



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Cllr M Herber**

Tel: 01582 708540

Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

e-mail: info@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk

17th November 2025.

To: Members of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee

Cllrs: E Cooper, Y Farrell, T McMahon, C Rollins, C Slough

(Copies to other Councillors for information)

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the **Community Engagement Sub-Committee** to be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street, on **Tuesday 25th November 2025 at 7.00 pm.**

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 AND SUBSTITUTIONS**
- 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.

¹ This meeting may be filmed by the Council for subsequent broadcast online and can be viewed at <http://www.houghtonregis.org.uk/minutes>

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.

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. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

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

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

4. MINUTES

Pages 4 - 8

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2025.

Recommendation: **To confirm the minutes of the Community Engagement Sub Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2025, and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

5. EXTERNAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Representatives are invited to provide updates regarding community events.

This report is provided for information purposes.

6. EVENT MANAGERS REPORT

Pages 9 - 11

Members will find attached a report from the Events Manager regarding past and forthcoming events.

This report is provided for information purposes.

7. COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER REPORT

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

This report is provided for information purposes.

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- *Pride of Houghton Awards*

Recommendation: **In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that**

publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

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HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on
23rd September 2025 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	Y Farrell E Cooper C Slough	Chair
	Co-opted members	K Wattingham L Morison	
	Officers:	Ian Haynes Saffron Cooper-Hughes Amanda Samuels	Head of Environmental & Community Services Events Support Officer Administration Officer
Apologies:	Councillor:	Cllr Rollins Cllr McMahon	

CESC63 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr McMahon and Cllr Rollins.

CESC64 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CESC65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CESC66 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2025.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee meeting held on 24th June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

CESC67 EXTERNAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Representatives were invited to provide updates regarding community events.

The representative from Friends of Windsor Drive reported that activities had been taking place on the field, including Legs, Bums and Tums sessions which were due to run until October end. Grants had been sourced to support events in 2026.

A request was made that, when planning events, HRTC considered the field at Windsor Drive as a potential venue.

The All Saints Church representative updated Members as follows:

- Church stalls had operated at Carnival and Houghton Rocks.
- All Saints Church had been open to the public to mark Heritage week. 112 visitors had attended the first Saturday and 33 on the second Saturday.
- There were now 200 recipients of the newsletter who were not members of the congregation.
- Guided tours were now being offered on Tuesday afternoons during term time and Thursday afternoons by arrangement.
- The church held a coffee morning every Saturday and once a month the proceeds were shared with a charity. Upcoming charity event dates were: 25th October, which would be in support of breast cancer charity Wear it Pink; and 15th November, the charity to be confirmed.

CESC68 EVENT MANAGERS REPORT

Members were provided with a report from the Events Manager regarding past and forthcoming events.

Events to date

- Carnival. There were fewer attendees this year and it was felt that exceptionally hot weather had impacted attendance.
- The open-air cinema had been well received with over 500 people attending screenings.
- The two open-air theatre events had also been well attended with excellent feedback received on the day. The Quantum Theatre Group had been provisionally booked for 2026.
- Houghton Rocks had taken place; feedback on this would be discussed at the next meeting.
- The Heritage event had been well received and would potentially run again next year. This would be discussed further at the next meeting.

Upcoming events

- Halloween at Houghton Hall Park: this would include a Halloween trail based on Mark Bolan's book *The Witch and the Moon*; fancy dress; face painting; and a Bowerbirdy ghost-themed activity.
- Fireworks display: to include food, retail and fairground.
- Christmas at Houghton Hall Park: Santa's Grotto would be held in a heated marquee in the kitchen garden. Robbie the Train and reindeer would also form part of the event.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members that the intention was for an external party to organise this year's Santa float. A meeting was scheduled with the Dunstable Rotary Club to discuss whether Houghton Regis could be included under their arrangements. In return, HRTC would provide a financial contribution.

The Christmas event scheduled at Houghton Hall Park was supported by Members; however, they were keen to maintain the involvement of the library which had been the historical venue. Members questioned how HRTC might continue to support the library. The Head of Environmental and Community Services responded that it was possible that stalls could be set up on site but that a formal request needed to be submitted by the library as confirmation of their support.

Members voiced concern that areas including the library, Bedford Square and Windsor Drive were being overlooked. The Head of Environmental and Community Services highlighted several factors involved in decision making:

- Increasing numbers meant that the library was becoming outgrown as a venue. The move to Houghton Hall Park enabled a more immersive event.
- Setting up and taking down the grotto had historically been constrained by the needs of the library. The proposed changes allowed for greater flexibility.
- Budgets were also a factor: expenses at Houghton Hall Park would be covered under its budget.
- As the town grew, there was a need to spread events over the wards.

This was the first major change in some time, and the transition would be monitored and assessed. There would be the potential to employ alternative venues in the future.

It was confirmed that the day would continue to be free, gifts would be distributed and photo opportunities with Regis the Lion available. A request had been submitted to Dunstable Town Council for seven stalls.

In response to Members concerns regarding the library, the Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that HRTC would reach out to the library to come and update Members on their upcoming plans, and to ascertain what measures HRTC could take to provide continued support.

CESC69 REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER

Members were provided with a report from the Community Services Manager regarding the recent Summer Fun Activities.

Family Fun Days had been distributed evenly across the town.

- Skate Jam, Tithe Farm Recreation Ground
- Crazy Golf, Houghton Hall Park
- Inflatable Fun, Parkside Recreation Ground
- Mobile Farm, Thorn Park
- Birds of Prey and Garden Games, Village Green
- Laser Tag, Thorn Park
- Southend Coach Trip
- Magician, HHP

The Head of Environmental and Community Services suggested that events similar to the birds of prey or crazy golf could potentially be held at Windsor Drive.

