



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

18th March 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 24th March 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](#)

Clare Evans
Town Clerk

***THIS MEETING MAY BE
RECORDED!***

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 - 13

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 25th November 2025 and 20th January 2026

Recommendation: To confirm the minutes of the Community Engagement Sub Committee meetings held on 25th November 2025 and 20th January 2026, 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 14 - 16

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 17 - 20

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. ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENT – MAY 2026

Members are informed that the Arts and Cultural Event will be taking place in Bedford Square Atrium, Community Centre and Shopping Centre on Saturday 16th May.

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 Chair
E Cooper
T McMahon
C Slough

Co-opted members: K Wattingham

Also in attendance: E Farrier Linnere Devt

Officers: Sarah Gelsthorp Events Manager
Tara Earnshaw Youth and Community
Manager
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Apologies: Councillors: C Rollins

CEC71 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Rollins.

CEC72 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CEC73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CEC74 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.

CEC75 EXTERNAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Linnere

The representative from Linnere 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 providers were showcasing their classes including yoga, Pilates, Kickboxing and Zumba. Each slot would be 30 minutes long and free of charge. Children's activities were also planned.
- 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 was scheduled for 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 was planned for 6th December
- There was a Christmas Fayre planned for 13th December and the choir from Limetree Academy was due to attend
- Carols by Candlelight would take place on 21st December
- Midnight Mass would be held on Christmas Eve and the Christmas Day services in the morning. A Christmas Eve Family Service was scheduled for the afternoon

The representative from All Saints questioned whether Linnere could publicise events on their website. The representative from Linnere confirmed this was possible and that the Civic and Events Manager would 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 18th-20th 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.

DRAFT

CEC79 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

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
20th January 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	Y Farrell J Carroll E Cooper T McMahon	Chair (Sub)
	Co-opted members	K Wattingham	
	Also in attendance:	Emma Farrier Tim Haines	Land Improvement Holdings, Linnere Devt Bidwell West
	Officers:	Sarah Gelsthorp Saffron Cooper-Hughes Amanda Samuels	Events Manager Events Support Officer Administration Officer
	Members of the public:	1	
Apologies:	Councillors:	C Rollins C Slough	

CEC80 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Rollins (Cllr Carroll substituted) and Cllr Slough.,

CEC81 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CEC82 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CEC83 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2025.

The officer recommendation of confirmation of the minutes was not proposed; therefore, the minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2025 will be deferred to the next meeting for approval.

CEC84 EXTERNAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Representatives were invited to provide updates regarding community events.

Linnere

The Christmas event had been well attended, and a similar event was being planned for 2026. Additional Christmas events were being considered and HRTC would be informed when dates were confirmed.

Upcoming events included:

- Breakfast on the Bus was being held in conjunction with Grant Palmer to promote the expanded Jo bus service.
- Soft Play would be held during half term and would be a free event for 100 children.
- A Love Bug Trail was planned around the Farmstead.
- Fit 26 was a series of free fitness classes showcasing what was available and encouraging people to take part
- Silver Birch Park and Oasis Park were due to open in the spring and summer. It was hoped the Town Mayor would be available to open both spaces.

Memorial Hall

The representative from the Memorial Hall informed Members that numbers had increased and there had been several parties for adults and children.

The following events were planned:

- An Easter fair in March
- Afternoon Tea for the over 65s at the end of May
- Two race nights in June and September
- Craft Fair planned for Christmas

The last of the S106 funding had been spent on the hall

Houghton Regis Helpers

Cllr Farrell gave the following update on behalf of Houghton Regis Helpers:

- The AGM was scheduled for Friday 13th February
- Houghton Regis Helpers were working in partnership with the Town Council to distribute HSF funding to households struggling with the cost of living.
- A programme of training had been planned for volunteers
- 4210 jobs were recorded as completed for residents in 2025, which exceeded all previous figures.

