



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

13th January 2026

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)

Co-opted Member: K Wattingham

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 20th January 2026 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](#)

A handwritten signature of Clare Evans.

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 25th November 2025

Recommendation: **To confirm the minutes of the Community Engagement Sub Committee meeting held on 25th November 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 MANAGER'S 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. YOUTH AND COMMUNITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Pages 12 - 14

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

This report is provided for information purposes.

8. NEW EVENT – MAY 2026

Pages 15 - 17

Members will find attached a report from the Events Manager regarding suggestions for a new event for May 2026. Other suggestions are welcome.

Recommendation: To confirm a new event for May 2026.

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on
25th November 2025 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	Y Farrell E Cooper T McMahon C Slough	Chair
	Co-opted members:	K Wattingham	
	Also in attendance:	E Farrier	Linmere Devt
	Officers:	Sarah Gelsthorp Tara Earnshaw Amanda Samuels	Events Manager Youth and Community Manager Administration Officer
	Apologies:	Councillors:	C Rollins

CESC71 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Rollins.

CESC72 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CESC73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CESC74 MINUTES

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

Resolved: **That the Minutes of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.**

CESC75 EXTERNAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Linmere

The representative from Linmere updated Members on events taking place:

- A Christmas event for residents was scheduled for 11th December
- Free soft play was organised for every school half term and for five weeks during the summer holidays 2026

- On 24th January class makers would showcase their classes including yoga, Pilates, Kickboxing and Zumba. Each slot would be 30 minutes long and free of charge. Children's activities would also be available.
- Silver Birch Park was a new space for residents containing a playground, bandstand and a cycle route. The date of the opening ceremony was to be confirmed
- Bounce camp for older children would take place in May

All Saints Church

The representative for All Saints informed Members of the following:

- Funds had been raised for Macmillan Cancer Support
- The Mayor's Carol Service would take place on 6th December
- There was a Christmas Fayre planned for 13th December and would include a choir from Limetree Academy
- Carols by Candlelight would be held on 21st December
- A Christmas Eve Family Service would take place in the afternoon
- Midnight Mass would be held on Christmas Eve and the Christmas Day services in the morning

The representative from All Saints questioned whether Linmere could publicise events on their website. The representative from Linmere confirmed this was possible and that the Civic and Events Manager could provide contact details.

Memorial Hall

The following events had taken place:

- Race nights
- Easter Fair
- Halloween Party. This had been the inaugural year and would be repeated next year
- Upcoming Christmas Fair
- Craft fairs, Easter and Christmas events, race nights, and afternoon tea for over 65s were planned for 2026

Houghton Regis Helpers

- The group had returned to the meeting room in Houghton Hall Park
- Seniors Christmas Party had been arranged

Houghton Regis Library

A representative was invited to the meeting but did not attend.

Resolved: **To note the report.**

CESC76 EVENT MANAGERS REPORT

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

- Houghton Rocks had been well attended. Members were informed that the car show and the dog show would be held as stand-alone events at Houghton Hall Park in going forward. 2026 would mark the 10th anniversary of the event and

commemorative patches, and potentially cups, would be produced. The Civic and Events Manager confirmed they would attempt to get the same stage for next year's event.

- The first Heritage Day had been a success. It was hoped that it would take place again in 2026, depending on budget, with minor amendments to the layout. All Saints Church confirmed they would be participating again in Heritage Week. The Civic and Events Manager informed Members that Heritage Open Days would be willing to promote local events.
- Approximately 350 people attended the free Halloween event. There were plans to repeat this in 2026, depending on budget.
- The Fireworks Display had proceeded well. It would be necessary, however, to consider future safety arrangements to ensure compliance with Martyn's Law.
- On Saturday 6th December the Christmas lights would be switched on. Road closures were planned.
- Santa's Grotto would be held at Houghton Hall Park on 13th December; this was free of charge but would be ticketed. It was planned that groups of twenty would gather in a heated marquee to hear a story from Santa and receive a gift. At the Visitors Centre there would be stalls, face painting, Robbie the Train, reindeer and Elftastic. The marquee would be set up in advance so that minimal preparation was required on the day. Members were invited to volunteer.
- The Rotary Club had expanded their offer to hold Santa's Float in Houghton Regis to four dates in December. They would cover Parkside Drive, Tithe Farm Road, Linmere, Thorn and Houghton Regis Central. Details would appear on the Rotary Club website and those wishing to volunteer could contact them.
- Teaching Talons would take place at Houghton Hall Park 18-20 February 2026.