It was hoped that the calendar of events in the coming year would maintain a similar format but with the possible relocation of some events to areas such as Linnere and Windsor Drive.

CESC70 CARNIVAL 2026

The Carnival 2026 was scheduled for Saturday 11th July 2026. Members were asked to consider calling the event 'Houghton Regis Carnival' instead of changing the theme each year.

Unfortunately, the response to the carnival parade had been disappointing in recent years, and the number of participating groups had been declining. The safety surrounding the parade was an important factor for consideration, in addition to the increased measures that needed to be factored in. However, the parade had been taking place since the 1980s, and there was a historic element to it.

Members were requested to discuss the feasibility of increasing interest in the carnival parade, amending the route and/or format, or cancelling the parade element of the event.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members of the introduction of Martin's Law, the common name of the Terrorism Protection of Premises Act 2025. This established a tiered system of the responsibilities of venues based on capacities (both internal and external) and the practical steps required to mitigate risk.

Risk assessment of vulnerabilities would make planning more time consuming and significantly more expensive if the current carnival format was maintained. With declining participants, it was questionable whether the additional cost would be justifiable.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services proposed that a walking parade was introduced in place of the parade. The suggested route would start at Moore Crescent, on to the visitor centre, through Houghton Hall Park and on to Village Green. Banners, arches or other structures would visually enhance the route

Members agreed that to continue holding the parade on the roads was impractical in light of road safety issues. A walking route on the Village Green would reassure participants about safety and potentially attract more groups. In addition, the current route was too long for some of the very young participants, especially when the weather conditions were challenging. The proposed format would address the problem.

It was acknowledged that the historical element should be taken into consideration and, therefore, any decisions should not be taken lightly. It was agreed that the community needed to be informed in advance of any changes that were implemented. It was also felt that an invitation should be extended to members from participating groups to take part in discussions with HRTC and provide feedback.

In regard to carnival themes, Members were in agreement that themes should be limited to years when there were special events or commemorations, e.g. 50th anniversary of HRTC.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services emphasised once more that this could be made a visually appealing event and employing a videographer could promote upcoming events and increase resident engagement.

Resolved: To discuss the elements of the Carnival moving forward.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.09 pm

Dated this 25th day of November 2025

Chairman

DRAFT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 6

Date:	17th November 2025
Title:	Event Managers report
Purpose of the Report:	To provide Members with an update on forthcoming events.
Contact Officer:	Sarah Gelsthorp, Events Manager

1. RECOMMENDATION

This report is provided for information purposes.

2. BACKGROUND

Houghton Regis Town Council delivers a variety of community events throughout the year, on Town Council land and also at Houghton Hall Park.

This report sets out the work delivered and plans for future initiatives.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Past events:

Houghton Rocks

Houghton Rocks was a very successful day, with a good variety of acts and stalls, and with an excellent attendance.

Moving forwards, the Car Show and the Dog Show are to be held as standalone events in Houghton Hall Park. Promotional patches have been produced for the 2026 event, and 10th anniversary cups are being investigated.

Heritage Day Houghton Hall Park

The first ever Heritage Display took place on 20th September at Houghton Hall Park. The event included re-enactors from the Viking era, some Tudor Re-enactors, a Heritage Walk and display from Houghton Regis Heritage Society and stalls.

The feedback from the public was excellent, and budget permitting, it is hoped to hold the event again in 2026.

Halloween Event at Houghton Hall Park

The Halloween Event on 31st October was very successful, and it is estimated that 300-350 visitors attended the event (based on the number of clue sheets handed out).

The free event included a Halloween Trail, face Painting, Potion Making / Crafts and storytelling, plus ‘Ghost busting’ activities!

The attendance was excellent and appeared to be much enjoyed who all who attended.

Fireworks Display

The Fireworks Display took place on Saturday 1st November at Thorn Park. Despite the roadworks in two locations, and wet weather, the display was a big success.

There were no incidents to report, and it was felt that the event ran very smoothly.

A big thank you to all who helped at the event.

3.2 Future events:

Christmas Tree Light Switch On

The Christmas Tree Lights will be switch on, on Saturday 6th December at 6pm, following the Mayor’s Christmas Carol Service. There will be carols sung around the tree, and the High Street will be closed for the duration as per previous years.

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Christmas at Houghton Hall Park

The details for the Santa’s Grotto on Saturday 13th December are still being confirmed, but the event will include activities in the Visitors Centre, and the Grotto in the Kitchen Gardens. To date, live Reindeer have been hired in for the day, and marquees are being investigated.

Half Term Activities – February 2026 at Houghton Hall Park

Teaching Talons will be bringing some reptiles and small animals to Houghton Hall Park Visitors Centre, on 18th, 19th and 20th February.

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

None

5. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

1 Town and Community: To unify all areas of the parish as one community and foster civic pride in our town

1.1 Improve integration between existing and new communities.

1.4 Develop an annual programme of community events across the Parish.

1.6 Promotion and protection of the cultural and heritage assets

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications - There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications - There are no legal implications.

Financial Implications—Some funding opportunities will naturally end during the new financial year. Therefore, during the 2025/26 budget-setting process, consideration must be given to whether these activities will continue.

Risk Implications - There are no risk implications.

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

These projects/issues do not discriminate.

Climate Change Implications - There are no climate change implications.

Press Contact - Deliveries of these projects will continue to be communicated to the press.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This report summarises the ongoing projects being delivered and plans for future initiatives provided by the Community Services Manager.