



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Councillor E Cooper**
Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

Tel: 01582 708540
e-mail: info@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk

8th July 2024

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 Tuesday 16th July 2024 at 7pm.

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](#)

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.

- 3. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

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.

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

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

4. MINUTES

Pages 4 - 9

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2024.

Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2024.

5. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Pages 10 - 31

To update members on the Corporate Peer Challenge process and to present an Action Plan reflecting on the Corporate Peer Challenge Report.

Recommendation:

1. To endorse the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan;
2. To approve the use of General Reserves up to £14,000 to support the Amber flagged projects to enable delivery, subject to Committee approval, in 2024/25.

6. MOTION RE OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR BEDFORDSHIRE

Following Motion has been received from Cllr Herber:

This Council notes and shares the widespread public dissatisfaction in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire and that Houghton Regis Town Council fully supports the Motion Proposed by Liberal Democratic Councillor Leamen at Central Bedfordshire Council's meeting held 17th January '24.

Liberal Democratic Councillor Leamen's – Motions reads *That this Council notes the hard work of Bedfordshire's police officers, PCSOs and auxiliary staff in trying to keep our local communities safe.*

Further notes that despite their best efforts, according to Home Office statistics, over 4,000 burglaries went unsolved between July 2021 and June 2023 in Bedfordshire with a 10% increase in car thefts in the year to June.

Believes that many more crimes could be prevented in Central Bedfordshire with an increased community policing presence and believes that many of our towns and villages have seen a drop in police visibility and presence in their local communities over recent years.

Notes that according to a Freedom of Information request, the Office of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, including staff running costs, came to £1,210,233 an increase of 13% on the previous financial year.

Further notes that since 2015, 67 Police Community Support Officers have been removed from Bedfordshire’s streets.

Believes that the cost of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner could be better spent on providing frontline police services - the equivalent of 52 new Police Community Support Officers.

Further believes that regardless of the incumbents political allegiances it is clear that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is not a necessary role and calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the Home Secretary expressing this Council’s view that the role should be abolished with the financial savings reinvested into frontline policing that would benefit Central Bedfordshire.

Central Bedfordshire colleagues carried the above motion.

Therefore, I request a recorded vote of Houghton Regis Town Council to agree that we also believe that regardless of the incumbents political allegiances it is clear that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is not a necessary role and calls on the Town Clerk of the Council to write to the Home Secretary expressing this Council’s view that the role should be abolished with the financial savings reinvested into frontline policing that would benefit residents in Houghton Regis.

Members are invited to consider the above Motion.

7. NALC SUPER COUNCILS NETWORK

As a member of the NALC Super Council Network, the council has been invited to nominate a councillor representative to attend network meetings.

The next meeting is on Thursday 12th September between 18:00-19:15 (virtual).

NALC has provided the following clarification on the frequency, timings and venue of these meetings:

- Network meetings are open to officers and councillors from Super Councils. Councils are encouraged to nominate at least one councillor to join the network mailing list and attend meetings when they can.
- Meetings take place quarterly on Zoom, with four scheduled in a calendar year.

There is not a set day of the week for network meetings. They were previously scheduled to take place from 12:00-13:15, however NALC are trialling a 18:00-19:15 slot for the next meeting.

Recommendation: To nominate a councillor to the NALC Super Councils Network.

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HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 17th June 2024 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: E Cooper
J Carroll
E Billington
P Burgess
Y Farrell
M Herber
D Jones
C Rollins
A Slough
C Slough
D Taylor

Town Mayor

Officers: Clare Evans
Amanda Samuels

Town Clerk
Administration Officer

Public: 0

Apologies Councillors: E Costello
W Henderson
T McMahan

12872 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors E Costello, W Henderson and T McMahan.

12873 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12874 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

12875 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2024.

