



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

9th December 2025

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

To: All Town Councillors

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to the Meeting of the Houghton Regis Town Council to be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street on Monday 15th December 2025 at 7.00pm.

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

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

Clare Evans
Town Clerk

<i>THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED¹</i>

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 8 - 13

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2025.

Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2025.

5. COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Pages 14 - 57

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

Corporate Services Committee	1 st September 2025 Minute number 13334 – Protocol for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure or Local Holder of High Office To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils marking the Death of a Senior National Figure or Local Holder of High Office protocol.
Community Services Committee	21 st July 2025 3 November 2025 Minute number 13409 – Operation Hana for 2026/27 To request Council considered that any underspend of cost centre 306/4059 at year end be transferred to an Earmarked reserve to be used for future Community Safety initiatives.
Environment & Leisure Committee	28 th July 2025 Minute number 13296 – Income and Expenditure Report To recommend to Town Council that the expenditure in Cost Centre 293 UKSPF be drawn from general reserves.
Planning Committee	6 th & 27 th October 2025
Staffing Committee	3 rd June Minute number 13221 – Staff Appraisal To recommend to Town Council, the adoption of the Town Councils Appraisal Policy and process.
Town Partnership Committee	29 th July 2025

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present
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To receive the minutes of the following task & finish group and consider any recommendations contained therein:

Community Venue Task & Finish Group None to present

Please contact the Head of Democratic Services if you would like a copy of any of these policies re-sent to you.

- Recommendation:**
1. To receive the Minutes detailed above;
 2. To approve the recommendations and to adopt the policies therein;
 - Minute number 13334 - Protocol for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure or Local Holder of High Office
 - Minute number 13409 – Operation Hana for 2026/27
 - Minute number 13296 – Income and Expenditure Report
 - In regard to Staff Appraisals (Minute number 13221) to approve the process and to adopt the following policy: Town Councils Appraisal Policy

6. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A verbal report will be provided.

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

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

8. EXTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT & AGAR

Pages 58 - 68

To advised members of the outcomes of the external audit 2024/25.

- Recommendation:**
1. To approve and accept the Audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25
 2. To note the matters raised in the Completion Letter dated 14th November 2025.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND SCHEDULE

Pages 69 - 107

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.2, the council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activates of the council. Risk

policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

A copy of the Risk Management Strategy and Schedule is attached. Members are reminded that the Risk Management Strategy and Schedule was approved at the Town Council meeting held on the 16th May 2025 which noted the register has been extended to include reference to s106 / deferred income. However, since this approval the Town Council has resolved to establish a Town Centre Community Venue at Unit 1, All Saints View, therefore the Risk Register has been updated to include this project.

Members are being requested to approve the attached Town Councils Risk Management Strategy and Schedule as revised to include Unit 1, All Saints View. Revisions are shown in red.

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

10. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members are advised that the next stage consultation of the Community Governance Review has now commenced and closes on 26 January 2026. The Draft Recommendations determined from the first stage consultation can be found at:

[Community Governance Review 2025 – stage 2 | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

The Draft recommendations from CBC are:

1. that the parish name of Houghton Regis should remain unchanged
2. increase the number of parish councillors on Houghton Regis Town Council from 14 to 17
3. create a new parish ward of Thorn with 3 members (see map)
4. reduce Houghton Hall parish ward from 5 to 4, retain Tithe Farm with 5 members
5. increase Parkside Ward from 4 to 5 to accommodate the Linnere Development
6. undertake a further community governance review of the parish within five years to ensure effective community governance arrangements in light of the development at Linnere
7. reject the proposal to extend the parish boundary into the parish of Chalton

Members are advised that the HRTC suggestion of altering the parish boundary with Chalton, creates complexities due to the location of the constituency boundary. Specifically, should the suggestion be approved, some residents would find themselves voting within Parkside Ward (Parish), Houghton Regis East (CBC) and within mid Bedfordshire constituency.

For reference Members can remind themselves of the HRTC response to the CGR first stage consultation here: [337-minutes.pdf](#)

Recommendation: In relation to the Stage 2 Community Governance Review consultation to support the draft recommendations as follows:

1. that the parish name of Houghton Regis should remain unchanged
2. increase the number of parish councillors on Houghton Regis Town Council from 14 to 17

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3. create a new parish ward of Thorn with 3 members (see map)
 4. reduce Houghton Hall parish ward from 5 to 4, retain Tithe Farm with 5 members
 5. increase Parkside Ward from 4 to 5 to accommodate the Linnere Development
 6. undertake a further community governance review of the parish within five years to ensure effective community governance arrangements in light of the development at Linnere

To note the draft recommendation:

7. reject the proposal to extend the parish boundary into the parish of Chalton.

11. INDEPENDENT TREASURY SERVICES

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 1st December 2025, members supported (minute number 13444) a recommendation from the Investment Working Group that the Council enter into a three-year contract with Arlingclose Treasury Services for independent investment advice at a cost of £11,000 per annum.

Members of the Corporate Services Committee acknowledged that there was no budgetary provision in the 2025/2026 budget for this service and therefore requested Council approve the use of General Reserves to fund the first year of service and to ensure suitable budgetary provision be made for the remaining years.

Although members of the Corporate Services Committee agreed for this item to be brought to the next meeting of town council, members may feel it more prudent, at this point in time, to defer this recommendation until such time that consideration has been given to the budget for 2026/27.

Recommendation: To agree the sum of £11,000 to be taken from General Reserves to fund the cost of independent investment advice for 2025/2026 financial year and to ensure suitable budgetary provision be made for the remaining years.

12. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & IT POLICY UPDATES

Pages 108 – 113 (Social Media) & 114 – 141 (IT)

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 1st December 2025 members agreed (minute number 13449) to recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Social Media Policy and the revised IT Policy.

Members recognised the need for the Town Council to have an up-to-date adopted IT policy as this was going to be a requirement on the new assertion (assertion 10) on the AGAR from 2025/2026. The Social Media policy was revised to mirror that of the IT policy. Members therefore recommended Town Council adopt these revised policies at the meeting to be held on the 15th December 2025 so as to ensure the Town Council was compliant as soon as possible.

Members will find attached a copy of the revised policies.

- Recommendations:**
- 1) To adopt the Town Council's Social Media Policy**
 - 2) To adopt the Town Council's IT Policy.**

13. INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Pages 142 – 173

Members are advised that the interim Internal Audit (IA) for 2025/26 was completed on 11th November 2025 by IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd.

Members will find attached the following:

1. Cover Letter dated 24th November 2025 – this details the areas covered by the audit – Appendix 13a.
2. Observations – this includes detail on the audit test, the IA observation and any IA recommendation. In the Comments column Members will find the Clerks response to the Recommendation. Members are requested to consider the Recommendation and the response in the Comments Column – Appendix 13b.
3. Revised Standing Orders - as per the recommendation under B3, members will find attached a revised copy of the Town Councils Standing Orders to regularise the tender threshold level to comply with Financial Regulations – Appendix 13c.
4. Summary – this summarises the audit – Appendix 13d.

- Recommendations:**
- 1) To support the Comments provided on the interim Internal Audit Observations report**
 - 2) To agree to the revision of the tender threshold figure contained within the Town Councils Standing Order (18 b v) to comply with the figure agreed in the Town Councils Financial Regulations.**

14. HR ADMINISTRATION SOFTWARE

At the Corporate Services meeting held on the 1st December 2025 members agreed (minute number 13450) to recommend the Town Council enter into a contract for the provision of HR administration software at a cost of £3,500 per annum.

Members felt that in order for this software to be utilised as soon as possible, members of the Corporate Services committee requested Town Council consider this matter at the Town Council meeting to be held on the 15th December 2025.

As the Town Council has grown and will continue to grow in employee size, administration has become increasingly time-intensive, placing a disproportionate burden on one particular staff member. Members of the Corporate Services Committee were very supportive of the introduction of HR administration software in order to not only address this imbalance but to futureproof the council as it grows.

Members were aware that no budget provision had been made in the 2025/2026 financial budget therefore Town Council are being requested to agree the use of General Reserves to fund this contract and to ensure suitable budgetary provision be made during future budget setting processes.

- Recommendations:**
- 1) To agree to the Town Council entering into a contract for the provision of HR administration software at a current cost of £3500.**
 - 2) To request Town Council agrees to the use of General Reserves to fund this contract and to request suitable budget provision is made during future budget setting processes.**

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- Staffing Forecast Review – Update for 2026-2027

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

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 13th October 2025 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: M Herber Town Mayor
J Carroll
E Billington
P Burgess
E Cooper
Y Farrell
D Jones
T McMahon
C Slough

Officers: Ian Haynes Head of Environmental &
Amanda Samuels Community Services
Administration Officer

Public: 0

Apologies Councillors: E Costello
W Henderson
C Rollins
A Slough
D Taylor

13359 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllrs E Costello, W Henderson, C Rollins, A Slough and D Taylor.

13360 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13361 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13362 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 29th September 2025.

Members referenced Minute 13347, highlighting that the penultimate paragraph was not required as it had been recorded previously. It was requested that the relevant text be removed.

Resolved: To amend the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2025 and for these to be signed at the meeting on 15th December 2025.

13363 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Corporate Services Committee	9 th June 2025
	Minute number 13236 – Investment Report To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Councils Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investments Arrangements Policy
	Minute number 13240 – Late Payments and Bad Debt Policy To recommend to Town Council the adoption of Community Services Manager Town Council's Late Payment and Bad Debts Policy
	Minute number 13241 – Complaints Procedure To recommend to Town Council, the adoption of the Councils Complaints Procedure
Community Services Committee	None.
Environment & Leisure Committee	28 th April 2025
Planning Committee	2 nd & 23 rd June, 14 th July, 4 th & 26 th August and 15 th September 2025
Staffing Committee	None.
Town Partnership Committee	29 th April 2025

Members highlighted that Corporate Services Safeguarding Policy (Minute 13242) had already been adopted at the Town Council meeting held on 16th June 2025 (Minute 13259). This item did not, therefore, require Members' approval and could be removed.

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the adoption of the following:

1. **Councils Banking arrangements, Investment Strategy and Investments Arrangement Policy (Minute number 13236)**
2. **Late Payments and Debt Policy (Minute number 13240)**
3. **Complaints Procedure (Minute number 13241)**

13364 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor had attended forty-nine events which included three events they had hosted. Three charity stalls had been held at HRTC and Houghton Hall Park events and raised significant monies.

The Mayor had also attended the Green Flag and Anglia in Bloom awards. The Mayor expressed pride on behalf of Houghton Regis for the awards received and thanked the grounds team for their hard work.

The Mayor had carried out school visits, attended various charity and civic events and attended the Dial-a-Ride AGM.

13365 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 had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Farrell informed Members that the Memorial Hall had recently held a successful function. The AGM was due to take place on 14th October 2025.

Cllr Jones informed Members that the BATPC AGM would be held on 16th October 2025. Speakers representing Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council would address the topic of flooding. The local MP was also due to attend.

13366 INTERNAL CONTROLS POLICY

The Council is required, by regulation 6.1 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, to review each financial year the effectiveness of its system of financial control.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. Therefore, members will find attached the Town Councils Internal Controls Policy, for review and approving.

Resolved: To review and approve the Town Councils Internal Controls Policy.

13367 UKSPF FUNDING

At the Environment and Leisure Committee meeting on 28th July 2025, Members were advised that, while they had been informed of all UKSPF monies being received, some costs had been paid in the current financial year which had not been budgeted for. The funds had gone into general reserves at the end of the previous financial year and Members were therefore asked to consider the £23,097 expenditure to be taken from general reserves. Members of Environment and Leisure Committee made the following resolution:

To recommend to Town Council that the sum of £23,097 Cost Centre 293 UKSPF, be drawn from general reserves.

Members of Town Council agreed that this was the preferred course of action.

Resolved: To approve the sum of £23,097 Cost Centre 293 UKSPF, be drawn from general reserves.

13368 COUNCILLOR MEMBERSHIP ON HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Members were advised that the Houghton Regis Liberal Democrat Group had requested that Cllr Taylor replace Cllr Farrell on the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. This change was being sought in order to facilitate the possibility that Cllr Farrell might substitute for any of the other four CBC councillors for the town, all of whom were already members of the committee.

Resolved: To substitute Cllr Farrell with Cllr Taylor on the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2025/26.

13369 CBC CONSULTATION: DEFINING THE HIGH STREET AREAS FOR HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS (HSRAS)

Members were advised that CBC were seeking views to define the area where High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) powers might be applied. Town/parish councils, residents, businesses and community groups had been invited to share their views on proposed high street areas where new powers could tackle long-term vacant properties.

The new powers would allow local authorities to auction leases for commercial properties that had been vacant for over a year. This was intended to help bring empty units back into use in designated areas.

Members were provided with CBC's proposed high street area for Houghton Regis which encompassed High Street, Bedford Square and Kings Street. Members highlighted some inconsistencies within the suggested boundaries and the omission of some commercial premises, most notably those at All Saints View.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services reminded Members that the Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan, which had been legally adopted, had already outlined the town centre. HRTC would therefore request that from 22-34 High Street along The Green and East End to the Chequers roundabout and incorporating All Saints View and The Red House were included.

Members agreed that the town centre as outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan was a more accurate reflection of the town centre boundaries.

13370 ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 stated that all Category 2 authorities must publish the Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) and the notice of completion of audit before the close of play on 30th September.

However, the Council's appointed external auditor, Mazars, had been unable to complete the audit by this date. As such HRTC was unable to publish the audited AGAR and completion notice by 30th September in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

A notice had been placed (1st October 2025) on the Council's website and within the Office Noticeboard explaining that HRTC had been unable to publish the audited AGAR and completion notice by 30th September in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as the council were awaiting the audit report from the external auditor.

The Council would publish the audited AGAR and completion notice as soon as these documents became available from Mazars.

To record disappointment that the AGAR for 2024/25 has not been returned by Mazars as the external auditor by 30th September 2025 and to note that a notice advising of this has been placed on the council website and noticeboard.

13371 MEMORIAL HALL

Members were advised that the freehold ownership of the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall was held by the Town Council; the footprint of the title number BD215262 did not include the 18m of driveway. To ensure there were no future disputes of ownership, Members were asked to approve the first registration of this small parcel of land, which was expected to be within the town council's ownership.

Members agreed that this was a technicality which incurred negligible costs and were willing to proceed as advised.

To approve the first registration of the land between the title number BD215262 and the edge of Drury Lane.

13372 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Jones Seconded by: Cllr C Slough

Votes for: 9

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.

13373 DUNSTABLE MARKET CHARTER

Members were presented with the legal advice requested in relation to the Dunstable Market Charter. The findings of the report were summarised as follows:

- DTC's market rights originate from a royal charter and are a property right (incorporeal hereditament).
- Competing markets within 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ miles constitute actionable interference.
- Judicial review requires proof of legal error; none currently identified in DTC's actions or policy.
- DTC's policy appears to be currently lawful, consistent, and not irrational; income from licensing is modest and not for collateral purposes.
- Very limited prospect of success for HRTC in pursuing judicial review. However, If, at any future time, DTC's implementation of its Charter Market Rights could realistically be characterised as perverse, irrational, or absurd, or if it is found that DTC is not applying its policy fairly to all parties, then a legal challenge by way of judicial review could be successful.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Dated this 15th day of December 2025

Chairman

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
1st September 2025 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: D Jones Chairman
E Billington
J Carroll
E Costello
W Henderson
C Rollins

Officers: Debbie Marsh Head of Corporate Services
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 2

Apologies: Councillor: M Herber

13315 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Herber.

13316 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13317 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13318 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 9th June 2025.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13319 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2025-2026

Members were reminded that the committee workplan for the municipal year 2025/2026 had been approved at the meeting held on the 9th June 2025.

Members were provided with, and noted, the updated committee workplan.

13320 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided, for information, an income and expenditure report highlighting significant variances for Corporate Services Committee to date.

190-4015 Gas

Members were informed at the Corporate Services meeting held on the 2nd December 2024 that the supplier had been slow in repairing the reported faulty meter; therefore, the Town Council had not been charged for gas consumption for a number of months, and this was reflected in the low expenditure figure.

A meter reading was provided to the supplier well in advance of the end of the financial year; however, due to the time it took for the supplier to provide an accurate bill the resulting cost had to be shown in the current financial year budget heading.

Due to the above factors, this budget would therefore be significantly overspent by the end of the financial year.

Members requested that adequate budget provision be included in the 2026-2027 budget forecast based on actual gas consumption data from 2025-2026.

13321 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 2025.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 2025;**
- 2. for these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.**

13322 LIST OF PAYMENTS

The Internal Auditor had made the following observation:

The practice at the Council is for a listing of Purchase Ledger payments to be reported to Council. Other payments, such as debit card payments, and salary payments are not reported to Council. As Council only reviews and approves a Purchase Ledger payment listing, which does not include direct payments, it is unclear how the Council would become aware of any issues with these payments. The Council to put in place arrangement so that ALL payments made by Council are report to, and approved by Council, or the appropriate committee.

In order to comply with this observation, Members were provided with a list of all payments made for April, May, June and July 2025.

Members were advised that all invoices had been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two bank signatories.

Resolved: **To receive and note the list of all payments made in April, May, June and July 2025.**

13323 INVESTMENT REPORT

This report was provided in accordance with the approved Committee Functions, Financial Regulations and Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements.

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

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

Members received information from CCLA notifying the Town Council of some changes taken place to the Public Sector Deposit Fund which were taking effect from 1st September 2025. This change was in regard to the minimum initial investment. The minimum initial investment had been revised to £1m, however, as an existing investor this minimum did not apply to the Town Council.

In addition to the above, Members also received an announcement from CCLA's Chief Executive that, subject to regulatory approval, CCLA was being acquired by Jupiter Investment Management Group Limited (Jupiter), a leading European investment manager. Included within this announcement were some questions and answers. Members noted that a webinar was planned for September and it was proposed that the invitation to attend would be extended to the Chair of Corporate Services.

Resolved: To note the report

13324 INVESTMENT REVIEW REPORT

Members were provided with the Investment Review Report detailing investment opportunities for consideration by the committee.

The following options were suggested to Members:

- Continue to invest with CCLA
- Utilise the service of a financial advisor
- Fixed term deposits with the Governments Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF)

Or a mixture of all or any of the above

Members were advised many organisations were unwilling to supply information regarding interest rates as it is believed that interest rates were not stable and thereby could not be counted on to remain as supplied. Members agreed, however, that there appeared to be no significant gain to be made to opening a savings account that required the town council to have to transfer all of its banking.

The three priorities for investments were:

- Security of reserves
- The liquidity of any investment
- Yield obtained from any investment

Following discussions, Members agreed the following actions:

- to make a deposit of £250,000 into the DMADF for 6 months in order to diversify investment and track performance;
- to seek to appoint a financial advisor;
- to establish an Investment Working Group, which would seek and evaluate new investment opportunities and provide recommendations to the Corporate Services Committee.

It had been proposed that the Investments Working Group should comprise of three members of the Corporate Services Committee. Members suggested members of other committees, with relevant expertise, might also form part of the working group. Councillor Jones, Councillor Carroll and Councillor McMahon (who attended the meeting virtually) volunteered to form the working group.

Members requested the Head of Corporate Services amend the wording of the Investment Working Group Terms of Reference to include councillors not on the Corporate Services Committee.

Resolved:

- 1. To consider investment opportunities, length of investment and amounts;**
- 2. To agree to the establishment of an Investments Working Group.**

13325 REVIEW OF CHARGES 2026/2027

Financial Regulation 13.2 stated:

The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process.

Members were provided with a list of charges for 2025/26 which were under the control of the committee. Members agreed to approve applying the same charges for 2026/27.

Resolved: **To approve the charges for 2026/2027.**

13326 REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP TO OTHER BODIES

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to annually review the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.

Members were provided with a list detailing fees paid for financial year 2025-2026 and indicative fees for financial year 2026-2027.

13327 VAT RETURN

In accordance with Financial Regulation 13.6 - The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.

Members were provided with a copy of the VAT Returns for quarter 1 for financial year 2025/2026.

13328 INSURANCE COVER 2025-2026

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.

Members were reminded that the Town Council was in a long-term agreement with Zurich Municipal until the 31st May 2027.

Members were provided with a copy of insurance cover for the period 1st June 2025 to 31st May 2026, along with a report on the current and appropriate level of Town Council Fidelity Guarantee cover.

The Head of Corporate Services assured Members that the controls currently in place meant the capacity to defraud was minimal. Taking this into consideration, Members were invited to consider whether they wished to maintain the current level of cover or increase the level to the next band.

Members agreed to increase the Town Councils Fidelity Guarantee cover to £5m and acknowledged the increase of cover would cause this budget to be overspent.

Resolved:

- 1. To confirm arrangement of insurance cover for the period 1st June 2025 to 31st May 2026;**
- 2. To approve the appropriate level of Town Council Fidelity Guarantee cover to £5million.**

13329 LONE WORKER DEVICE

Members were provided with a report detailing contracts entered into for lone worker devices. It was agreed that lone worker devices were a necessity and that the contracts should therefore be approved.

Resolved:

- 1. To retrospectively agree to entering into a three-year contract with Reliance, for two lone worker devices;**
- 2. To approve entering into a three-year contract with Reliance, for one lone worker device.**

13330 GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

One of the actions within the Corporate Peer Challenge Review (CPCR) action plan was for the Council to review its current governance framework and committee structure and consider other possible frameworks which would possibly be better placed to support the Town Council in developing and progressing its strategic agenda, including extending the term of its committee chair and vice-chair.

In order to implement the CPCR suggested action, it was proposed that a Strategic Policy Co-ordination Committee be established. Members highlighted that this proposal had been put forward at the December 2025 meeting of the Town Council (Minute 13071) and had been declined. Members agreed that this decision should stand.

Members discussed the alternative frameworks proposed, including a leader and cabinet system; however, it was felt that this was unlikely to be a satisfactory option under the Town Council's current structure.

It was agreed that a decision regarding the governance framework should be revisited at a later date. Members did not propose or second the recommendation

‘To consider changes/improvements to the Town Councils governance framework’

which was therefore not carried.