T Haines, the representative from Bidwell West, joined the meeting

Bidwell West

- Work was underway for the Easter Egg Hunt
- Activities were planned for every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in August
- Community Engagement Days were planned
- It was hoped a large community event would take place in late summer
- Carols would be held in the square with the Salvation Army brass band also taking part.

It was highlighted that some Bidwell West residents remained unaware of available events, and it was suggested that HRTC could perhaps install a community notice board at the pavilion area.

It was hoped that the first phase of the community centre building would open in 2026, but this would be confirmed once details were available.

A member of the public expressed enthusiasm for the events that had taken place but was keen to ensure that areas of the town did not feel excluded from events, referring especially to the Christmas event which had moved to Houghton Hall Park.

The Events Manager responded that dates would be provided for all of the planned events at the next meeting, and that events organised by the Youth and Community Manager would be taking place at a number of sites around the town to encourage optimal involvement.

The Events Manager stressed that this was the first year that the Christmas event had been held at HHP and consideration would be given to the changes required and ways to raise awareness in the community.

The representative from Bidwell West informed Members that the Houghton Regis - Better Together initiative (Peabody and the Houghton Regis Community Development Charity) was able to provide funding for local community groups. The Events Manager requested details of the scheme in order to help promote its availability.

CEC85 EVENT MANAGER'S REPORT

The Events Manager provided a report to Members on past and forthcoming events.

The switching on of the Christmas lights and the tree had both been held on the same date for the first time.

The feedback from Santa's Grotto had been positive; however, it was acknowledged that there was a need for an improved booking system and that the event required more effective promotion. The event had been extremely busy with all 200 tickets for the Santa's Grotto requested within 2 hours. On the day, nobody was turned away if they attended without prior booking.

Members enquired whether information had been gathered on the demographics of attendees. The Events Manager responded that the system had not allowed for this and information had been limited to numbers and times. Members expressed a wish for this information to be available in the future, which the Events Manager confirmed would be referred back to the Head of Environmental and Community Services.

Members also expressed a wish to have more involvement in the choice of events and decision making. The Events Manager suggested that a conversation with the Head of Environmental and Community Services to discuss these matters further. Members agreed they would welcome the opportunity.

Members proposed a 'Festival of Christmas' which would bring together all the different Christmas events taking place around Houghton Regis. It was stated that a more cohesive approach, involving a range of groups and organisations, was needed.

Upcoming events at HHP were:

- 18th-20th February: Teaching Talons
- 28th March: Easter Egg Hunt

A co-opted member requested that – following feedback from businesses - an event should be held at Bedford Square.

The representative from Bidwell West suggested that pop-up stalls and activities could potentially take place in Bedford Square during the school holidays. Funding for traders could be sourced, and it would be an opportunity to get the community involved.

The Events Manager confirmed that these points had been noted but might be better addressed at the Community Services Committee.

CEC86 YOUTH AND COMMUNITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Members were presented with a report from the Youth and Community Manager regarding past and forthcoming events.

- Family Fun Days were planned
- Town centre initiatives were in the planning phase
- The Later Living Social Group numbers were growing

The Events Manager informed Members that they would be co-clerking this committee with the Youth and Community Manager. Members enquired if a schedule was available to say who would clerk each meeting. Members suggested that the officers alternated meetings or clerked each meeting together.

The Events Manager confirmed this would be referred back to the Head of Environmental and Community Services.

CEC87 NEW EVENT – MAY 2026

Members were provided with a report from the Events Manager regarding suggestions for a new event for May 2026.

- Houghton's Got Talent
- 1940's themed event
- Cultural festival
- Festival of Spring

Members questioned whether a 1940's event would be too close to the VE Day celebrations in 2025. It was highlighted that a Festival of Spring had been held previously and the format mirrored that of Carnival.

Following further discussion, a festival of food and arts was proposed as a potential event. This could involve the businesses in Bedford Square and provide an opportunity to celebrate the cultural variety within the town.

A Member informed the committee that 15th May was the International Day of Families and suggested celebrating this by holding a number of family activities on the Village Green.