The following amendments were suggested by Cllr Jones:

- Under Minute 12831 the New Cemetery Sub-Committee was not listed
- Under Minute 12831 E Costello was listed as the Chair of Environment & Leisure instead of Community Services
- Under Minute 12839 the date of the meeting should be 22nd January 2024 rather than 2023

Resolved: To approve the amended minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12876 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Corporate Services Committee	4 th March and 30 th April 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute number 12736 Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy • Minute number 12737 References Policy • Minute number 12737 revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy • Minute number 12737 revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	None to present
Planning Committee	22 nd April 2024
Town Partnership Committee	Non to present

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present
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It was highlighted by Cllr Jones that two additions should be included under Minute 12736 as follows:

- To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy.
- To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Resolved: To receive the amended Minutes detailed above and to the approve the recommendations contained therein as follows:

- 1) the adoption of the Town Council's Data Retention Policy
- 2) the adoption of the Town Council's References Policy.
- 3) the adoption of the revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy.
- 4) the adoption of the revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

12877 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor updated members on events that had been attended. These were as follows:

- 19th May: the bowls club open day
- 1st June: CBC Volunteering Week celebration at Houghton Regis Library
- 6th June: Community Awards for Luton
- 6th June: D-Day beacon lighting
- 9th June: Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire's Thanksgiving

- 11th June: trophy presentation at TWP Flooring (presentation to be rearranged)
- 12th June: AGM for the Bedfordshire Scouts Council
- 16th June: Mayor of Harpenden's Civic Service

12878 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

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

Cllr A Slough reported that the Friends of Windsor Drive were delighted to be supporting Houghton Regis in Bloom and welcomed the positive collaboration with the Head of Environmental and Community Services.

The Friends of Windsor Drive had received a Highly Commended award at the Pride of Houghton Awards.

Cllr Carroll had attended a 'uniform grants' meeting at the Chews Foundation. The grants had almost doubled from 54 families in 2023 to 98 families in 2024, which highlighted a growing need regarding school uniforms.

Cllr Jones had attended the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of the BATPC. The accounts for the previous year came in just under £500 in excess of the deficit forecast.

The training programme provided by the Association was discussed at the meeting. The programme had been expanding and a summary of the programme would be shared with Councillors.

The Houghton Hall Park Board had taken place and the main points for noting were that the assistant post continued to be unfilled, and that the park pathways were going to be resurfaced.

Cllr Farrell advised that the Memorial Hall had held a race night to raise funds. The next meeting would be on 9th July 2024.

12879 WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Members were requested to nominate a further councillor to sit on the Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group as only 4 councillors were appointed at the Annual Meeting on 15th May 2024.

Current membership of this working group comprised:

Cllrs: D Jones, D Taylor, A Slough, M Herber

Nominee: Cllr J Carroll

Proposed by:

Cllr M Herber

Seconded by:

Cllr P Burgess

Accordingly, Cllr Carroll became the additional Member of the Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group for the municipal year of 2024/2025.

Resolved: To nominate a councillor to sit on the Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group.

12880 YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Members were presented with a report providing a brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members were invited to raise any queries relating to the process.

**12881 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/2024
ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/2024**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members were advised that the internal auditor completed an interim internal audit on 21st February 2023 and the year-end internal audit on 7th May 2024. Members were provided with a copy of the Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024.

Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report as attached.

12882 DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2023/2024

Members were 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 2024.

Members were advised of the following

1. Date of announcement: 20th June 2024
2. Date of commencement: 21st June 2024
3. End date: 1st August 2024

Cllr Billington left the meeting.

Resolved: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024 as follows:

- 1. Date of announcement: 20th June 2024**
- 2. Date of commencement: 21st June 2024**
- 3. End date: 1st August 2024**

**12883 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/2024
SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024 is attached for consideration, approval and signature, Appendix A.

Resolved: 1. To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024.

**12884 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/2024
SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2024 was provided for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

It was queried why the figures showed only half of the total repayment of the Public Works Board Loan had been settled. Members were advised that this was due to the loan repayment dates falling 30th September and 31st March. The repayment date of 31st March 2024 fell on a weekend and as such the payment left the account on the next working day, which fell into the next financial year. It was questioned whether Houghton Regis Town Council had accrued for this interest.

Resolved: To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024 subject to external audit.

12885 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2024/25

Members were provided with a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2024/25 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

12886 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND SCHEDULE

In accordance with Financial Regulation 17.1, the council was responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk should prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements would be reviewed by the council at least annually.

A copy of the Risk Management Strategy and Schedule was provided.