Resolved: To note the report.

CESC77 COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER REPORT

Members were provided with a verbal update from the Community Services Manager.

- LLSG attendance had grown significantly, and the group now met at All Saints View on the first and third Tuesday of every month. Upcoming events included:
 - 6th December, crafts
 - 9th December, panto at The Grove Theatre
 - 16th December, Christmas party
- Arrangements were being made for Easter and Family Fun activities in 2026
- Youth provision was being decided for April 2026 – March 2027
- A residential visit for the youth group was being planned
- Youth Council were volunteering at Santa's Grotto and would also be involved in the carol service
- A meal with the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor had been arranged as a thank you to the young people for volunteering at events.

Resolved: To note the report.

CESC78 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Slough

Seconded by: Cllr McMahon

Votes in favour: 4

Resolved: 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.

CESC79 PRIDE OF HOUGHTON AWARDS

Members were requested to decide if the Pride of Houghton Awards should continue on an annual basis or be held in alternate years. There had been some feeling that event attendance needed to increase and that nominations should encompass a broader scope of the community.

Members were of the opinion that this item should also be discussed at the Community Services Committee; however, the following decisions and suggestions were put forward:

- The next Pride of Houghton Awards to be held in 2027
- Potential changes to the format, categories and nominations for the awards to be considered
- To assemble an informed panel, potentially including local groups, businesses and councillors to help expand the range of nominations

The Civic and Events Manager suggested that the video of the 2025 event might encourage future participation and nominations. The Civic and Events Manager confirmed they would contact Members with ideas for future changes and event suggestions for 2026.

Members were requested to vote on a proposed recommendation:

- To hold the Pride of Houghton Awards every other year with the next ceremony to be held in 2027
- To organise an alternative event for 2026

Proposed by: Cllr McMahon

Seconded by: Cllr Cooper

Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation.

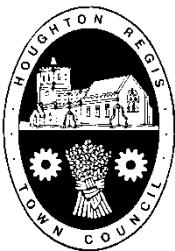
Resolved: • To hold the Pride of Houghton Awards every other year with the next ceremony to be held in 2027.
• To organise an alternative event for 2026.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.10pm

Dated this 20th day of January 2026

Chairman

DRAFT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 6

Date: 7th January 2025

Title: Event Managers report

Purpose of the Report: To provide Members with an update on past and 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:

Christmas Tree and Christmas Light Switch On

The Christmas Tree and Christmas Lights were switched on, on Saturday 6th December after the Mayor's Christmas Carol Service. There was a good turnout for the evening, and it was the first time that both sets of lights were switched on together.

Christmas at Houghton Hall Park

The Santa's Grotto was a big success. There were 7 stallholders, plus facepainting, at the Visitors Centre, and it was very busy. The main attractions for the day, were the Reindeer, Santa's Grotto, 'Robbie the Train' and Elftastic, and the feedback from these has been amazing. The Volunteers from the Friends of Houghton Hall Park served refreshments from the hut in the Kitchen Garden (Non-alcoholic mulled wine and Mince Pies) which was also very much appreciated by all.

3.2 Future events:

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.

Easter Egg Hunt at Houghton Hall Park

The Easter Egg Hunt and Craft stalls will be held at Houghton Hall Park on Saturday 28th March 2026. The event will also include some craft activities, alongside the Easter Egg Trail.

The programme of events for 26/27 will be confirmed at the next meeting.

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 2026/27 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.

