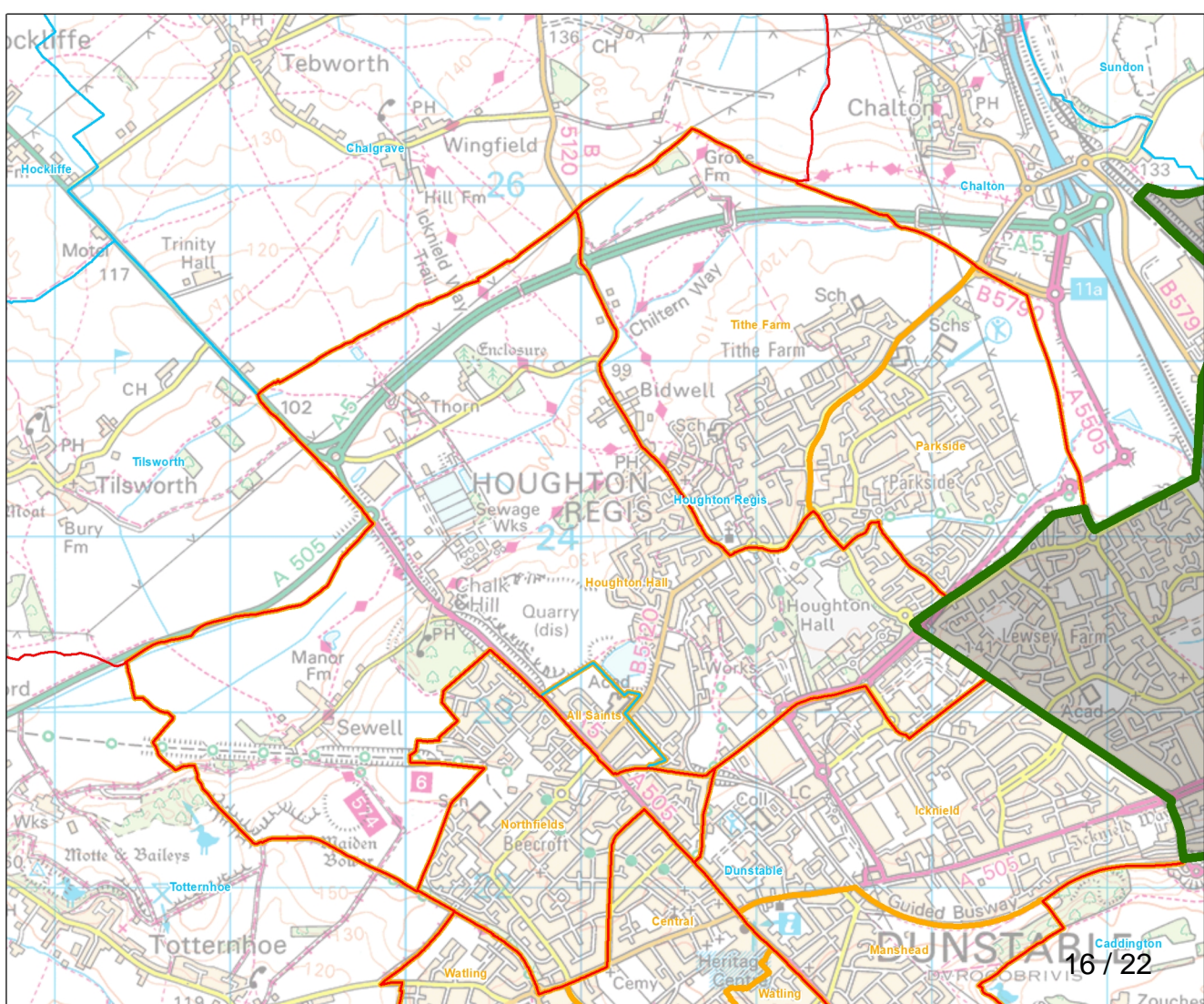
## **7. APPENDICES**

**Appendix A:** Local Government Boundary Commission Summary Report for Central Bedfordshire Council

**Appendix B:** Local Government Boundary Commission – Plan: Parish Warding Arrangements for Houghton Regis Town Council

Parish Warding Arrangements for Houghton Regis Town Council

-  District
-  Draft Recommendations
-  Parish
-  Parish Ward





## Have your say

We are now consulting local people on a new pattern of wards for Central Bedfordshire Council. We have an open mind about our final recommendations, and we will consider every piece of evidence we receive from local groups and people, regardless of whom it is from or whether it relates to the whole council area or just a part of it.

