



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Cllr J W Carroll**

Tel: 01582 708540

Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

e-mail: info@houghtonregis.org.uk

9th June 2023

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

To: All Town Councillors

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to the Meeting of the Houghton Regis Town Council to be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street on Monday 19th June 2023 at 7.00pm.

Members of the public who wish to attend the meeting may do so in person or remotely through the meeting link below.

To attend remotely through Teams please follow this link: [MEETING LINK](#)

Please follow this guidance if attending the meeting remotely [LINK](#)

Clare Evans
Town Clerk

THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED¹

AGENDA

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

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.

¹ *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.

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 8 - 19

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2023.

Recommendation: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2023.

5. COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Pages 20 - 28

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

Corporate Services Committee	27 th February 2023
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	14 th March 2023
Planning Committee	24 th April 2023
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present
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Please contact the Head of Democratic Services if you would like a copy of any of these policies re-sent to you.

Recommendation: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendation contained therein as follows:

To recommend to Town Council to adopt a revised Town Councils Leave and Other Absences Policy and to adopt a new Family Friendly Policy that covers all leave entitlements other than Annual Leave.

6. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A verbal report will be provided.

7. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Councillors are requested to provide verbal reports from meetings they have attended of outside organisations or from training courses they have attended on behalf of the Council.

8. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Pages 29 - 31

Members will find attached a report providing brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members are invited to raise any queries relating to the process.

This report is provided for information purposes.

**9. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023
ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2022/2023**

Pages 32 - 46

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members are presented with the completed Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Members are advised that the internal auditor completed an interim internal audit on 21st February 2023 and the year-end internal audit on 25th April 2023.

Recommendation: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/2023 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report as attached.

10. DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2022/2023

Page 47

Members are requested to approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Members are advised of the following

1. Date of announcement: 22nd June 2023
2. Date of commencement: 23rd June 2023
3. End date: 3rd August 2023

Recommendation: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2023 as follows:

- 1. Date of announcement: 22nd June 2023**
- 2. Date of commencement: 23rd June 2023**
- 3. End date: 3rd August 2023**

11. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023 SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Pages 48 – 52

Members are advised that the Interim Internal Audit identified an issue of non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The attached report enables Members to consider the comment made during the interim internal audit as it relates to Assertion 3.

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 31st March 2022 is attached for consideration, approval and signature, Appendix B.

Recommendation:

- 1. To note that the failure to display the external auditors report by 30th September 2022 is non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations;**
- 2. To confirm that as it has not had a significant financial effect on the ability of the council to conduct its business or manage its finances, as included in Assertion 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2022/2023, that the council can respond positively to Assertion 3.**
- 3. To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023.**

12. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023 SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

Page 53 - 68

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 31st March 2023 is attached for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

Recommendation: **To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023 subject to external audit.**

13. REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2023/24

Page 69

Members will find attached a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2023/24 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

This report is provided for information only, ear marked reserve movements are confirmed at year end.

14. RECEIPT OF PETITION

Members are requested to note that a petition was submitted to the Town Council on 15th May 2023.

The wording of the petition is as follows:

Petition for the town meeting Monday 15th May 7pm St Thomas'

We, the undersigned note that, following the elections, there has been a change at Houghton Regis Town Council.

We ask our councillors to act on the following:-

Insist Grendall Lane is brought back to the full town council for further discussion.

Subsequent to this, Members are advised that a Motion was submitted on 30th May to the Town Clerk as follows:

From Cllrs; Jimmy Carroll proposer of the motion and Trace McMahon seconder of the motion.

Motion.

To Instruct the Clerk and Chair of the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee of Houghton Regis Town Council to:

1. To open negotiations with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding land owned by Central Bedfordshire Council at Grendall Lane Houghton Regis for its suitability as a future Cemetery for the Town of Houghton Regis.

2. To proceed and complete the T3 investigations at the Grendall Lane site subject to Central Bedfordshire Council as land owner. To fund the investigations of the Grendall Lane from EMR 348 and general reserves up to £20,000.

3. To contact CDS cemetery consultants to inform them of the change of motion by the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee as to Grendall Lane and to continue with the investigations into the Grendall Lane possible cemetery site.

At the time of preparing this report, the motion is to be debated at the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee meeting on 12th June. A verbal update will be given on the outcome of that meeting.

Members are requested to note that the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference for the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee enable it to consider and determine all matters relating to the development of a new cemetery. To view please follow this link:

[Houghton Regis Town Council](#)

The petition is signed by some 175 residents, although not cross checked with the electoral role, it is taken that the signatories are all residents of Houghton Regis.

There is no legislation or local policy directing how the council is to respond to the receipt of a petition. The Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee was advised at its meeting on 12th June that a petition had been received, what it said and how many people signed it.

In addition the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee was provided with the option of referring this matter to Town Council in accordance with Standing Orders.

At the time of preparing this report, the outcome of the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee is not known. However, given that the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee had full knowledge of the existence of the petition and it was acting within its remit, the advice is that the Town Council should note the receipt of the petition.

This report is provided for information purposes only.

15. START TIME FOR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Pages 70 - 72

To enable members to consider a suitable start time for meetings of Working Groups.

Recommendation: To change the start time of Allotment Working Group to 5.30pm.

16. ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE NOMINATION

Pages 73 - 82

To enable members to consider the suitability and desirability of nominating the land at Windsor Drive as an asset of community value.

Recommendation: To support the request from the Friends of Windsor Drive group to nominate the land at Windsor Drive as an Asset of Community Value.

17. COMMITTEE, SUB-COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

As members may recall at the AGM on 17th May 2023 it was agreed to defer nominating to the Town Partnership Committee until this meeting.

For information Central Bedfordshire Council have appointed CBC Cllrs C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill and T McMahon to the Houghton Regis Partnership committee.

The Town Council is required to nominate 4 cllrs to sit on this committee.

Recommendation: To nominate and approve membership on the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.

18. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

As members may recall at the AGM on 17th May 2023 it was agreed to defer nominating to the Houghton Hall Park Board and Houghton Hall Park Management Advisory Group until this meeting.

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: J Carroll
N Batchelor
E Billington
E Costello
E Cooper
Y Farrell
W Henderson
M Herber
D Jones
T McMahan
C Rollins
A Slough
C Slough
Town Mayor

Officers: Clare Evans
Louise Senior
Sarah Gelsthorp
Town Clerk
Head of Democratic Services
Civic and Events Manager

Public: 9

Apologies Councillor: P Burgess

12422 ELECTION OF THE TOWN MAYOR

The retiring Town Mayor, Cllr Farrell, invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the period May 2023 to May 2024.

Nominee: J Carroll
Nominated by: Cllr McMahan
Seconded by: Cllr M Herber

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote Cllr Carroll was duly elected as Town Mayor for the municipal year 2023 – 2024.

The new Town Mayor read and signed the ‘Declaration of Acceptance of Office’. The new Town Mayor retired to receive the mayoral robes and the Chain of Office from the retiring Town Mayor.

The new Mayor adopted the role of Chairman and thanked councillors for the opportunity and gave an acceptance speech.

Cllr Jones proposed a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Cllr Farrell. Highlighted were the extensive number of events, both held and attended, over the course of the year and the professionalism shown throughout. Also highlighted was the funds of £5,000 raised for

Cllr Farrell's chosen charities of Headway, the Hub Cafe and Carers in Bedfordshire. The retiring Town Mayor, spoke of her mayoral year, and shared some highlights and thanked her fellow councillors for the support they had offered throughout her year.

The Town Mayor, Cllr Carroll, welcomed his appointment and announced that his charities for the year were to be confirmed.

12423 ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR

The Town Mayor invited nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor for the period May 2023 to May 2024.

Nominee:	Cllr Cooper	Nominated by:	Cllr Jones
		Seconded by:	Cllr Farrell

On being put to the vote Cllr Cooper was duly elected as the new Deputy Town Mayor.

The new Deputy Mayor read and signed the 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office' and received the Chain of Office from the Town Mayor.

Cllr Cooper thanked fellow members for their support in her role as Deputy Mayor.

12424 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Burgess.

Cllr C Slough advised the Chair that he would need to leave part-way through the meeting.

12425 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12426 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

12427 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2023.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12428 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the following committees and considered any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	None to present
Community Services Committee	None to present

Environment & Leisure Committee	13 th February 2023
Planning Committee	13 th March and 3 rd April 2023
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

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

New Office Provisions Sub-Committee	None to present
New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

12429 COUNCIL CALENDAR FOR 2023-24

The draft Council Calendar, including meeting dates, member briefing dates, and council and civic event dates, for 2023/24 was presented at the Town Council meeting held on the 20th March 2023. At this meeting Members noted the draft Council Calendar, made some suggested alterations and recommended its approval at the Annual Meeting of Town Council.

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 in accordance with Standing Order 4.j.ix.

Further amendments were suggested and agreed.

Members requested that the timing of working groups be included on the next Town Council agenda for consideration to allow for work commitments of members.

Resolved: To approve the Council Calendar for 2023/24.

12430 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.v. Council was required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub committees.

These arrangements were set out in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference. This document set out the system of delegation to the Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups of the Council.

The approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference were reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on the 20th March 2023, as detailed under Minute 12403, Strategic Policies 2023/24.

Under Minute 12403, Members noted that consideration was given to the following points:

- Sub-Committees and Working Groups of the Council shall consist of 5 Councillors, with the exception of the Complaints Sub-Committee, the Complaints Appeals Sub-Committee and the Disciplinary Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee, the membership of all of which shall consist of 3 Councillors. This was now reflected in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference.
- Conclusion of the New Office Sub Committee. This Sub Committee last met on 27th September 2022 where it was agreed that the revised Chamber layout was suitable for meetings and as such the building would continue to be maintained as required. It was suggested that the office accommodation for the Town Council be placed under the Corporate Services Committee. It was felt that this option provided the most efficient use of time and as such, amendments had been made in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference.

Resolved: To approve the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference as presented for 2023/24.

12431 COMMITTEE, SUB-COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Members were requested to:

1. Nominate and approve membership on the Town Council's Committees, Sub Committees, Working and other Groups (Standing Order 6d);
2. To appoint Chairs of Standing Committees accordingly Groups (Standing Order 6dv).

The following summarises the committee structure and associated membership:

Standing Committees

Corporate Services Committee	7 members
Environment & Leisure Committee	7 members
Community Services Committee	7 members
Planning Committee	7 members

Joint Committees

Partnership Committee	8 members (4 Town Cllrs & 4 CBC Cllrs)
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Sub-Committees

Complaints Sub-Committee ¹	3 members
Complaints Appeal Sub-Committee ²	3 members
Personnel Sub-Committee ²	5 members
Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee ²	3 members
Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee	5 members

¹ To be appointed as required

² To be appointed from Town Council

Working Groups

Events Working Group	5 members (up to)
Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group ³	5 members
Combating Crime Working Group	5 members

Steering Groups

Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan	5 members
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Members confirmed the below memberships on the Town Council's Committees, Sub Committees, Working and other Groups, and appointed Chairs.

STANDING COMMITTEES – 2023 - 2024*Corporate Services*

Cllrs: D Jones (Chair), J Carroll, E Costello, W Henderson, M Herber, C Rollins and C Slough

Cllr D Jones was proposed as Chair by C Slough, seconded by Cllr Farrell
Members voted in favour, accordingly Cllr Jones was appointed as the chair of Corporate Services Committee.

Environment & Leisure

Cllrs: A Slough (Chair), P Burgess, E Cooper, E Costello, Y Farrell, W Henderson and T McMahon

Cllr A Slough was proposed as Chair by C Slough, seconded by Cllr Jones
Members voted in favour, accordingly Cllr A Slough was appointed as the chair of Environment and Leisure Committee.