13331 STAFFING FORECAST 2026-2031

Members were provided with a report on the proposed five-year Corporate Services staffing plan.

Resolved:

- 1. To support the projected staff changes within the Corporate Services team for the years 2026-2027, and to recommend to the Staffing Committee these changes be included as part of the 2026-2027 budget setting process;**
- 2. To receive the staffing forecast for 2027-2031**

13332 BUDGET REQUESTS 2026/2027

Members were provided with the officer draft budget for 2026/27 along with budget forecast figures for financial years 2027 to 2030.

The draft budget reflected ongoing budgetary commitments, along with anticipated increase in budgetary commitments arising from an increase in staff resources. The draft budgetary forecast figures had been prepared to support the objectives of the Town Council's Corporate Plan and to meet the requirements of the Corporate Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide.

Members were requested to consider and comment on the information provided. The following observations were made:

- The stated CCLA interest rate was a conservative figure and would likely be exceeded; however, it was agreed that it was sensible to underestimate the income.
- The treatment of earmarked reserves was noted. The amount allocated towards legal costs would arise from the transfer of assets and would ultimately be allocated against those headings.
- It would be more appropriate for the proposed expenditure on IT equipment to fall under the 2027/2028 budget when a new council, and possibly additional councillors, would be in place.

Resolved: **1. To consider and comment on the draft budget for financial year 2026-2027 for Corporate Services budget responsibilities;**
 2. To note the budget forecast figures for financial years 2027 to 2030.

13333 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr E Costello Seconded by: Cllr W Henderson

Votes in favour: 6

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.**

13334 PROTOCOL FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF A SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE OR LOCAL HOLDER OF HIGH OFFICE.

Members were provided with a revised protocol which was to be followed when marking the death of a senior national figure or local holder of high office.

Members highlighted that the document referenced the ‘serving Member of Parliament for South West Bedfordshire’ but should state the ‘serving Member of Parliament for Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard’. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed this would be amended.

Resolved: **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils marking the Death of a Senior National Figure or Local Holder of High Office protocol.**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.38 pm

Dated this 1st day of December 2025

Chairman

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Community Services Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

21st July 2025 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: T McMahon Chairman
P Burgess
E Cooper
A Slough
C Slough
D Taylor

Officers: Ian Haynes Head of Environmental &
Community Services
Tara Earnshaw Community Services Manager
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 4

Apologies: Councillors: 0

Absent: Y Farrell

13273 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

13274 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13275 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13276 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice-Chair for the Community Services Committee for 2025-2026.

Nominee: Cllr Y Farrell Proposed by: Cllr D Taylor
Seconded by: Cllr E Cooper

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Farrell became the Vice-Chair of Community Services for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

13277 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2025.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Community Services Committee meetings held on 24th February 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13278 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING WORKING GROUPS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Community Engagement Sub-Committee	4 th February 2025, 25 th March 2025.
Combating Crime Working Group	15 th January 2025, 19 th February 2025, 19 th March 2025, 23 rd April 2025 and 21 st May 2025.

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

13279 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

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

Members were provided with the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

13280 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were provided with a workplan for the municipal year 2025/26.

The workplan provided a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2025/26, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations were met in a timely manner.

Recommendations had been taken from the Corporate Plan for consideration and would be distributed throughout the year.

Resolved: To review and approve the Community Services Committee Workplan for 2025/26, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year.

13281 STAFFING FORECAST 2026-2027

Members were advised that consideration was being given to a potential division of the Head of Environmental and Community Services role; or, alternatively,



introducing a supporting position in 2026/27. In respect of this, Members were asked to consider the following options:

Option 1: To note the staffing forecast and use it to inform future service and budget planning.

Option 2: To refer the forecast to the Staffing Committee for comment and alignment with wider staffing reviews.

Upon discussing the matter, Members agreed that Option 2 was the preferred action; however, it was requested that an amendment was made recommending that conclusions reached by the Staffing Committee at the November meeting were reported back at the following Community Services meeting.

Members voted on the amendment:

Proposed by Cllr C Slough

Seconded by: Cllr Burgess

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Resolved:

- To refer the forecast to the Staffing Committee for comment and alignment with wider staffing reviews.
- Conclusions from the Staffing Committee to be reported back at the next Community Services Committee.

13282 PROJECT GRANT REQUEST

Members were presented with a completed project grant application from the Friends of Windsor Drive for £800 for the delivery of PT Fitness sessions.

The Friends of Windsor Drive informed Members that there had been a consistently good turnout at the sessions, which would be running until the end of October. It was hoped to confirm the sessions for 2026 with this grant in place.

Resolved: To consider and approve the project grant request.

13283 TOWN CRIER REVIEW

Members were asked to provide feedback on the Town Crier, the official newsletter of Houghton Regis Town Council, which aimed to keep residents informed about local events, community updates, and news.

Historically, the Town Council printed 10,500 copies twice a year, which were distributed to each residential property. Members were requested to consider the sustainability and environmental impact of the project and to explore digital alternatives over the coming years.

Members appreciated the unsustainability of the current model of operation but were keen to avoid isolating those residents not online. It was suggested that a hybrid model could be established whereby fewer copies were printed and were distributed to key locations in the town, in addition to an online version being made available. It was



confirmed that Houghton Regis Town Council could potentially work with partners who were able to assist in reaching more isolated residents.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services reminded Members that the communications strategy was due to be discussed under the Committee Workplan in February. This discussion could be brought forward to November to consider how HRTC might best demonstrate its effectiveness in communicating with the public. Feedback from this discussion would then be brought back to the Community Services Committee where a hybrid model would be investigated further. It was important to ensure that, whatever the format, content of interest was provided.

Resolved: To provide feedback and guidance on how the Town Crier can develop.

13284 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided with the income and expenditure report for the Community Services Committee to date.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that income from council events had already reached its budget, otherwise figures were in line with expectations.

13285 HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICES

Members were provided with a verbal update on the in-house youth services work. The update included a breakdown of youth engagement and detached youth work, including attendance figures, for the following:

- Youth Café
- Open Access and Boxing
- Youth Council
- Open Access/Football/Scooter Coaching
- Enhanced Activities

Members were also advised of upcoming events.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.43 pm

Dated this 3rd day of November 2025

Chairman



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Community Services Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
3rd November 2025 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: T McMahon Chairman
J Carroll (Substitute)
E Cooper
Y Farrell
A Slough
C Slough

Officers: Ian Haynes Head of Environmental &
Amanda Samuels Community Services
Administration Officer

Public: 1

Apologies: Councillors: P Burgess
D Taylor

13398 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

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

13399 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Cllr Herber attended the meeting to address Members on Op Hana following the earlier distribution of their email. Cllr Herber believed that Op Hana did not represent an effective use of funds and that the budget would be more effective if it was used to purchase additional CCTV/ANPR cameras.

13400 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

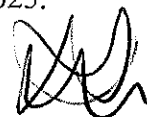
13401 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2025.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Community Services Committee meetings held on 21st July 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13402 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING WORKING GROUPS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Community Engagement Sub-Committee 24th June 2025
Combating Crime Working Group 18th June 2025, 16th July 2025, 20th
August 2025 and 17th September 2025.



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

13403 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were provided with a workplan for the municipal year 2025/26.

The workplan provided a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2025/26, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations were met in a timely manner.

13404 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided with the income and expenditure report for the Community Services Committee to date.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members that the report was as expected. Income from sponsors had achieved its annual target and income from events was at 82.4% of its target. The public toilets figure was tracking slightly higher as this was technically out of contract and due to go out to tender.

13405 HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICES

Members were updated on the in-house youth services work. Key figures were:

Day	Activity	Sessions	Average Attendance	Individual attendees
Monday	Youth Café	7	20 - 24	40
Tuesday	Open Access and Boxing	14	5 - 12	40
Wednesday (alt)	Youth Council	3	9	12
Thursday	Open Access and Football	14	20 - 30	78

A trip to Southend had been arranged for the young people as a reward for volunteering at a number of local events and activities.

Members responded that the numbers were positive and demonstrated increased engagement by young members of the community. Members expressed their thanks and appreciation for the contribution made by the volunteers.

Members suggested that suitable protective clothing was provided for the young volunteers and were advised that this request could be addressed under the Budget Requests item.

13406 BUDGET REQUESTS 2026/27

Members were provided with the officer draft budget for 2026/27 along with budget forecast figures for financial years 2027 to 2030.

The draft budget reflected ongoing budgetary commitments along with anticipated increase in budgetary commitments arising from an increase in staff resources. The draft budgetary forecast figures had been prepared to support the objectives of the

Town Council's Corporate Plan and to meet the requirements of the Corporate Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services provided Members with the main points to note:

- The most significant saving would arise from the reduced print number of the Town Crier newsletter.
- A 4% per annum increase had been factored in across the board where possible.
- There was an increased events budget allocation for fireworks and Houghton Rocks.
- The Mayor's Christmas Appeal Fund would be transferred to Corporate Services.

Members reiterated the proposal to provide protective clothing for young people volunteering at events and activities. Members unanimously approved the recommendation.

Resolved: 1. To consider and comment on the draft budget for the financial year 2026-2027 for the Community Services Committee budget responsibilities.

2. To note the budget forecast figures for financial years 2027 to 2030.

13407 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr A Slough Seconded by: Cllr Y Farrell

Votes in favour: 6

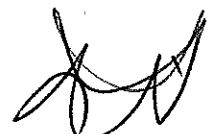
Resolved: In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

13408 STAFF SALARIES

Members reviewed the Community Services staff salaries for 2026/2027. The information provided highlighted, the SCP range for each post, the hours worked and the actual salary costs, with on costs broken down for each role.

Resolved: To note the Community Services staff salaries for 2026/2027 and for the Committee Chair to sign that the information provided was a true record.

13409 OPERATION HANA FOR 2026/27



Members discussed three recommendations proposed by the Combatting Crime Working Group, which was held 15th October 2025, which were

1. Cease the Op Hana agreement after March 2026 and use the budget to fund alternative activities
2. Reduce current Op Hana expenditure by 50% and use remaining budget for additional ANPR/CCTV cameras
3. Cancel the Op Hana budget and invest all funds in ANPR/CCTV cameras according to advice from CBC and Bedfordshire Police

Members discussed and after receiving advice from the Head of Environmental and Community Services. Members proposed the following amended recommendation, which were unanimously agreed upon.

- Resolved:**
1. To request Council to considered that any underspend of cost centre 306/4059 at year end be transferred to an Earmarked reserve to be used for future Community Safety initiatives.
 2. Instruct the Head of Environmental and Community Services to review CCTV options available to the Town Council.
 3. That the Combatting Crime Working Group be changed into the Community Safety Sub-Committee, as soon as possible.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:59 pm.

Dated this 10th day of November 2025

Chairman



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
28th July 2025 at 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillors:	A Slough P Burgess J Carroll Y Farrell D Jones C Slough	Chairman (Substitute) (Substitute) (Substitute)
	Officers:	Ian Haynes Amanda Samuels	Head of Environmental & Community Services Administration Officer
	Public:	1	
Apologies:	Councillors:	W Henderson T McMahon C Rollins D Taylor	

13286 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson (Cllr C Slough substituted), Cllr McMahon, Cllr Rollins (Cllr Carroll substituted) and Cllr Taylor (Cllr Jones substituted).

13287 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13288 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Nominee:	Cllr D Taylor	Proposed by:	Cllr Y Farrell
		Seconded by:	Cllr J Carroll

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Taylor became the Vice-Chair of Environment and Leisure for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

13289 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2025.

AS

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 28th April 2025, and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13290 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Houghton Hall Park Board 23rd May 2025

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

13291 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.iv. Council is required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub-committees.

These arrangements are outlined in the Committee's Functions & Terms of Reference. This document outlines the system of delegation to the Council's Committees, Sub-Committees, and Working Groups.

Members were provided with a copy of the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference, which related to this committee.

13292 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Members were provided with a copy of the work plan for the 2025/26 municipal year.

The work plan provided a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2025/26, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations were met in a timely manner.

Members were advised that items could be categorised as deferred, completed, removed, or brought forward, and that it was within their remit to request changes to the work plan.

Resolved: To review and approve the Environment and Leisure Services Committee Workplan for 2025/26, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year.

13293 STAFFING FORECAST 2026-2027

Members were provided with the staffing forecast for the period of 2026-2027.

The primary item to note was the review of the Head of Environmental and Community Services position, with options for consideration including a separation into two individual dedicated roles or the recruitment of an additional supportive resource.

PS

supplies and building rates were logged as fully spent, which would bring the overspend percentage down.

Members discussed and noted the cost centre 293 UKSPF and wished to make a recommendation to the Town Council that this money be drawn from the general reserves.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the expenditure in Cost Centre 293 UKSPF be drawn from general reserves.

13297 COMMUTED SUMS FOR HRN2 CB/15/00297/OUT

Members were provided with a breakdown of the commuted sum received for HRN2 CB/15/00297/OUT and consideration to reasonable expenditure within the first 12 months.

The proposed expenditure would be used to secure the site and purchase equipment for its upkeep. While this involved significant initial expenditure, this would be significantly reduced going forward.

A further proposal was for appropriate signage, bins, goal posts etc to be installed, and repairs made to the existing fence.

Members discussed the options regarding the site name and were in agreement that Thorn Park was the preferred option.

Resolved: To note the value of commuted sum received for HRN2 CB/15/00297/OUT to be used for the ongoing maintenance of the transferred sites only.

- i) Approve the expenditure of up to £200,000 to improve, secure the site and purchase new equipment funding through a hire purchase scheme.
- ii) To consider the appropriate naming of the site, either Option 1 or Option 2

13298 PARISH BOUNDARY WALK

Members' views were sought on the investigation and possible implementation of a parish boundary walk.

It was suggested to Members that the car park at Thorn Park would provide a convenient base to explore the park, the quarry and on through the town.

A boundary walk had originally formed part of the Neighbourhood Plan, before being removed when it was thought likely that it would be incorporated under another project. Interest in establishing a walk remained and this would be picked up by the project officer once they were appointed.

MS

Members questioned whether supplementary financial information was available to inform their decision-making. Members were advised that, should they vote in favour of Option 2, the Staffing Committee would possess the necessary level of detail, which would be fed into the budget process.

Members resolved to vote in favour of Option 2, recommending that the matter be referred to the Staffing Committee.

Resolved: To consider and recommend Option 2

13294 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

Members were provided with a verbal report on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

The Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Highway Agreement Officer had signed off and approved the road safety audit for the proposed works to the car park entrance. Costs were likely to be as anticipated, and it was now a matter of the contractor contacting CBC to schedule the works.

13295 HOUGHTON HALL PARK

Members were provided with a verbal update on the day-to-day operations of Houghton Hall Park management.

The vacancy for Community Gardener would soon be advertised and a garden designer had been consulted with a view to redesigning the formal gardens.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services was compiling a garden manifest to inform the community gardener role and the development of a harvest plan was also being considered.

The new uniform had been released and had been well received.

13296 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

For information, Members were provided with a copy of the income and expenditure report, with appropriate commentary, for the Environment & Leisure Services Committee. It was highlighted that although salaries were not yet included, figures were otherwise in line with expectations.

It was brought to the attention of Members that, although they had been informed of all UKSPF monies received, some costs had been paid in the current financial year that had not been budgeted for. The funds had been allocated to general reserves at the end of the previous financial year, and Members were therefore asked to consider that the total expenditure in cost centre 293 UKSPF be covered from general reserves. If Members agreed with the recommendation, this proposal would be submitted for approval at the next Town Council meeting.

Members highlighted that there was an overspend on some accounts. The Head of Environmental and Community Services responded by saying that horticultural

A phased approach was now suggested that would include introducing maps, way markers and an app to provide heritage details.

Members agreed that the walk would be a welcome addition to Houghton Regis.

Resolved: To consider and support the phased development of a Parish Boundary Walk, building on initial exploratory work. The project presents a valuable opportunity to enhance local walking infrastructure, promote community engagement, and celebrate the parish's heritage and natural assets

13299 SPORTS PAVILION PLANNED MAINTENANCE SYSTEMS

Members were provided with a completed planned maintenance system developed for five of the town council's sports pavilions.

Members were advised that the document was very much at an early stage and the figures were likely to be subject to significant change. It was also anticipated that the suggested dates would be postponed by a year.

The report had been carried out by a chartered building surveyor; however, there was very little in terms of briefing, and Members were presented with a 'worst case' scenario.

By approving the recommendation at this stage, Members would signal the completion of a Corporate Peer Challenge recommendation. Amended expenditure figures would be presented at a later date.

Resolved: To note the report and ask the Head of Environmental and Community Services to review and prioritise potential future expenditure.


13300 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Carroll Seconded by: Cllr Slough

Votes for: 6

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.



13301 DEPOT LEASE

HRTC had received notification from CBC that continued use of the depot would be incumbent upon signing a three-year lease at a significantly increased rate. A review of alternative depots had established that the CBC proposed rate was in line with other similar facilities. Agreeing to the lease would mean a higher budgeted cost for the first three months of 2026; however, it was suggested that this would be the preferred option in the short term while other options were explored.

Members voiced disappointment that CBC did not appear willing to negotiate terms, despite the letter stating the terms were a basis for negotiation.

Following the discussion, Members agreed to the proposed recommendations:

- To note the financial pressure on the budget during the first three months of 2026.
- To enter into a three-year lease whilst exploring alternative options

Resolved:

- 1. To note the financial pressure on budget code 291-4013 during the first three months of 2026**
- 2. To enter into a three-year lease with CBC whilst continuing to explore alternative options**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.18 pm

Dated this 20th day of October 2025

Chairman



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Planning Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on
6th October 2025 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: M Herber Chairman
E Cooper
Y Farrell
D Jones
C Slough

Officers: Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: E Billington
D Taylor

13352 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Billington and Taylor.

13353 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13354 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

13355 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 15th September 2025.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13356 PLANNING MATTERS

(a) The following planning applications were considered:

CB/25/02936/VOC
(click for more details)

Variation of condition numbers 3, 16 and 17 of planning permission CB/23/03775/FULL (Erection of 6 residential dwellings with associated works) Variation reason (1) The road layout has been slightly modified to reduce the distance of

parking bay for Plot 1 from the house (2) The site's sustainability strategy has been updated to include Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) (3) The internal layouts of the proposed houses have been revised (4) The window cill heights have also been adjusted to ensure compliance with building regulations
Land south of The Bungalow, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis



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

Noted:

CB/25/02774/DOC
(click for more details)

Discharge of Condition 20 against planning permission CB/12/03613/OUT (Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. Development to comprise: up to 5,150 dwellings (Use Class C3); up to 202,500 sqm gross of additional development in Use Classes: A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away); B1, B2, B8 (offices, industrial and storage and distribution); C1 (hotel), C2 (care home), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car showroom; data centre; petrol filling station; car parking; primary substation; energy centre; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.)
Phase 4, Parcels 4 and 5 - Houghton Regis North Site 1, Land on the northern edge of Houghton Regis

CB/25/02864/DOC
(click for more details)

Discharge of Condition 2 against planning permission CB/25/00320/RM (Reserved Matters: following Outline Application CB/12/03613/OUT (Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. Development to comprise: up to 5150 dwellings (Use Class C3); up to 202500 sqm gross of additional development in Use Classes: A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away); B1, B2, B8 (offices, industrial, and storage and distribution); C1 (hotel), C2 (care home), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car showroom; data centre; petrol filling station; car parking; primary substation; energy centre; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.). Reserved matters for the appearance and finish of external features, including play equipment, spatial arrangement, street furniture, signage, for the key spaces in the areas known as Phase 3A and 3B of Masterplan Area 3)
Land To The North And East Of Houghton Regis, Sundon Road, Houghton Regis

CB/25/02856/DOC
(click for more details)

Discharge of Condition 6 against planning permission CB/23/03775/FULL (Erection of 6 residential dwellings with associated works)
Land south of The Bungalow, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis

MR

Permissions / Approvals / Consents

None received.

Refusals:

None received.

Withdrawals:

None received.

13357 PLANNING APPLICATIONS – DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Members were advised that there were no planning applications which had been determined using delegated authority to report at this meeting.

13358 STREET NAMING – RED COW FARM HOUSE, BEDFORD ROAD

Members were notified of a street naming proposal for Red Cow Farm House, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, LU5 6JP. Members were advised that this notification had not been received in time for the previous Planning Committee meeting, resulting in the consultation deadline being missed. Central Bedfordshire Council's planning authority has been informed of this matter.

The proposed street name was “Jersey”, which members considered to be an appropriate and fitting choice for the former farmhouse. The proposed name was therefore supported.

Recommendation: To consider the Town Council’s response to the proposed road name of Jersey for Red Cow Farm House, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, LU5 6JP

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.19 pm

Dated this 27th day of October 2025



Chairman

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Planning Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on
27th October 2025 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: M Herber Chairman
E Cooper
Y Farrell
D Jones
C Slough
D Taylor

Officers: Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 17 (16 virtual)

Apologies: Councillors: E Billington

13390 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Billington.