If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for Central Bedfordshire we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

# Central Bedfordshire Council

## Draft Recommendations on the new electoral arrangements

We aim to propose a pattern of wards for Central Bedfordshire Council which delivers:

- **Electoral equality:** each councillor represents a similar number of voters.
- **Community identity:** reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- **Effective and convenient local government:** helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

### A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of voters.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

### Electoral equality

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of voters as elsewhere in the council area?

### Community identity

- **Transport links:** are there good links across your proposed ward? Is there any form of public transport?
- **Community groups:** is there a parish council, residents association or another group that represents the area?
- **Facilities:** does your pattern of wards reflect where local people go for shops, medical services, leisure facilities etc?

#### Write to:

Review Officer (Central Bedfordshire)  
LGBCE c/o Cleardata  
Innovation House  
Coniston Court  
Riverside Business Park  
Blyth, NE24 4RP

- **Interests:** what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
- **Identifiable boundaries:** are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

### Effective local government

- Are any of the proposed wards too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the wards appropriate?

### Useful tips

- Our website has a special consultation area where you can explore the maps and draw your own proposed boundaries. You can find it at [consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk).
- We publish all submissions we receive on our website. Go to: [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

### Our consultation area:

[consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk)

#### Email:

[reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

#### Twitter:

@LGBCE



### Who we are

- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament.
- We are not part of government or any political party.
- We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.
- Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

### Electoral review

An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority, including:

- The total number of councillors representing the council's voters ('council size')
- The names, number and boundaries of wards
- The number of councillors for each ward

### Why Central Bedfordshire?

- Central Bedfordshire Council currently has high levels of electoral inequality: some councillors represent many more - or many fewer - voters than others.
- Therefore the value of your vote, in Central Bedfordshire Council elections, varies depending on where you live in Central Bedfordshire.
- We are seeking to improve levels of electoral equality for local voters.

### Our proposals

- We propose that the council should have **63 councillors** in future, representing 12 three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and seven one-councillor wards.

**You have until 7 September 2020 to have your say on the recommendations**

## Summary of our recommendations

Our draft recommendations propose that Central Bedfordshire Council should have 63 councillors, an increase of 4 from the existing arrangements.

Those councillors should represent 12 three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and seven one-councillor wards.

Before drawing up the draft recommendations, the Commission carried out a public consultation inviting proposals for a new pattern of wards for Central Bedfordshire.

We have considered all of the submissions we received during that phase of consultation. The boundaries of most wards should change.

An outline of the proposals is shown in the map to the right. A detailed report on the recommendations and interactive mapping is available on our website at: [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk).

We welcome comments on our draft recommendations, whether you support the proposals or wish to put forward alternative arrangements.

Have your say at [consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk):

- view the map of our recommendations down to street level.
- draw your own boundaries online.
- zoom into the areas that interest you most.
- find more guidance on how to have your say.
- read the full report of our recommendations.
- send us your views directly.

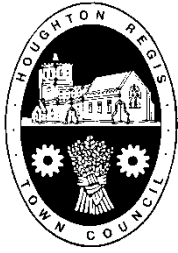
Stage of Review	Description
22 October 2019 - 24 February 2020	Public consultation on warding arrangements
30 June 2020 - 7 September 2020	Public consultation on draft recommendations
1 December 2020	Publication of final recommendations
May 2023	Subject to parliamentary approval - implementation of new arrangements at local elections

# Overview of draft recommendations for Central Bedfordshire Council

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**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**Title:** MEMBER IT PROVISION

**Purpose of the Report:** To enable consideration of the provision of IT for members.

**Contact Officer:** Clare Evans, Town Clerk

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**1. RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. To purchase as required by individual members, a Microsoft Surface Go 2 Tablet with a 3 year support pack and email only to support members in performing their role and undertaking their responsibilities as a councillor;**
- 2. To be funded through 199-4026 Computer Costs.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

Under Minute 11277 of the Town Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July the following was requested:

- 5. To note the provision of £6,000 in 199-4026 Computer Costs for tablets/laptops for members and to require a report on the sourcing, support and cost of these items to be brought before the next Corporate Services Committee or Full Town Council meeting for approval.**

This report is provided as requested.