Planning

Cllrs: C Slough (Chair), N Batchelor, E Billington, J Carroll, E Cooper, M Herber and D Jones

Cllr C Slough was proposed as Chair by Cllr Jones, seconded by Cllr A Slough
Members voted in favour, accordingly Cllr Slough was appointed as the chair of the Planning Committee.

Community Services

Cllrs: Y Farrell (Chair), N Batchelor, E Billington, P Burgess, T McMahon, C Rollins and A Slough

Cllr McMahon was proposed as Chair by Cllr Herber, seconded by N Batchelor

- Cllr McMahon received 4 votes in favour

Cllr Farrell was proposed as Chair by Cllr Jones, seconded by Cllr Cooper

- Cllr Farrell received 7 votes in favour

³ To comprise Members who do not sit on Events Working Group

Accordingly, Cllr Farrell was appointed as the chair of the Community Services Committee.

OTHER COMMITTEES – 2023 – 2024

Town Partnership

Cllrs: To be deferred to the June Town Council meeting

SUB-COMMITTEES – 2023 - 2024

Complaints Sub-Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Personnel Sub Committee (Reporting to Corporate Services)

Cllrs: E Costello, W Henderson, M Herber, D Jones and T McMahon

New Cemetery Sub Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: J Carroll, Y Farrell, T McMahon, C Rollins and A Slough

WORKING GROUPS – 2023 - 2024

Events Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: N Batchelor, Y Farrell, T McMahon, C Rollins and A Slough

Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: E Billington, P Burgess, E Costello, M Herber and D Jones

Complaints Appeal Sub-Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee (Reporting to Corporate Services)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Combating Crime Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: E Cooper, Y Farrell, M Herber, T McMahon and C Slough

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (Reporting to Planning)

Cllrs: N Batchelor, J Carroll, Y Farrell, W Henderson and D Jones

Allotments Working Group (Reporting to E&L)

Cllrs: E Billington, J Carroll, E Cooper, T McMahon and C Rollins

- Resolved:**
- 1. To nominate and approve membership on the Town Council's Committees, Sub Committees, Working and other Groups;**
 - 2. To appoint Chairs of Standing Committees accordingly.**

12432 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Town Council was invited to appoint representatives to outside organisations to act as a link between the Town Council and the organisation.

Reporting Mechanisms

Members who were appointed as representatives were requested to attend meetings of the organisations and to report to them items / issues of relevance from Houghton Regis Town Council and in turn to report back to the Town Council or the specified committee on the activities of the organisation. There was a standing item on Town Council agendas to facilitate this.

Members were appointed to the organisations as below:

All Saints View Stakeholder Group	Cllr C Slough
Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils	Cllr Carroll, Cllr Jones and Cllr C Slough
Bedfordshire Bus Users	Cllr McMahon
Chews Foundation	Cllr Carroll
Citizens Advice	Cllr Cooper
Hospice at Home Volunteers	Cllr Jones
Houghton Hall Park Project Board	TBC
Houghton Hall Park MAG	TBC
Houghton Regis North Stakeholder Group	Cllr Jones
Memorial Hall Committee	Cllr Cooper and Cllr Farrell
SORTED	Cllr Billington
South Beds Dial-a-Ride	Cllr Henderson
Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space	Cllr A Slough

Resolved:

- 1. To appoint the councillor representatives for the listed outside organisations for 2023/24;**
- 2. To note the reporting back mechanism as set out.**

12433 **STANDING ORDERS**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.vii. Council was required to review its Standing Orders.

Standing Orders were ‘the written rules of a local council. they were used to confirm a council’s internal organisational and administrative procedures, procurement and procedural matters for meetings’.⁴

The approved Standing Orders were reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on the 20th March 2023 and considered suitable. However, since the meeting held on the 20th March 2023, members were advised that the Government had increased the threshold where councils intend to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (“the

⁴ Local Councils Explained, NALC

Regulations”), from £25,000 to £30,000 or more. Therefore, members were requested to note amendments to values stated in Standing Orders 18bv and 18d.

Resolved: To approve Standing Orders as presented.

12434 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.vii. Council was required to review its Financial Regulations.

Financial Regulations were ‘the “standing orders” of a local council that regulate and controlled its financial affairs and accounting procedures’.⁵

The Financial Regulations were reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on the 20th March 2023.

Since the meeting held on the 20th March 2023, members were advised that the Government had increased the threshold where councils intend to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”), from £25,000 to £30,000 or more. Previously, the threshold was £25,000 including VAT however, as of the 22nd December 2022 the threshold is £25,000 plus VAT.

Members received updated values for public contracts.

Members were also requested to note that the regulations now included an e-notification service to advertise contract opportunities, as highlighted on the footer of the document.

Resolved: To approve Financial Regulations as presented.

12435 SCHEME OF DELEGATION

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.v. Council was required to review its Scheme of Delegation.

The Scheme of Delegation authorised the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, Council and Standing Committees of the Council to act with delegated authority in the specific circumstances detailed.

The approved Scheme of Delegation was reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on 20th March 2023 and was recommended for approval.

Resolved: To approve the Scheme of Delegation as presented.

12436 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

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

⁵ Local Councils Explained, NALC

- 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.

12437 BANKING & SIGNING ARRANGEMENTS

Banking Arrangements

Under Town Council Minute 11683 (June 2021) the signing arrangements for the councils bank accounts was approved as follows:

To confirm the above and to approve the bank mandate be set up as follows:

- 2 signatories from Group A (members) and 1 signatory from Group B (officers);
- Group A to comprise current serving councillors
- Group B to comprise Clerk & RFO, Democratic Services Officer, Head of Grounds Operations, Corporate Services Manager

To remove all other signatories.

In order to update the bank mandate to reflect the new council and some alterations to staffing, the council was asked to approve the recommendation below.

Signing arrangements / Authorisation of Payments

In accordance with Financial Regulation 5.2 it was requested that Council authorise 2 councillors to receive, check and authorise the payment of invoices.

Tithe Farm Sports Project

Members were requested to note under Minute 11653 that authority had been given to the Chair of Environment & Leisure Committee to sign related contracts in conjunction with the Clerk. The opportunity to highlight this delegation arrangement was taken as in the next few weeks the Chair of Environment & Leisure Committee would be asked to sign the contract for the all-weather playing pitch.

This was provided for information only.

Resolved: Banking Arrangements

To approve the bank mandate be set up as follows:

- 2 signatories from Group A (councillors) and 1 signatory from Group B (officers);
- Group A to comprise current serving councillors
- Group B to comprise Clerk & RFO and Heads of Service

To remove all other signatories.

To accord with banking requirements the following resolution is also passed:

-
- **if we add or remove Authorised Signatories in the “Add or Remove Authorised Signatories” section on the “About your request” page of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's “About your business” section**
 - **if we change the Signing Rules in the “Change the Signing Rules on the Mandate” section on the “About your request” page of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's “About your business” section**
 - **and the current mandate will continue as amended.**

Signing Arrangements

To nominate Cllr Jones and Cllr Herber to receive, check and authorise the payment of invoices.

12438 HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

At the Town Council’s Planning meeting held on the 24th April 2023 members of the committee resolved to recommend to Council the approval, for submission to Central Bedfordshire Council, of the final version of Houghton Regis Town Council’s Neighbourhood Plan.

The committee requested that this recommendation be presented to Town Council at its meeting in May in order to not wait until after the planning meeting held on the 22nd May 2023. Recommendations to either Council or other Committees, were usually considered following the approval of the minutes of the meeting where the recommendation was made. However, due to the length of time this project had taken to get to this submission stage (the Town Council appointed a planning consultant to support the development of the plan on the 16th May 2016), members of the planning committee felt it imperative to gain support for this recommendation as soon as possible. Members were advised, that this item may be deferred due to the business to be conducted at the Council meeting in May.

Members received a copy of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Resolved: To recommend to Council the approval, for submission to Central Bedfordshire Council, of the final version of Houghton Regis Town Councils Neighbourhood Plan

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.58pm
Dated this 19th day of June 2023**

Chairman

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2023 / 2024

STANDING COMMITTEES – 2023 - 2024

Corporate Services

Cllrs: **D Jones (Chair)**, J Carroll, E Costello, W Henderson, M Herber, C Rollins, C Slough

Environment & Leisure

Cllrs: **A Slough (Chair)**, P Burgess, E Cooper, E Costello, Y Farrell, W Henderson, T McMahon

Planning

Cllrs: **C Slough (Chair)**, N Batchelor, E Billington, J Carroll, E Cooper, M Herber, D Jones

Community Services

Cllrs: **Y Farrell (Chair)**, N Batchelor, E Billington, P Burgess, T McMahon, C Rollins, A Slough

OTHER COMMITTEES – 2023 - 2024

Town Partnership

Cllrs: *TBC at June Town Council meeting*

SUB-COMMITTEES – 2023 - 2024

Complaints Sub-Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Complaints Appeal Sub-Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee (Reporting to Corporate Services)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Personnel Sub Committee (Reporting to Corporate Services)

Cllrs: E Costello, W Henderson, M Herber, D Jones, T McMahon

New Cemetery Sub Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: J Carroll, Y Farrell, T McMahon, C Rollins, A Slough

WORKING GROUPS – 2023 - 2024

Events Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: N Batchelor, Y Farrell, T McMahon, C Rollins, A Slough

Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: E Billington, P Burgess, E Costello, M Herber, D Jones

Combating Crime Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: E Cooper, Y Farrell, M Herber, T McMahon, C Slough

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (Reporting to Planning)

Cllrs: N Batchelor, J Carroll, Y Farrell, W Henderson, D Jones

Allotments Working Group (Reporting to E&L)

Cllrs: E Billington, J Carroll, E Cooper, T McMahon, C Rollins

OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS – 2023 / 2024

All Saints View Stakeholder Group	Cllr C Slough
Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils	Cllr Carroll, Cllr Jones, Cllr C Slough
Chews Foundation	Cllr Carroll
Citizens Advice	Cllr Cooper
Hospice at Home Volunteers	Cllr Jones
Houghton Hall Park Project Board	TBC
Houghton Hall Park MAG	TBC
Houghton Regis North Stakeholder Group	Cllr Jones
Memorial Hall Committee	Cllr Cooper, Cllr Farrell
SORTED	Cllr Billington
South Beds Dial-a-Ride	Cllr Henderson
Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space	Cllr A Slough

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
27th February 2023 at 7.00pm.

Present:	Councillors:	D Jones J Carroll Y Farrell S Goodchild C Slough K Wattingham	Chairman Substitute Substitute
	Officers:	Debbie Marsh Louise Senior	Corporate Services Manager Head of Democratic Services
	Public:	0	
Apologies:	Councillors:	E Cooper C Copleston M S Kennedy	

12372 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Cooper (Cllr Farrell substituted), Cllr Copleston (Cllr C Slough substituted) and Cllr Kennedy.

12373 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12374 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

12375 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2022, 16th January and 30th January 2023.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2022, 16th January and 30th January 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12376 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Personnel Sub-Committee: 8th November 2022 and 17th November 2022

New Office Sub-Committee: 21st February 2022

DJT.

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

12377 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members received the income and expenditure report, highlighting significant variances, for Corporate Services Committee to date.

Members received this report for information.

12378 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for October, November and December 2022.

Resolved:

1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for October, November and December 2022;
2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.

12379 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS

Members received a list of payments for the period October, November and December 2022 (inclusive).

Members received this report for information.

12380 INVESTMENT REPORT

In accordance with Committee Functions, Financial Regulation 8 and Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements.

The Corporate Services Committee were to oversee and manage the financial obligations of the Council, including:

To receive quarterly reports on investments containing a forecast of capital expenditure, investment opportunities and a recommendation for further investment including where length and amount.