13391 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13392 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

13393 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th October 2025.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2025
and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

13394 PLANNING MATTERS

**(a) Members were advised that there were no planning applications which
required the consideration of the Planning Committee at this meeting.**

Noted:

[CB/25/03219/DOC](#)
[\(click for more](#)
[details\)](#)

Discharge of Condition 12 against planning permission ref.
CB/24/01505/RM: following Outline Application
CB/12/03613/OUT(Outline planning permission with the details
of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for
later determination. Development to comprise: up to 5,150

dwelling (Use Class C3); up to 202,500 sqm gross of additional development in Use Classes: A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away); B1, B2, B8 (offices, industrial and storage and distribution); C1 (hotel), C2 (care home), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car showroom; data centre; petrol filling station; car parking; primary substation; energy centre; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.). Reserved matters for access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 189 dwellings at Parcel 5 pursuant to outline permission CB/12/03613/OUT and details to satisfy conditions; 8 (Surface Water Drainage), 25 (Construction Management Plan), 26 (Landscape Management Plan), 29 (Foul Drainage), 32 (Noise) and 33 (Noise)'.
Land to the North and East of Houghton Regis, Sundon Road, Houghton Regis (Linmere Parcel 5)

[CB/25/03220/DOC](#)
(click for more details)

Discharge of Condition 17 against planning permission ref. CB/24/01505/RM: Reserved Matters: following Outline Application CB/12/03613/OUT (Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. Development to comprise: up to 5,150 dwellings (Use Class C3); up to 202,500 sqm gross of additional development in Use Classes: A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away); B1, B2, B8 (offices, industrial and storage and distribution); C1 (hotel), C2 (care home), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car showroom; data centre; petrol filling station; car parking; primary substation; energy centre; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.). Reserved matters for access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 189 dwellings at Parcel 5 pursuant to outline permission CB/12/03613/OUT and details to satisfy conditions; 8 (Surface Water Drainage), 25 (Construction Management Plan), 26 (Landscape Management Plan), 29 (Foul Drainage), 32 (Noise) and 33 (Noise)'.
Land to the North and East of Houghton Regis, Sundon Road, Houghton Regis (Linmere parcel 5)

Permissions / Approvals / Consents

[CB/25/01963/FULL](#)
(click for more details)

Erection of single storey timber frame rear extension to create a storage area and a covered sitting area, with new door, and steel corrugated roofing

Refusals:[CB/25/02016/FULL](#)[\(click for more details\)](#)

Subdivision of the dwelling house into two self-contained units, single storey rear extension, ground floor replacement side extension, 4 roof lights to front, front porch, hip to gable, first floor side / rear extension, erection of rear dormer and associated external alterations.

None received.

Withdrawals:

None received.

13395 PLANNING APPLICATIONS – DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Members were advised that there were no planning applications which had been determined using delegated authority to report at this meeting.

13396 [CB/25/01901/FULL](#) – NOTIFICATION OF AMENDMENTS

Members were advised that amendments had been received in relation to planning application [CB/25/01901/FULL](#) for the proposed development at Houghton Regis. Members were provided with a comparison table highlighting the amended documents:

Members were reminded that Houghton Regis Town Council objected to this application when it was submitted in July – minute number 13272 on the grounds of:

Conflict with Adopted Plans

The site is not designated for employment use in the Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan, Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan or the Houghton Regis North Framework Plan. The proposal is therefore contrary to planning policy, particularly Policy BE1, which restricts employment development to defined zones such as Thorn Turn and Junction 11a. Approval would set a precedent that undermines these plans.

Residential Amenity and Quality of Life

The proposed development would result in significant harm to nearby residential properties, including those on Cresswell Edge, Seaton Crescent, and Alnwick Grove. It was noted that the units would be positioned very much closer to residential properties than those at the Thorn Road location at the western edge of Bidwell West, which had caused considerable disgruntlement, and that they would be built to approximately the same height, making them much more overbearing. Concerns raised include increased levels of noise, light pollution, visual intrusion, and a loss of privacy. Several residents, including those working from home or with specific health or educational needs in the household, expressed that the impact of this development would be considerable and disruptive.



Traffic and Highway Safety

The scheme proposes 233 car parking spaces, additional motorcycle and HGV parking, and could generate upwards of 700 vehicle movements. Bedford Road already accommodates multiple access points and is not suited to a further increase in volume, particularly involving HGVs. Residents highlighted the dangers posed to children walking to school and to the wider pedestrian and cycling community.

Ecological and Environmental Impact

The site currently functions as a green buffer and supports a range of local wildlife. Concerns were raised about the loss of habitat and the undermining of wildlife corridors created during the construction of the A5. One resident has been monitoring the site since 2017 and believes the ecological report provided with the application does not reflect the full picture.

Public Right of Way

The proposal includes the diversion of a Public Right of Way through an industrial estate, which contradicts Policy GSR5. This change would significantly diminish the amenity of the route and deter pedestrian use.

Lack of Demonstrable Employment Need

It was noted that the Baytree development in Dunstable has already met and exceeded employment land provision targets. In addition, there are vacant industrial units within the surrounding area, calling into question the need for further development of this nature.

Impact on Property and Future Investment

Residents expressed concern about the impact on property values, future mortgage viability, and the effect of the development on the perception of the area. One resident, having moved from Borehamwood, stated they were explicitly told the land would remain as green open space at the time of purchase.

Community Sentiment and Engagement


Over 1,000 signatures have been collected via a petition opposing the application. Residents feel the application has not been transparent, with certain roads such as Alnwick Grove omitted from the plans. Many feel misled and strongly oppose the introduction of industrial use within what was marketed as a family-oriented development.

Public Transport and Accessibility

Public transport links in this part of Houghton Regis are minimal, raising further concerns around the sustainability of the proposed development and the increased reliance on car and HGV travel.

General Overdevelopment and Unsuitable Use

Residents and community representatives stressed that this proposal represents overdevelopment and would fundamentally change the character of this part of Bidwell West. It was emphasised that the site was always intended to function as a green buffer between residential properties and the major road infrastructure to the west and north of the site.



Members maintained their objection on all the grounds previously cited. Members also noted that the proposal to move the junction further south would bring it into conflict with the Haul Road through Linnmere, when it opened, and would make the turn even tighter than before for lorries entering and leaving the site.

Members stressed the importance of the objections raised by Highways in an Internal Consultation Memo. The memo raised several concerns and stated that relocating the junction further to the south made 'no significant change' and that proposed access arrangements were neither 'safe nor practicable'.

Members restated the point that residents had previously been advised the land formed a buffer zone, and that it had been designated a green open space under the Houghton Regis North Framework Plan. Moving the warehouses slightly further back did not address the fundamental issue of overdevelopment, nor the impact on residents who no expectation of development of this site.

The single petition submitted against this application did not reflect the fact that over one thousand residents had objected to this development.

The Planning Committee were made aware of a technical issue preventing virtual attendees from joining the meeting. Once the issue was resolved, Members summarised their discussion and invited comments from the public.

Members of the public joining the meeting raised the following points:

- Objections were not simply a matter of layout but the inappropriate nature of five substantially sized warehouses, with resulting traffic, being situated in close proximity to a residential community.
- To approve the application would be in contradiction of the promises made to residents and would set a dangerous precedent.
- Public safety and the right of way were both a source of concern
- Any development of the land should be for the provision of promised facilities for residents.
- A traffic survey recently conducted on this road took place while road works were in operation; therefore, the accuracy of data gathered was questionable.

Members of the public expressed the wish to see better management of residential and commercial interaction, especially for a site not previously earmarked for development.

A member of the public informed Members that the Minister for Housing and Planning had encouraged local authorities to put in place local plans; something



which Central Bedfordshire already had in place. Under Section 38 of the Planning Act 2004 there was a requirement for an application to be in accordance with the Development Plan, including the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. It was highlighted that the Houghton Regis North Framework Plan was one of several major documents supporting the Local Plan; this designated the site as a green buffer zone between housing and the new A5. It was felt that the application could not fit within this framework.

Further issues highlighted were:

- The proposed relocation of the entrance would put it in close proximity to the new housing being built and would subject the area to HGVs generating fumes, noise and increased traffic flow.
- The proposals would not uphold the requirement for a 10% statutory on-site gain in biodiversity without offsetting elsewhere.
- Sustainable drainage - enhancement to green routes was not included in the proposal.
- The application did not represent a high-quality development to support 'strong, vibrant and healthy communities, beautiful and safe places with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.'

It was felt that the applicant was ignoring the concerns of the residents, and it was hoped that CBC would have the confidence to ensure full compliance with the Local Plan.

To ensure that members of the public were fully informed of the earlier discussion, Members of the Planning Committee reiterated their grounds for objection. The Planning Committee stated that the submitted amendments did not overcome identified policy conflict or the likely detrimental impact on the community.

Resolved: **That Houghton Regis Town Council maintains its objection to Planning Application CB/25/01901/FULL, on the same grounds as previously recorded, as the submitted amendments do not overcome the identified policy conflicts or the likely detrimental impact on the local community.**

13397 PUBLIC NOTICE - NO WAITING ON REDHOUSE COURT AT ANY TIME

Members were presented with a public notice, and road plan, concerning the proposed extension of waiting restrictions under Traffic Regulation Order TRO-042 affecting Redhouse Court and Clarkes Way in Houghton Regis. The proposal sought to introduce "No Waiting at Any Time" restrictions to address indiscriminate parking and prevent the obstruction of junctions by parked vehicles.



Specific locations to be restricted:

- Clarkes Way (north-west side): approximately 10 metres from junction with Redhouse Court extending south-westerly
- Clarkes Way (south side): approximately 10 metres from junction with Redhouse Court extending westerly
- Redhouse Court (east side): approximately 14 metres from the junction centre extending south-easterly

The proposal was intended to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety by ensuring junctions remain clear and unobstructed.

Members were unanimous in support of the proposed waiting restrictions.

Resolved: **To submit comments to Central Bedfordshire Council in support of the proposed extension of waiting restrictions under Traffic Regulation Order TRO-042 for Redhouse Court and Clarkes Way, Houghton Regis.**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.35pm

Dated this 17th day of November 2025

Chairman



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Staffing Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on
3rd June 2025 at 7pm**

Present:	Councillors:	W Henderson E Cooper M Herber D Jones T McMahon A Slough	Chairman (Substitute)
	Officers:	Louise Senior Ian Haynes Amanda Samuels	Head of Democratic Services Head of Environmental & Community Services Administration Officer
	Public:	0	
Apologies:	Councillors:	E Costello D Taylor	

13212 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllrs Costello and Taylor (Cllr Cooper substituted).

13213 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13214 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13215 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice Chair for Staffing Committee for 2025/2026.

Nominee:	D Jones	Proposed by:	E Cooper
		Seconded by:	A Slough

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Jones became the Vice-Chair of Staffing for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

WTH

13216 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

Members were provided with the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

13217 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were provided with a workplan for the municipal year 2025/26. The workplan provided a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2025/26, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations were met in a timely manner.

It was requested by Members that dates for the Staffing Committee 2026/2027 reverted to the pattern previously followed by the Personnel Sub-committee, as follows:

- End July 2026
- End November 2026
- End January 2027
- End April 2027

Members agreed to accept the recommendation and the suggested diary changes for the following council year were duly noted.

Resolved: To review and approve the Staffing Committee Workplan for 2025/26, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year.

13218 APPOINTMENT OF CLERK'S APPOINTED PERSONS

As part of the Committee's Functions one member of the Committee was to be appointed as the contact to support the Clerk for day-to-day matters, to handle impromptu leave requests, absences from work and to feed matters to Committee where any decisions/action had been made. This person and one other appointed person (historically this had been the Mayor as Chair of the Council) was required to undertake the Clerk's appraisal.

One of these positions was generally taken by the Chair of the Committee but this was not a requirement.

Members were invited to make nominations for the Clerk's Appointed Person.

Nominee: D Jones

Proposed by:

E Cooper

Seconded by:

T McMahon

There were no other nominations.

WCM

On being put to the vote, Councillor Jones was duly appointed as the Clerk's Appointed Person for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

The appointment of a second member was made as follows:

Nominee:	M Herber	Proposed by:	T McMahon
		Seconded by:	D Jones

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Councillor Herber was duly appointed as the second member to undertake the Clerk's appraisal for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

Resolved:

- 1. To appoint a member of the Committee as the Clerk's Appointed Person and to undertake the Clerk's appraisal;**
- 2. To appoint a second member to undertake the Clerk's appraisal.**

13219 TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL LEAVE, OVERTIME WORKING AND SICKNESS

Annual leave

From January to April 2025 the Clerk had 3 day's annual leave and 2 days flexi leave.

The following leave was requested:

- 30th June – 4th July 2025
- 14th August – 1st September 2025

Overtime

The Clerk had attended 8 meetings or events outside of the normal working day within the period January to April 2025 (compared with 6 meetings in the previous quarter).

Resolved: To approve the Town Clerk's annual leave request.

13220 RECRUITMENT

Members were advised, following the successful internal appointment to the post of Finance Support Officer, the recruitment for the remaining posts had been completed in accordance with the Town Councils Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy. These new members of staff were now in post:

- Support Officer (Events) – Saffron Cooper-Hughes (F/T)
- Support Officer (Leadership) – Elizabeth Holland (P/T-15hrs pw)
- Cemetery & Allotment Officer – Bianca Nagle (P/T – 15hrs pw)

WGM

13221 STAFF APPRAISAL

Members were advised that the majority of staff appraisals had been completed, with the remaining appraisal meetings booked over the coming week. The Town Councils Appraisal Policy and appraisal form was reviewed in 2017 and as such it was opportune to review and update.

Members made the following queries regarding wording within the Appraisal Policy:

- *In paragraph 3.1 'Town Clerk' had been substituted with 'Line Manager' but it was later stated that appraisees must return the form to the 'Town Clerk' – should this also read 'Line Manager'?*
The Head of Corporate Services agreed to clarify and confirm the wording.
- *Should paragraph 10.3 read 'Staffing Committee' rather than 'Corporate Services'?*
The Head of Corporate Services responded that the Staffing Committee had initially been established for the current year only, hence the wording; Members requested that it should read 'Staffing Committee'.
- *'Section 43' should read 'Section 3'.*
This would be amended.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council, the adoption of the Town Councils Appraisal Policy and process.

13222 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: D Jones Seconded by: T McMahon

Votes in favour: 6

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.

13223 STAFF SICKNESS

Members received a rolling twelve-month record of sickness absence for all members of staff.

It was confirmed to members that the Bradford Point system was monitored by Line Managers.

Resolved: To note the information

WEM

13224 STAFFING MATTERS

Members considered a report relating to internal staffing structures and future service delivery. A number of recommendations were discussed to support the Council's ongoing development and to ensure sufficient capacity is in place to meet current and anticipated responsibilities.

The proposals included consideration of potential future appointments, and longer-term workforce planning to reflect the evolving needs of the Town Council. Members also considered budget implications and the importance of aligning staffing resources with the Council's strategic priorities.

Resolved: To support all recommendations as contained within the report.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.01 pm.

Dated this 24th day of November 2025

Chairman



Houghton Regis Partnership Committee

Town Mayor: Cllr M Herber
Town Clerk: Clare Evans

Tel: 01582 708540

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET ON 29th July 2025

Present: Town Cllrs: Y Farrell, D Jones, M Herber, C Slough
CBC Cllrs C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill
CBC Mrs Hughes, Community Engagement Manager
Officers:
HRTC C Evans, Town Clerk
Officers: A Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: J Anderson, D Gibbons, C Regan, T Haines, R Turner

Also in attendance: 0

Apologies: CBC Cllrs T McMahon

Members of the public: 1

1085 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2025/26.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this could be a member from either authority.

Nominee:	C Alderman	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	D Jones

There were no other nominations.

Accordingly, Cllr Alderman was elected as Chair of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

1086 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr McMahon. Cllr R Goodchild had also advised that he would not be attending this meeting as his preliminary work with town and parish councils and partnership committees continues.

CA

1087 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this should be a member from the other authority to the Chair.

Nominee:	D Jones	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	Y Farrell

No further nominations were received.

Accordingly, Cllr Jones was elected as Vice Chair of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

1088 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

1089 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1090 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2025.

Following on from her email, the Chairman took the opportunity to remind Members that Cllr Watkins had declined the suggested open public meeting to discuss sports hall provision. It was suggested that Cllr Watkins' decision to decline the meeting should be noted.

The Town Clerk emphasised that Cllr Watkins had declined to attend an open public meeting but would be willing to participate in the October Town Partnership meeting when the sports hall would be on the agenda.

The October Town Partnership meeting would be used to gain feedback from councillors and members of the public on strategic matters relating to the new Leisure Centre, on whether there were continued issues with access to the Houghton Sports Hall and whether there remained a demand for sports hall access during school hours.

Members were reminded that CBC's Sustainable Communities Committee were anticipating reviewing the suitability of Houghton Sports Hall to serve Houghton Regis at its meeting on 6th November 2025. Any issues raised at the October HR Partnership meeting would be fed into the CBC meeting on 6th November 2025.

A formal request would be extended to Cllr Watkins to attend the next Town Partnership meeting.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2025.

CA

1091 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION

The Terms of Reference required the list of Co-opted Members to be reviewed annually by the Town Joint Committee.

Members had received applications for co-option from:

- David Gibbons
- Jo Anderson
- Carole Regan
- Roger Turner
- Tim Haines

Members were invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt further local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. In this regard the Terms of Reference for the Committee stated:

Co-option

To support engagement with local stakeholders the Town Joint Committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate up to a maximum of 15. Each co-opted Member will be able to engage fully in all discussions but will not have any voting rights. Co-opted members can be removed from the Town Joint Committee. Decision making around removals can either be taken by the whole Town Joint Committee or by joint agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair, depending on each Town Joint Committee's preference.

Resolved: To approve the Co-optee applications from:

- David Gibbons
- Jo Anderson
- Carole Regan
- Roger Turner
- Tim Haines

1092 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were provided with the Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

As requested at the April 2025 Partnership meeting, a report on the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Committee had been included in the Committee Workplan (October).

1093 CONFIRMATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Committee were required to confirm the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for 2025/26.

It was agreed that Houghton Regis Town Council would continue to act as the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

CA

1094 TOWN CENTRE MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

Members had requested an exploration with CBC of their intentions and aspirations for developing a Town Centre Management Plans for towns within the authority's area. CBC had responded that funding and capacity constraints currently prevented them from developing or updating Town Centre Management Plans.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that Houghton Regis had previously had a Town Centre Management Plan which was now very outdated and more recently developed Town Centre Action plan (2023). Although more recent, the Action Plan may require an update to reflect the changes that had subsequently taken place within the town. The plan did, however, contain a number of actions that were worth revisiting and updating.

Members were also reminded that HRTC had previously commissioned a benchmarking survey of the town centre. A repeat survey had recently been commissioned by CBC to facilitate an evaluation of the "new normal" high street economy. With this in mind, Members queried what the current priorities should be and the relevance of town centre development, especially with the Bidwell and Linnere sites being established.

During discussion, the following suggestions were made:

- Adoption of a phased approach to achieve some of the aspirations for the town centre within the Action Plan.
- To explore funding possibilities.
- To set up a task and finish group to establish specific needs within the town - especially in relation to deprivation - and establish costings.
- Establish cross-sector engagement.
- The creation of a dedicated role (grant assisted) to promote the town centre and pursue funding opportunities.

The Community Engagement Manager informed Members that they had spoken to the Lead Officer regarding the benchmarking survey. The officer was happy to come to the Partnership Committee to discuss the findings which could potentially inform how the Partnership could move forward on this topic.

The proposed actions were:

- Establish which items from the Town Centre Action Plan could potentially be taken forward.
- The Town Clerk and the Community Engagement Manager To discuss eligibility for funding ahead of the next meeting.
- Establish the Terms of Reference for a potential task and finish group.
- To establish what the mechanisms may be to take actions forwards within CBC and / or HRTC.
- Consider the benchmarking report at the next meeting to help inform what could be achieved with the Town Centre Action Plan.

CA

1095 COMMUNITY BUILDINGS IN HOUGHTON REGIS

Members were provided with a verbal update on community buildings as follows:

HRN2 Community Building in Bidwell

The CBC Community Engagement Manager informed Members that a project team was now in place, with input also being provided by the CBC Planning and Assets teams. A business plan had been produced which supported the delivery in a phased approach.

A representative from Bidwell highlighted that this was a charity delivering a community facility partially funded by S106 money as such there had been arising complications to resolve; however, it was hoped that a planning application for the first phase would be submitted by September 2025.

Bedford Square Community Centre

The Town Clerk informed Members that there was no further update on that provided at the April 2025 Partnership meeting (Minutes 1080).

Parkside Community Space

The town council had considered a request from the Parkside Action Group to site a cabin on Parkside recreation ground to serve as a local community space. The following was Resolved:

1. To provide permission in principle for Parkside Action Group to site a cabin on Parkside recreation ground to serve as a local community space
2. To request that Parkside Action Group provide detail on the following matters: planning and building control; legal issues including a lease; safety & technical matters; utilities; operational details; and finance.

The Red House

The HR Heritage Society had approached the town council to suggest a way forward and this was being considered by HRTC.

HR Day Centre

The Community Engagement Manager had no update. An update on plans for the site was requested.

Townsend Centre

The future of the building would be considered at Executive in August. It would not be possible to reutilise the building until the transfer of occupants had been completed. It was requested that a consultation be carried out to help shape future plans for the site.

1096 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2025/26. This had been extended to include the following items on the October agenda:

- Sports hall provision
- Review of the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

The Town Clerk had confirmed that Health remained on the Workplan, in line with a request from Members.

CA

Members wished to pursue the matter of school provision within Bidwell West. A School Organisation Plan was adopted by CBC in April. Members requested that this was discussed at Town Partnership at the earliest opportunity. Members also requested clarity on the delivery of the primary school and the anticipated number of available school places.

Regarding sports hall provision, it was felt that the report should focus on the actions that had been requested rather than historical detail. The Chair confirmed that the Town Partnership would consider any continuing issues and formulate a comment for Sustainable Communities.

The committee discussed various ways to structure the agenda item. The Chair confirmed that these suggestions were noted and would be taken into account.

It was highlighted that a number of substantial items had been requested for the next agenda and concern was expressed that there may be insufficient meeting time available.

To assist it was suggested that in relation to a review of the Committee Functions and Terms of Reference that this item presented a consideration to set up a Task & Finish Group to undertake this work. It was hoped that this would reduce the discussion time enabling a full discussion on the other matters scheduled for the meeting.

Members highlighted that Economy and Retail was a bullet point on the workplan 2025/25 and questioned whether this should read Town Centre Plan. The Town Clerk confirmed this could be added to the same line.

1097 CBC UPDATE REPORT

The Chair asked if Members had any questions or observations relating to the report. The following points were raised:

- Emphasised the need to keep Health on the agenda.
- CBC were keen to support the doctor's practice in relocating to within the Bedford Square centre however the rooms were not fit for purpose and did not allow for examinations or certain procedures to be carried out.
- Since 2022 Drury Lane had been due to have drainage and resurfacing works carried out but this remained outstanding. The cost of the works had escalated significantly.
- Roundabouts were overgrown and CBC was not maintaining them. It was felt that HRTC could take this on at a cost.
- Nuisance bikes continued to be a significant issue.
- There was an encroachment by a resident into the land within Windsor Drive. Planning Enforcement were involved. Details were to be shared.