This was last considered at the Town Council meeting in March 2024. At this meeting, Members were advised that, on the advice of the Internal Auditor, the review timing of this policy would change to be considered at the June Town Council meeting.

Following feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge process, it was highlighted to Members that the risk schedule had been extended to include risks on:

- Tax base changes
- Acts of God

Resolved: To approve the HRTC Risk Management Strategy & Schedule.

12887 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

At the Town Council meeting held on the 21st March 2022 (minute number 11984), Members supported the recommendation from the Corporate Services meeting, held on the 28th February 2022, that the Town Council appoint IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd, for a period of 3 years, as the Town Council internal auditor provider. This appointment covered accounting years 21/22, 22/23 and 23/24.

Members were requested to consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor for a period of 3 years (financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7). A report was presented to Corporate Services Committee on 10th June.

A verbal update was provided at the meeting on the outcome of the deliberations of Corporate Services Committee and it was highlighted to Members that it had proved problematic to source a selection of internal audit providers. The following recommendation was made to Corporate Services Committee:

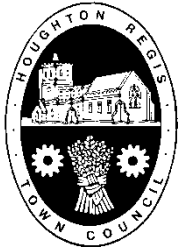
To recommend to Town Council, at the meeting to be held on the 17th June 2024, that IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd be appointed as the Town Councils internal audit provider, for a period of 3 years (financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7), at a cost of £800 plus VAT per annum.

Resolved: To appoint IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as the Town Councils internal audit provider, for a period of 3 years (financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7), at a cost of £800 plus VAT per annum.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.35pm

Dated this 16th day of July 2024

Chairman



Date:	16th July 2024
Title:	CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN
Purpose of the Report:	To update members on the Corporate Peer Challenge process and to present an Action Plan reflecting on the Corporate Peer Challenge Report.
Contact Officer:	Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1. To endorse the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan;**
- 2. To approve the use of General Reserves up to £14,000 to support the Amber flagged projects to enable delivery, subject to Committee approval, in 2024/25.**

2. BACKGROUND

In August 2023 the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) promoted a new round of the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) programme. HRTC considered and supported engagement in the process and a CPC Review was completed in March 2024.

Further details can be found by following this link: [NALC CPC](#)

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

CPC Requirements

Members are reminded of the following requirements arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge process:

- publish the final agreed CPC report within 3 months of the last day of the onsite visit; by Friday 28 June 2024
- publish its CPC action plan, to address the report's findings, within 5 months of the last day of the onsite visit; by Wednesday 28 August 2024

- have a progress review within 10 months of the last day of onsite visit; by Tuesday 28 January 2025, to explore progress implementing its CPC action plan;
- publish the final report from that review no later than 12 months after the CPC's last onsite visit day; by Friday 28 March 2025.

CPC Repot Publication

Members are advised that the Corporate Peer Challenge Report was published on 24th May 2024, via the website:

[LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report \(houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk\)](https://houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk)

The publication of the report was promoted on the councils social media sites.

CPC Action Plan

A draft Action plan is attached at Appendix A for consideration and approval.

CPC Next Steps

A progress review meeting is scheduled to be held week commencing 2nd December 2024. This will involve the Town Clerk and Senior Management Team plus the Town Mayor Cllr E Cooper and the previous Town Mayor Cllr J Carroll. The meeting will consider progress in implementing the CPC Action Plan.

The final report from that review will be published at either the Town Council meeting in January 2025 or March 2025.

4. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

4 Management and Operations: To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council as the key local service provider

4.5 Enhance the role of the council.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- Implications for other committees including Partnership Committee – a number of Actions require further consideration by Council or Committees
- Policy implications – additional polies may be required
- Staff implications – where possible Actions will be completed in-house, however collectively this will place increased requirements on staff. Some Actions could be lead through the use of external consultants. Where this is possible cost estimates are included, these estimates will be confirmed and presented to Committee for consideration.

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

Financial Implications

- Budget – a number of Actions are coded as Amber as the Action Plan suggests delivery in this financial year where no budget is readily available. The Report Recommendation includes provision for the use of General Reserves to facilitate the project in 2024/25.