Members received this report for information.

It was highlighted that there was an error contained within the report as the sum was billions rather than millions.

12381 INSURANCE CLAIMS

DJT.

Members were advised that there have not been any insurance claims from 18th November 2022 to date.

Members received this report for information.

12382 LEAVE ENTITLEMENT POLICY AND FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICY

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting of the Corporate Services Committee it was anticipated that a Leave and Other Absences policy and a Family Friendly Policy was to be presented at this meeting.

Members discussed the contents of the policies and what constituted a close family relative. Members requested the last sentence in 8.3 of the Holidays and Other Absences Policy be removed from the policy.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council to adopt a revised Town Councils Leave and Other Absences Policy and to adopt a new Family Friendly Policy that covers all leave entitlements other than Annual Leave.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.47pm

Dated this 30th day of May 2023

Chairman

D. J. Jones.

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
14th March 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman
 J Carroll Substitute
 E Cooper
 Y Farrell
 T McMahon
 R Morgan
 S Thorne

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

Public: 0

Also present: Councillor: D Jones

12390 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Burgess (Cllr Carroll substituted).

12391 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12392 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

12393 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2023.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 13th February 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12394 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

Members were advised of the uplift in costs for the project. Members discussed the remainder of the funds to be vired from EMR 322. It was advised that officers were exploring with other funders opportunities for any uplift in their funding.

Members were advised that the work would be starting imminently.

AS

- Resolved:**
1. To confirm that the additional funding required (£143,000) to support this project will be found using the 10% uplift in Football Foundation grant (£76,143) with the balance to be found from EMR 322 as required (pending confirmation of further external grant sources already applied for);
 2. To note that the decision making during the construction phase will be based on the following:
 - Variations to works within or less than the budget to be agreed by Clerk
 - Variations in excess of budget to be agreed by Environment & Leisure Committee
 - Internal finishes (wall coverings, flooring etc) to be agreed by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment & Leisure Committee

12395 GROUNDS MACHINERY RENEWAL

Members were requested to approve the sale of the Ford transit (MK18WYJ). This was purchased 4 years ago, the resale value was approximately £19,000. The vehicle was unsuitable for council use as it was only a 2 wheel drive and ran the risk of getting stuck when used off road. Since purchase it had only been driven 7000 miles.

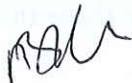
The suggested replacement vehicle was another Ford Ranger. These were 4 wheel drive and suitable for off road work year round. The estimated cost of purchase was £18,000 to £20,000.

Resolved: To approve the sale of the Ford transit (MK18WYJ) and the purchase of a Ford Ranger as a replacement up to the value of £20,000.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 6.12pm

Dated this 5th day of June 2023

Chairman



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Planning Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
24th April 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: D Jones
J Carroll
E Cooper
S Goodchild
S Thorne

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 5

Apologies: Councillors: M S Kennedy
C Slough

Also present: Councillor: Cllr Farrell

12414 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Kennedy and Cllr C Slough.

12415 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12416 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

12417 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd April 2023.

Resolved To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12418 PLANNING MATTERS

(a) The following planning applications were considered:

CB/23/00867/FULL Demolition of existing garage, erection of a new garage with annexe accommodation.
The Orchard, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable,
LU5 6JJ
For: Mrs S Edwards

CRS

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application, however concerns were raised regarding parking capacity for the site.

CB/23/01092/FULL Single storey rear extension
122 Fensome Drive
For: Mr A Ali

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application.

CB/21/03369/FULL Residential development of 57 affordable dwellings with associated works including the re-configuration of the roundabout to create a fourth arm and form the vehicular access Hand Post Field, North of Thorn Road, Houghton Regis
Members are advised that been amendments have been made to this application in respect of the above property. Revised plans, including additional ecological information

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application.

CB/23/01274/REG3 Change of Use: Installation of artificial grass and associated drainage.
The Chiltern School Kingsland Campus Parkside Drive LU5 5PX

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application.

CB/23/00677/FULL Single storey glass orangery extension to restaurant
La Bella Calabria 100 Parkside Drive LU5 5QN

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application.

Noted:

CB/23/00970/DOC Discharge of Condition 5 against planning permission CB/20/00687/FULL (Residential development of 31 affordable dwellings with formation of two vehicular accesses, sustainable urban drainage and associated landscaping). Discharge in Part of Cond 5 PV Panel Certificates and As-Built Elevations and Roof Plan.
Land to the south of The Bungalow, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 6JS

CB/23/00981/DOC Discharge of Condition 2 against planning permission CB/22/01876/FULL (Replacement front garden wall, 2.1m in height and part trellis on wall.) Cond 2 Landscaping.
The Gables, East End, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5LA

CB/23/00918/LDCP Lawful Development Certificate Proposed: Proposed use of the property for supported living accommodation for up to two dependent young persons (aged between 8 and 18) and two appropriate adults operating on a rota basis consistent with the parameters of C3 (b).
No 4 Caretakers Bungalow, Houghton Regis Campus, Parkside Drive, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5PX

(b) Decision Notices

Permissions / Approvals / Consents

Refusals:

None received.

Withdrawals:

None received.

12419 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Following the outcome of the recent Regulation 14 public consultation, members received the final version of Houghton Regis Town Councils Neighbourhood Plan. This was the version to be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council, ready for them to take over and progress the plan to referendum. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group met on the 4th April 2023, to discuss the responses to the consultation and to agree to minor amendments of the plan. These amendments had been made.

Members requested that the recommendation to Council to approve the plan for submission, be taken to the next Town Council meeting (AGM) on the 17th May 2023 so as not to delay this process any longer than is necessary. Members were mindful that due to the business to be conducted at the AGM that this item may be deferred.

Resolved: To recommend to Council the approval, for submission to Central Bedfordshire Council, of the final version of Houghton Regis Town Councils Neighbourhood Plan

12420 CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL – PUBLIC NOTICE A00353 – 18 MONTH EXPERIMENTAL ORDER CONSULTATION – PARK AVENUE, HOUGHTON REGIS

Members received communication from Central Bedfordshire Council in regard to a no waiting at any time 18 month experimental order consultation, for Park Avenue, Houghton Regis.

It was requested that feedback be sought regarding the effectivity of the restrictions, with assurances that Central Bedfordshire Council enforce the restrictions laid out in the order.

CRS

**12421 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES/LOCAL PLAN-
UPDATE/PROGRESS**

Woodside Link – No substantive update to report.

A5 M1 Link – No substantive update to report.

All Saints View – No substantive update to report.

Linnere – No substantive update to report.

Bidwell West – No substantive update to report.

Kingsland – No substantive update to report.

Windsor Drive – No substantive update to report.

Section 106 Monies – No substantive update to report.

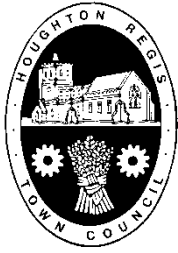
Resolved: To note the information

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.48pm

Dated this 22nd day of May 2023.

Chairman

CRH. Slough



TOWN COUNCIL

Agenda Item 8

Date: 19th June 2023

Title: YEAR END ACCOUNTS PROCESS

Purpose of the Report: To advise members of the year end accounting processes.

Contact Officer: Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

The report is provided for information only.

2. BACKGROUND

This report is provided to advise members of the year end accounting processes.

There are 3 elements to the Council's accounts:

1. Day to day accounts administration
2. Year end close down
3. Preparation of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return

The report provides guidance on each of these elements.

3. DAY TO DAY ACCOUNTS ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the council's accounts is undertaken by the Town Clerk / RFO with support from DCK Beavers.

The council has been successful in its recruitment process for a Finance Officer. It is anticipated that this new employee will commence with the council week commencing 14th August 2023.

4. YEAR END CLOSE DOWN

The RFO specifies a date for year end close down to DCK Beavers for mid May. This is to enable March invoices to be received and processed and for journals of corrections, adjustments, accruals and prepayments to be completed.

DCK Beavers then undertake the following:

1. Check prepayment, accrual and adjustments journals
2. Complete any outstanding journals over which there was a query
3. Make recommendations as appropriate to RFO & Accounts Officer
4. Check the proposed EMR transfers, make necessary amendments and input the appropriate journal entries
5. Print journal report for HRTC officer to check
6. Close down for the month of March and complete back-up
7. Closed the year and complete year end back-up.
8. Open new live company for the subsequent year's accounts.

5. PREPARATION OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

The Annual Governance & Accountability Return comprises:

- Completion of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return form;
- Bank Reconciliation Statement for year end;
- Explanation of Differences to figures contained within the Annual Return form;
- Reconciliation of Boxes 7 & 8 of the Annual Return form;
- Statement of Accounts for the Year;
- Completion of Intermediate Audit Questionnaire supported by evidence specified by the external auditors.

DCK Beavers assist in the completion of the Annual Return. In preparation they require a Questionnaire to be completed in January which provides them with information on the Council's pension scheme, recruitment, advertising, publicity, asset purchases and disposals to date, leases and tenancies, and agency work. This information is provided to assist with the preparation of the Notes to the Statement of Accounts. In addition, the RFO specifies a date for the completion of the Statement of Accounts to DCK Beavers for early June dependent on the date of the Town Council meeting.

DCK Beavers provide a draft of Section 2 Statement of Accounts Notes to the Accounts by the date specified. Officers check information provided.

DCK Beavers do not prepare the following for submission with the Annual Return:

- Bank Reconciliation Statement for year end;
- Explanation of Differences to figures contained within the Annual Return form;
- Reconciliation of Boxes 7 & 8 of the Annual Return form;
- Completion of Intermediate Audit Questionnaire with evidence required

These are completed by the RFO.

6. COUNCIL VISION

The proposed action supports the Council's Vision as follows:

Aspirations

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

7. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- This process is supported by the following council policies:
 - Standing Orders
 - Financial Regulations
 - Internal Audit, Planning & Review

Legal Implications

Smaller authorities must:

- Approve and publish the unaudited AGAR by 30th June
- Must commence the period of public rights on or before 1st July
- Submit the AGAR to the external auditor by 30th June
- Publish the audited AGAR and notice of completion by 30th September

Financial Implications

- There are no budget implications.

Risk Implications

- Failure to submit the Annual Governance & Accountability Return by 30th June would result in the external auditor issuing Qualified Accounts. This may result in reputational damage to the council.

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 report does not discriminate.

Press Contact

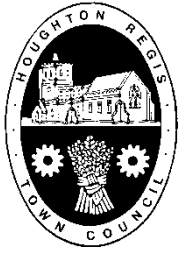
The decision relating to this agenda item will be communicated to the press, via the council's website and social media.

8. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This is an annual process. The report provides background guidance for members information.

9. APPENDICES

None.



Date:	19th June 2023
Title:	INTERNAL AUDIT 2022/23
Purpose of the Report:	To present to members to internal auditors findings for the financial year 2022/23.
Contact Officer:	Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/2023 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report as attached.

2. BACKGROUND

Internal Audit is a function of management and forms part of the Council's internal control mechanisms. It is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk. It thus provides a reasonable, not absolute, assurance of effectiveness.

The audit should cover the areas of 'risk' identified by the annual return and any additional matters Council chooses. It must be based on the financial year.

The scope of the internal audit is set out in the Internal Audit Planning & Review Policy. This is reviewed on an annual basis by Corporate Services Committee.
[221219 Internal Audit Planning & review policy.pdf \(houghtonregis.org.uk\)](https://www.houghtonregis.org.uk/221219-internal-audit-planning-and-review-policy.pdf)

The internal audit for the financial year 2022/23 was carried out by IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd on 21st February 2023 and 25th April 2023.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Members will find attached from the internal auditor the following:

- Cover letter dated 7th June 2023 – App A
- Observations reports annotated to show a response (Comments column) – App B
- Summary report – App C
- Detailed analysis – App D

- Annal Internal Audit Report 2021/22 – App E

The Observations report as annotated is the suggested council’s response, with timeline, to the internal audit.