In response to a question from Members, the Chair confirmed they would investigate whether it would be possible to have a police presence at Town Partnership meeting.

There was general dissatisfaction with the police response to problems in the area and it was felt by some that the cost of HRTC's high visibility policing initiative, Op Hana, did not represent good value. Members expressed disappointment that the Combating

CA

Crime Working Group had not become a Sub-Committee to improve transparency and provide an opportunity to address a police representative directly.

Members questioned whether the camera at Tithe Farm Road was operational. There were continuing parking problems at this location and it did not appear that tickets were being issued. This would be investigated.

The Community Engagement Manager drew Members' attention to the following current live consultations:

Changes to the Licensing Policy
Community Governance Review
Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Refresh of the SEND Strategy

Members were encouraged to review these items.

1098 ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Members had been advised of the CBC process to determine further consideration, at CBC committee level, of items and issues.

Members of this committee were able to use this process to forward items for CBC's attention via the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair.

As such, Members were requested to identify and confirm if there were any requested items for CBC's attention.

Although not an item to forward for CBC's attention, concerns were expressed over road repairs.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.19 pm

Dated this 21st day of October 2025

Chairman





TOWN COUNCIL

Agenda Item 8

Date:	15th December 2025
Title:	AUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2024/25
Purpose of the Report:	To advised members of the outcomes of the external audit 2024/25.
Contact Officer:	Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To approve and accept the Audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25;
2. To note the matters raised in the Completion Letter dated 14th November 2025.

2. BACKGROUND

The Audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 was submitted for external audit on 20th June 2025.

The external audit has to be completed by 30th September 2025. The audited return was received on 14th November 2025.

The Council was notified by Mazars of the delay and a notice advising of this was placed on the website and noticeboard.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Members will find attached the following:

- Completion Letter dated 14th November 202, Appendix A
- Audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25, Appendix B

Members will note that the external auditor under Section 3 of the Return has raised one issue under:

‘Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

We were required to return the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to enable the Council to correct the following:

A. Section 2 Box 5 Loan Interest/Capital repayments – The 2023/24 comparative figure did not include the loan interest amount therefore is understated by £12,034, and the 2024/25 figure is overstated by £12,034.

B. The correction of both Box 5 led to an amendment of 23/24 Box 7, and 24/25 Box 1. In future the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is accurate and complete.'

This advice is noted and accepted.

The completion letter raises the following 3 issues as ***Minor scope for improvement in 2025/26:***

1. In undertaking the review of the 2024/25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return it came to our attention that in 2025 the Council has not met the requirements of the 2015 Accounts and Audit Regulations to start the period of 30 working days for the public to inspect the AGAR as soon as possible after it was approved. The Council should ensure that in 2025/26 they comply with the Regulations.

This advice is noted and accepted.

For members information the Council meeting approving the AGAR and supporting statements was held on 15th June 2025, the submission of the AGAR was completed on 20th June.

2. The internal control objective (L), 'the authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation', was ticked 'not applicable' by the internal auditor. We regard the relevant legislation in this area to be the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. We confirm the Council have complied with the requirements regarding publication of information in 2024/25, so the box should have been ticked 'Yes'.

Members may recall that this was raised as a *Minor scope for improvement in 2023/24 and in 2024/25*. Members were advised that this was previously raised with the Internal Auditor during his year-end visit in June 2024. In response he provided a letter of Explanation of 'Not Covered' responses (copy available on request). In response to the External Audit in 2023/24 the Internal Auditors Letter of Explanation was shared with the External Auditor and their further advice sought. No response was received.

3. *Accessibility Regulations*

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

This advice remains provided on the Council's website.

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

- There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

Financial Implications

- There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations

Risk Implications

- There are no risk implications arising from the recommendations

Equalities Implications

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

This project / issue does not discriminate.

Climate Change Implications

- There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations

Press Contact

- There are no press implications arising from the recommendations

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Members are requested to receive the external auditor's completion letter and Audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024/25.

7. APPENDICES

- Appendix A, Completion Letter dated 14th November 2025
- Appendix B, Audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

Newcastle office
Sustainably routed via:
30 Old Bailey
London
EC4M 7AU

Tel: +44 (0)191 383 6300
forvismazars.com/uk



Mrs C Evans
Houghton Regis Town Council
Council Offices
Peel Street
Houghton Regis
Bedfordshire
LU5 5EY

Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348

Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk

Date: 14 November 2025

Dear Mrs Evans

Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2025

We have completed our review for the year ended 31 March 2025 and I have pleasure in enclosing the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The External Auditor's Certificate and Report is given in Section 3.

If there are any significant matters arising from the review, they are summarised in the External Auditor's certificate in Section 3. If we have identified minor scope for improvement we have recorded this on page 2 of this letter. The Council must consider these matters and decide what action is required. In most cases this will be self-evident. In some instances we have referred to further guidance available, in particular, in the publication "*Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide (England) 2024*". This can be obtained via your NALC or SLCC branch, or downloaded free of charge.

Action you are required to take:

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, you are required to:

Publish (which must include publication on the authority's website) a statement on or before 30 September to confirm:

- that the review has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- of the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.
- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 do not specify the period the Completion Notice needs to be on the council's website, but this period must be reasonable.

Minor scope for improvement in 2025/2026

In undertaking the review of the 2024/25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return it came to our attention that in 2025 the Council has not met the requirements of the 2015 Accounts and Audit Regulations to start the period of 30 working days for the public to inspect the AGAR as soon as possible after it was approved. The Council should ensure that in 2025/26 they comply with the Regulations.

The internal control objective (L), 'the authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation', was ticked 'not applicable' by the internal auditor. We regard the relevant legislation in this area to be the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. We confirm the Council have complied with the requirements regarding publication of information in 2024/25, so the box should have been ticked 'Yes'.

Accessibility Regulations

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

Audit fee

Our fee note for the audit, which is in accordance with the audit fee scales set by SAAA, and available at [Audit Fees | Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments \(saaa.co.uk\)](https://saaa.co.uk/Audit-Fees-Smaller-Authorities-Audit-Appointments) will follow.

We would be grateful if you could arrange for this to be paid at the earliest opportunity.

We have made an additional charge as we were required to either write to you or send back your Annual Governance and Accountability Return for amendment and undertake additional work. This charge is shown separately on our fee note.

Commitment to achieving net zero

We've made an important change to how we handle post - and sustainability is driving it.

In line with our net zero targets, we encourage digital communication wherever possible. However, should it be necessary for you to communicate with us by post, our correspondence address is **30 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7AU**.

Yours sincerely



James Collins

Director

For and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2025**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2025**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2025 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2025 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2025.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2024) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2025).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2025**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✓	

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Houghton Regis Town Council

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk /WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	Yes		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	Yes		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	Yes		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	Yes		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	Yes		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	Yes		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	Yes		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	Yes		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			N/A
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.			N/A
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	Yes		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .	Yes		
O. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			N/A

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

09/06/2024 20/11/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Kevin Rose ACMA- IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

08/06/2025

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

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

Houghton Regis Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

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

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

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

16/06/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE
13254

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

Chair

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

<https://houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk/> ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

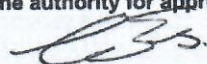
Houghton Regis Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	Revised 826,230	621,085 633,119	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,196,781	1,363,800	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	2,573,167	1,232,568	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	-749,067	-855,262	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	-24,068 12,034	-24,069 36,403	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	-3,201,958	-1,407,709	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	621,085 633,119	930,413	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	667,405	880,153	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	6,873,900	6,894,679	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	686,554	662,448	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

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



Date

10/06/2025

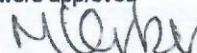
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

16/06/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

13255

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



Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Houghton Regis Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2024/25

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

We were required to return the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to enable the Council to correct the following:

- A. Section 2 Box 5 Loan Interest/Capital repayments – The 2023/24 comparative figure did not include the loan interest amount therefore is understated by £12,034, and the 2024/25 figure is overstated by £12,034.
- B. The correction of both Box 5 led to an amendment of 23/24 Box 7, and 24/25 Box 1.

In future the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is accurate and complete.

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable

External Auditor Name

Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature

Forvis Mazars LLP

Date

14 November 2025



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & SCHEDULE

Date of Approval:	Town Council 28 th September 2015
Date of Review:	26 th September 2016; 25 th September 2017; 24 th September 2018; 23 rd September 2019; 14 th September 2020; 21 st September 2021; 28 th November 2022. No longer reviewed by Corporate Services, as per IA recommendation.
Date of Re-approval Town Council	5 th December 2016; 11 th December 2017; 8 th October 2018; 9 th December 2019; 14 th December 2020; 13 th December 2021; 20 th March 2023; 18 th March 2024, 15 th May 2024; 16 th May 2025; 15 th December 2025

Risk Management Strategy

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Scope
- 3.0 Strategy Outcomes
- 4.0 Risk Management Overview
- 5.0 Risk Appetite
- 6.0 Embedding Risk Management
- 7.0 Roles and Responsibilities
- 8.0 Risk Management Processes
- 9.0 Monitoring and Review
- 10.0 Glossary of Terms

Appendix 1 - Impact and Likelihood Descriptors and Risk Scoring Matrix

Risk Management Schedule

- Corporate Services
- Environment & Leisure
- Planning
- Community Services

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Effective risk management is essential if Houghton Regis Town Council is to deliver its key outcomes and achieve its goals. It supports continuous improvement and good governance.
- 1.2 Risk management is about us: identifying the things that could happen to prevent the delivery of our key outcomes (our risks); assessing how likely it is that these things might happen and what their impact might be; and determining what can be done to reduce the likelihood of those unwanted events or mitigate their impact. Effective risk management requires us to identify our most important risks; record those risks and the actions we plan to take to deal with them; and review, regularly the impact of our actions on our risks.
- 1.3 We cannot avoid risk entirely and it would be impracticable to try to manage away entirely the risks that we are exposed to. What we must do is: decide what level of risk we are prepared, and can afford, to accept; take action that is proportionate and affordable to reduce to an acceptable level as many risks as possible; and keep under review and actively manage those risks that remain unacceptably high.
- 1.4 The Risk Management Strategy has been adopted to help us to manage our risks effectively.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The Strategy provides an overview of risk management before examining in more detail the elements critical to successful risk management, i.e.:
- determining our risk appetite
 - the integration of risk management into our decision making
 - linking service planning and performance management with risk management
 - defining responsibilities for risk management
 - processes for identifying, assessing and managing risk

3.0 Strategy Outcomes

- 3.1 The outcomes to be delivered by this strategy are within the approved Town Council Plan:

4.0 Risk Management - Overview

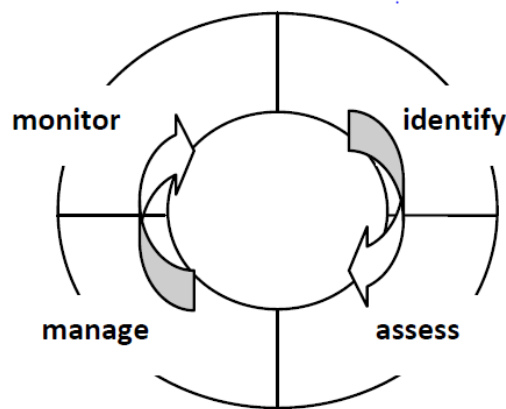
- 4.1 Risk management is the process by which the organisation seeks to identify, assess and manage key risks which might prevent it from achieving its corporate outcomes and goals or from doing so in an effective and efficient manner.
- 4.2 Risk management should not be treated as a standalone process. It should be treated just like budgeting and financial management or service planning and performance management – something that any good manager does as a matter of course. It should be linked to the service and financial planning and management as managers identify both the risks to their plans as they develop them and the risks associated with subsequent actions to keep those plans on track.
- 4.3 Risk management is a continuous process. For known risks, it should operate from the time that each risk is first identified until such time as it no longer represents a significant risk to the organisation. Recorded risks and the controls used to mitigate them should be reviewed on

a regular basis: the frequency of review for each risk should reflect the impact the risk might have and the degree of confidence placed on the controls in place to manage it. In addition, there is a need for constant and ongoing vigilance to ensure that any new risks that may arise are recognised and dealt with before they can impact on the organisation.

4.4 There are a number of benefits of having an effective risk management process in place and these include:

- Alerting management and other accountable persons to the key risks which might prevent the achievement of the organisation's corporate outcomes and service plan objectives, in order that timely mitigation can be developed to either prevent the risks occurring, or to manage them effectively if they do occur.
- Contributing to better decision making and the process of achieving corporate outcomes and service plan objectives. When embedded within existing business processes such as planning, performance management, project management and budgeting, it provides a basis for ensuring that the implications of decisions are thought through; that the impact of any decision on other decisions, initiatives and projects is considered; and that conflicts within planning and decision making are balanced. It also helps managers to design mitigations that are proportionate to the degree of risk faced.
- Providing assurance to accountable persons and managers on the adequacy of arrangements for the conduct of business. It demonstrates openness and accountability to various regulatory bodies and to all other stakeholders.
- Greater risk awareness and an improved control environment, which should mean fewer incidents and other control failures and better service outcomes.

4.5 The organisation's risk management approach is based on the standard management cycle of:



5.0 Risk Appetite

5.1 Risk appetite or risk tolerance are two terms that mean the same thing – how much risk the organisation is prepared to live with to achieve service goals and reach its strategic objectives. Using the language of the risk management professional, the organisation may be risk averse, risk neutral or risk loving. The organisation's risk appetite may vary depending on which aspect of its activities it is considering but for risk management purposes, it must be capable of expressing its appetite objectively – and numerically.

5.2 Houghton Regis Town Council has determined that it will use a scoring model based on impact and likelihood and will set a single risk tolerance level: any risk that scores 9 or more, using the model will be considered "primary" risks and will be subject to positive action

designed to mitigate the risk and bring its score within the tolerance level. Appendix 1 to the Strategy provides guidance for scoring the impact and likelihood of each risk.

- 5.3 To provide full assurance, those risks scoring less than 9 will also be recorded in the Risk Register – as will be the controls and other mitigations that resulted in a within-tolerance risk score. They will also be subject to monitoring designed to give assurance that controls are operating as expected to keep them within tolerance.

6.0 Embedding Risk Management

- 6.1 Embedding risk management is defined as building risk consistently and uniformly into all operations at every level so that it becomes part of ‘the way we do things’ as a matter of routine.

- 6.2 The key factors for successfully embedding risk management are:

- Sponsorship;
- Ownership;
- Developing linkages with service plans and corporate priorities
- Developing the appropriate knowledge and skills to identify, assess and manage risks

- 6.3 How we will seek to achieve these success factors – and embed risk management - is outlined in sections 7 and 8 of the Strategy and the accompanying appendices and guidance notes.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 Houghton Regis Town Council will only succeed in managing its risks if everyone understands their responsibilities in this area. The key message for all of us is that we share responsibility for our risks – and we can’t afford to have anyone shirking their responsibility.

- 7.2 The Town Clerk is specifically responsible for:

- Producing and reviewing the Risk Management Strategy
- Reporting to those charged with governance on the effectiveness of risk management arrangements
- Providing (or obtaining via competent specialists) advice, guidance, support and training to employees and Councillors or other accountable persons
- Reviewing committee reports to ensure risks relating to recommendations /decisions are clearly stated in the report
- Promoting effective risk management across the organisation
- Assisting officers in maintaining the corporate Risk Register

- 7.3 Every risk in the Risk Register will be made the responsibility of a specific employee, manager or Town Clerk. That person will be the Risk Owner.

- 7.4 The organisation’s Corporate Services Committee is responsible for oversight of the risk management processes. The Committee receives 6 monthly reports on overdue risk actions. *Those charged with governance* are involved in the preparation and review of the Annual Governance Statement (*Statement of Internal Control*) which includes reference to the organisation’s risk management arrangements.

- 7.5 The following table identifies other specific roles and responsibilities.

Who	Responsibilities
Accountable persons – those charged with governance (<i>Town Clerk & elected members</i>)	<p>To hold management team (or equivalent) accountable for effective risk management across the organisation</p> <p>To ensure effective risk management arrangements are in place</p> <p>To consider risks when making decisions</p> <p>To raise risk issues and concerns with management team or Risk Manager</p>
Senior management / Clerk (risk manager in this context)	<p>To identify and assess risks to service delivery and instigate actions to mitigate those risks</p> <p>To identify corporate risks and ensure identified actions to mitigate are completed</p> <p>To champion risk management and lead by example</p> <p>Horizon scanning to identify emerging risks</p> <p>To ensure appropriate risk owners are designated for each risk or action</p>
Project Managers (for projects)	<p>To identify and manage project risks</p> <p>To ensure high level project risks are recorded on the Risk Register</p>
Partnership Lead officers	<p>To identify and manage partnership risks from the organisation's perspective</p> <p>To identify and manage risks from the partnership's perspective (where the organisation is the lead authority)</p> <p>To ensure partnership risks are recorded on the Risk Register and in accordance with any partnership agreement.</p>
Clerk and other employees	<p>To identify opportunities or threats to service delivery</p> <p>To take reasonable action to minimise risks in service delivery</p> <p>To report events (materialising of identified risks) to management team</p> <p>To seek advice from the Risk Manager on risk management issues</p>

8.0 Risk Management Processes

8.1 Houghton Regis Town Council uses its Town Council Plan to identify its aims, objectives and desired outcome. Houghton Regis Town Council has determined that, for all outcomes identified in this Plan, Risk Owners must consider the risks that may materialise to prevent delivery of a desired outcome and determine what should be done about them. The following steps are to be followed:

- **Risk identification** – the Risk Owner will determine what might happen that could impact on delivery and establish when, how and why such an event might occur.
- **Risk assessment** – the Risk Owner will apply the guidance set out in Appendix 1 to determine the relevant risk score: if the risk score is outside the tolerance level action will be required. At this point the Risk Owner is assessing the “inherent risk”, that is the risk that the organisation would be exposed to if no mitigating actions were taken.

- **Initial risk mitigation** – the Risk Owner will identify what controls are already in place to reduce the chance of a risk materialising
 - **Initial risk response** – the Risk Owner will determine what to do about a risk in terms of treating, tolerating, transferring or terminating the risky activity in order to reduce the potential impact on the organisation. Alternatively, you might take the risk in order to get an outcome that would not be achievable without taking the risk.
 - **Risk review** – the Risk Owner will review the scoring with the responses and controls in place to come up with the residual risk score.
 - **Future risk mitigation** – the Risk Owner will identify actions that need to be taken to reduce the residual risk score to within the risk appetite.
- 8.2 These steps may be undertaken by officers during a group workshop, or individually with the assistance of the Risk Manager or an external facilitator. Risks, controls and actions can then be recorded in the Risk Register. Risks can be classified as:
- Corporate – cross cutting and affecting all services in the organisation
 - Operational – related to a specific service or activity
 - Strategic – may affect the strategic direction of the organisation
 - Project – time limited and specific to finite projects
- 8.3 Implementation of risk actions are monitored as part of the organisation's regular reporting of budgets, performance and risk management (where such reporting exists). Where actions have not been taken in a timely manner to mitigate risks, this shall be reported to the appropriate committee charged with governance.
- 8.4 Emerging risks identified through regular horizon scanning will be assessed, analysed and recorded on the Risk Register with suitable responses as soon as they are identified.
- 8.5 Risks relating to committee decisions are recorded in each committee report. The Risk Manager provides advice and guidance and will identify if the Risk Register requires updating with any corporate or service risks emerging from report recommendations.
- 8.6 Project risks will be identified at the outset of any project and recorded in the organisation's Project Management approach. Any project risks that have an inherent risk score of 9 or above will be recorded on the Risk Register in a sub-section for the appropriate service area. This will enable monitoring of controls and actions.
- 8.7 Once the project is completed, project risks will be removed from the Risk Register.
- 9.0 Monitoring and Review**
- 9.1 The Strategy will be reviewed annually by Corporate Services Committee and reported to Town Council.
- 9.2 Progress with actions designed to mitigate primary risks will be reported to those charged with governance.
- 9.3 Risk Owners will review their risks on the Risk Register every six months and give assurance that controls are still operating as recorded.
- 9.4 Where appropriate, Internal Audit will review the organisation's risk management processes at least once every two years.

10.0 Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Risk	The threat that an event or action will adversely affect the organisation's ability to deliver its objectives. The threat is measured in terms of impact and likelihood.
Risk strategy	How the organisation plans to achieve good risk management
Risk appetite	The level of risk the organisation is prepared to accept
Risk averse	A low appetite for risk taking
Risk positive	A high appetite for risk taking to potentially achieve a more favourable outcome
Upside risk	Opportunity to exploit a situation for a positive advantage
Inherent risk	The impact and likelihood of an event occurring before any controls have been applied
Residual risk	The impact and likelihood of an event occurring when controls are operating as designed
Controls	Processes or actions taken to address risks by reducing the likelihood. Usually referred to as treating the risk. Cost of controls should be proportional to the risk
Mitigation	Actions taken or to be taken to reduce the chance of a risk materialising or the impact if it does.
Treat the risk	Operate processes to reduce the risk e.g. password security, spot checks, regular monitoring or reporting
Tolerate the risk	Agree not to take action, usually due to minimal likelihood of occurrence, or cost of controls is disproportional to the risk
Transfer the risk	Often through insurance, where the impact of a risk materialising is reduced. May also occur through outsourcing if a third party takes on the risk.
Terminate the risk	Stop doing the activity / service to which the risk relates
Take the risk	View the risk as an upside risk / opportunity to improve an outcome or deliver an even better service and take the chance

APPENDIX 1

IMPACT DESCRIPTORS (scores) – how big could the impact be?