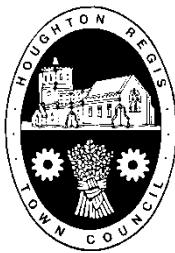
These projects/issues do not discriminate.

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 Events Manager.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 7

Date: 8th January 2026

Title: Youth & Community Manager's report

Purpose of the Report: To provide Members with an update on community work.

Contact Officer: Tara Earnshaw, Youth & Community Manager

1. RECOMMENDATION

This report is provided for information purposes.

2. BACKGROUND

Houghton Regis Town Council delivers a variety of community initiatives, including Town Centre Initiatives, Summer and Easter Family Fun Days and trips.

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

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Future Events

Family Fun Days

Staff are currently in the planning phase for the family fun days and will continue to deliver activities in a variety of locations across Houghton Regis, which will also include the popular Day trip to Southend-on-Sea.

Town Centre Initiatives.

Staff are currently in the planning phase to deliver Town Centre Attractions for 2026/27.

Later Living Social Group

The volunteers continue to meet monthly to plan initiatives and enhanced activities for the members. The ongoing Tea and Treat sessions at All Saints View remain popular

with residents, with an average of 50 attendees. They meet on the first and third Tuesday every month. The volunteers are currently in the planning phase for 2026/27 for the delivery of enhanced activities.

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.

3 Quality of Life: To enhance the quality of life of our residents

- 3.3 Improve access to services and support through the provision of a network of Parish-wide community hubs.
- 3.4 Improve existing and develop new opportunities for young people across the parish.

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.

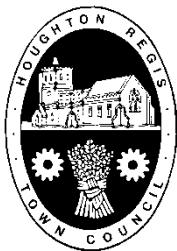
These projects/issues do not discriminate.

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 initiatives being delivered and plans for future initiatives provided by the Youth & Community Manager.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 8

Date: 7th January 2025

Title: Event Managers report

Purpose of the Report: To put forward ideas for a new Community event in May 2026, in place of the Pride of Houghton Awards.

Contact Officer: Sarah Gelsthorp, Events Manager

1. RECOMMENDATION

To confirm a new event for May 2026.

2. BACKGROUND

At the meeting of 25th November, members of the Community Engagement Sub Committee resolved to hold the Pride of Houghton Awards on alternate years (next one 2027) and to hold a new event in its place.

This report sets out ideas for a new event (to be held on Saturday 9th May 2026), although other suggestions are welcomed.

3. EVENT IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION

Houghton's Got Talent (Village Green)

A talent event was mentioned by members at the time of creating the Town Council's Corporate Plan, and this event could comprise:

- Art Show in a marquee on the Village Green (photography, paintings, drawings etc) with an opportunity for the artists to see the artwork.
- Local singers / Bands / Dance Groups performing from 12 noon – 3pm
- Refreshments on sale in the Village Green Pavilion
- Stalls / Craft stalls

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VE Day / 1940s (Village Green)

- Musical entertainment from the era (singers / dancers)
- Cream Teas etc in the Pavilion
- Craft activities
- Rationing with ration books and stamps (each family will receive a ration book. Every stall or activity will be labelled with a ration number, and families will collect stamps from each station to complete their book and receive a small prize)
- Vintage themed Photo Booth
- Stalls

Cultural Festival (Village Green)

- Cultural passport trail, storytelling, arts and crafts, Henna.
- Food from around the world
- Dance / Music Displays / Drumming Workshops
- Stalls

Festival of Spring (Village Green)

- Maypole Dancing
- Folk type music
- Refreshments in the pavilion
- Stalls
- Food
- Country Dancing / Morris Dancing Displays
- Small scale Fairground Rides

Other suggestions are welcome.

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Budget for the event is £5,000 subject to budget being granted by the Town Council for the 2026/27 programme of events.

For each of the events, it would be necessary to factor in:

- Sound equipment and/or Stage provision / Video equipment
- Sourcing singers / bands / musicians / dance groups

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 2026/27 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

Each of the events detailed in the main body of the report would be feasible within the proposed budget.

Members are asked to confirm which type of event would be most suitable for May 2026.