It is highlighted that the Internal Auditor has given a ‘Not Covered’ response in relation to Control Objective K, L and O. Appendix F provides a covering letter explaining why this response has been given.

5. COUNCIL VISION

Aspirations

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

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- Fixed asset report to be presented to Town Council in December 2023
- Year-end bank reconciliation and bank statements to be presented to Corporate Services Committee in September 2023

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

Financial Implications

- There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations

Risk Implications

- There is a reputational risk should the council not follow accounting practices.

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 press implications arising from the recommendations.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out by an independent and suitability qualified company. A number of observations have been made and an action plan to address these observations has been presented to members for consideration and approval.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Cover Letter

Appendix B – Observations report – annotated

Appendix C - Summary report

Appendix D – Detailed analysis

Appendix E - Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22

Appendix F - covering letter explaining the ‘Not Covered’ response in relation to Control Objective K, L and O



Clare Evans
Town Clerk
Houghton Regis Town Council
Council Offices
Peel Street
Houghton Regis
Bedfordshire
LU5 5EY

7th June 2023

Dear Clare,

Report on Internal Audit carried out on 25 April 2023

An audit was carried out by Kevin Rose on Tuesday 25 April 2023. This was the Year End audit following on from the Interim Internal Audit carried out on 21 February 2023.

The audit was undertaken using our standard IAC Audit Checklist, used for all Local Councils, which has 198 items. A total of 61 items were tested during this audit. Including the items tested during the Interim Internal Audit visit a total of 149 items have been checked during the financial year a further 49 items on the standard Checklist were checked and confirmed as being Not Applicable to your Council. There were no items unchecked at the year end.

Areas subject to audit were;

the payment system (Box B), risk and insurance (Box C), budget and precept setting and monitoring (Box D), income billing, collection and VAT (Box E), payroll (Box G), assets and investments (Box H), bank reconciliations (Box I), and accounting Statements (Box J).

Of the 61 items tested during this audit a Positive response was obtained in respect of 54 tests. There were 7 Negative responses identified, details of which are set out in the attached Year End Internal Audit Observations. A detailed breakdown of our audit testing and Responses is set out in the attached Year End Internal Audit Summary.

You will note from the signed statutory report that I have not given a Negative response for Internal Control Objective M although I did raise an Observation at the Interim audit that the External Auditors Report had not been published on the Councils website by the 30th September as required by law. The report has now been published on the Councils website and I understand that the Council will ensure that it fully complies with this requirement in future.

I would like to express my thanks for the assistance provided to me during my audit.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Rose". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a distinct "Rose" following a dot.

Kevin Rose ACMA
Director

Houghton Regis Town Council Financial Year 2022-23



IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd

Audit date: 25 April 2023

Year End Internal Audit Observations

C This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Assets included in the assets register are covered under the Councils insurance policy	No	<i>The Council's asset register includes the Memorial Hall which, it is understood, is managed by a Charity. The Hall is not listed as an asset on the Council insurance policy and it is understood that Hall is insured through the Trustees Management. A copy of the current insurance of the asset was not provided to the auditor.</i>	<p>The Council to provide the auditor with a copy of the insurance confirming that the building is currently insured.</p> <p>The Council to review the level of insurance cover in place on the Memorial Hall to ensure that it adequate.</p>	Medium	A request has been made to the Memorial Hall Management Committee to provide insurance details. Once received this will be forwarded to the Internal Auditor. Anticipated July 2023 and annually will be available going forwards.

G Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Salaries paid agree with those approved by the council	No	<i>It was noted that one member of staff had been paid the incorrect monthly pay. It appears that this may have been for the entire year.</i>	The Council to review the salaries paid and verify whether they are correct.	High	This review is currently underway any identified discrepancies will be rectified. Anticipated September 2023.
2	Accounting Statements Box 4 - Staff Costs value agrees to total payments of Salaries, Wages and Pensions	No	<i>It was noted that the value stated in Box 4 of the draft Accounting Statements was not correct as it did not include the balance of £12,247.48 on nominal code 4005 Staff Overtime.</i>	The Council to note the difference between the draft Accounting Statements Box 4 value and the value computed by the Internal Auditor. The Council to review the computation and, if appropriate, amend the Box 4 value.	High	This has been addressed and the draft Accounting Statements Box 4 has been amended accordingly and is presented correctly. No further action required.

H Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Continuing existence and condition of assets is checked on a regular basis (when was last check?)	No	<i>It is unclear when the Council last undertook a formal review and verification of its assets.</i>	The Council should put in place a process for the regular review and verification of its assets. Assets of a high value or which may be particularly vulnerable should be subject to verification at more frequent intervals.	Medium	The council has confirmed a definition of an asset. Work is currently being undertaken to review and update the asset register. Once completed a report will be presented to Council. Anticipated December 2023.

I Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Bank reconciliations have been signed and dated as evidence of independent review (Year End)	No	<i>As at the date of the audit the year end bank reconciliation had not been subject to independent review.</i>	Prior to the approval of the Accounting Statements the year end bank reconciliation and supporting bank statements should be subject to formal review and signed as dated as evidence of this review.	Medium	The year end bank reconciliation has been completed. It will be presented to Corporate Services Committee at the next meeting for review and signature. Anticipated September 2023 (next scheduled meeting).
2	Year end bank reconciliation agrees to Box 8 of the Accounting Statements	No	<i>It was noted that the "Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 31 March 2023" report provided includes the £600,000 balance held in the CCLA property fund. This is not a component of Box 8, it is recorded in Box 9 Total Fixed Assets.</i>	Council to note that the balance stated on the Cash and Investment Reconciliation does not agree to the Box 8 value.	Medium	The CCLA property fund balance is allocated in the accounts software as a bank balance. Going forwards it will be allocated as an investment. The balance is correctly shown on the Annual Return. For 2022/23 to note that the balance stated on the Cash and Investment Reconciliation does not agree to the Box 8 value. To be actioned for the 23/24 audit.

J Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
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1	Audit Extended Trial Balance agrees to draft Accounting Statements	No	<p><i>It was noted that there were differences in the values calculated for Box 3 Other income (the auditors value is £4,000 higher) and the Box 4 expenditure (see comments in G above). The balancing difference was on Box 6 so the Box 7 value agrees.</i></p>	<p>Council to review the values stated in the draft accounting statements to ensure that they agree to the Councils accounting records. (A copy of the auditors computations was provided to the Town Clerk).</p>	High	<p>This has been addressed and the draft Accounting Statements has been amended accordingly and is presented correctly. No further action required.</p>
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Houghton Regis Town Council

Interim Audit Date: 21/02/2023



Internal Audit Summary 2022-23

Year End Audit Date 25/04/2023

(shaded Internal Control Objectives are not applicable to your Council)

Internal Control Objective	Negative Analysis					Responses				Recommendations	
	Non - Compliance	High	Medium	Low	Advisory	Positive	Negative	N/A	Not Checked		
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
B	This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	0	2	1	1	0	31	3	5	0	4
C	This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	0	0	1	0	0	10	2	0	0	1
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	0	0	1	0	0	13	0	2	0	1
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	0	1	2	0	0	13	2	10	0	3
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	0	2	0	0	0	15	2	8	0	2
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	0	0	1	0	0	8	1	2	0	1
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	0	0	2	0	0	11	2	3	0	2
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	0	1	1	0	0	7	2	2	0	2
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR tick "not covered"	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
L	The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	N/A	N/A

Internal Control Objective		Negative Analysis					Responses				Recommendations
		Non - Compliance	High	Medium	Low	Advisory	Positive	Negative	N/A	Not Checked	
M	<i>In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).</i>	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
N	<i>The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).</i>	1	0	0	0	0	6	1	1	0	1
O	<i>(For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	N/A
Total		<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>17</u>

Houghton Regis Town Council

Interim Audit Date: 21/02/2023



Internal Audit Detailed Analysis 2022-23

Year End Audit Date 25/04/2023

Internal Control Objective	Negative Analysis					Responses				Recommendations
	Non - Compliance	High	Medium	Low	Advisory	Positive	Negative	N/A	Not Checked	
A <i>Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
<i>Accounting system</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
<i>Record keeping</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Minutes</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
B <i>This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</i>	0	2	1	1	0	31	3	5	0	4
<i>Financial Regulations & Standing Orders</i>	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
<i>RFO</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
<i>Powers</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Payment Controls</i>	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	2	0	2
<i>Expenditure Controls</i>	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
<i>VAT Compliance</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Credit/Debit Cards</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
<i>Tenders</i>	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1
<i>Grants</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
C <i>This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.</i>	0	0	1	0	0	10	2	0	0	1
<i>Risk</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0
<i>Minutes</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Insurance</i>	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
<i>Internal Controls</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0		0
D <i>The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.</i>	0	0	1	0	0	13	0	2	0	1
<i>Budget & Precept setting</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
<i>Auditors Reports</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
<i>Accounting Statements</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Budget monitoring</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Reserves</i>	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	1
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0		0
E <i>Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</i>	0	1	2	0	0	13	2	10	0	3
<i>Investments</i>	0	1	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	2
<i>Fees & Charges</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
<i>Leases</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
<i>Debt control</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

	Billing & Collection	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0
	Precept	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Cash income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
	VAT Compliance	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F	<i>Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
	Accounting	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Payment controls	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Reimbursement	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Reporting	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
G	<i>Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.</i>	0	2	0	0	0	15	2	8	0	2
	Contracts	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
	PAYE	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
	Deductions	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Pension	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Members Allowances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
	Accounting	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	Changes to terms and conditions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Payroll Approval	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Overtime	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
H	<i>Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.</i>	0	0	1	0	0	8	1	2	0	1
	Asset Register	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Additions & Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Verification	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Accounting	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Investments & Loans	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I	<i>Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.</i>	0	0	2	0	0	11	2	3	0	2
	Preparation	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
	Review	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	1
	Cash balances	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
	Accounting	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J	<i>Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.</i>	0	1	1	0	0	7	2	2	0	2
	Accounting basis	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Prior year	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Current Year	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Creditors	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Accounting Statements	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	1
	Stocks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

2022-23 Internal Audit Houghton Regis Town Council

	<i>Debtors</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>PWLB</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K	<i>If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
	<i>Council Resolution</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>Criteria</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>Publication</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
L	<i>The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
	<i>Expenditure publication</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>AGAR publication</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
	<i>Member responsibilities</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>Assets publication</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>Publication of Minutes</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M	<i>The authority, during the previous year (2019-20) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).</i>	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
	<i>Publication</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>Commencement</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>Duration</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	<i>Minutes</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N	<i>The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2019/20 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).</i>	1	0	0	0	0	6	1	1	0	1
	<i>Publication</i>	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	1
	<i>Approval</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
O	<i>(For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
	<i>Meetings</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	<i>Accounting</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	<i>Statutory Returns</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Total **1** **6** **9** **1** **0** **134** **15** **48** **0** **17**

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Houghton Regis Town Council

<https://www.houghtonregis.org.uk/> ONLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
	A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓	
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.			✓
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

13/06/2022 21/02/2023 DD/MM/YYYY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Kevin Rose - IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Kevin Rose
SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date 07/06/2023

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

The Clerk
Houghton Regis Town Council
Council Offices
Peel Street
Houghton Regis
Bedfordshire
LU5 5EY

07-Jun-23

Explanation of "Not Covered" responses

Further to our Internal Audit of your Council for the financial year 2022/23 I am pleased to submit the signed Internal Report for your Annual Return. We have completed our work and I can confirm that we have not given a Negative response for any of the Internal Control Objectives.