The following descriptors are designed to assist the scoring of the impact of a risk if it were to occur:

Score	Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	Very High (4)
Legal	Minor civil litigation	Major civil litigation and/or local public enquiry	Major civil litigation setting precedent and/or national public enquiry	Section 151 or government intervention or criminal charges
Financial	Up to £25k	Up to £50k	Up to £100k	Over £100k
Performance / Service Quality	Low level of minor complaints	Material level of minor complaints Service quality impaired	Unacceptable level of complaints. Adequate service level cannot be maintained	Complete failure to deliver service Government intervention
Health and safety of people	Low level of minor injuries	High level of minor injuries	Serious injury	Death of an individual for whom the organisation has a responsibility
Reputation	Little or no impact outside of the organisation	Minimal negative local media reporting	Significant negative front page reports or editorial comment in the local media	Questions raised in Parliament and/or reported in the national media

Financial risk impact levels should be adjusted to fit with the budget of the organisation. As a guide, Very High impact would be 10% of the organisation's net expenditure for the year (or precept and other income if applicable)

LIKELIHOOD DESCRIPTORS (scores) – how soon might it happen?

Low (1)	Once every two to five years or more
Medium (2)	This year or next year
High (3)	Within six months to a year
Very High (4)	Immediate or within a month

RISK SCORING MATRIX

VERY HIGH (4)	4	8	12	16
HIGH (3)	3	6	9	12
MEDIUM (2)	2	4	6	8
LOW (1)	1	2	3	4
IMPACT / LIKELIHOOD	LOW (1)	MEDIUM (2)	HIGH (3)	VERY HIGH (4)

Scores are mapped on the matrix above.

Red scores – Primary risk that exceeds the organisations risk appetite – action needed to redress, monthly monitoring

Amber scores – likely to cause the organisation some difficulties – quarterly monitoring

Green scores – monitor as necessary

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RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE

Corporate Services

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
Finance											
• Banking	Failure of banking set up to meet legal, policy & administration requirements	Loss of funds Short term loss of bank services (telephone / internet banking)	1	3	3	Use of national bank Spread of investments Internal controls	1	3	3	RFO	Ongoing
• Borrowing	Failure of borrower to honour loan agreement Failure of lender to honour loan agreement	Financial penalties Damage to reputation	1	3	3	Use of recognised public sector lender Set up for BACS repayments	1	3	3	RFO	Ongoing

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Audit – external	Failure of audit to provide appropriate assurance and give unqualified opinion	Financial penalties Damage to reputation	1	2	2	Use of national auditors as required by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd Preparation of accounts by professional accountants	1	2	2	RFO	Ongoing
• Audit – internal	Failure of audit to identify failings Unsuitability of internal audit service	Financial penalties Damage to reputation	1	2	2	Internal auditor is suitably qualified and independent of the Council. Appt made and scope set by Council	1	2	2	RFO	Ongoing

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Software	Loss of data Failure of software Protection of data from breach of confidentiality	Unable to undertake council functions Unlawful access to data Damage to reputation	2	3	6	Use of qualified IT support Up to date premise security Up to date IT security Off site secure data storage Up to date equipment	2	3	6	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• Investments	Failure of investment company	Loss of funds Restricted access to funds	2	4	8	Good track record Nationally renown Resolution to invest in institutions AA-rating or higher	2	4	8	RFO	Ongoing

• S106 / deferred income	Fraud	Loss of funds Damage to reputation	1	4	4	Use of national bank Spread of investments (factoring in security, liquidity, yield) Internal controls Invested with CCLA Deposit Account – AAA rated	1	4	4	Extend spread of investment Head of Corporate Services	December 2025

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Financial management	Poor financial decisions	Damage to reputation	3	3	9	Financial policy controls in place	3	3	9	RFO	Ongoing
	Non compliance with legislation & policy	Unable to meet financial commitments				<p>Council appoints an RFO</p> <p>Staff and Councillor training provided</p> <p>Internal and external audit undertaken</p> <p>Use of professional accountancy support</p> <p>Use of council specific accounts software</p>					

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Income generation	Predicted income doesn't match budgeted income Threat to service provision	Damage to reputation Unable to meet service commitments	3	2	6	Council sets balanced budget 3-9 months general reserves maintained Regular budget monitoring Main income from Precept and is governed by Legislation	3	2	6	RFO	Ongoing
• Tax base changes	Reduce income from precept arising from reduction in parish area	Reduced income	1	3	3	Active engagement by HRTC in governance reviews	1	3	3	RFO	Ongoing
	Slower than predicted increase in tax base arising from slower build out	Reduced income	1	3	3	None	1	3	3	RFO	Ongoing

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
Democracy											
• Elections	Not contested Insufficient Cllr's Suitability of candidates Not run according to statute	Damage to reputation Reduced democratic mandate Poor decisions	2	2	4	Elections promoted Information provided Elections run by principal authority	2	2	4	Head of Democratic Services	Ongoing
• Councillors	Cllr vacancies though resigning, leaving or disqualification Suitability of skills and experience Quality of guidance / decisions	Insufficient numbers to support the democratic process Damage to reputation Financial costs	2	3	6	Cllr training and support provided Cllr's agree to Code of Conduct Cllr complete Declarations of Interest forms and declare interests at meetings	2	3	6	Head of Democratic Services	Ongoing

						<p>Cllr workload shared among 14 Cllr's</p> <p>Council staff provide guidance, knowledge and support</p> <p>Council and Cllr's work under approved policies</p>					
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Subscriptions	<p>Loss of outside professional bodies who provide guidance and support</p> <p>Withdrawal of budget to fund subscriptions</p>	<p>Poor actions</p> <p>Damage to reputation</p>	2	2	4	<p>Long history of subscriptions</p> <p>Budget provision made annually</p> <p>Cllr's aware of benefits of subscriptions</p>	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
Central services											
• Utilities	Supply fails Cut off Supplier fails	Operation of council services ceases Damage to reputation	2	2	4	Use of national suppliers Accounts settled promptly	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• Unplanned work	Unbudgeted costs / use of general reserves Non compliance with council policy	Damage to reputation Financial costs	2	3	6	Council policies guide for unplanned financial decisions Special mtgs can be held as required	2	3	6	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• Non compliance with legislation	Council acting unlawfully	Damage to reputation Financial costs Legal proceedings	3	3	9	Trained staff Cllr training offered Use of outside professional services to	2	2	4	Promotion of training to cllrs - Head of Democratic Services Council to consider if training	Ongoing

						support council Membership of professional bodies				should / could be mandatory – Town Clerk	
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Communication systems inc. email, post, telephone, social media	Failure of systems Council uncontactable	Damage to reputation Financial costs Cessation of work of council	2	2	4	Variety of communication methods available Use of nationally recognised suppliers	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• Insurance	Failure of insurance company Insufficient insurance cover	Damage to reputation Financial costs	1	4	4	Use of nationally recognised provider Annual review of insurance arrangements	1	4	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• Contracts	Company failure	Damage to reputation	2	3	6	Use of recognised &	2	3	6	Town Clerk	Ongoing

	Termination of contract Insufficient / unsuitable monitoring	Financial costs Cessation / disruption of service Dissatisfied customers				competent providers Annual review of contracts All contracts are signed Financial statements provided					
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Professional support inc legal, hr, occ health, payroll, accounts / year end	Insufficient cover Incorrect advice	Damage to reputation Financial costs Dissatisfied customers / staff / contractors etc	2	3	6	Use of competent providers	2	3	6	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• IT & copier / equipment	Security Failure	Damage to reputation Financial costs	1	2	2	Routine maintenance provided	1	2	2	Town Clerk	Ongoing

	Replacement Maintenance contracts fail	Cessation / disruption of service Dissatisfied customers				Up to date equipment & security					
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Staff	Competence Resignation Unplanned extended leave Fraud Misconduct Policy compliance	Poor / disrupted service delivery Damage to reputation Financial costs Dissatisfied customers	2	2	4	Qualified staff Ongoing training provided Contracts of employment Policy guidance Staff aware of colleagues work and processes Cllr monitor Appraisals Insurance in place	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing Develop a succession plan for key members of staff – Dec 24

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Health & Safety	Non compliance with legislation Accidents, injury & death	Damage to reputation Financial costs	2	2	4	H&S policy in place Trained staff inc NEBOSH Day to day H&S practices completed Insurance in place Use of first aiders at events H&S equipment provided Employee Assistance Programme provided	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Service continuity	Disruption to / cessation of services	Damage to reputation Financial costs	2	3	6	Premises security measures in place Data backed up off site Remote working available Staff and Cllr training to be provided	2	3	6	Town Clerk	Ongoing
• Senior Staff and Member leadership	Disruption to / cessation of services Failure to meet statuary requirements	Damage to reputation Financial costs	2	3	6	Senior leadership team with breadth of knowledge and expertise Availability of external support	2	2	4	Share external support options - Town Clerk	Ongoing

						Regular leadership meetings held					
						Availability of political group leaders					
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• General risk management	Poor controls	Damage to reputation Financial costs Accidents and emergencies	2	2	4	Risk assessments completed for all areas of work and events Staff aware Staff training May 2017 Member training and briefing programme summer 2019 completed.	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing

Environment & Leisure

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (=)	Total	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
Public open spaces / recreation grounds / pavilions / play areas / sport provision	Service delivery	Poor / disrupted service delivery	2	3	6	Competent staff	2	3	6	Head of Grounds	Ongoing
	Health & safety					Insurance in place					
	Equipment suitability / safety	Damage to reputation				Regular checks					
	Replacement	Financial costs				Up to date and maintained equipment					
	Vandalism	Dissatisfied customers				Process in place to manage illegal traveller encampments					
	Lease expiring	Liability claims									
	Land needed for other purposes	Non compliance with relevant legislation									
	Unauthorised access (trespass, travellers)										
	Adequate maintenance										
Acts of God	Harm to person	Poor / disrupted	1	3	3	Good management	1	3	3	Clerk	Ongoing

	Removal of service or facility	service delivery				and maintenance					
	Environmental damage	Damage to reputation				Engagement in local authority disaster recover planning					
		Financial costs									
		Dissatisfied customers									
		Liability claims									
		Non compliance with relevant legislation									
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (=)	Total	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Allotments	Service delivery	Poor / disrupted service delivery	2	3	6	Insurance in place	2	3	6	Head of Grounds	Ongoing
	Health & safety					Access codes provided to allotment holders only					
	Vandalism	Damage to reputation									
	Unauthorised access (trespass, travellers)	Financial costs				Allotment Agreement (contracts) Regular inspections					

		Dissatisfied customers				Land registered					
		Liability claims									
		Non compliance with relevant legislation									
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (=)	Total	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Cemetery	Service delivery	Poor / disrupted service delivery	2	3	6	Competent staff	2	3	6	Head of Grounds	Ongoing
	Health & safety					Insurance in place					
	Equipment suitability / safety	Damage to reputation				Regular checks					
	Vandalism	Financial costs				Up to date and maintained equipment					
	Unauthorised access (trespass, travellers)	Dissatisfied customers				Active work taking place to extend useful working life					
	Lack of space	Liability claims									
		Non compliance									

		with relevant legislation				of current cemetery. Active work taking place to identify site for a new cemetery.					
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• All Saints churchyard	Service delivery Health & safety Equipment suitability / safety Vandalism Unauthorised access (trespass, travellers) Wall stability Not the land owner (church)	Poor / disrupted service delivery Damage to reputation Financial costs Dissatisfied customers Liability claims Non compliance with relevant legislation	2	3	6	Competent staff Insurance in place Regular checks Up to date and maintained equipment Work completed on wall repairs re stability	2	3	6	Head of Grounds	Ongoing

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Street furniture	Health & safety	Lack of facility	2	2	4	Competent staff	2	2	4	Head of Grounds	Ongoing
	Equipment suitability / safety / replacement	Damage to reputation				Insurance in place					
		Financial costs				Regular checks					
	Vandalism	Dissatisfied customers				Up to date and maintained equipment					
	Land needed for other purposes	Liability claims									
		Non compliance with relevant legislation									
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Machinery and equipment	Failure	Poor / disrupted service delivery	2	2	4	Competent staff	2	2	4	Head of Grounds	Ongoing
	Replacement					Insurance in place					
	Suitability	Damage to reputation				Regular checks					
	Competence of staff to use	Financial costs									

		Dissatisfied customers Liability claims Non compliance with relevant legislation				Up to date and maintained equipment					
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Unregistered land	Evidence of right to manage Right of ownership challengeable False claim of ownership by a third party Insurance claims	Legal challenge: Ownership Injury Responsibilities	2	1	2	On work programme to check and complete where needed	2	1	2	Corporate Services Manager	Ongoing
• Tithe Farm Sports Project	Financial affordability Contractor financial stability	Poor / disrupted delivery Damage to reputation	2	2	4	Tender process followed Grants secured	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing until build complete and facility up and running

	Future site management	Increase in financial costs Liability claims				Contingency included					
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Community Services

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (=)	Total	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Provision of services to young people	Cessation of services	Poor service delivery	2	2	4	Regular reports to committee	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing
	Disruption to services	Damage to reputation				Disclosure and Barring checks					
	Suitability of contractor or staff	Financial costs				Trained staff					
		Dissatisfied customers				Reliable staff					
		Liability claims									
		Non-compliance with relevant legislation									

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Provision of community events	Cessation of events	Poor service delivery	2	2	4	Regular reports to committee	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing
	Disruption to events	Damage to reputation				Monitoring of contracts					
	Suitability of contractor or staff	Financial costs				Insurance in place					
		Dissatisfied customers				Risk assessments undertaken and checked					
		Liability claims				Calendar of events agreed at the beginning of a new Council year					
		Non compliance with relevant legislation				Sufficient budget provision to cover staff overtime costs					
		Impact on staff capacity									

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Provision of town centre public toilets	Cessation of services	Poor service delivery	1	3	3	Use of reputable contractor	1	3	3	Town Clerk	Ongoing
	Disruption to services	Damage to reputation				Annual monitoring					
	Suitability of contractor or staff	Financial costs				Contract in place					
		Dissatisfied customers									
		Liability claims									
		Non compliance with relevant legislation									
• Christmas lights	Cessation of services	Poor service delivery	1	2	2	Use of reputable contractor	1	2	2	Town Clerk	Ongoing
	Disruption to services	Damage to reputation				Annual monitoring					
	Installation/ Maintenance/ Removal	Financial costs				Insurance					
	Vandalism	Dissatisfied customers				Up to date equipment					
	Weather	Liability claims				Agreement in place					

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Communications inc town crier, town guide, website, social media	Cessation of services	Poor service delivery	2	2	4	Compiled by all staff	2	2	4	Head of Democratic Services	Ongoing
	Disruption to services	Damage to reputation				Delivered by various distributors					
	Quality of communications	Financial costs				Use of reputable print & design company					
	Suitability of contractors	Dissatisfied customers									
		Non compliance with relevant legislation									
• Civic events	Absence of mayor	Damage to reputation	3	1	3	Provision of established events	3	1	3	Town Clerk	Ongoing
	Absence of support staff	Poor quality event				Use of regular providers & venues					
	Health & safety issues	Personal injury				Availability of deputy mayor / cllrs					
	Event not financially viable	Financial implications									
	Not supported by attendees					Supported by staff					

• Corporate events	Absence of support staff	Damage to reputation	3	1	3	Provision of established events	3	1	3	Town Clerk	Ongoing
	Health & safety issues	Poor quality event				Use of regular providers & venues					
	Not supported by attendees	Personal injury				Availability of deputy mayor / cllrs / other staff					
	Weather	Financial implications									
	Disaster / terrorism etc	Reduce value for money / low community benefit									
	Poor attendance										
• Community grants	Failure to provide appropriate support to Community Groups	Damage to reputation	2	1	2	Budget provision	2	1	2	Town Clerk	Ongoing
		Lack of service delivery				Cllr support					
	Public perception					Advertising availability					
	Service delivery	Insufficient funds				Robust application process					
	Poor uptake					Budget advice provided					

	Excessive uptake										
Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likelihood (x)	Impact (y)	Total (=)	Existing controls	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Community safety	Community support Public perception Service delivery	Damage to reputation Lack of community support	2	2	4	Monthly contract review Use of Beds Police Budget provision Cllr support Regular Combating Crime meetings attended by the police	2	2	4	Town Clerk	Ongoing
Mayor and deputy mayor	Civic face of Council Resignation from position	Damage to reputation	2	1	2	Cllr and staff support Regular reviews	2	1	2	Town Clerk	Ongoing

Unit 1 All Saints View – Project H	Financial affordability / financial management	Increase in financial costs	2	2	4	Cllr and staff support	2	2	4	Town Clerk & Head of E&CS	Ongoing
	Community support / Public perception	Insufficient funds				Use of reputable contractor					
	Quality of communications	Damage to reputation				Up to date equipment					
	Health & safety issues	Lack of community support				Contractual agreement to be signed					
	Service delivery	Liability claims				Regular reports to T&FG					
	Disruption to services	Dissatisfied customers				Monitoring of contracts					
	Suitability of contractors	Non compliance with relevant legislation				Insurance in place					
	Contractor financial stability					Risk assessments undertaken and checked					
	Future site management										

Planning

Activity	Risk area	Risk event	Likeli- hood (x)	Impact (=)	Total	Existing controls	Likeli- hood	Impact	Total	Actions (who)	Review date
• Consultation responses	In house expertise	Damage to reputation	2	2	4	Use of consultant to guide on more significant applications	2	2	4	Corporate Services Manager	Ongoing
	Professional advice	Poor / ineffective response									



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

Date of approval:	9 th October 2017
Date of review:	23 rd August 2017; 3 rd March 2025; 1 st December 2025
Dates of re-approval:	16 th June 2025

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- 11. Review**

Appendix A – Social Media House Rules

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council uses social media to inform, consult, and engage with our community in an open, accessible, and safe way, while protecting the Council's reputation and complying with all relevant legal duties.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all forms of social media, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, Threads, TikTok, WhatsApp channels, Nextdoor, blogs, and any future emerging platforms.
- 1.3 It applies to all employees, councillors, consultants, contractors, casual workers, and agency workers.
- 1.4 Councillors – Misuse of social media will be dealt with under the Council's Code of Conduct. Councillors are expected to follow the standards set out in this policy when representing the Council online, whether on official or personal accounts.
- 1.5 This policy does not form any part of an employee's contract of employment and may be amended it at any time.

2. Implementation

- 2.1 The Corporate Services Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but delegates day-to-day responsibility to the Town Clerk.
- 2.2 Managers are responsible for ensuring all employees understand the standards expected of them and for taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.
- 2.3 All employees and councillors are responsible for the success of this policy and should take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Town Clerk.

3. Compliance

- 3.1 Social media use should comply with:
 - The Council's IT and Data Protection policies
 - UK GDPR 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018 The Equality Act 2010
 - The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018
 - The Local Government Act 1986 and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity
 - Any other applicable laws or regulations

- 3.2 Do not disclose personal information about colleagues, councillors, contractors or members of the public without lawful basis.
- 3.3 Only trained and authorised individuals may post on the Council's official social media channels or on behalf of the Council elsewhere.

4. Personal Use of Social Media

- 4.1 Personal use of social media during working hours should be minimal, must not interfere with work duties and must not involve inappropriate or unprofessional content.
- 4.2 Employees and councillors should maintain clear boundaries between personal accounts and council business.
- 4.3 If you identify yourself as a council employee or councillor on personal accounts, make it clear that views expressed are your own and not those of the council.

5. Prohibited Use

You must not:

- Post anything that could damage the council's reputation or public trust
- Share unverified or misleading information
- Engage in harassment, discrimination, or bullying
- Post political material from official accounts outside election rules (pre-election period)
- Share confidential, commercially sensitive, or legally restricted information
- Use the council's logo or crest without authorisation
- Post inaccessible content (e.g., images without alt text, videos without captions) from official accounts

6. Business Use of Social Media

- 6.1 All official accounts must have secure, unique passwords, two-factor authentication (2FA), and be stored in a secure, centrally-managed password system.
- 6.2 If contacted for comments on behalf of the council, direct the enquiry to the Town Clerk.
- 6.3 In emergencies or urgent public information situations, the Town Clerk (or delegated officer) may post without standard approvals, provided the post is factual and time-critical.

7. Guidelines for Responsible Use of Social Media

When posting or engaging on social media:

- Be respectful, polite and factual
- Use plain language and avoid jargon
- Ensure all content is accessible (all text, captions, good contrast, plain English)
- Avoid personal disputes or inflammatory exchanges
- Publish and enforce “House Rules” for public engagement – explaining that abusive, defamatory, or discriminatory comments will be removed
- If you see misinformation or negative content about the council, notify the Town Clerk before responding

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 The council may monitor social media activity on official accounts to ensure compliance with this policy, security and legal obligations.
- 8.2 Any monitoring will be proportionate and compliant with UK GDPR

9. Recruitment

- 9.1 Publicly available social media content may be reviewed as part of recruitment, in line with the council's Recruitment Policy, safeguarding obligations and privacy laws.

10. Breach of this policy

- 10.1 Breaches may result in disciplinary action for employees or referral to the Monitoring Officer for councillors.
- 10.2 You may be required to remove content that breaches this policy. Failure to do so may itself be treated as a breach.

11. Review

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in law, best practice or social media platform developments.

APPENDIX A

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA HOUSE RULES

Welcoming, respectful, and safe spaces for our community online

We use our social media channels to share news, promote events, and keep you informed about Council services. We welcome questions, ideas, and feedback — but we ask everyone to follow these simple rules, so our pages remain respectful and useful for all.

1. Be Respectful

Treat everyone with courtesy.

No harassment, threats, abuse, or discriminatory language.

2. Stay On Topic

Keep comments relevant to the original post.

Spam, repetitive messages, and unrelated promotion will be removed.

3. No Political Promotion

By law, we must remain politically neutral.

During election periods, we will remove posts or comments that promote candidates or parties.

4. Keep It Safe & Legal

Do not post anything defamatory, obscene, or unlawful.

Do not share personal information about yourself or others.

5. Accessibility Matters

Please ensure any images or videos you post are accessible where possible (e.g., add captions or descriptions).

Where possible, we will do the same for our own posts.

6. Moderation

Our social media is not monitored 24/7.

Our channels are monitored during working hours (Monday–Friday), although not instantaneous.

We may remove posts that breach these rules without notice.

Repeat offenders may be blocked.

7. Emergencies

Our social media is not monitored 24/7.

In an emergency, contact the relevant emergency services or the Council via phone.