Risk Implications

- Service delivery – there is a risk to service delivery relating to staff capacity
- Capacity – members are requested to support the use of external service providers to support timely delivery of some Actions
- Reputation – there is a reputational risk should the council not address the CPC report.

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 should be communicated to the press, via the website and social media.

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The CPC process has been beneficial in providing guidance to support the council going forwards. It highlights many areas of work which the council undertakes well and it provides useful and constructive feedback from partners.

The arising Action Plan looks to address the recommendations of the Report in a positive and proactive way.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Draft CPC Action Plan
Appendix B : General Reserves Note



Corporate Peer Challenge



Time2Connect



Action Plan June 2024



What is an Action Plan?

The purpose of an action plan is to serve as a roadmap or guide for achieving a specific goal or set of objectives. An action plan outlines the steps, tasks, resources, and timelines required to accomplish something. It helps to:

1. Break down a large goal into manageable steps or action items.
2. Assign responsibilities for who will do what and by when.
3. Allocate resources (money, people, materials) needed.
4. Set deadlines and milestones to track progress.
5. Identify potential obstacles or risks and ways to mitigate them.
6. Establish accountability by clearly defining roles.
7. Provide a framework to monitor and evaluate the implementation.

A practical action plan, developed collaboratively, provides clarity, direction, and focus. It helps coordinate efforts across teams or individuals working towards a common objective, ensuring everyone is working towards the council's goals. An actionable plan increases the chances of successfully executing a strategy, project or change initiative within the desired timeframe and budget.

What is the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan?

Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC¹) completed a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in March 2024. This process is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool delivered by the sector for the sector. The CPC Team (senior local government councillors and officers) undertook a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge and support in the form of a report.

This Action Plan, designed to build on the council's strengths and identify areas for improvement, is a direct response to the recommendations and suggestions made in the Corporate Peer Challenge report. It provides a clear roadmap for the council's future actions.

This Action Plan, driven by the council, provides clarity, direction and focus to coordinate efforts across the council to initiate positive change for the community of Houghton Regis through its locally elected council.

The Action Plan pulls from the CPC report recommendations and suggestions under the six reviewed themes:

1. **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering its priorities effectively and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management:** Does the council clearly understand its current financial position? Does the council have a clear strategy and plan to address its financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement:** Can the organisation support the delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?
6. **Regeneration Growth** and whether the council is sufficiently resourced and prepared for this, especially regarding its staffing, budgets and governance, to accommodate the significant housing, community, infrastructure and other growth planned for Houghton Regis.

¹ A list of acronyms and abbreviations can be found at the end of this document.

What HRTC currently does well

- ❖ **Notable recent achievements**, including its recently completed artificial football pitch, management of open spaces, and activity programmes for its younger and older communities. There is a commitment to build on these.
- ❖ **A committed team of councillors and staff** greatly helps HRTC address key opportunities and challenges.
- ❖ **Pioneering ambitious and impressive plans**, including the HRTC Corporate Plan, the Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan and the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan, with a wide focus and good understanding of specific issues.
- ❖ **An impressive Youth Council and Later Living Group**, who organise local events & activities, champion advocacy, and promote support.
- ❖ **A high-quality services and assets provider** in the town centre and wider Houghton Regis area.
- ❖ **A friendly, positive, supportive and productive culture** with good relationships aiding the effective delivery of the work of the council.
- ❖ **Effective and collaborative relationships** with the principal authority, with HRTC described as a “partner of choice”, and with local partners and community groups.
- ❖ **Strongly committed** staff and councillors to deliver the best services to residents, visitors and businesses.
- ❖ **An employer of choice**, resulting in high staff retention and satisfaction.
- ❖ **Highly successful in acquiring project funding.**

CPC Report Recommendations²

The Action Plan has been assessed using a RAG status. The RAG acronym stands for Red, Amber, and Green. These colours make up the traffic light colours coding scheme for categorising project status.

These colours represent different types of required management action and are a shorthand for discussing projects that are going well or those in trouble.

A coding of Blue has been added to show when a project has been completed or closed.