You will note that we have given 'Not Covered' responses in respect of Control Objective K, L and O and we are required to explain why we have done this.

- *The reason for the "Not Covered" response for Objective K is that it is not applicable to your Council as the Council did not certify itself exempt from limited assurance review for the 2021/22 financial year.*
- *The reason for the Not Covered response for Objective L as your 'annual turnover' exceeds £25,000 and you are therefore not subject to the publication requirements of the Transparency Code.*
- *The reason for the Not Covered response for Objective O as it is our understanding that the Council does not act as Trustee.*

The External Auditor may query why we have responded 'Not Covered' and, if so, you should provide them with a copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Rose ACMA
Director



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Telephone: 01582 708540

Email: info@houghtonregis.org.uk

www.houghtonregis.org.uk

Confirmation regarding the exercise of public rights

Parish Council name: **Houghton Regis Town Council**

The Parish Council must inform the electorate of an exact 30 working day period during which public rights may be exercised. This is inclusive of the start and finish dates.

The inspection period **must** commence no later than 3 July 2023 and must **include the first 10 working days of July**.

The elector's rights must start **exactly** one day after the annual return has been published on your website (or other free to access website used by the Council) with the statutory notice at Attachment 3.2. Publication of the annual return must be as soon as practical after the unaudited annual return has been approved by the Parish Council, and in line with the regulatory inspection period.

Working days are defined as Monday – Friday. They do not include Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

(See calendar guide overleaf, noting that because the earliest date to start a compliant public rights period is 5 June 2023 the definition of 'as soon as practical' excludes any earlier dates than this.)

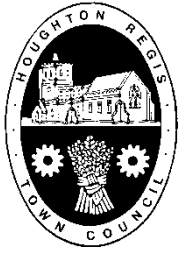
The inspection period commences on: 23rd June 2023

And ends on: 3rd August 2023

Signed

Date: 9th June 2023

Position held: Town Clerk & RFO



Date:	19th June 2023
Title:	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023 SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
Purpose of the Report:	To enable Members to consider the comment made during the interim internal audit regarding Assertion 3.
Contact Officer:	Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1. To note that the failure to display the external auditors report by 30th September 2022 is non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations;**
- 2. To confirm that as it has not had a significant financial effect on the ability of the council to conduct its business or manage its finances, as included in Assertion 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2022/2023, that the council can respond positively to Assertion 3.**
- 3. To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023.**

2. BACKGROUND

At the Council meeting on 20th March 2023 members received and considered the Interim Internal Auditors Report for 22/23. The report highlighted an issue of non-compliance in relation to the publication on the council's website of the External Auditors report for the year 2021/22. An extract from the Interim Report is included at Appendix A.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The council is required to publicise the external auditors report on its website by 30th September each year. For the year 2021/22 the report was uploaded to the website, however a glitch with the website meant that it failed to upload properly.

As soon as the omission was identified, steps were taken to rectify the situation.

Assertion 3 of Statement 1 within the AGAR states:

3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.

Whilst the failure to display the external auditors report by 30th September 2022 is non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, it has not had a significant financial effect on the ability of HRTC to conduct its business or manage its finances (as included in Assertion 3).

As such it is suggested that the council can respond positively to Assertion 3 in Statement 1 of the AGAR, Appendix B.

4. COUNCIL VISION

Aspirations

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

5. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications

- Failure to display the external auditors report by 30th September 2022 is non compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations

Financial Implications

- There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations

Risk Implications

- Reputational risk

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.

Climate Change Implications

- There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations

Press Contact

- There are no press implications arising from the recommendations

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The failure to display the external auditors report by 30th September 2022 is non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. There has not been a significant financial effect on the ability of HRTC to conduct its business or manage its finances (as included in Assertion 3).

As such it is suggestion that the council can respond positively to Assertion 3 in Statement 1 of the AGAR.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Extract from the Interim Report 2022/23

Appendix B: AGAR Statement 1

Extract from the Interim Internal Auditors Report 2022/23

N *The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The Council has published the External Auditors report on its website in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations	Yes	<i>As at the date of the Interim Audit visit the Council had not published the External Auditors report on its website in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. Regulation 13 requires that this is published 'no later than 30th September'.</i>	The Council to review its compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The Council should consider what response it should give in respect of Assertion 3 of the 2022-23 Annual Governance Statement.	Non Compliance	A verbal update will be provided at the meeting, however the issue relates to a glitch in the council's website CMS where when officers replace a file with a more up to date file, where it has the same file name the CSM doesn't replace it.

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

Houghton Regis Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

www.houghtonregis.org.uk PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

Houghton Regis Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	651,812	746,279	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	969,231	1,119,236	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	228,169	422,331	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	-528,469	-571,106	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	-24,069	-24,069	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	-550,395	-866,441	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	746,279	826,230	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	755,015	577,485	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,862,735	4,196,414	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	217,208	202,202	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date

07/06/2023

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Houghton Regis Town Council

Unaudited Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

Houghton Regis Town Council

Table of Contents

31 March 2023

	Page
Table of Contents	2
Council Information	3
Statement of Accounting Policies	4
Income and Expenditure Account	6
Balance Sheet	7
Notes to the Accounts	8
1 Interest and Investment Income.....	8
2 Publicity.....	8
3 General Power of Competence.....	8
4 Tenancies.....	8
5 Pensions.....	8
6 Fixed Assets - Additions and Disposals.....	9
7 Fixed Assets.....	9
7 Fixed Assets (cont'd).....	10
8 Investments.....	12
9 Current Asset Investments.....	12
10 Debtors.....	12
11 Creditors and Accrued Expenses.....	12
12 Agency Work.....	13
13 Hire Purchase and Lease Obligations.....	13
14 Loans.....	13
15 Usable Capital Receipts Reserve.....	13
16 Earmarked Reserves.....	14
17 Capital Commitments.....	14
18 Contingent Liabilities.....	14
Appendices	15

Houghton Regis Town Council

Council Information

31 March 2023

(Information current at 19th June 2023)

Mayor

Cllr J.W. Carroll

Councillors

Cllr E. Cooper (Vice Chairperson)

Cllr N. Batchelor
Cllr E. Billington
Cllr P. Burgess
Cllr E. Costello
Cllr Mrs Y. Farrell
Cllr W. Henderson
Cllr M. Herber
Cllr D. Jones
Cllr T. McMahon
Cllr C. Rollins
Cllr A. Slough
Cllr C. Slough

Town Clerk

Mrs Clare Evans

Auditors

Mazars LLP
Salvus House
Aykley Heads
Durham
DH1 5TS

Internal Auditors

IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd
23 Westbury Rd
Yarnbrook
Wiltshire
BA14 6AG

Houghton Regis Town Council
Statement of Accounting Policies
31 March 2023

Auditors

The name and address of the External Auditors is provided for information only.

These Statements are not subject to audit and the External Auditors have no responsibility for them.

Accounting Convention

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Accounting Guidance Notes for Local Councils (the Guide) issued by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as applicable to a medium sized council.

These accounts have been prepared having regard to the fundamental accounting concepts of: Going Concern, Prudence, Accruals, Relevance, Consistency, Reliability, Comparability, Understandability and Materiality.

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Fixed Assets

All expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of fixed assets is reported in the notes to the accounts, provided that the fixed asset yields benefits to the authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year. Fixed assets are valued on the basis recommended by CIPFA. The year end values are stated on the following basis:

land, operational properties and other operational assets are reported in notes to the accounts at cost (where known) or at insurance values current when first reported as approximating to the lower of net replacement cost and net realisable value at that time (previous years at current insurance values).

certain community assets are the subject of restrictive covenants as to their; use and/or future disposal. Such assets are therefore considered to have no appreciable realisable value and are included at nominal value only.

Revenue Grants

Revenue grants are credited to income when conditions attached thereto have been fulfilled and/or equivalent expenditure has been incurred. Grants received in respect of which the conditions have not been fulfilled, or expenditure incurred, are carried forward as deferred revenue grants.

Investments

Investments are included in the balance sheet at historic cost and realised gains or losses are taken into the income and expenditure account as realised. Details are given at notes 8 and 9.

Debtors and Creditors

The council reviews the level of its commercial debtors on a regular basis and provisions are made, as required, where the likelihood of amounts proving ultimately collectable is in doubt.

Value Added Tax

Income and Expenditure excludes any amounts related to VAT, as all VAT suffered/collected is recoverable from or payable to HM Revenue and Customs. Any amounts not so recoverable are treated as a separate expense.

Houghton Regis Town Council
Statement of Accounting Policies
31 March 2023

External Loan Repayments

The council is not required by the Guide to incorporate external borrowings in its Balance Sheet. Details are shown at note 14.

Leases

The council is not required by the Guide to incorporate Hire Purchase and/or Finance Lease obligations in its Balance Sheet. Details are shown at note 13.

Reserves

The council maintains certain reserves to meet general and specific future expenditure. The purpose of the council's reserves is explained in notes 15 to 16.

Interest Income

All interest receipts are credited initially to general funds.

Pensions

The pension costs that are charged against precept in the council's accounts, in respect of its employees, are equal to the contributions paid to the funded pension scheme for those employees.

These contributions are determined by the fund's actuary on a triennial basis and are set to meet 100% of the liabilities of the pension fund, in accordance with relevant government regulations.

The next actuarial valuation is due at 31st March 2025 and any change in contribution rates as a result of that valuation will take effect from 1st April 2026.

Houghton Regis Town Council
Income and Expenditure Account
31 March 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
INCOME			
Precept on Principal Authority		1,119,236	969,231
Agency Services	12	1,200	4,412
Capital Receipts, Grants and Loan Proceeds		263,580	111,541
Interest and Investment Income	1	49,949	29,166
Leisure and Recreation		19,129	37,168
Cemetery & Churchyard		27,184	17,472
Community & Youth		4,378	1,185
Miscellaneous		9,303	994
Community Development		12,308	3,456
Sale of Assets		31,300	22,775
Community Services		4,000	-
		1,541,567	1,197,400
EXPENDITURE			
Establishment/General Administration		677,242	598,497
Agency Costs	12	31,092	-
Election Expenses		5,350	7,813
Capital Expenditure incl Capital Grants	6	368,599	159,752
Loan Interest and Capital Repayments		24,069	24,069
Operational Expenditure:			
Leisure and Recreation inc. Pavilions		206,470	145,501
Allotments		1,786	-
Cemetery & Churchyard		2,321	4,174
Planning and Development		5,204	5,593
Highways - Footpaths and Lighting		551	-
Democratic Representation and Management		10,450	9,805
Town Security		1,387	48,146
Public Toilets		20,337	20,029
Community Development		66,566	52,402
Grants Under Specific Powers		22,769	16,969
Community Services		17,423	10,183
		1,461,616	1,102,933
General Fund			
Balance at 01 April 2022		417,477	366,508
Add: Total Income		1,541,567	1,197,400
		1,959,044	1,563,908
Deduct: Total Expenditure		1,461,616	1,102,933
		497,428	460,975
Transfer (to) Earmarked Reserves	16	(68,177)	(43,498)
General Reserve Balance at 31 March 2023		429,251	417,477

The notes on pages 8 to 14 form part of these unaudited statements.