We want our online spaces to be a safe and welcoming place for everyone.
Thank you for helping us keep it that way.

Need to contact us?

Houghton Regis Town Council
Council Offices, Peel Street, Houghton Regis, LU5 5EY

Tel: 01582 708540

Email: info@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk

Web: <https://houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk/>



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Information Technology Policy

Date of Approval:	23 rd October 2006
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 IT communications are a key part of Houghton Regis Town Councils business, and so it is important that we adhere to certain standards to protect everybody. Our IT systems and services are primarily a business tool and we aim to take a fair and consistent approach to their use within our organisation. This policy sets out the rules when using our computer equipment and systems. Computer equipment includes laptops, stand-alone PCs and other portable devices. This policy also covers system security, personal use, computer viruses, monitoring, email and internet use, and what we would deem to be inappropriate use.
- 1.2 We also expect employees and workers to maintain a high standard of conduct whilst using the organisation's IT systems and associated facilities.
- 1.3 We operate a zero-tolerance policy on any form of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination during the course of employment, including when using IT systems and associated facilities. It is expected that employees and workers and workers using our systems to treat colleagues and others with respect and to behave in a way that does not conflict with our policies, work activities, business dealings or which may adversely affect or undermine our reputation.
- 1.4 We encourage employees to use email at work. However, we do require them to follow the simple rules below and to note that a serious breach of these rules could lead to dismissal. Any employee or worker who is unsure about whether anything may be in breach of these rules should speak to their Line Manager in the first instance.
- 1.5 Misuse of the Internet or email may give rise to legal liability to third parties. It may also give rise to a claim against us. Unauthorised access or intentional modification to restricted documentation or software will be considered a disciplinary offence. By following the standards set out in this policy, we aim to ensure that the use of our IT equipment and services are legally compliant and secure and that our users can work efficiently and productively. It is therefore vital that this policy is adhered to.
- 1.6 It is important that all users understand their responsibilities and are aware of the implications of misuse of our systems and services. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all users are aware of the restrictions that we place on the use of our IT systems and services, and the implications that misuse of it might have on the individual and Houghton Regis Town Council.
- 1.7 If there is anything in this policy which becomes unworkable or unclear, then this must be brought to the attention of the employees Line Manager
- 1.8 The current laws must be obeyed at all times. We will never ask nor expect any employee to breach the law whatever the circumstances.

- 1.9 IT and the law relating to it changes all the time and this policy will be updated regularly. Users are responsible for ensuring they read and understand the latest version of this policy which will be emailed or printed off for employees.
- 1.10 This policy should be read together with our Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy, and Social Media Policy which will be emailed or printed off for employees as well as being available on the Town Council shared drive.
- 1.11 This policy is not contractual but sets out our current rules and procedures for computer, email, and internet use.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
- HRTC employees and/or Councillors
 - Houghton Regis Town Council IT equipment including (but not limited to) computers, tablets, laptops, printers, mobile phones and network
 - Software and IT services licensed by Houghton Regis Town Council
 - Volunteers using Houghton Regis Town Council computer equipment and/or network.
 - Councillors when using Houghton Regis Town Council IT equipment and/or network.
 - Members using social networking media in their capacity as Councillors
- 2.2 New employees must be made aware of this policy upon joining Houghton Regis Town Council as part of the induction process.
- 2.3 Any Houghton Regis Town Council employee and/or Councillor who are requesting permission to use their own IT equipment (e.g. mobile phones, tablets) for Council business purposes.

3 Computer use

3.1 Hardware

- 3.1.1 Our IT equipment and services are provided for Houghton Regis Town Council business purposes, however reasonable personal use is permitted (reasonable interpreted as in the opinion of a Senior Manager). Any personal use of our IT equipment and services should not interrupt our daily business in any way and users are asked to restrict any personal use to official lunch breaks or before or after working hours.
- 3.1.2 All IT equipment supplied should be treated with good care at all times. IT equipment is expensive, and any damage will have a financial impact on the Council.
- 3.1.3 Computer and electronic hardware should be kept clean and every precaution taken to prevent food and drink being dropped or spilled onto it.

- 3.1.4 All IT equipment will carry a number which is logged against the current user of that equipment. A database of IT equipment issued will be kept.
- 3.1.5 IT equipment should not be dismantled or reassembled without seeking advice.
- 3.1.6 Employees are not to purchase any IT equipment or software for Houghton Regis Town Council without it being authorised by a Senior Manager
- 3.1.7 Personal external storage devices, e.g. USB disks, CDs, DVDs, memory sticks, cannot be used on our computers without the prior approval of a Senior Manager.
- 3.1.8 Any IT faults or necessary repairs must be reported to a Senior Manager or to the company who provide IT support to Houghton Regis Town Council, currently Techies Ltd.

3.2 Portable IT equipment

- 3.2.1 Portable IT equipment includes, but not limited to, laptop computers, notebooks, tablets, mobile phones., external storage devices.
- 3.2.2 Data backup procedures specific to portable IT equipment should be followed at all times.
- 3.2.3 All portable computers must be stored safely and securely when not in use in the office, i.e. when travelling or when working from home. Portable IT equipment (unless locked in a secure cabinet or office) should be kept with or near the user at all times and must not be left unattended when away from our premises. and should never be left in parked vehicles.
- 3.2.4 It is important to ensure all portable devices are protected with suitable security in case they are lost or stolen. All smartphones or tablets that hold Town Council data including emails and files must be protected with a pin code. Where possible, these devices should also be configured to erase all content after several unsuccessful attempts to break in. Any security configured on these devices must not be disabled or removed.
- 3.2.5 If an item of portable IT equipment is lost or damaged this should be reported to a Senior Manager. If the loss or damage is due to an act of negligence by the user, they may be liable to meet an agreed amount of the loss/damage.
- 3.2.6 To protect confidential information, unless it is a requirement of the job and this has been authorised, it is forbidden for photographs or videos to be taken on our premises without the prior written permission of a Senior Manager. This includes mobile telephones with camera function, camcorder, tape or other recording device for sound or pictures - moving or still.
- 3.2.7 Under no circumstances must any meeting or conversation be recorded without the express permission of those present.
- 3.2.8 In addition, we do not permit-webcams to be used in the workplace, other than for conference calls for business purposes. If there is any doubt as to whether a device falls under this clause, advice should be sought from a Senior Manager

3.3 Phones

- 3.3.1 Houghton Regis Town Council use a phone system (3CX) that connects to the internet to make and receive phone calls (both internal and external). The system can be accessed either through a web browser or an application that is installed on any compatible device.
- 3.3.2 If the user is making a business call from a mobile phone (both Houghton Regis Town Council and personal device) then the call should be made from the 3CX system rather than the mobile number unless this is unavoidable.
- 3.3.3 If a 3CX phone user is not available (e.g. holiday) then the status of the users extension should be changed to show this, and an appropriate call forwarding is set.
- 3.3.4 Personal calls must not be made from the 3CX system as this will show Houghton Regis Town Council as the caller ID.
- 3.3.5 The status must be set to available during working hours except if permission has been obtained to change it by a manager.
- 3.3.6 Automatic call forwarding to another user must only be setup if the user the call is being forwarded to has agreed to this.

3.4 Video Conferencing

- 3.4.1 Video conferencing is available from many different applications (including Microsoft Teams, Zoom and 3CX).

3.5 Use of own devices including BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)

- 3.5.1 Some users may wish to use their own smartphones, tablets, laptops etc. to connect to the Town Councils network. and use them for business purposes. This includes, but not limited to, reading Town Council emails, accessing Town Council documents stored on our server(s) or access data in other services. Any such use of personal devices will be at the discretion of the user's manager, but consent for standard systems (MS Windows, Mac OS X, Linux - in commercial configurations) will normally be permitted. Such devices must be kept up to date so that any vulnerabilities in the operating system or other software on the device are appropriately patched or updated. All official accounts must have secure, unique passwords, two-factor authentication (2FA), and be stored in a secure, centrally-managed password system.
- 3.5.2 The same security precautions apply to personal devices as to Town Council owned IT equipment. For continuity purposes, calls made to external parties must be made on our landlines or mobile phone numbers to ensure that only these numbers are used and/or stored by the recipient, rather than personal numbers. Any emails sent from own devices should include our name, address, contact telephone number and our standard disclaimer and should not identify the employee's personal email address.

- 3.5.3 Users of our IT services are expected to use all IT equipment (both Town Council and personal devices including mobiles) in an ethical manner and in accordance with this policy. Accessing inappropriate websites or services on any device using the Town Councils IT services that are paid for or provided by us carries a high degree of risk, and, for employees, will result in disciplinary action, including dismissal, irrespective of the ownership of the device used. An example would be downloading copyright music illegally or accessing pornographic material.
- 3.5.4 In cases of legal proceedings against Houghton Regis Town Council, we may need to temporarily take possession of any employee's personal device to retrieve the relevant data.
- 3.5.5 Wherever possible the user should maintain a clear separation between the personal data processed on our behalf and that processed for their own personal use, for example, by using different applications (apps) for business and personal use. If the device supports both work and personal profiles, the work profile must always be employed for work-related purposes.
- 3.5.6 Users who intend to use their own devices via any Town Council IT service must ensure that they:
- use a 4 digit pin, strong password (i.e. one which contains lower and upper case letters and numbers or fingerprint (preferably the latter) to protect their device(s) from being accessed. For smartphones and tablets this should lock the device after 3 failed login attempts.
 - configure their device(s) to automatically prompt for a password after a period of inactivity of more than 2 minutes duration
 - always password protect any documents containing confidential information that are sent as attachments to an email, and notify the password separately (preferably by a means other than email)
 - for smartphones and tablets, activate the automatic device wipe function (where available). Note that use of the remote wipe function may also involve the removal of the employee's personal data. Employees are advised therefore to keep personal data separate from business data where possible.
 - ensure that they use secure WiFi networks
 - be cautious if family or friends use the device, ensuring that work-related data cannot be accessed
 - inform us if their device(s) is/are lost, stolen or inappropriately accessed where there is risk of access to our data or resources. To prevent phones being used, they will need to retain the details of their IMEI number and the SIM number of the device as their provider will require this to deactivate it.
- 3.5.7 Any Town Council work done on a user's own equipment must be stored securely and password protected and must always be backed up in accordance with our standard backup procedures.
- 3.5.8 If transferring data, either by email or by other electronic means, this should be done through an encrypted channel, such as a virtual private network (VPN) or a secure web protocol (https://). Unsecured wireless networks should not be used.

- 3.5.9 Prior to the disposal of any device that has Town Council data stored on it, and in the event of a user leaving our employment, users are required to allow the Town Clerk access to the device to ensure that all passwords, user access shortcuts and any identifiable data are removed from the device.
- 3.5.10 Users must take responsibility for understanding how their device(s) work in respect to the above rules if they are accessing our servers/services via their own IT equipment. Risks to the user's personal device(s) include data loss as a result of a crash of the operating system, bugs and viruses, software or hardware failures and programming errors rendering a device inoperable. We will use reasonable endeavours to assist, but users are personally liable for their own device(s) and for any costs incurred as a result of the above.
- 3.5.11 By connecting a personal device to any Town Council network or service the user is allowing Houghton Regis Town Council to implement policy(s) on the device that will enable Houghton Regis Town Council to erase any or all of the data on the device to ensure confidentiality.

4 Health and safety

- 4.1 Users who work in our offices will be provided with an ergonomically designed workstation.
- 4.2 We have a duty to ensure that regular appropriate eye tests, carried out by a competent person, are offered to employees using display screen equipment. Further details are set out in our Eyecare Policy.
- 4.3 Any VDU user who feels that their workstation requires changes to make it compliant must speak to their Line Manager.
- 4.4 If any hazards are detected at a workstation, including 'noises' from the IT equipment, this should be reported immediately to a Senior Manager.

5 Software

- 5.1 Equipment allocated to individuals will be supplied with the appropriate software and configuration. Users are not permitted to load screensavers/software from any source without the prior permission of a Senior Manager.
- 5.2 Any software that is additional to that supplied must be discussed with the user's manager and authorised prior to purchase to ensure that the necessary licences are also purchased.
- 5.3 Non-approved software or data, such as games, screen savers, video clips, non-worked related programmes, must not be installed on our computers under any circumstances, unless prior approval has been given by the Line Manager.
- 5.4 Copies of any software must not be made unless prior approval has been given by the Line Manager. We do not allow the use of pirated or copied computer software. All software must be licensed.

- 5.5 The licence agreement that accompanies software packages should be strictly adhered to. Unauthorised copies of software must not be made for use within the office or outside.

6 Virus checking

- 6.1 Virus protection and awareness of the importance of this is vital to our day-to-day ability to operate effectively. A catastrophic failure of the IT structure will potentially render us inoperable. Any activity by an individual that contributes to such a potential situation may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. Users should note that the intentional introduction of viruses is a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- 6.2 Anti-virus software is installed on all computers and should be left running automatically and updated when prompted. Full system auto scans are set to run and must be left in place until a time when an alternative might be considered appropriate. We use virus detection software to scan all email and attachments received from any external source.
- 6.3 There is a risk of importing computer viruses if programmes or executable files are downloaded from the Internet, or if email attachments containing viruses are opened. All incoming email documents are scanned for viruses, and documents containing known viruses are intercepted. However, users who believe an attachment is suspicious should contact their Line Manager or the IT Support company before opening this.
- 6.4 All incoming material should be checked for viruses, whether loaded manually (e.g. from CDs or memory sticks) or downloaded from an external source such as the Internet before being saved or copied onto our computers.
- 6.5 Users must not change or install any software on their computer that includes the transference of data/software from their work or home computer without the express permission of the Town Clerk.
- 6.6 If a virus is detected a Senior Manager or the IT Support company must be notified immediately.
- 6.7 Nothing should be attached to an email which may contain a virus. We could be liable to the recipient for any loss suffered. We have virus-checking in place, but a check should be made with a manager if in doubt.
- 6.8 Care should be taken when forwarding attachments from third parties, particularly unidentified third parties. These may carry viruses, and they may also not have been cleared for copyright issues. Sending them on to someone else may be a breach of copyright and result in damages for breach of copyright.

7 Desktop appearance and settings

- 7.1 The programme and desktop icons should not be changed from the standard icons.

7.2 Our IT systems may not be used to acquire, display or distribute any content that may be considered offensive to others, including content of a sexual nature. This includes, but not limited to, any programme, image, document, sound or video clip that can be displayed or heard on any IT equipment.

7.3 Sound systems on computers must be switched off in consideration of people working near to you.

8 User IDs and passwords

8.1 Users are authorised only to use the IT services made available to them when logging onto the IT equipment under their allocated username.

8.2 Individual users are responsible for the security of their IT equipment and must not allow this to be used by an unauthorised person. Personal password(s) should be kept confidential and all reasonable precautions taken to prevent unauthorised access to the data stored on any Town Council IT equipment.

8.3 Users are not permitted to use, change or divulge to any other party, their or any other person's password or own Council system password without the express permission of a Senior Manager.

8.4 Passwords should not be written down anywhere where they could be easily retrieved by someone else. All official accounts must have secure, unique passwords, two-factor authentication (2FA), and be stored in a secure, centrally-managed password system.

8.5 Users should never use another person's username, email address or password (unless specifically authorised to do so), nor should they permit any other person to transmit, download, copy, forward or store material using their username, email address or password.

8.6 A user who changes their name through marriage, divorce, deed poll or any other method, should inform their Line Manager immediately so that all user IDs, passwords and email addresses can be amended accordingly.

8.7 When logged onto our IT system, and leaving any IT equipment unattended, or on leaving our workplace, users should ensure they log off the system to prevent unauthorised access. Any printed material should also be collected and stored confidentially.

8.8 Passwords may be changed from time to time, especially when someone leaves our employment.

- 8.9 On leaving our employment, access to our systems will be immediately withdrawn. Incoming emails will be diverted to the leaver's manager and an automatic response will be set up informing the sender that the address is no longer to be used to contact the leaver. Any passwords giving remote access to our systems will be changed, thus preventing unauthorised access. We will also notify any suppliers or contractors of any leavers who should be removed from their list of those who are authorised by us to use their services. Note that in order to protect our business interests, the above may also apply during any period of "garden leave".

9 Files and data

- 9.1 All files should be stored on the Town Councils file servers. Permission must be obtained from the Town Clerk before any data is removed or duplicated to any other IT equipment.
- 9.2 Any Town Council sensitive or personal data stored on our IT equipment must be kept in the strictest of confidence and no copies must be taken other than for back-up purposes without the permission of the Town Clerk.
- 9.3 All reasonable precautions should be taken to ensure that any data storage devices containing Town Council files, or printouts of data are secure from theft or copying.
- 9.4 Any data stored on our IT equipment or systems must only contain information relating to our business. No personal data must be stored on our IT equipment and systems.
- 9.5 No data of any other description should be present on our computer systems with specific regard to pornographic or obscene material, whether pictorial or descriptive.
- 9.6 All users must be aware that storing any Town Council personal data on a computer is subject to data protection legislation.
- 9.7 Houghton Regis Town Council IT equipment and systems must be used responsibly and in a way that does not interfere with, disrupt or prevent anyone else legitimately using these resources. Users should ensure they are aware to which drives they have access/modification rights and remember this when saving confidential data. This is to make certain that the right people can view and edit the files saved to the system.
- 9.8 Unauthorised access, attempts to access, modify, delete or use data belonging to the Town Council will be considered a disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- 9.9 Users will be notified of any data backup procedures in place that affect them: these must be followed at all times.
- 9.10 Hard copies should be kept of information regarded as legal messages, relating to such matters as occupancy, staff or business transactions. Financial information, including VAT records (which should be stored for 6 years), must be stored on physical files.

10 Monitoring

- 10.1 Houghton Regis Town Council reserves the right to monitor, inspect and maintain logs of the usage of any Town Council IT equipment or personal devices that use the Town Councils network or services to ensure compliance with this policy as well as relevant legislation. Internet, email, and computer usage is continually monitored as part of our protection against computer viruses, our ongoing maintenance of the system, and when investigating faults.
- 10.2 We will monitor the use of electronic communications and use of the internet in line with the Investigatory Powers (Interception by Businesses etc for Monitoring and Record-keeping Purposes) Regulations 2018. We may monitor social media activity on official accounts to ensure compliance with this policy, security and legal obligations. The monitoring of social media activity is primarily for security, safeguarding and compliance.
- 10.3 Monitoring of an employee's email and/or internet use will be conducted in accordance with an impact assessment that the organisation has carried out to ensure that monitoring is necessary and proportionate. Monitoring is in the organisation's legitimate interests and is to ensure that this policy is being complied with.
- 10.4 The information obtained through monitoring may be shared internally, including with relevant managers and IT staff if access to the data is necessary for performance of their roles. The information may also be shared with external HR or legal advisers for the purposes of seeking professional advice. Any external advisers will have appropriate Data Protection policies and protocols in place.
- 10.5 The information gathered through monitoring will be retained only long enough for any breach of this policy to come to light and for any investigation to be conducted. Any monitoring will be proportionate and compliant with UK GDPR.
- 10.6 Employees and workers have a number of rights in relation to their data, including the right to make a subject access request and the right to have data rectified or erased in some circumstances. You can find further details of these rights and how to exercise them in our Data Protection Policy.
- 10.7 Monitoring and the inspection of the content of any files or messages (including emails) may be for the purposes of checking whether the use of the system is legitimate, to find lost messages or to retrieve messages lost due to computer failure, to assist in the investigation of wrongful acts, or to comply with any legal obligation.
- 10.8 Houghton Regis Town Council also reserve the right to monitor the internet usage, including the websites being accessed and the extent and frequency of use of the internet at any time, both inside and outside of working hours to ensure that the system is not being abused and to protect us from potential damage or disrepute.
- 10.9 Any use that the Town Council considers to be 'improper', either in terms of the content or the amount of time spent on this, may result in disciplinary proceedings.

- 10.10 All computers will be periodically checked and scanned for unauthorised programmes and viruses.

11 Remote working

- 11.1 Increased IT security measures apply to those who work away from their normal place of work (e.g. whilst travelling, working from home or any other different venue), as follows:
- if accessing the Town Councils systems or services remotely, using IT equipment that either does not belong to the Town Council or is not owned by the user then any passwords must not be saved (cached), and the user must log out or disconnect at the end of the session deleting all logs and history records. If this is not possible for the IT equipment being used (e.g. at an internet café), our services must not be accessed from that device.
 - the location and direction of the screen must be checked to ensure the contents cannot be viewed by other people. Steps should be taken to avoid messages being read by other people, including other travellers on public transport etc.
 - any data printed must be collected and stored securely
 - all electronic files should be password protected, and the data saved to the Town Councils system/services when accessible
 - papers, files or IT equipment must not be left unattended at a third parties premises. If this is not possible for any period, then arrangements must be made with a responsible person at the third parties premises for them to be kept in a locked room or cabinet
 - any data should be kept safely and should only be disposed of securely
 - papers, files, memory sticks, flash drives or backup hard drives should not be left unattended in cars, except where it is entirely unavoidable for short periods, in which case they must be locked in the boot of the car. If staying away overnight, company data should be taken into the employee's accommodation, care being taken that it will not be interfered with by others or inadvertently destroyed
 - where possible the ability to remotely wipe any mobile devices that process sensitive information should be retained in the case of loss or theft
 - employees and workers who work away from the office with sensitive data should be equipped with a screen privacy filter for mobile devices and should use this at all times when accessing such data away from the office.
- 11.2 Those issued with a mobile phone that allows WiFi access using hotspot should take note of the monthly data limit for the phone and the additional cost if it is exceeded, especially if used abroad.
- 11.3 The use of paid for WiFi access, for example at hotels and airports should be carefully monitored and restricted to essential business use.