R	Red	The project is likely to deliver late/over budget
A	Amber	The project has missed some targets, but overall end date/budget is not at risk
G	Green	The Project is on track
B	Blue	The Project completed or closed

² Pages 5-7 of the CPC Report

CPC Ref :	CPC Recommendations	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required ³	Timeline	Monitoring & Evaluation	Accountability
3.1	Set formal annual committee and staff objectives to progress your corporate plan, including setting measurable annual targets.	Allocate work from the Corporate Plan to committees.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Town Council	Clerk & SMT
		Committees will consider tasks and formulate SMART action plans for delivery and for this to become an annual process.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Committees	SMT
		Objectives linked to the Corporate Plan are to be included in staff appraisals.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Town Council	Clerk & SMT
3.2	Delegate committee and SMT operational decision-making and activities to your staff so your senior politicians and management team can focus on strategic issues	Review and update Scheme of Delegation.	Staff resource	£0	May 2024	Town Council	Clerk
		Implement a newly approved Scheme of Delegation.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Clerk	SMT
		Active review of committee reports in light of the new scheme of delegation and removal of standard reports which come under the Scheme of Delegation or where they are expressly covered by the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Clerk	SMT
		Review newly released model Financial Regulations.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Clerk	Head of Corp Serv

³ The budget indicated is to deliver the specific action, depending on the outcome further costs may be involved. This is especially highlighted for larger projects such as Council Offices and Community Centres

CPC Ref :	CPC Recommendations	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required ³	Timeline	Monitoring & Evaluation	Accountability
		Consider and approve new Financial Regulations, ensuring that they provide delegation by the Scheme of Delegation.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Town Council	RFO
		Consider a delegation scheme to enable policies to be reviewed and approved at the officer level when in accordance with legislation or when there is no significant change.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corp Serv
3.3	Improve the quality of your decision-making by focusing on strategic issues at your council meetings – ensure your agendas give necessary weight to those issues.	See 3.2	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Clerk	SMT
		Ensure agenda items are presented in order of strategic importance.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Clerk	SMT
		Consider establishing a Futures committee to discuss and consider high-level strategic issues impacting Houghton Regis.	Staff resource	£0	Winter 2024	Town Council	Clerk
3.4	Develop a long-term financial plan.	Consider external support to assess maintenance and refurbishment requirements for key assets	Budget availability	£2,000	Autumn 2024	E&L Committee	Head of E&C
		Develop a lifecycle plan of asset maintenance and refurbishment and ensure that it is aligned with earmarked reserves.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	E&L Committee	Head of E&C

CPC Ref :	CPC Recommendations	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required ³	Timeline	Monitoring & Evaluation	Accountability
		Develop a three-year rolling financial budget as required by the Corporate Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide and ensure that it incorporates the HRTC Corporate Plan Objectives, the CPC Action Plan responses and the asset lifecycle plan .	Staff resource	£0	Winter 2024/25	Town Council	RFO
		Develop and approve a reserves policy which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> confirms the desired level of general reserves. steers the council away from using reserves to fund revenue costs. 	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Town Council	RFO / Head of Corporate Services
		Develop and approve a reserves strategy which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allocates funding to long-term projects. allocates funding for long-term maintenance and refurbishment (linking to the asset lifecycle plan). 	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Town Council	RFO / Head of Corporate Services
3.5	Reset your relationship with Central Bedfordshire Council at a strategic level to agree and prioritise shared objectives	Seek to meet/link in regularly with CBC’s Chief Executive and SMT.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Town Council	Clerk
		Seek to meet/link in regularly with CBC’s senior cllrs.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Town Council	Clerk

CPC Ref :	CPC Recommendations	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required ³	Timeline	Monitoring & Evaluation	Accountability
		Seek to meet regularly with CBC's Communications Manager, especially in shaping the partnership Agenda.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Town Council	Clerk
3.6	Develop a plan to improve further and/or move your offices, including immediately making the reception area more welcoming and informative so it is fit for future use. ⁴	Consider options for new/refurbished office space.	Budget Staff resource	Option dependent	March 2025	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
3.7	Improve the HRTC communications strategy.	Consider an external support to assess council's communications strategy to promote the work and services of the council	Budget availability	£3000	March 2024	Community Services Committee	Head of E&C
		Review and update the council's communications strategy to promote the work and services of the council using various digital, physical and face-to-face options.	Staff resource	£0	March 2025	Community Services Committee	Head of E&C
		Seek to meet/link in regularly with local partners and stakeholders.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Clerk	SMT
		Support local partners and stakeholders by promoting their work and services/facilities.	Staff resource	£0	March 2025	Head of E&C	Communications Administrator

⁴ This Recommendation has the potential to be high cost.