Houghton Regis Town Council

Balance Sheet

31 March 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £
Long Term Assets				
Investments Other Than Loans	8		600,000	600,000
Current Assets				
Debtors and prepayments	10	281,166		82,834
Investments	9	554,500		735,500
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>22,985</u>		<u>19,515</u>
		858,651		837,849
Current Liabilities				
Creditors and income in advance	11	<u>(292,996)</u>		<u>(352,145)</u>
Net Current Assets			565,655	485,704
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities			<u>1,165,655</u>	<u>1,085,704</u>
Total Assets Less Liabilities			<u><u>1,165,655</u></u>	<u><u>1,085,704</u></u>
Capital and Reserves				
Earmarked Reserves	16		736,404	668,227
General Reserve			<u>429,251</u>	<u>417,477</u>
			<u><u>1,165,655</u></u>	<u><u>1,085,704</u></u>

Signed:

Cllr J.W. Carroll

Mayor

.....

Mrs Clare Evans

Responsible Financial Officer

Date:

.....

The notes on pages 8 to 14 form part of these unaudited statements.

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

1 Interest and Investment Income

	2023	2022
	£	£
Interest Income - General Funds	49,949	29,166
	<u>49,949</u>	<u>29,166</u>

2 Publicity

Section 5 of the Local Government Act 1986 requires the council to disclose expenditure on publicity. Details are shown under the following broad categories:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Publicity	1,770	-
Councils Website	268	826
Newsletter	4,856	5,105
	<u>6,894</u>	<u>5,931</u>

3 General Power of Competence

With effect from 28th September 2015 Houghton Regis Town Council acquired the right to exercise the General Power of Competence extended to Town and Parish Councils under the Localism Act 2011 by S.I. 2012 No 965 (The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012). Therefore, with effect from 28th September 2015 the council no longer exercises the powers conveyed by Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

4 Tenancies

During the year the following tenancies were held:

Council as landlord

Tenant	Property	Rent p.a. £	Repairing / Non-Repairing
NONE			

Council as tenant

Landlord	Property	Rent p.a. £	Repairing / Non-Repairing
Central Bedfordshire Council	Workshop	15,500	Non-Repairing
Central Bedfordshire Council	Parkside Recreation Ground	50	N/A
Central Bedfordshire Council	Tithe Farm Recreation Ground	5	N/A

5 Pensions

For the year of account the council's contributions equal 26.80% of employees' pensionable pay. These contributions will remain at 26.80% in future years, in order to provide adequately for future liabilities.

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

6 Fixed Assets - Additions and Disposals

	2023	2022
	£	£
	Cost	Cost
During the year the following assets were purchased:		
Operational Land and Buildings	265,134	30,343
Vehicles and Equipment	76,018	75,130
Infrastructure Assets	7,927	42,429
Community Assets	19,520	11,850
	<u>368,599</u>	<u>159,752</u>
	Proceeds	Proceeds
During the year the following assets were disposed of:		
Vehicles and Equipment	31,300	22,775
	<u>31,300</u>	<u>22,775</u>

7 Fixed Assets

	2023	2022
	£	£
	Value	Value
At 31 March the following assets were held:		
<u>Land and Buildings</u>		
Bowls Green Shed	2,800	2,800
Houghton Regis Memorial Hall	293,000	293,000
Council Offices and Land	260,400	260,400
Sports Pavilion Moore Crescent	340,020	340,020
Leasehold-Tithe Farm Pavilion	138,900	138,900
Leasehold-Tithe Farm Sports Development Project	288,382	23,248
Leasehold-Parkside Pavilion	154,784	154,784
Leasehold - Orchard Close Pavilion	115,940	115,940
Leasehold-Village Green Pavilion	459,836	459,836
	<u>2,054,062</u>	<u>1,788,928</u>

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

7 Fixed Assets (cont'd)	2023	2022
<u>Vehicles and Equipment</u>		
Recreation Ground Equipment	62,826	66,113
Office Equipment	44,164	39,761
Office Boiler	2,990	2,990
Office Furniture	100,226	100,226
Pavilion Furniture & Equipment	7,446	7,446
Play and Sports Equipment & Safety Surfaces	272,208	272,208
Skate Park	90,306	90,306
M U G A	30,062	30,062
Christmas Decorations	63,069	57,187
Kubota Tractor M9540 - LK09 EPL	35,000	35,000
Ford Transit Tipper MK 18 WYJ	-	22,620
Ford Ranger EX67 KKW	16,942	16,942
Ford Ranger EN68 VTG	22,520	22,520
Ford Ranger LC69 HCL	18,990	-
P7E Trailer	795	795
LT106G Trailer	2,465	2,465
Ifor Williams Trailer	800	800
Work Platform (f/lift)	650	650
Dennis Mower	1,500	1,500
Verticut Mower	1,200	1,200
Ransomes Cylinder Mower	850	850
Hayter Mower	2,137	2,137
Hayter Mower (2018)	535	535
Trimax Snake Mower	19,950	19,950
Hayter Pro Rotary Mower	1,149	1,149
Pro Virtue SVP Mower x 2	748	748
Verti-Cutter	1,329	1,329
Harrier Grass Cutter x 2	1,400	1,400
Honda Tractor Rotavator	4,300	-
Stihl AR300L	1,320	1,320
Stihl RMA765 Mower	1,037	1,037
Kubota Mower LR21 HKO	17,000	17,000
Sissis Autorake	5,209	5,209
Tractor Rotavator	-	4,300
Bomford Kestrel Arm Mower	24,600	-
Kubota Flail Deck	7,104	7,104
Tomlin Harrows	4,229	-
Mitsubishi truck KY64BGK	15,000	15,000
Exac Post Hole Borer	1,500	1,500
Dump Trailer 12' x 6'	4,650	4,650
JCB Mini Excavator	3,476	3,476
Kubota K15 DXU	14,116	14,116
Kubota F3890 (KX68 BDZ)	18,368	18,368
Kubota F3890 (KX68 BEJ)	18,368	18,368
Kubota XL300 Spreader	1,888	-
Rotowash	7,176	7,176
CCTV Equipment	25,041	18,028
Anti-Ram Bollards	5,592	5,592
Gazebos	905	905
Cemetery Earth Augur	670	670
Hot Water Pressure Cleaner	18,219	18,219

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

	2023	2022
7 Fixed Assets (cont'd)		
Shibarua Tractor LK 17 KTD	19,755	19,755
Sports Equipment (Village Green)	69,999	69,999
Outdoor Gym	4,100	4,100
Kubota RTV KX20 CCJ	15,250	15,250
Defibrillators	10,092	10,092
	<hr/> 1,121,221	<hr/> 1,080,123
<u>Infrastructure Assets</u>		
Gates and Fencing	92,569	92,569
Bowls Irrigation System	7,290	7,290
Speed Activated Signs	9,226	9,226
Town Signs & Noticeboards	12,157	10,685
Litter Bins	9,970	5,941
Bollards - Village Green Grnd	7,192	7,192
Benches	5,990	4,991
Flame Beacon	2,204	2,204
Flag Poles	5,875	5,875
Memorial Hall Planter	3,720	-
Floodlights (Tithe Farm Skate Park)	15,844	15,844
Bedford Rd Wall (All Saints Gate)	20,018	20,018
Village Green Play Area Resurfacing	48,000	48,000
Resurface Orchard Close Play Area	21,081	21,081
Parkside Family Picnic Area	10,180	8,975
Allotment Shed Bases	6,502	10,000
	<hr/> 277,818	<hr/> 269,891
<u>Community Assets</u>		
Civic Regalia	4,779	4,779
War Memorial	9,363	9,363
Village Green	1	1
Tithe Farm Recreation Ground	1	1
Land rear of Orchard Close	1	1
Houghton Regis Cemetery	104,305	97,785
New Cemetery Development	24,850	11,850
Orchard Close Recreation Ground	1	1
Land rear of Houghton Court	1	1
Land rear of Village Green Pavilion	1	1
Land Adj Chapel Path	1	1
Land off Townsend Farm Road	1	1
All Saints Churchyard	1	1
Land at Moore Crescent	1	1
Land at The Baulk	1	1
Land at Orchard Close	1	1
Parcels within Dog Kennel Down Area	1	1
Parkside Recreation Ground	1	1
Part of The Paddocks	1	1
Former Railway Line	1	1
	<hr/> 143,313	<hr/> 123,793
	<hr/> <hr/> 3,596,414	<hr/> <hr/> 3,262,735

The basis of valuation of the above assets is set out in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

8 Investments

	Investments Other Than Loans
Cost	£
At 01 April 2022	600,000
At 31 March 2023	<u>600,000</u>
Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2023	<u>600,000</u>
	<u>600,000</u>
At 01 April 2022	<u>600,000</u>
	<u>600,000</u>

9 Current Asset Investments

	2023	2022
	£	£
L A Deposit Fund Account	554,500	735,500
	<u>554,500</u>	<u>735,500</u>

10 Debtors

	2023	2022
	£	£
Trade Debtors	195,926	46,515
Trade Debtors	195,926	46,515
VAT Recoverable	56,569	16,734
Other Debtors	1,450	5,350
Prepayments	17,566	6,885
Accrued Income	9,655	7,350
	<u>281,166</u>	<u>82,834</u>

11 Creditors and Accrued Expenses

	2023	2022
	£	£
Trade Creditors	5,553	54,466
Other Creditors	126	1,695
Accruals	17,265	35,109
Income in Advance	320	300
Capital Creditors	9,157	-
Capital Receipts in Advance	260,575	260,575
	<u>292,996</u>	<u>352,145</u>

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

12 Agency Work

During the year the Council undertook the following agency work on behalf of other authorities:

Commissioning Authority and Nature of Work

	2023	2022
	£	£
Central Bedfordshire Council - Dog Bin Emptying	1,200	1,200
Central Bedfordshire Council - Ground Works	-	3,212
	<u>1,200</u>	<u>4,412</u>

A final claim for reimbursement to 31 March 2023 has been made.

During the year the Council commissioned the following agency work to be performed by other authorities:

Performing Authority and Nature of Work

	2023	2022
	£	£
Central Bedfordshire Council - CCTV Monitoring	2,700	-
Central Bedfordshire Council - Bulk Waste Collections	3,600	-
Police & Crime Commissioner Beds - OP HANA	24,792	-
	<u>31,092</u>	<u>-</u>

A final claim to 31 March 2023 has been made.

13 Hire Purchase and Lease Obligations

At 31 March the following hire purchase agreement(s) and lease(s) were in operation:

Hire/Lessor	Purpose	Annual Lease/Hire Payable £	Year of Expiry
Grenke Leasing Ltd	Photocopier (5 Years Lease)	2,079	2024

14 Loans

At the close of business on 31 March 2023 the following loans to the council were outstanding:

Lender	Loan Period	Amount £	Years Remaining
Public Works Loan Board	24 Years from 19 th October 2009	94,281	11
Public Works Loan Board	24 Years from 5 th February 2010	107,921	11

15 Usable Capital Receipts Reserve

	2023	2022
	£	£
Capital receipts (asset sales) during the year	31,300	22,775
Less:		
Capital used to fund expenditure	<u>(31,300)</u>	<u>(22,775)</u>
Balance at 31 March	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

The Usable Capital Receipts Reserve represents capital receipts available to finance capital expenditure in future years.

Houghton Regis Town Council

Notes to the Accounts

31 March 2023

16 Earmarked Reserves

	Balance at 01/04/2022	Contribution to reserve	Contribution from reserve	Balance at 31/03/2023
	£	£	£	£
Other Earmarked Reserves	668,227	93,701	(25,524)	736,404
Total Earmarked Reserves	668,227	93,701	(25,524)	736,404

The Other Earmarked Reserves are credited with amounts set aside from revenue to fund specific known commitments of the council.

The Other Earmarked Reserves at 31 March 2023 are set out in detail at Appendix A.

17 Capital Commitments

The council had no other capital commitments at 31 March 2023 not otherwise provided for in these accounts.

18 Contingent Liabilities

The council is not aware of any contingent liabilities at the date of these accounts.