12 Email

12.1 General principles

- 12.1.1 Our email facilities are intended to promote effective and speedy communication on work-related matters. Although we encourage the use of email, it can be risky. Users need to be careful not to introduce viruses onto our system and should take proper account of the security advice below.
- 12.1.2 On occasion, it will be quicker to action an issue by telephone or face to face, rather than via protracted email chains. Emails should not be used as a substitute for face to face or telephone conversations. Employees are expected to decide which is the optimum channel of communication to complete their tasks quickly and effectively.
- 12.1.3 These rules are designed to minimise the legal risks we run when using email at work and to guide users as to what may and may not be done. If there is something which is not covered in the policy, users should ask their manager, rather than assuming they know the right answer.
- 12.1.4 All employees who need to use email as part of their role will normally be given their own Town Council email address and account. We may, at any time, withdraw email access from any employee, should we feel that this is no longer necessary for the role or that the system is being abused.
- 12.1.5 Email messages sent from a Houghton Regis Town Council account must be for Town Council business use only. Users are asked to restrict their personal use of emails to their personal email account(s) during official lunch breaks or before or after working hours.
- 12.1.6 Misuse of our email address may give rise to legal liability on the user's behalf to third parties. It may also give rise to a claim being made against the Town Council. It is therefore vital that the following policy is adhered to when using email.

12.2 Reading email

- 12.2.1 Email messages should be read regularly. Employees who are away from their place of work for more than a day should ensure that an appropriate message is sent automatically to senders and/or that temporary access is granted to another colleague and that emails are dealt with in their absence as appropriate. With the exception of senior managers, unless specifically requested to do so, employees are not expected to read or action their emails when on any form of leave.
- 12.2.2 During unplanned leave or prolonged absence, and solely where necessary, we may access and/or divert email accounts to continue the smooth operation of our business.
- 12.2.3 Take care before opening emails from unknown sources - this is how most viruses are introduced, and they could easily spread throughout our systems.

- 12.2.4 When an email is received from a sender outside the Town Councils email domain (@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk) a banner is inserted in the email to notify the recipient that it is from an external source and that any attachments or links must be checked before opening.

12.3 Sending email (including replies and forwarding)

- 12.3.1 Email sent from an individual's mailbox is effectively signed by an individual.
- 12.3.2 Emails are merely another form of communication: in some instances, they may be the only contact that a recipient has with the Town Council and the style, appearance and content of the email will therefore influence the image that is portrayed of our organisation. Emails can appear to be a more informal type of communication, but our normal standards of presentation and content apply equally to them and the language used in the message must be courteous and professional. This includes spelling, punctuation and correctly heading each email as appropriate. All emails should therefore be checked before they are sent to ensure they don't contain typing, grammatical or spelling mistakes and to ensure the content is professional and accurate. In many cases for longer emails, it may be better to prepare the message as a draft and check it carefully before sending.
- 12.3.3 Messages should be concise and directed only to those on a 'need to know' basis. General messages to a wide group should only be used where necessary and the "reply all" facility should not be overused.
- 12.3.4 Long email trails should not be sent unless absolutely necessary and messages should only be marked as 'urgent' if they warrant immediate action. "Read receipts" and requests to acknowledge acceptance of an email further add to email traffic, so should be used sparingly. Please be mindful of the size of attachments within emails. Very large attachments can have an impact on speed and performance of the email systems and internet connections and may be rejected by one or more of the recipients. Where possible, the size of pictures should be reduced and very large files compressed into smaller files by zipping them.
- 12.3.5 Houghton Regis Town Council users must not solicit, send or willingly receive emails of an obscene nature, or which are intended to annoy, harass, intimidate or cause offence to colleagues or members of the public.
- 12.3.6 Personal or sensitive data must not be sent using email unless agreement has been received from the individual concerned or this processing is necessary to carry out public functions.
- 12.3.7 Houghton Regis Town Council users should regularly delete or archive emails when they are no longer current or required in order to restrict the size of their mailboxes and reduce the risk of incoming emails being rejected.
- 12.3.8 Houghton Regis Town Council users should be aware of the characteristics of spam and phishing emails and should not reply to or forward these emails but add the sender to their email system's Blocked Senders List.

- 12.3.9 Emails should contain the sender's full name and job title. All emails sent by employees must have one of the following disclaimers (as appropriate):

Please consider the environment and don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

- **** Any opinions expressed in this email are those of the individual and are not necessarily those of Houghton Regis Town Council.
- This e-mail and any attachments hereto are strictly confidential and intended solely for the addressee. It may contain information which is privileged. If you are not the intended addressee, you must not disclose, forward, copy or take any action in reliance of this e-mail or attachments. If you have received this e-mail in error, please delete and notify the sender immediately.
- The anti-virus software used by Houghton Regis Town Council is updated regularly in an effort to minimise the possibility of viruses infecting our systems. However, you should be aware that there is no absolute guarantee that any files attached to this e-mail are virus free.***

- 12.3.10 Email correspondence with a third party can create a binding contract or otherwise be disclosed in legal proceedings. Where appropriate, the use of clear labelling to prevent either of these circumstances arising (e.g. the words 'subject to contract' and 'without prejudice' must be used). Statements should not be made in an email which could, intentionally or otherwise, create a binding contract or make a negligent statement.
- 12.3.11 Emails containing confidential information, client/customer information or any personal data should only be transmitted, copied or forwarded to authorised third parties.
- 12.3.12 Confidential information should not be sent externally by email. Such messages should be fully encrypted (or any attachments containing confidential information password protected and the password sent separately).
- 12.3.13 Delivery of email, like land mail, is not guaranteed and, if used for business-critical messages, confirmation of receipt should be requested from the recipient. Note: email 'read receipts' only confirm that the email has been flagged as read, it does not confirm the contents have been read nor does it confirm who has read it (the email could be opened by somebody else with permissions on the recipients mailbox).
- 12.3.14 Houghton Regis Town Council emails must not be used for spreading gossip or nuisance mail, for personal gain or in breach of any of our employment policies, such as equal opportunity, bullying, harassment or sexual harassment. Sending unwanted, abusive, discriminatory or defamatory emails can constitute bullying or harassment and will be treated as a serious disciplinary issue. This also applies to any emails sent from personal IT equipment to work colleagues or other Houghton Regis Town Council contacts.

- 12.3.15 Take care before sending or viewing material which may be of a hurtful, suggestive or harassing nature: it is the view of the recipient that determines whether it is inappropriate, even if the recipient was not the original addressee. When preparing an email, if the overall feeling is that you are glad you have 'got it off your chest', this is probably a signal it should not be sent. Drafts should be revisited prior to sending.
- 12.3.16 Anyone who receives an email message that has been wrongly delivered to his/her email address should notify the sender by returning the message to that person. If the message contains confidential information, this must not be disclosed or used.
- 12.3.17 Any emails that contravene this policy must be brought to the attention of the Town Clerk.

12.4 Legal proceedings and libel

- 12.4.1 All email messages are the property of the Houghton Regis Town Council and are treated as records of the business.
- 12.4.2 An email message (however confidential or damaging) may be subject to disclosure in legal proceedings or to relevant competition authorities and regulatory bodies. Claims of defamation, breach of confidentiality or contract could arise from a misuse of the system. Emails must therefore be treated like any other form of correspondence and, where necessary, hard copies retained. Even deleted emails may still be recoverable and are regarded as legitimate forms of evidence in court.
- 12.4.3 We can be sued for libel if inaccurate statements are made in emails which disparage other people or companies. This could lead to us having to pay damages. Therefore, all messages should be read carefully before sending and if in any doubt about what is written, the content should be checked with a manager first.
- 12.4.4 Users should avoid making statements which criticise our competitors or their staff, state there are quality problems with goods or services of suppliers or that state (or imply) that anyone is incompetent.
- 12.4.5 Neither should opinions or views be expressed that could be interpreted as misrepresenting our services or those of any other organisation with whom we deal.

12.5 Carbon copying (CCing)

- 12.5.1 Users should take care not to copy emails automatically to all those copied in with the original message to which they are responding. It is easy to do this but may result in a message being seen by someone that should not see this or may result in the disclosure of confidential information to the wrong person. Therefore, the automatic 'cc-ing back' function on the email should be disabled, and each email considered before copying people in. The use of the 'Reply' rather than 'Reply All' should be adopted.

12.6 Attachments

- 12.6.1 Care should be taken when opening attachments, and should any attachment produce strange or unexpected results, a Senior Manager should be notified immediately.
- 12.6.2 Certain types of attachments will not be allowed through our gateway.

12.7 Deleting and storing email

- 12.7.1 Good file management should be practiced by frequently checking the content and volume of email folders. As a guide, inboxes should only contain matters awaiting action; other items should be deleted, archived or filed.
- 12.7.2 Deleted email is stored temporarily in the 'Deleted Items' folder and should be emptied on a regular basis.
- 12.7.3 For record-keeping purposes, copies of important email (both sent and received) should be stored in an appropriate location on the shared drive.

12.8 Chain mail

- 12.8.1 It is prohibited to originate or distribute chain letters by email, either internally or externally.

12.9 Spam/junk mail

- 12.9.1 Any email message identified as spam or junk mail will be forwarded but marked that it is thought to be spam. Users can either deal with this manually or set up automatic rules.

12.10 Specifically prohibited activities

- 12.10.1 Houghton Regis Town Council users who are authorised to access external services and systems using Town Council IT equipment or their personal devices may not send or permit to be sent on behalf of Houghton Regis Town Council any email, attachment or posting which:
- is unlicensed software or other material that infringes the intellectual property rights of a third party
 - contains information that is commercially sensitive or may have legal implications for us
 - contains confidential information
 - may damage our reputation or our relationships with any third party
 - is defamatory about our business or any third party
 - is illegal, of a sexual nature, obscene, pornographic, offensive, or is discriminatory or constitutes harassment (on any grounds of discrimination or any other unacceptable grounds), or damaging, or which may be considered by others to cause distress or is otherwise abusive or threatening
 - may infringe copyright of someone else's work by copying files or data onto the Councils IT equipment or by copying to a third party
 - may introduce viruses into our system

- constitutes ‘junk’ email or is posted to multiple groups
- invites automatic email back to us.

12.10.2 In addition, Houghton Regis Town Council IT services must not be used to search for, obtain or store information from any external network, which falls into the categories listed in 12.10.1 above.

12.11 Security

12.11.1 Users should be aware that emails are potentially insecure and others who are not the intended recipient might read messages, e.g. the recipient may forward the email on to other people.

12.11.2 Both sender and recipient should understand the risks of using email as a communication channel and agree what will and will not be sent.

12.12 Accessing other email accounts

12.12.1 Users must never access another person’s email account. The only exception is where the person concerned has been authorised to access these during a prolonged absence due to holiday, ill health or some other valid reason.

12.12.2 Where such access is authorised, emails must not be sent from that person’s account using the original account holder's name. If a response is required, this should be sent from the sender’s own account, headed “sent on behalf of (colleague’s name)”.

12.13 Monitoring of emails

12.13.1 We reserve the right to monitor, at any time, all emails, including deleted emails, and the IT equipment (both Houghton Regis Town Council and personal) upon which such emails are stored and circulated. This right is reserved solely for the purposes of monitoring communications relevant to our business.

12.13.2 We will not routinely monitor emails. However, email folders will be checked when users are absent from work to ensure the continuation of service.

12.13.3 While an email that is clearly private does not fall within the definition of a communication that is relevant to our business, we maintain a right to monitor and examine such a communication where there is a reasonable suspicion that the content breaches this policy or where there are grounds for suspecting criminal activity or equivalent malpractice. When monitoring personal emails, we will, in most cases, restrict this to the address and heading of the emails. Personal emails should be clearly marked as such, and where possible we will avoid opening these unless there is a suspicion of improper use, and they form a relevant part of a disciplinary investigation.

- 12.13.4 We exercise this right under the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000 for the following reasons: to check that this policy is being observed; that no discriminatory or offensive content appears in emails, etc; to maintain an adequate level of security for our computer systems; to detect computer viruses; and to check mailboxes of absent employees.
- 12.13.5 Therefore, electronic communications, storage or access should not be considered private if it is created or stored on our systems.

13 Use of the Internet

13.1 General principles

- 13.1.1 Utilising the vast amount of data that can be found on the Internet can be a useful resource and may be integral to some roles within our business.
- 13.1.2 All employees who need to use the Internet as part of their role will normally be permitted access. We may, at any time, withdraw internet access from any employee, should we feel that this is no longer necessary for the role or that the system is being abused.
- 13.1.3 Having access to the Internet demands a level of trust and responsibility, as websites visited can record the computer system's IP address. Users should restrict their access to websites necessary to complete their daily tasks and to consider the security implications before accessing any other sites for personal use.

13.2 Copyright

- 13.2.1 Much of what appears on the Internet is protected by copyright. Any copying without permission, including electronic copying, is illegal and therefore prohibited. The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 sets out the rules. The copyright laws not only apply to documents but also to software. The infringement of the copyright of another person or organisation could lead to legal action being taken against our business and damages being awarded, as well as disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken against the perpetrator.
- 13.2.2 It is easy to copy electronically, but this does not make it any less an offence. Our policy is to comply with copyright laws, and not to bend the rules in any way.
- 13.2.3 Users should not assume that because a document or file is on the Internet, it can be freely copied. There is a difference between information in the 'public domain' (which is no longer confidential or secret information but is still copyright protected) and information which is not protected by copyright (such as where the author has been dead for more than 70 years).
- 13.2.4 Usually a website will contain copyright conditions; these warnings should be read before downloading or copying.

- 13.2.5 Copyright and database right law can be complicated. Users should check with their manager if unsure about anything.

13.3 Trademarks, links and data protection

- 13.3.1 Our name is a registered trademark. Any employee or worker who notices anyone using the same or a similar name should let their manager know, so that we may instruct our solicitors to take appropriate action.
- 13.3.2 Users should not register any new domain names or trademarks relating to our names or products anywhere in the world, unless authorised to do so. Nor should they add links from any of our web pages to any other external sites without checking first with their manager.
- 13.3.3 Special rules apply to the processing of personal and sensitive personal data.

13.4 Accuracy of information

- 13.4.1 One of the main benefits of the Internet is the access it gives to large amounts of information, which is often more up to date than traditional sources such as libraries. Be aware that, as the Internet is uncontrolled, much of the information may be less accurate than it appears.

13.5 Downloading material

- 13.5.1 Downloading large volumes of material from the Internet onto our network can place excessive demand on computing resources. This can result in poor network performance or the temporary loss of access to IT services on the network. Such material should not be downloaded unless necessary and preferably during a period when there is little other activity.
- 13.5.2 Files should not be downloaded on to PCs without using virus-checking software.

13.6 Registering on external web sites

- 13.6.1 Many websites require registration. Employees who wish to register as a user of a website for work purposes are encouraged to do so. If there is any doubt as to whether it is appropriate to register as a user of a website for work purposes, users should check with their Line Manager. Employees must ask their manager in advance so that we are aware of what they are committing us to and to ensure the registration will not result in us being inundated with junk mail. Any boxes should be ticked to show we do not want our data used for other marketing purposes.
- 13.6.2 Our business email addresses should only be supplied for access to sites needed exclusively for work purposes. For any such sites, the password should be registered with the Town Clerk, who must also be notified of any change to the password.

13.7 Personal use

- 13.7.1 We trust users to limit their browsing of the Internet for non-business purposes. When surfing the web for personal purposes, this must only be at times that do not interfere with the performance of their role or our daily business, i.e. during breaks or after hours with permission. It must also not include visiting websites that are of a sexual nature, include sexual, obscene, pornographic, offensive content, or which may be considered by others to cause distress is prohibited. Accessing websites for these purposes may lead to disciplinary action, including summary dismissal (without notice). In the case of an agency worker, the termination of their engagement with us.
- 13.7.2 Personal use of the Internet for conducting financial transactions, e.g. on-line banking or for the purchasing of goods, must be restricted to out of working hours.
- 13.7.3 Users should not have any expectation of privacy as to their internet usage. All use can be monitored and excessive use that results in wasting our time in this way may result in the facility being withdrawn and/or dealt with in line with our disciplinary procedure.
- 13.7.4 All users who are allowed access to the Internet must ensure that:
- they do not access any site which will result in charges being levied to Houghton Regis Town Council for such access
 - they do not use the Internet to access unlawful or inappropriate material – if unlawful or inappropriate material is accidentally accessed, the user should send an email to their manager so we know the circumstances (the access may be picked up by any monitoring system). For these purposes, unlawful material is that which breaks the law such as child pornography or harassment; inappropriate material includes searches that may not be unlawful, but which may expose us to liability for harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination by colleagues who may see the search material, such as soft pornography.
 - they do not enter into any contracts or commitments in our name or on our behalf
 - they do not order any goods for personal use in our name.

13.8 Misuse of the Internet

- 13.8.1 Those who are allowed access to the Internet at work for work purposes are expected to use it sensibly and not so that it interferes with efficient working. They may be called upon to justify the amount of time spent on the internet or the sites visited, so this should be borne in mind when browsing the internet.
- 13.8.2 We trust employees not to abuse the latitude we give them, but if this trust is abused, then we reserve the right to alter our policy in this respect.

- 13.8.3 Creating, accessing, sending, downloading or the display of inappropriate, illegal, offensive, sexual, obscene or indecent material is strictly forbidden and may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal as a possible outcome. The accessing of and downloading of some material, for example, sexually explicit material and pornography of children is a criminal offence.
- 13.8.4 The creation or transmission of such material, or material which is designed or likely to cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety, is strictly forbidden.
- 13.8.5 Furthermore, our systems may not be used for any of the following (this list is not exhaustive but indicates the sort of usage we would consider to be unacceptable, and which may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal as a possible outcome):
- gambling
 - downloading, accessing or storing large personal files which interfere with the running of the organisation, such as photographs, videos and music
 - games of any kind
 - copying software for personal use or using our software (including accounting programmes and/or design programmes) for personal use
 - promoting non-business related religious, charitable or political material unless authorised to do so by the Town Clerk
 - sending or participating in junk mail, spam mail or chain letters (this includes forwarding jokes, cartoons and video clips to groups of people and also transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material that is not work-related)
 - bringing our name into disrepute via social networking websites
 - undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff time or networked resources
 - using our business email address and misrepresenting our business
 - using our name, business contacts, clients or customers for personal benefit or the benefit of any other firm, company or organisation
- 13.8.6 IT equipment is provided as a business tool to enable users to perform their roles effectively. We expect users to have an individual and collective responsibility not to abuse any of our IT equipment or services. Damage or serious unauthorised use of or tampering with our equipment is strictly forbidden.
- 13.8.7 Anyone who discovers a work colleague is abusing our internet facility should inform the Town Clerk. An employee who is found to be concealing the activities of a work colleague who is abusing our internet facilities may face disciplinary action.

13.9 Removing internet access

- 13.9.1 We may at any time deny internet access to any employee without giving any reason, although normally we would provide reasons.

14 Houghton Regis Town Council website

- 14.1 Houghton Regis Town Council website is created and amended as part of defined development projects and unauthorised amendment of information on this site is prohibited.
- 14.2 Anyone who sees anything on our website which is not up to date should let their manager know as, for legal and public relations reasons, we need to keep it accurate and current.

15 Use of social media

- 15.1 Social media includes blogs; Wikipedia and other similar sites where text can be posted; multimedia or user generated media sites including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, Threads, TikTok, WhatsApp channels, Nextdoor, and any future emerging platforms; text messaging and mobile device communications and more traditional forms of media such as TV and newspapers. Care should be taken when using social media at any time, either using our systems or at home. Social media use should comply with:
- UK GDPR 2018
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018
 - Local Government Act 1986 and Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity
- 15.2 Only authorised and trained officers may post on official Council channels as governed by the Social Media Policy.
- 15.3 Personal use of social networking/media and chat sites are not permitted during working hours and should be restricted to breaks during working hours, or after hours. The use of social networking/media and chat sites in a personal capacity must comply with both the IT policy and the Social Media policy. If an employee identifies themselves as a council employee on a personal account, they must make it clear that view expressed are their own and not those of the council.
- 15.4 We recognise the importance of employees joining in and helping to shape sector conversation and enhancing our image through blogging and interaction in social media. Therefore, where it is relevant to use social networking sites as part of the employee's position, this is acceptable and must follow the town councils Social Media Policy Social media use should comply with:
- UK GDPR 2018
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018
 - Local Government Act 1986 and Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

- 15.5 Inappropriate comments and postings can adversely affect the reputation of our organisation, even if it is not directly referenced. It should be noted that if comments/photographs are likely to be construed as linked to us or, in more direct cases, if comments about colleagues, members of the public or our business could be regarded as abusive, humiliating, sexually harassment, discriminatory or derogatory, or could constitute bullying or harassment, we will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence. Employees should be aware that other organisations may read employees' personal weblogs, to acquire information on, for example, their work, products, technical developments and employee morale. Therefore, even if the Council is not named, care should be taken with any views expressed.
- 15.6 Social networking media may be used by the Town Council as part of its means of communication with residents and service users. Such media will be used to represent the Council as a corporate body. Where members of the public are able to post to a social media page representing the Town Council, the pages will be monitored by Town Council officers, following published community guidelines, and to ensure that any offensive, inappropriate or discriminatory messages will be deleted and that abusive repeat offenders may be blocked.
- 15.7 Members who use social networking sites in their capacity as councillors must make it clear that they are speaking in a personal capacity and not representing the view of the Council. It is the responsibility of Members to ensure that they are adhering to the Town Council's Code of Conduct when using social networking sites. Councillors using social media must follow both the IT Policy and Social Media Policy and should maintain clear boundaries between personal accounts and council business.
- 15.8 To protect both the Council and the Councils interests, we ask that everyone complies with the following rules about social media, whether in relation to our employment or personal social networking sites, and irrespective of whether this is during or after working hours:
- Contacts from any of our databases should not be downloaded and connected with on LinkedIn or other social networking sites with electronic address book facilities.
 - Any blog that mentions the Council, our current or potential services, employees, partners and suppliers, should identify the author as one of our employees and state that the views expressed on the blog or website are theirs alone and do not represent the views of the Council. Even if our organisation is not mentioned, care should be taken with any views expressed on social media sites and any views should clearly be stated to be the writer's own (e.g. via a disclaimer statement such as: "The comments and other content on this site are my own and do not represent the positions or opinions of my employer."). Writers must not claim or give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of the Council.
 - Any employee who is developing a site or writing a blog that will mention Houghton Regis Town Council, our current or potential, employees, members, councillors, volunteers, partners, visitors and suppliers, must inform the Town Clerk that they are writing this and gain agreement before going 'live'.
 - We expect our employees to be respectful about our business and our current or potential services, employees, partners, members, councillors, volunteers, visitors and suppliers and not to engage in any name calling or any behaviour that will reflect negatively on our reputation. Any unauthorised use of copyright materials, any unfounded or derogatory

statements, or any misrepresentation is not viewed favourably and could constitute gross misconduct.