CPC Ref :	CPC Recommendations	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required ³	Timeline	Monitoring & Evaluation	Accountability
		Provide communications to residents to promote the variety of available services, retail, leisure, heritage, parks, and wider countryside opportunities.	Budget Staff resource	£5000	March 2026	Community Services Committee	Head of E&C
		Development and promotion of the Town Branding Scheme.	Budget Staff resource	£5000	March 2025	E&L and Community Services Committees	Head of E&C
		Options for branded merchandise.	Budget	£1000	March 2026	Community Services Committee	Head of E&C
3.8	Develop a plan to create your community centres – in the town centre and all your estates ⁵	Consider external support to assess the current use and availability of existing community centres, and options for the future	Budget availability	£3000	March 2024	Community Services Committee	Head of E&C
		Liaise with CBC and other local partners to identify options, including new premises and refurbishment options to make more fit for purpose.	Staff resource	£0	March 2025	Community Services Committees	Head of E&C
		Liaise with partners to assess the need for additional community space and any associated specifics.	Staff resource	£0	March 2025	Community Services Committees	Head of E&C

⁵ This Recommendation has the potential to be high cost.

CPC Ref :	CPC Recommendations	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required ³	Timeline	Monitoring & Evaluation	Accountability
3.9	Create an implementation group to ensure the delivery of your neighbourhood plan and set a renewal date for reviewing and revising it.	Consider an external support to support the implementation of the NHP	Budget availability	£3000	March 2024	Planning Committee	Head of Democratic Services
		Create an implementation group to agree on and ensure the plan's delivery and renewal date.	Staff resource	£0	March 2025	Planning Committee	Head of Democratic Services
		Review the planning committee's terms of reference to support the NHP's implementation and renewal.	Staff resource	£0	March 2025	Planning Committee	Head of Democratic Services

CPC Report Suggestions⁶

CPC Report Section	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
Section 5 Feedback						
Proactive participation in the CBC community governance review due in 2025.	Understand the community governance review process and timeline.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Clerk	Head of Corporate Services
	Consider the engagement of consultants to support community and town council engagement in this process	Budget availability in 2025/26	£10,000	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
	Preliminary/informal consideration by the council.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
	Regular liaison with CBC.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn / Winter 2024	Clerk	Head of Corporate Services
	Engagement with residents.	Staff resource	£0	Winter 2024 / Spring 2025	Head of Corporate Services	Communications Administrator
	Formal consideration/response/engagement by the council.	Staff resource	£0	Spring 2025	Town Council	Head of Corporate Services

⁶ Taken from the body of the CPC report, Section 5 Feedback, pages 9-23

CPC Report Section 5 Feedback	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
Increase the council's staffing levels to deliver their corporate plan objectives	Formulate a five-year rolling staffing plan and review it on an annual basis.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
	To ensure budget provision for the delivery of the staffing plan.	Staff resource	£ dependent on the staffing plan	Autumn / Winter 2024	Town Council	Clerk
	To establish an enhanced set of ancillary staffing benefits to enable the council to offer an attractive employment package.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
Ensure that the council fully utilises the talents and skills of current members of staff	Consider the engagement of external support to undertake a skills audit of staff, to identify any skills gaps and develop a training and development strategy	Budget availability	£2000	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
	Undertake a skills audit of staff and use it as a basis to identify any skills gaps and develop a training and development strategy.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
	Use the adopted appraisal process to explore with staff areas in which they feel they could bring added benefit, through their skills and talents, to the delivery of the work of the council.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services