Houghton Regis Town Council

Appendices

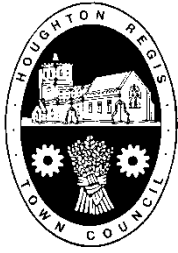
31 March 2023

Appendix A

Schedule of Earmarked Reserves

	<u>Balance at</u> <u>01/04/2022</u> £	<u>Contribution</u> <u>to reserve</u> £	<u>Contribution</u> <u>from reserve</u> £	<u>Balance at</u> <u>31/03/2023</u> £
All Saints Churchyard Wall	2,816	1,800		4,616
Pavilion Renovation	244,301			244,301
Street Furniture	-	4,251		4,251
Play Areas	70,651	75,000		145,651
Tree Planting	2,720		(2,720)	-
Community Development	19,072		(3,204)	15,868
Elections	6,127	6,650		12,777
Website Development	-	6,000		6,000
Cemetery Provision	77,491			77,491
Allotments	49,560		(16,600)	32,960
Former Railway Line	30,489		(3,000)	27,489
Office Provision	165,000			165,000
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES	<u>668,227</u>	<u>93,701</u>	<u>(25,524)</u>	<u>736,404</u>

2023/24							
Committee	Schedule of Earmarked Reserves		Predicted	Transfer In	Transfer Out	Predicted	Notes
			Opening Balance			Closing Balance	
			01.04.23			31.03.24	
			£	£	£	£	
Town Council	310	General Reserves - Predicted	429,251		21,640	407,611	Minute TBC re additional IT £6000, Minute 12323 £14140 to balance 23/24 budget, Minute 12095 £1500 to 305 4992 re cost of living donations
E&L	320	All Saints Churchyard Wall	4,616	1,000	0	5,616	To be used to fund repairs as required. From 272 4028
E&L	322	Pavilion Renovation	244,301	0	160,341	83,960	It is anticipated that this EMR will be used to help fund Tithe Farm Sports project. The project funding outlined to E&L includes this contribution, however as this EMR is greater Members may like to increase the project contribution to reduce the PWLB borrowing requirement.
	324	Street Furniture	4,251	0	0	4,251	Capital budget provision of £7000 has been agreed to fund the replacement of litter and dog bins with dual purpose bins. A report will be presented to E&L, some of this EMR may be required to support this project.
E&L	327	Play Areas	145,651	25,000	0	170,651	Typically this fund gets built up over time to fund major improvements to play areas. £25 trnf in from 299 4999
Comm Serv	330	Community Development	15,686		0	15,686	To be used to fund the Neighbourhood Plan process and production. It is hoped that this project will complete in 2023/24
Corp Serv	332	Elections	12,777	0	7,000	5,777	Typically this fund gets built up over time to fund any by-election or main election. This fund may be used in part in 23/24 to fund the May 2023 election.
E&L	348	Cemetery	77,491	10,000	30,000	57,491	Possibly £20k To be used to fund the environmental assessment of the land at Grendall Lane. £10k to be used to purchase additional vaults for the Garden of Remembrance. £10k trnf in from 299 4862
E&L	351	Allotments	32,960	0	0	32,960	To be used to fund enhancements to any allotment provision.
E&L	352	Former Railway Line	27,489	0	3,000	24,489	This has to date been an annual transfer out to help fund the ongoing maintenance of this land in accordance with the s106 agreement. In accordance with Town Council minute 11801 this transfer out has not been shown in the budget. However to accord with the requirements of the s106 the council needs to be using this to fund ongoing maintenance. To be transferred to 281-4992
Town Council	355	New Office Provision	165,000	0	35,000	130,000	Minute 12323 to 191 4992
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES			730,222	36,000	235,341	530,881	
E&L	S106	Deferred Income	230,575	0	230,575	0	To be used to help fund Tithe Farm Sports project



Date:	19th JUNE 2023
Title:	START TIME FOR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS
Purpose of the Report:	To enable members to consider a suitable start time for meetings of Working Groups.
Contact Officer:	Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

To change the start time of Allotment Working Group to 5.30pm.

2. BACKGROUND

The approved calendar of meetings for 2023/24 shows the following start times for Working group meetings of the Town Council:

- Combating Crime Working Group (CCWG) – 11am
- Allotment Working Group (AWG) – 3pm
- Events Working Group (EWG) – 5.30pm
- Pride of Houghton Working Group (PoHWG) – arranged at a time and date convenient to members of that group

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

It has been requested that Town Council consider the times set as meetings during office hours limit the availability of those councillors who work typical office hours.

The following points are highlighted:

- staff working hours are between 8am and 6.30pm in accordance with the councils flexi time scheme. Hours worked outside of these hours to service events and meetings of the council can be claimed as overtime or as time off in lieu
- the council decided a number of years ago to arranged working group meetings within office hours to help to limit pressures on the overtime budget

- the police and other supporting agencies who attend CCWG have confirmed that their attendance would be restricted (and maybe not possible) if meetings were held outside of normal office hours
- EWG is currently held at the latest time possible to enable working Cllrs to attend who work typical working hours
- PoHWG meets only once a year. The meeting is not included in the calendar but is arranged in consultation with appointed Cllrs for a date and time which is convenient

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Given the points above the following is suggested:

- Combating Crime Working Group (CCWG) – continues to be held at 11am to continue to enable supporting stakeholders to be able to attend
- Allotment Working Group (AWG) – to change the start time to 5.30pm
- Events Working Group (EWG) – to continue with a start time of 5.30pm
- Pride of Houghton Working Group (PoHWG) – to continue for this meeting to be arranged at a time and date convenient to members of that group

5. COUNCIL VISION

Aspirations

- A1 To develop and enhance **partnerships** between HRTC, stakeholders, partners, community groups and residents
- A2 To effectively and proactively **represent** our community
- A5 To ensure the **council** is fit for purpose and efficient in its delivery of services

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- Staff implications – there are no staff issues arising from the recommendation, however should Working Group meetings be held outside of office hours, there would be overtime or time off in lieu implications

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

Financial Implications

- Budget available – there are no budget issues arising from the recommendation, however should Working Group meetings be held outside of office hours, there may be overtime implications

Risk Implications

- There are no risk implications arising from the recommendations

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.

The recommendation seeks to find a balance between enabling the work of the council to be conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible whilst also giving equality of opportunity councillors.

Climate Change Implications

- There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations

Press Contact

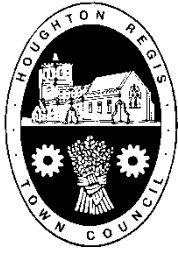
- There are no press implications arising from the recommendations

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The recommendation seeks to find a balance between enabling the work of the council to be conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible whilst also giving equality of opportunity councillors.

8. APPENDICES

None



Date:	19th June 2023
Title:	ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE NOMINATION
Purpose of the Report:	To enable members to consider the suitability and desirability of nominating the land at Windsor Drive as an asset of community value.
Contact Officer:	Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

To support the request from the Friends of Windsor Drive group to nominate the land at Windsor Drive as an Asset of Community Value.

2. BACKGROUND

Members are advised that the Friends of Windsor Drive group have requested that Town Council give consideration to nominating the land at Windsor Drive as an Asset of Community Value. Members will find detail on this scheme on the Central Bedfordshire Council website, [Localism | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

This was previously considered by Community Services Committee on 8th February 2021, there was lengthy debate on the matter and ultimately the recommendation to submit a nomination was not supported.

Through the above link Members can find guidance notes on the scheme, in summary important points to note are (extract):

1. About Community Right to Bid

What's the legal basis for the Community Right to Bid?

The Community Right to Bid was introduced under the Localism Act 2011. The Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012 provide further details of the legislative requirements.

What does the Community Right to Bid aim to achieve?

The legislation aims to help communities faced with losing local amenities and buildings which are of importance to them. The Government recognises that over the past decade Community Asset ownership has been growing with over two hundred communities having bought their village shop, and many looking to take over their local pub to prevent it closing.

In the past, many communities have lost the use of buildings and land because they were sold privately or without a community group having the time to raise the necessary funds. The Community Right to Bid gives local community groups such as parish councils, charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises a right to nominate a building or other land for listing by the council as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). When a listed asset is to be sold, local community groups will have a chance to make a bid and buy it on the open market.

Does the Community Right to Bid give community groups a right to buy Assets within their community?

No. The legislation only stalls the selling process to give suitably constituted community groups a period of time to prepare a proposal and raise the funds required to put in an offer. The sale takes place under normal market conditions and the owner is under no obligation to sell to the group.

Where can I get help and advice about Community Right to Bid?

The Community Engagement Team is responsible for coordinating the council's Community Right to Bid process, and the Nominated Team can be contacted using the details at the end of this document.

Independent support is available from Locality, the national network of over 700 community-led organisations appointed by the Government to provide advice and help relating to the Community Rights agenda. Locality can be contacted on 0845 458 8336 or by emailing Locality.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The following points are made:

1. The Town Council and the Friends of Windsor Drive are eligible to nominate an Asset for inclusion in the List of Assets of Community Value
2. Land is eligible for nomination provided it can demonstrate 'Community Value'
3. Community Value is defined as follows:
'The current use of the building or land being nominated (that is not an ancillary use) must further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, and it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.'
4. Nominations are made using an online nomination form
5. Nominations will need to include:
 - A description of the nominated Asset including its proposed boundaries clearly edged in red, its proposed boundaries and its use.
 - A statement of all information which the nominator has with regard to the names of current occupiers and also the names and current (or last known) addresses of all those holding a freehold or leasehold estate in the land;

- Reasons for thinking that the council should conclude that the Asset is one of Community Value; and
- Evidence that the nominator is eligible to make a nomination, in line with the requirements set out in the next section.
- Evidence is required to support the nomination demonstrating how the asset furthers the social interest or social wellbeing of the local community, such as:
 - photographs/social media posts of the events taking place at the asset
 - testimonials, letters of support and statements of those who use the asset
 - list of events held at the asset with frequency, numbers who attend, who attends (i.e. local community, wider community)
 - list of groups who use the asset, the frequency the groups use the asset, numbers who attend, what does the group use the asset for etc.,
 - other event publicity fliers/posters/social media posts
 - print media articles of events that have taken place at the asset

In support of their request the Friends of Windsor Drive have produced the document attached at Appendix A.

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Having reviewed the criteria and the FofWD document, it is considered that the criteria is met for a nomination to be made.

Members are requested to consider the information above and included in the CBC guidance and the Friends of Windsor Drive document to determine whether support is provided for the council making such a nomination.

5. COUNCIL VISION

Aspirations

- A1 To develop and enhance **partnerships** between HRTC, stakeholders, partners, community groups and residents
- A2 To effectively and proactively **represent** our community

Objective 4: Our community

- 4.7 To support local organisations

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

Financial Implications

- There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations

Risk Implications

- There are no risk implications arising from the recommendations

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.

Climate Change Implications

- There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations

Press Contact

The decision relating to this agenda item will be communicated to the press, via the website and social media.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The FofWD group have worked tirelessly over the last few years to engage with Central Bedfordshire Council over their future plans for the site, to engage with local residents and to enhance the use of the site generally.

The Friends have identified this land as essential to the wellbeing of local residents and, especially over the last 12 months or so, have secured funding and resource to offer community activities from the site.

Having secured extensive local support for the open space and provided a range of community events and activities, the Friends have demonstrated that the site meets the nomination criteria for an Asset of Community Value.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Friends of Windsor Drive document

Windsor Drive is an Asset of Community Value (ACV)

***Presented by:
Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space (FoWDCOS)
30 May 2023***



In Summary

It is hoped Houghton Regis Town Councillors will, not only from the information contained in this business case, but from their own experience agree Windsor Drive Open Space is an important asset to Houghton Regis, that it meets the eligibility criteria to be registered as an ACV as set out in this paper and that it deserves to be recognized as such.