The Events Manager stressed that a decision on the location needed to be made and Members expressed a preference for a food and arts event in Bedford Square. The proposed date was 9th May but this would conflict with Dunstable Pride. The Events Manager confirmed that 16th May would be a suitable alternative.

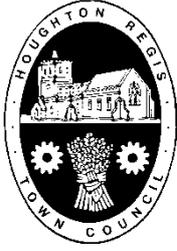
Resolved: To confirm a new event for May 2026.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.37pm

Dated this 24th day of March 2026

Chairman

DRAFT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 6

Date:	1st March 2026
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:

Half Term Activities – February 2026 at Houghton Hall Park

The half term activities at Houghton Hall Park were very successful, with a large turnout on each day. It is estimated that in excess of 300 people attended each day.

3.2 Future events:

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, stalls and facepainting.

Medieval Mayhem – Dragon Days

Two days of activities have been planned for Houghton Hall Park, for 2nd April and 8th April. A company will be attending with Princess Plopp or King Merlot and Olaf the Snow Dragon. A Dragon Egg Trail will also be held around the park, with some Easter prizes.

3.3 Event Plan 2026/27

- 2nd / 8th April 2026 - Easter End of Term Activities (HHP) -Medieval Madness with Dragons.
- 16th May 2026 - Arts and Cultural Event
- 23rd May 2026 -Dog Show (HHP)
- 27th and 28th May 2026 Half Term Activities (HHP)
- 6th June 2026 Classics in the Park (Car Show) (HHP)
- 11th July 2026 – Carnival
- 29th July 2026 -Open Air Cinema (HHP)
- 28th July 2026 Skate Jam (*run by the Youth and Community Manager*)
- 18th August 2026 -Open Air Theatre August 2026
- 29th August 2026 - Houghton Rocks
- Heritage Day 19th September 2026 (HHP)
- 6th November 2026 (Friday) - Fireworks Display
- 8th November 2026 - Remembrance Sunday
- 11th November 2026 – Armistice Day
- 5th December 2026 – Christmas Light Switch On
- 12th December 2026 - Santa's Grotto
- 20th March 2027 – Easter Egg Hunt

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.

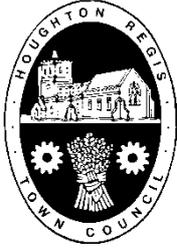
These projects/issues do not discriminate.

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: 16th March 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 have developed a draft plan for Family Fun Days over the summer holidays, featuring a variety of activities across several locations. This includes a day trip to Southend-on-Sea.

Summer Fun Activities			
Activity	Date	Venue	Time
Skate Jam	Thursday 23rd July 2026	Tithe Farm Rec	11.00-14.00
Crazy Golf & Garden Games	Tuesday 28th July 2026	Parkside	11.00-14.00
Sensory Day	Thursday 30th July 2026	Village Green	11.00-14.00
Inflatables Fun & Garden Games	Tuesday 4th August 2026	Parkside	11.00-14.00
Roller Disco	Thursday 6th August 2026	Linmere Farmstead	11.00-14.00
Go Karting	Tuesday 11th August 2026	Thorn Park	11.00-14.00
Trip to Southend	Thursday 12th August 2026	Southend-on-sea	09.00-17.00
Sensory Tent	All	All	

Town Centre Initiatives.

Staff are currently in the planning phase for a series of Community Activities. They are keen to deliver initiatives such as table-top sales and Crafty November.

Later Living Social Group

The volunteers continue to meet monthly to plan initiatives and enhanced activities for members. They are currently organising *Heavenly Hands*, a quiz session, tea at the Kitchen Gardens, and an intergenerational technology day as part of the Tea and Treat programme. In addition, they are planning a trip to the garden centre, a visit to Bourton-on-the-Water, and a Christmas outing to the Grove Theatre for the pantomime.

The volunteers have delivered five Tea and Treat sessions so far, including bingo at All Saints View, with an average of 50 residents attending each session.

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.