CPC Report Section 5 Feedback	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
	To consider separating its Responsible Financial Officer and Town Clerk roles.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
Ensure that staff undertake decisions and delivery at an operational level to enable the council to focus on its strategic direction.	See 3.2					
	Support the Clerk and SMT in engaging with peer councils, officers and colleagues.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Clerk	SMT
	Encourage councillors to engage with peer councillors and colleagues.	Cllr resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
Improve relationships between political groups	Political groups, perhaps through their group leaders, discuss opportunities for improved ways of working. This could comprise regular informal meetings, team-building sessions, etc.	Cllr resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Group Leaders	Cllrs
Clarify the differences between council policies and council plans so that the community understands the differences in purpose and use.	Review and update the council's website to ensure clarity on council policies and council plans is provided. Use other means of communication in support.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Clerk	SMT

CPC Report Section 5 Feedback	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
Engage more widely with Houghton Regis communities	Use demographic data (e.g. national census, CBC Local Insight and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion) to better understand the community to shape an effective and proactive Communication Strategy (see 3.7).	Staff resource	£0	Autumn / Winter 2024	Community Services Committee	SMT
	Extend the functionality of the council website to enable email updates to be sent out when a page is updated.	Budget Staff resource	£300	Autumn 2024	Community Services Committee	Head of E&C
	Develop a programme for increased community engagement activities & events (changing location for full council mtgs, joint cllr surgeries, small scale competitions).	Budget Staff resource	Up to £1000	Autumn 2024	Head of Democratic Services and Head of E&C	Administration Assistant and Community Services Manager
	Develop a programme to increase the visibility of the town council in the new housing areas of Bidwell West and Linnere.	S106 Land and facility transfers Staff resource	£60,000	Autumn 2024	E&L Committee	Head of E&C
Strengthen the council's relationship with CBC at a strategic level, especially through the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.	To discuss new and improved ways of working with CBC through meetings with senior officers and Cllrs to agree on and prioritise shared objectives.	CBC engagement Staff resource	£0	Autumn / Winter 2024	Clerk	SMT

CPC Report Section 5 Feedback	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
	Review the terms of reference for the Partnership Committee.	CBC engagement Staff resource	£0	Autumn / Winter 2024	Partnership Committee	Clerk
	Ensure that the Partnership agenda has a strategic focus.	CBC engagement Staff resource	£0	Autumn / Winter 2024	Partnership Committee	Clerk
Ensure the lease with the Beds FA for the Tithe Farm sports project is robust and comprehensive.	Review the draft lease to ensure that it covers the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> timing of the Football Association's obligations to refurbish pitches. clarity on related finances and responsibilities of both partners. length of lease, review periods and scope for extension of the lease. 	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Head of Corporate Services	Head of E&C
Provide, support and encourage engagement for councillor training and development.	Re-shape / Extend the Member Open Sessions to provide an annual training and support programme.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Town Council	Clerk & SMT
	Continue to promote external cllr training opportunities.	Staff resource	£0	Summer 2024	Clerk	Head of Democratic Services

CPC Report Section 5 Feedback	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
Ensure that the council thoroughly assesses and mitigates against potential strategic risks.	Continue to review the council's risk management strategy & schedule annually.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Town Council	Clerk & SMT
	To undertake an external succession planning exercise.	Budget Staff resource	£5,000	Summer 2025	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services
Review committee structures against corporate plan objectives and financial plans.	Continue to review on an annual basis the council's committee structure to ensure it is effective and efficient.	Staff resource	£0	Spring 2025	Town Council	Clerk & SMT

Acronyms

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr	Councillor
CPC	Corporate Peer Challenge
E&L	Environment & Leisure Committee
HEAD OF E&C	Head of Environmental & Community Services
HRTC	Houghton Regis Town Council
NHP	Neighbourhood Plan
SMT	Senior Management Team

General Reserves Note

- At 1st April 2024 the level of General Reserves was £485,804
- During 2024/25 the following use of General Reserves will be made:
 1. £12,069 re PWLB repayment from 31/03/24 as was not be accrued for at year end
 2. £67,897 to cover 2024/25 budget deficit,As such the council is expecting the level of General Reserves to reduce by £79,966.
- The projected level of GR at 31st March 2025 is therefore anticipated to be £405,838.
- As members are aware it is considered good practice to have approximately 3 months net revenue expenditure in General reserves.
Based on spend in 2023/24 this equates to a General reserve level of around £297,000.
- **It is not recommended that General Reserves be used for revenue (day to day) expenses.**