Our ask is for Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) to apply to register Windsor Drive Open Space as an ACV in June 2023 and to work with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to make sure the application is successful. In doing so HRTC would demonstrate to residents that, not only do they recognise Windsor Drive Open Space as a valuable asset for sport and recreation, but also that they are listening and taking action to support the people of Houghton Regis.

Key Questions Answered

Does Windsor Drive Informal Recreation Open Space meet the criteria for an Asset of Community Value?

Yes, The Localism Act 2011, advises building or other land in a local authority's area, is land of community value if in the opinion of the authority:

- a) An actual current use of the building or other land that is not of ancillary use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, and
- b) It is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community. The Localism Act states that 'social interests' includes (in particular) cultural, recreational and sporting interests.

What social wellbeing or social interests of the local community take place on Windsor Drive Open Space?

There are many, to include but not inclusive of the following:

Dog walking

Through spot checks it is estimated that there are c. 70 plus visits to Windsor Drive Open Space to walk dogs on a daily basis, more at the weekend and during bank holiday periods.

The social aspect of this recreational activity must not be overlooked as for many dog walkers it is the only connection/social interaction they have on a daily basis. This is particularly true in the case of the elderly, disabled and those suffering from mental health issues, it is a vital connection to people for them.

The added bonus with Windsor Drive Open Space is the public footpath around the perimeter, making it easy for wheelchairs and mobility scooters users to navigate to exercise their dogs.

Many people find Houghton Park too far to go, not everyone has a car to get there, in addition it can get very busy, not ideal when you are looking for a quiet space to support wellbeing and mental health issues.

It should also be noted that Windsor Drive Open Space is used by residents outside the surrounding estates, for example, residents from Tithe Farm and Parkside regularly use the space to extend their walk, particularly on days when Parkside Recreation Ground is in use with football matches and due to the development of Tithe Farm Recreational Ground.

Houghton Hall Casual Joggers

The Joggers use Windsor Drive as part of their running route. They meet weekly, every Wednesday.

Football

Local teams have used the open space for training sessions.

Children's recreation

Children have always enjoyed the open space on Windsor Drive for recreation and sport. From snowball fights to learning to ride a bike, there are many activities going on. In the Easter holidays, several games of football

were noted to have occurred, a children’s party took place. Through 2022, children made use of the rounders’ pitch and hopscotch.

Personal Trainer Sessions

Private sessions are conducted on Windsor Drive Open Space

Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space (FoWDCOS)

The group of 600+ members was initially set up to fight against development on Windsor Drive, which is ongoing, however, FoWDCOS also coordinate community activities and events, as listed below, bringing together the community to enjoy Windsor Drive Open Space.

FoWDCOS are affiliated to two national groups, The Eden Community Project and CPRE- The Countryside Charity and work with both to enrich the activities offered on Windsor Drive.

Recently FoWDCOS have successfully secured grant money from CBC which has enabled sessions of Franklin Fitness and Tai chi to be available to the community free of charge, helping to make sure sport and fitness are financially accessible to all.

- **Mindfulness Walk**

Working with Bedfordshire Rural Community Charities, Mindfulness Walks will be taking place weekly each Thursday throughout June 2023 from 10am. Available to all, this gentle exercise also improves mental wellbeing.

- **CPRE – The Countryside Charity Community Walk**

Residents of Houghton Regis walked around Windsor Drive on a peaceful protest in support of protection of green space. Event took place in 2022 and 2023 (CPRE – campaign to protect rural England known as The Countryside Charity)

- **Community Celebration Events e.g. Jubilee and Coronation Events**

The community came together on Windsor Drive Open Space for a picnic on both these auspicious occasions. The local choir attended to sing the national anthem and the Town Mayor Councillor Yvonne Farrell presented awards to the children who made the best crown at each event.

At the Coronation event we added a display of Tai Chi which participants loved, as was the attendance at the event of a representative of The Eden Communities Project, which gave us a truly National feel.

- **Working together as a Community - Litter Picking**

Residents are happy to join together socially to support each other to keep Windsor Drive clean and safe for everyone. It is particularly nice to see children joining in.

- **CBC Active Communities**

The FoWDCOS applied for and have received funding from CBC as part of their Active Communities initiative. This allows the FoWDCOS to offer free activity sessions to encourage residents from all income groups to take part. Currently two activities are available:

- Franklin Fitness.** Sessions of high impact training and boxing take place on Windsor Drive every Tuesday at 9.30am and 7pm through the summer months. As well as getting fit it’s an inclusive opportunity for all within the community to come together and meet people. All ages and abilities are welcome to attend.
- Tai chi.** Gentle exercises to help mind and body are held every Friday evening and Saturday morning. No previous experience needed, just comfortable clothing.

Why should Houghton Regis Town Council support the application for Windsor Drive to be listed as an Asset of Community Value?

There are several reasons:

- The application for ACV status for Windsor Drive Open Space supports and actively demonstrates HRTC’s vision i.e:

Our vision: Our town 2020-2024

Objective 4 - Our Community - You asked us to:

- *Create/enhance community facilities which support community Development and cohesion.*
 - *Enhance existing facilities to enable improved use/accessibility.*
 - *Provide activities for young people, families and older people.*
 - *Help to protect and preserve historic gems.*
 - *Provide quality green spaces for leisure and recreation, healthier Living, urban attractiveness, improved air quality.*
 - *Provide a range of play facilities for all to enjoy.*
 - *Support local organisations and Houghton Hall Park to help develop full potential.*
- b) Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan lists Windsor Drive Open Space as valuable recreational space, applying for ACV status would support this statement by requesting CBC include Windsor Drive Open Space on their ACV register.
- c) No additional costs or budget needed. The application would have no ongoing cost implication as HRTC currently pay for the upkeep of the space.
In addition, and this is a really important point as it has caused significant issues previously, registration as an ACV does not mean HRTC would be required to purchase the land should CBC decide to sell it. For clarity, if an asset is registered as an ACV and the owner decides to dispose of it, under the provisions set out for ACV status they will be unable to proceed with a sale for a period of 6 months. This allows time for local groups to come up with a bid for the asset if and when it is sold. These provisions are also known as the 'community right to bid', the owner can still sell to whomever they choose however, it does give groups such as FoWDCOS an opportunity to bid.
- d) We understand CBC listing Windsor Drive as an ACV will not prevent development, but it may be a material consideration in a planning application, as it was in 2017 when ACV status was recorded on the call for sites assessment of Windsor Drive Open Space, the outcome of which was the site was not suitable for development. When the ACV status expired in early 2021, was it a coincidence CBC started moving forward with its plans to develop? The community did not think so, infact feelings were running so high they came together to form FoWDCOS.
- e) At the very least it may be considered bad publicity for CBC to build on land it agrees is of community value.

And Finally....

The above provides conclusive evidence of how Windsor Drive Open Space meets the eligibility criteria to gain ACV status, what interests take place there and why HRTC should register the space as an ACV. In addition, we have provided testimonials from the residents who use the space at Appendix I. Many more are available upon request.

Please let us know if you need any further information.

The Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space Committee

www.friendsofwindsordrive.com



Appendix I: Testimonials

(Residents own words. Contact details available on request)

I love being able to take my grandchildren for ball games, picnics, walks around the wooded area just an area close to me to take regular walks & maybe just stop & chat awhile (altho I would love a bench or 2 to sit on) Last summer my grandchildren also met up with some other local children & played football...We always comment on all the changes during the seasons & at the moment looking for the signs of spring.

Gaye Lewis, Houghton Regis resident 7 years

I love the fact it's a big open space for my children and dog to run free. I love that it has lots of wildlife that not only looks lovely but enables me to teach and show my children about it. Oh and seeing the local fox strolling over the field on my morning dog walk the friendly nods and hellos from fellow dog walkers and runners always brightens my day

It was a godsend in lockdown 1 when we could take 1 daily walk. I was heavily pregnant and walked over and round with my then 3-year-old just to get out of the same 4 fences of my garden x

Jenna Bradshaw. Houghton Regis resident of 6 years

I love seeing excited children walk to school in the mornings and exhausted one's trudge home, I love seeing all the dog walkers with their pups taking them on daily walks they have had all their lives with their human. I love in winter all the children (and sometimes adults!) building snowmen in competition. I love how a picnic, or a bike ride is available right on my doorstep.

And most of all I love how everyone else loves all of these things as well

Liz Smith. Houghton Regis resident of 11 years

I like the fact that we've just got green space just outside our window. See a lot of people walking and time out to spend with family and friends to chill out and deal with people's depression and anxiety. Nice to see a lot wildlife in the trees and just freedom the space gives to everyone.

Claire Dowers. Houghton Regis resident 47 years

I love my quiet morning dog walk right on my doorstep, a lovely open space for my dog to run and sniff whilst I watch and listen to all the birds flying above and the squirrels running up the trees. The beautiful blossom on the trees in spring and the frost on the ground in winter. The best thing about where we live

Lucy Lawrence, Houghton Regis resident 8 years

I love that I can take my dog for a walk and not have loads of others run up to him. Even if others are using the field to walk their dog, there is plenty of space.

I actually used the space in lockdown more because it made me smile seeing how many people used it - children riding their bikes, someone playing golf, another walking their dog, a family going for a walk, someone running. So many people doing different things but able to socially distance without difficulty.

Sometimes the field seems quiet and rarely used, but if you sit and watch, even for just half an hour, you realise just how busy it is!

Karen Rhodes, Houghton Regis resident 12 years

I love that its size and location and non-commercialisation lend itself perfectly to its informality, and its tranquillity. A free to use amenity space where you can have several things happening in an ad-hoc fashion, where you can choose to be close to or as far from without affecting whatever you are doing. I've sat there

and felt like I'm so far away from the urban hustle and bustle that I could be anywhere, on my own and safe, whilst sharing the space with school age kids knocking a ball about, a couple of joggers, and several dog walkers... doing our own thing, not getting in the way of each other and without feeling obliged to use a designated area or footway, or be encouraged by something else that will separate me and my hard earned cash

Tracey McMahon, Houghton Regis resident of 54 years

I love being able to walk my dogs early in the morning and even though its close to the road, in the middle of the field you can actually have peace and a place to recharge your mental sanity before starting the day. The peace the air and the space all a much-needed commodity.

In a world that is increasingly being closed in and built on space is needed for the mental health of all in the community.

Sarah Smith, Houghton Regis resident of 15 years

I love the fact that when I look at that field it takes me back to memories of my childhood

When the sun was going down and my parents would take me and my sisters and all our friends to the field to play rounders or cricket and all the neighbours would join in as well.

When it would snow and we would all go over and build snow men and have snow ball fights.

Sitting in the field when the sun was going down with my friends laughing and chatting and feeling safe because it was better than being in town and getting into trouble.

Even stupid games me and my sister would play with my dad walking across the field on the way home from school spot a stinger you're a winner who knew looking for stinging nettles could be fun .

Seeing my youngest sister learning to walk and taking her over there to make daisy chains

Walking my neighbour's dog on the field and watching him go nuts chasing the birds then running away because they would start chasing him.

Remembering the time my dad got chased by an owl on his way home from his friend's house lol.

Seeing mother foxes and their cubs laying in the field or playing or just passing by

I know it doesn't seem like much, but these things are still happening now with the new generation and to see it always brings a smile to my face because I can look back and think that was me many years ago.

Kerry-Ann Denney, Houghton Regis resident of 21 years.

I have recently got into bird song and really am enjoying watching the robins and thrushes sing as I walk my dog in places like this. That's what makes here so special!

Susie Carlino, Houghton Regis resident