**3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

As agreed through the revised budget additional resource has been put into Computer Costs, 199-4026 to enable the council to purchase suitable IT to support members. The need, which is ongoing, for members to be able to carry out their duties using IT has been highlighted during Covid-19. A particular difficulty has been the lack of consistency of what IT members have available and as such it is difficult to provide the right support. However, members are still expected to engage with the council and to carry out their duties as a councillor. As such it is suggested that the council source an appropriate option to supply all councillor with a laptop/ tablet. This will ensure consistency of IT provision, that suitable support can be provided and that members

will be able to engage with the council and to carry out their duties. This may be through purchase or leasing. This proposal is intended to support councillors in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, it is a necessary spend of resources.

#### **4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Quotes on options have been sourced from the Council's IT support company. The following information is provided:

##### **Hardware:**

Prices have been sourced for a tablet and for a laptop. The council can mix and match as required using the unit price.

Microsoft Surface Go 2 Tablet – 10.5” (inc 3-year support pack at £69, 1 year included as standard) – unit price £390 includes a microphone and camera, keyboard  
Fujitsu Lifebook A359 15.6” (inc 3-year support pack at £49, 1 year included as standard) – unit price £596, includes a microphone and camera, larger screen size than tablet

##### **Software:**

Members need to decide whether they just need their emails on the device or whether they need the full office package.

There are no additional software charges just for email access.

If an office package is required then there will be an additional software charge of £112.80 per year, per user.

If members create their own Microsoft outlook account they can access free Office software that way instead. The potential issue with this option is that it could get complicated and be confusing on which account they're logged in with should the member not be IT confident. Members should also note that the free Office has editing limitations compared to the paid for version.

PDF documents can be opened using Adobe regardless. Any documentation sent to members would need to be in a PDF format.

Should members opt for email only software and it prove too limiting it is possible to upgrade to the full office package for the cost stated above.

##### **Leasing**

This is not a common approach to small scale IT equipment, as such it is taking longer than expected to source prices. The council's IT support company have cautioned that this option is usually considered a false economy as the council would pay more over time in leasing costs than it would for purchase and at the end of the lease the council does not own the equipment.

##### **Installation**

With the office package this is charged at £100 per machine to configure.

With access to emails only this is charged at £60 per machine to configure (assuming all machines are purchased at the same time).

This includes delivery to the council offices once configured.

This charge is applicable to purchased and leased equipment.

##### **Support**

IT support to members will be provided under the council's current contract, however should the support required significantly increase the IT company may look to review their contract charge to the council.

#### Other

The provision of IT to members is optional for individual councillors. Should a member decide to take up the offer they will be issued with guidelines for use, security and safety. The IT will remain the property of the Council and members will be required to return it to the council at the end of their term of office.

#### Budget

Based on the recommendation the costs are as follows:

Capital purchase of Microsoft Surface Go 2 Tablet unit price £390

3-year support pack unit price £69

Configuration charge unit price £60

Total £519 per unit

## 5. COUNCIL VISION

### Aspirations

A5 To ensure the **council** is fit for purpose and efficient in its delivery of services

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

### Corporate Implications

- Member IT training will be provided via an online platform. The annual cost is £350 and will be taken from Member Training

### Legal Implications

- Should members decide to agree a lease arrangement a contract would be entered into

### Financial Implications

- To be funded through 199-4026 Computer Costs. This budget would be overspent should all 13 members decide to take up the provision.

### Risk Implications

- There is an increasing reliance on IT connectivity. Members may be disadvantaged due to a lack of access to suitable IT.

### Equalities Implications

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

**Press Contact**

There are no arising press implications.

**7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

Access to IT by members is integral to them being able to perform their role and undertake their responsibilities.

The most cost effective and suitable option is to purchase the Microsoft Surface Go 2 Tablet with email only.

**8. APPENDICES**

**None**