- Photos or videos showing any employee or worker in uniform or other clothing that includes our name or logo and that could reflect negatively on the employee, his/her job, his/her colleagues or our business should not be posted on social media; neither should photos, videos or sound recordings taken on our property without explicit permission.
- Comments posted by our employees on any sites should be knowledgeable, accurate and professional and should not compromise us in any way.
- Inappropriate conversations with residents or third parties should not take place on any social networking sites, including forums.
- Any writing about or displaying photos or videos of internal activities that involves current employees, might be considered a breach of data protection and a breach of privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, their permission should be gained prior to uploading any such material. Details of any kind relating to any events, conversations, materials or documents that are meant to be private, confidential or internal to the business of the Council should not be posted. This includes manuals; procedures; training documents; databases; non-public financial or operational information; personal information regarding other employees or suppliers; anything to do with a disciplinary case, grievance, allegation of bullying/harassment or discrimination, or legal issue; any other secret, confidential, or proprietary information or information that is subject to confidentiality agreements.
- All employees must be aware that they are personally liable for anything that they write or present online (including on a competitor's blog, post, feed or website). They may be subject to disciplinary action for comments, content, or images that are defamatory, embarrassing, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous, or that can create a hostile work environment. They may also be sued by any individual or company that views their comments, content, or images as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous or creating a hostile work environment. In addition, other employees can raise grievances for alleged bullying and/or harassment.
- Postings to websites or anywhere on the Internet and social media of any kind, or in any press or media of any kind, must not breach copyright or other law or disclose confidential information, defame or make derogatory comments about the business of the Council or its employees, members, councillors, volunteers, partners, visitors and suppliers, or disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach data protection legislation.
- Contacts by the media relating to our business, our current and potential products, employees, partners, customers, suppliers and competitors should be referred to the Town Clerk.
- Employees who use sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook must ensure that the information on their profile is accurate and up to date and must update their profile on leaving our employment to show that they are no longer employed by us.
- Employees who use X.com, LinkedIn, or other social media/networking sites for business development purposes must ensure that they inform us of their password(s) so that these sites can be accessed and updated in their absence.

- Employees who have left our employment must not post any inappropriate comments about the business of the Council or our employees on LinkedIn, Facebook, X.com or any other social media/networking sites.
- Any contacts made on such sites during the course of employment will be classed as business information and thus belong to the Council. Employees will be asked to disclose contacts on LinkedIn, or any other sites, that they have made in their capacity as an employee.

15.8.1 Note that we may, from time to time, monitor external postings on social media sites. Any employee who has a profile (for example on LinkedIn or Facebook) must not misrepresent themselves or their role with us. Employees are also advised that social media sites are not an appropriate place to air business concerns or complaints: these should be raised with a manager or formally through our grievance procedure.

15.8.2 It is important to note that any contact details and information remain the property of the Council. In addition, employees leaving our employment will be required to delete all work-related data from any personal device/equipment.

16 Training

16.1 Any employee who feels they require training to increase their understanding of the real benefits the Internet can bring to their position, or to improve their ability to use our IT equipment and services, should contact their Line Manager.

17 Breach of this policy

17.1 Failure to adhere to this policy may be a gross misconduct offence and may result in action being taken under our disciplinary policy, which could lead to dismissal. Depending on the nature of the offence it may also be necessary to notify the police.

17.2 Anyone who discovers a user abusing our IT equipment or services must inform the Town Clerk. An employee who is found to be concealing the activities of a work colleague who is abusing our IT equipment or services may face disciplinary action themselves.

18 Related policies and documents

- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Health and Safety policy

The above list is not exhaustive.

19 Further information

19.1 Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the Head of Corporate Services in the first instance.

20 Policy owner

This policy will be reviewed annually, by the Corporate Services Committee, or sooner if required by changes in law, best practice or social media platform developments.



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

24th November 2025

Dear Clare,

Interim Internal Audit Report

An audit was carried out by Kevin Rose on Tuesday 11 November 2025. This was the interim internal audit, part of the annual internal audit coverage of the Council. Prior to the audit a 'Pre-Audit' was carried out remotely which tested items which are required to be published on the Council's website.

The audit was undertaken using the standard IAC Audit Checklist, that we use for all Local Councils, which has 206 items. A total of 106 items were tested during this audit, including items that were examined and tested as part of the pre-audit process. A balance of 100 items remain to be tested.

The following 'Internal Control Objectives' of the Annual Internal Audit Report (part of the AGAR) were checked and confirmed as being Not Applicable to your Council for this financial year.

- Exemption from External Audit (Box K)
- the Transparency Code (for Smaller Authorities) (Box L)
- Trust Funds (Box O)

Areas subject to audit were;

- the Accounting system and records (Box A)
- the Payment system (Box B)
- Risk and insurance (Box C)
- Budget and precept setting and monitoring (Box D)
- Income billing, collection and VAT (Box E)
- Petty cash (Box F)
- Bank reconciliations (Box I)
- Accounting Statements (Box J)
- the Transparency Code (for Smaller Authorities) (Box L)
- the Publication of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Box N)

Of the 99 applicable items tested a Positive response was obtained in respect of 93 tests. There were 6 Negative responses identified and 8 Observations were made, details of which are set out in the attached Interim Internal Audit Observations.

Summary of tests undertaken during this audit

Positive response	93
Negative response	6
Not Applicable to your Council	7
Total tests carried out	<u>106</u>

I am pleased to advise that no 'Non-Compliances' were identified at this stage that would give rise to a negative response on the statutory Annual Internal Audit Report.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Rose'.

Kevin Rose ACMA
Director

Houghton Regis Town Council

Financial Year 2025-26

Visit 1 Internal Audit Observations

Date considered by Council _____

Minute Reference _____



IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd

Audit date: 11 November 2025

B This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Have payments been approved as required under Council Financial Regulations?	No	<i>Payments have not been approved as required under the Councils Financial Regulation 6.10 which requires that "A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting."</i>	The Council to review its compliance with Financial Regulation 6.10. The Council should amend either the process in place, or the financial regulation, to ensure they both agree.	High	Actioned. April, May, June and Julys signed payments list attached to the minutes of the Corporate Services meeting held on the 1st September 2025.
2	Council has in a place a process to regularly check and agree supplier statements of account	Yes	<i>It was noted that there are a large number of unallocated amounts on the creditors ledger (although the value of these is not high)</i>	The Council to review the purchase ledger and ensure that any unallocated amounts are correctly allocated. Any unallocated debit balance should be queried and cleared.	Medium	The creditors list will be cleared prior to year end.
3	Is the tender level in Financial Regulations and Standing Orders set at the same level?	No	<i>It was noted that the tender threshold in Standing Orders, at £30,000, differs from that set in Financial Regulations which is £100,000</i>	The Council to review the tender level set in its Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and ensure that it is the same.	Medium	Request for this to be regularised at the Council meeting to be held on the 15th December 2025

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The value of the Councils Fidelity Insurance covers the value of the Councils cash & bank holdings	No	<i>Minutes record the Councils Fidelity Insurance as £5 million - this is now below Council bank holdings.</i>	The Council to review the level of its Fidelity insurance and consider whether it is adequate to cover the value of cash and bank balances held.	Medium	To be considered at the Corporate Services committee meeting to be held on the 2nd March 2026

D The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
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1	Council has reviewed independence of the Internal Auditor	No	<i>It was noted that the Council has not formally considered the independence of the Internal Auditor as set out in the Practitioner's Guide paragraph 4.11</i>	The Council to ensure that , on an annual basis, it formally considers the independence of the Internal Auditor. It may be appropriate for this to be done at the same time as the Council considers the Annual Internal Audit Report.	Medium	To be considered at the Corporate Services committee meeting to be held on the 2nd March 2026
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I Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Bank reconciliations, and supporting bank statements, have been signed and dated as evidence of independent review (Interim)	Yes	<i>It is not currently practice for the CCLA statement to be reviewed and signed. Other bank statement have been signed.</i>	The CCLA statement should be subject to the same review and signature process as other bank accounts.	Medium	Actioned. CCLA statement, starting from August 2025, signed at Corporate Services committee meeting held on the 1st December 2025

L The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The Council has complied with the publication requirements of the ICO Model Publication Scheme for Parish Councils. (This includes a requirement to publish the Annual Internal Audit Report).	No	<i>The Council has not complied with the publication requirements of the ICO Model Publication Scheme for Parish Councils. - Re: Listing of payments over £100.</i>	The Council to review its compliance with the ICO Model Publication Scheme. The Council to note that the scheme must be adopted in full unless specific exemption has been obtained from the Information Commissioner's Office.	Advisory	Purchase Ledger payments have historically been listed. <u>ALL</u> payments will be included from October 2025.

N *The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The Council has published the Notice of Conclusion of Audit on its website in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations	No	<i>The Council has not published the Notice of Conclusion of Audit on its website in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. At the date of the interim audit the External Audit Report had not been received.</i>	Council to note.	Low	Members were advised at the Town Council meeting held on the 13th October 2025, that due to the delay by the Town Councils appointed external auditor the town council was unable to publish their audited AGAR and completion notice in accordance with the requirements. The Town Council published both of these documents onto their website on the 17th November 2025, as soon as they were recieved.



Houghton Regis Town Council

Standing Orders

Date of Approval:	Town Council 22 nd June 2015
Date of Review:	18 th May 2016; 18 th July 2017; 3 rd July 2018; 8 th October 2018 (following advice from NALC); 15 th May 2019; 18 th May 2022; 17 th May 2023; 15 th May 2024; 14 th May 2025; <u>15th December 2025</u> (following observation from Internal Auditor)

Based on NALC Model Standing Orders 2018 (Revised 2020) and updated April 2022 (Update to Model Standing Order 18 only), 31st March 2025 Standing Orders 18 and 26

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Appendix A – Procedure for Recording Meetings

PREFACE

This is a set of Standing orders based on the model set of Standing orders produced by NALC (April 2018), revised 2020, updated April 2022 & 31 March 2025. Standing Orders that are in **bold type** contain legal and statutory requirements and are to be adopted without changing them or their meaning. Standing Orders not in bold are designed to help councils operate effectively but do not contain statutory requirements therefore they may be adopted or amended to suit a council's needs.

If the words "Local Council's" are used, it means Parish and Town Council's in England and Community and Town Council's in Wales.

For convenience, the word "councillor" is used in model standing orders and, unless the context suggests otherwise, includes a non-councillor with or without voting rights.

These standing orders use gender-neutral language (e.g. "Chair")




The Chair of a Town Council is entitled to use the title "Town Mayor". The title confers no additional powers on the chair, and, in particular, has no implications for his conduct in meetings.

Notes:

- *The word "Chair" includes "Town Mayor" and means the person actually presiding at a meeting*
- *The word "Vice-Chair" includes "Deputy Town Mayor"*
- *Where appropriate use of the word "he" is to include the meaning "she"*
- *The word "Council" includes "committee," where any function has been delegated.*


STANDING ORDERS







1. MEETINGS

-  Full Council meetings
-  Committee meetings
-  Sub-committee meetings

Smoking is not permitted at any meeting of the Council.













All meetings of the Town Council shall be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street, Houghton Regis at 7pm unless the Council decides otherwise.


-  a **Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.**




-  b **The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.**
-  c **The minimum three clear days' public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice**
- 
 d **Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.**
- e 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.
- f The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 1(e) above shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting.
- g Subject to standing order 1(f) above, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- h In accordance with standing order 1(e) above, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- i A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak.
- j A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chair of the meeting.
- k Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- 
 l **Subject to standing order 1(m), a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To "report" means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting procedures, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or**

written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.

See Appendix A for the Procedure for Recording Meetings

-  m **A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.**
-  n **The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.**
-  o **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair of the Council may in his absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chair of the Council (if there is one).**
-  p **The Chair of the Council, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair of the Council, (if there is one) if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**
-  q **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting.**
-  r **The chair of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his casting vote whether or not he gave an original vote.**

See standing orders 4(h) and (i) for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chair of the Council at the annual meeting of the council.
-  s **Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.**
- t **The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:**
 - i. the time and place of the meeting;
 - ii. the names of councillors who are present (virtually or in person) and the names of councillors who are absent, with or without apologies;
 - iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with

- voting rights;
 - iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
 - v. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
 - vi. if there was a public participation session; and
 - vii. the resolutions made.
-  u **A councillor or a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on his right to participate and vote on that matter.**
-  v **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three.**
See standing order 6d(vii) for the quorum of a committee or sub-committee meeting.
-  w **If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted** and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting.
- x A meeting shall not normally exceed a period of 2.5 hours unless by agreement of those Members present.

2 PROPER OFFICER

- a The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the Council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.
- b The Proper Officer shall:
 - i. **at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee or a sub-committee,**
 - **serve on councillors, by delivery or post at their residences or by email authenticated in such a manner as the Proper Officer thinks fit, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda (provided the councillor has consented to service by email) and**

- **Provide, in a conspicuous place, public notice of the time, place and agenda (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the council convened by councillors is signed by them);**

See standing order 1(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 1(c) for a meeting of a committee.

- ii. subject to standing order 11, include on the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least 5 days before the meeting confirming his withdrawal of it;
- iii. **convene a meeting of full council for the election of a new Chair of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his office;**
- iv. **facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;**
- v. **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities;**
- vi. retain acceptance of office forms from councillors;
- vii. retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests;
- viii. assist with responding to requests made under the freedom of information legislation and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with and subject to the council's relevant policies and procedures;
- ix. liaise, as appropriate, with the Council's Data Protection Officer (if there is one);
- x. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;
- xi. assist in the organisation of, storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form subject to the requirements of data protection and freedom of information legislation and other legitimate requirements (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980);
- xii. arrange for legal deeds to be executed;
(See also standing order 20);
- xiii. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the council in accordance with the council's financial regulations;
- xiv. record every planning application notified to the council and the council's response to the local planning authority;
- xv. refer a planning application received by the council to the Chair or in his absence Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of Planning Committee if an extension of time is not agreed by the Planning Department;
- xvi. manage access to information about the council via the publication

scheme; and

- xvii. retain custody of the seal of the council (if any) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.

See also standing order 20.

- c. The Proper Officer or other staff member(s) nominated by the Council shall be present at every meeting of the council, committee or sub committee.

3 RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

- a The council shall appoint appropriate staff member(s) to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.

4 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS

- a **In an election year, the annual meeting of the council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.**
- b **In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a council shall be held on such day in May as the council decides.**
- c **If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the council shall take place at 6pm.**
- d **In addition to the annual meeting of the council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the council decides.**
- e **The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the council shall be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair (if there is one) of the Council.**
- f **The Chair of the Council, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the council.**
- g **The Vice-Chair of the Council, if there is one, unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chair of the Council at the next annual meeting of the council.**
- h **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the council, he shall preside at the annual meeting**

until a successor Chair of the Council has been elected. The current Chair of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

- i **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the council, he shall preside at the annual meeting until a new Chair of the Council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- j Following the election of the Chair of the Council and Vice-Chair (if there is one) of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
 - i. **In an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council of his acceptance of office form unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date;**
 - ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council;
 - iii. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;
 - iv. Review of the terms of reference for committees;
 - v. Appointment of members to existing committees;
 - vi. Appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing order 6;
 - vii. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
 - viii. In an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the Council becoming eligible to exercise the general power of competence in the future;
 - ix. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

5 DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

- a No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is not adhered to, the chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b If person(s) disregard the request of the chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or excluded from the meeting. The motion, if

seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.

- c If a resolution made under standing order 5(b) above is ignored, the chair of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

6 COMMITTEES & SUB-COMMITTEES

- a **Unless the council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.**
- b **The members of a committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the council.**
- c **Unless the council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**
- d The council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:
 - i. shall determine their terms of reference;
 - ii. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of full council;
 - iii. shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
 - iv. shall, subject to standing orders 6(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;
 - v. shall, after it has appointed the members of a standing committee, appoint the chair of the standing committee;
 - vi. shall permit a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chair and vice chair at the first meeting of the committee;
 - vii. shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which shall be no less than three;
 - viii. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;
 - ix. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee;
 - x. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and

- xi. may dissolve a committee.
- e All committees may exercise on behalf of the Council any of the functions delegated to them as set out in their terms of reference and subject to any statutory provision. No committee shall be obliged to exercise the functions delegated to it, but can if it so wishes refer matters to the council for decision;
- f Each Committee shall submit to the Council a report of the proceedings of any meetings held since the Council last met.

7 PRESENCE OF NON-MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- a. Any Councillor may attend, and with the permission of the Committee Chair speak on particular matters at a meeting, not in private session, of a Committee or Sub-Committee of which he is not a member but may not vote.
- b. A member who has proposed a resolution, which has been referred to any committee of which he is not a member, may explain his resolution to the committee but shall not vote.
- c. A Member of a Committee, who is not able to attend for any reason, may appoint as a substitute a Councillor who is not a member of that Committee. Notification of such a substitution shall be given to the Town Clerk or the Chair before the start of the meeting. This substitute Member may take part in the proceedings as if he were a member of it.

8 WORKING GROUPS

- a. The Council may create working groups, whose name, and number of members and the bodies to be invited to nominate members shall be specified.
- b. The Clerk shall inform the members of each working group of the terms of reference of the group.
- c. A working group may make recommendations and give notice thereof to the Council or Committee or Sub Committee
- d. A working group may consist wholly of persons who are not members of the Council.
- e. Working Group meetings are to be held in normal office hours (to start not earlier than 10am and to finish not later than 6.30pm)

9 EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

- a **The Chair of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council at any time.**

- b **If the Chair of the Council does not call an extraordinary meeting of the council within seven days of having been requested in writing to do so by two councillors, any two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council. The public notice giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two councillors.**
- c The chair of a committee or a sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or the sub-committee at any time.
- d If the chair of a committee or a sub-committee does not call an extraordinary meeting within 3 days of having been requested by to do so by 2 members of the committee or the sub-committee, any 2 members of the committee or the sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee and a sub-committee.

10 QUESTIONS

- a A councillor may seek an answer, at a meeting of the council, a question concerning any business of the Council provided 2 clear days notice of the question has been given to the Proper Officer.
- b Questions from a councillor not related to items of business on the agenda for a meeting shall only be asked during the part of the meeting set aside for such questions.
- c Every question shall be put and answered without discussion.

11 MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO BE GIVEN TO THE PROPER OFFICER

- a A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting for which it is tabled and, in any event, shall relate to the performance of the council's statutory functions, powers and obligations or an issue which specifically affects the council's area or its residents.
- b No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least 10 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- c The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 11(b), correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.

- d If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 11(b) is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it, in writing to the Proper Officer, so that it can be understood at least 8 clear days before the meeting.
- e If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the chair of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.
- f The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- g Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.
- h Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer for their rejection.

12 MOTIONS NOT REQUIRING WRITTEN NOTICE

- a The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer;
 - i. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
 - ii. to move to a vote;
 - iii. to defer consideration of a motion;
 - iv. to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;
 - v. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;
 - vi. to change the order of business on the agenda;
 - vii. to proceed to the next business on the agenda;
 - viii. to require a written report;
 - ix. to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;
 - x. to extend the time limits for speaking;
 - xi. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
 - xii. to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;
 - xiii. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
 - xiv. to temporarily suspend the meeting;
 - xv. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory or legal requirements);
 - xvi. to adjourn the meeting; or
 - xvii. to close a meeting.

13 RULES OF DEBATE AT MEETINGS

- a Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the chair of the meeting.
- b A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.
- c A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the chair of the meeting as withdrawn.
- d If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- e An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- f If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion (as amended) becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- g An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the chair of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chair.
- h A councillor may move an amendment to his own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- i If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the chair of the meeting.
- j Subject to standing order 13(k), only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the chair of the meeting.
- k One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chair of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- l A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- m The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.

- n Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of debate on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- o Unless permitted by the chair of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
 - i. to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor;
 - ii. to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since he last spoke;
 - iii. to make a point of order;
 - iv. to give a personal explanation; or
 - v. to exercise a right of reply.
- p During the debate of a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which he considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting he is concerned by.
- q A point of order shall be decided by the chair of the meeting and his decision shall be final.
- r When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
 - i. to amend the motion;
 - ii. to proceed to the next business;
 - iii. to adjourn the debate;
 - iv. to put the motion to a vote;
 - v. to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
 - vi. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
 - vii. to exclude the public and press;
 - viii. to adjourn the meeting; or
 - ix. to suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory or legal requirements.
- s Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chair of the meeting shall be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived his right of reply.

- t Excluding motions moved under Standing Order 13(r), the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the chair of the meeting.




14 RULES OF DEBATE – RESOLUTIONS

- a No discussion of the Minutes shall take place except upon their accuracy. Corrections to the Minutes shall be made by resolution and must be initialled by the Chair.
- b A member shall direct his speech to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or to a question of order.
- c A member shall remain seated when speaking unless requested to stand by the Chair.
- d The ruling of the Chair on a point of order or on the admissibility of a personal explanation shall not be discussed.
- e Members shall address the Chair. If two or more members wish to speak, the Chair shall decide whom to call upon.
- f Whenever the Chair speaks during a debate all other members shall be silent.

15 PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS


- a A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 6 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 11, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.
- b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 15(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further six months.

16 DRAFT MINUTES

-  Full Council meetings
-  Committee meetings
-  Sub-committee meetings

- a If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on councillors with the agenda to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.
- b There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance with standing order 12(a)(i).

- c The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- d If the chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:

“The chair of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the () held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.”
-  e **If the Council’s gross annual income and expenditure (whichever is higher) does not exceed £25,000, it shall publish draft minutes on a website which is publicly accessible and free of charge not later than one month after the meeting has taken place.**
- f Subject to the publication of draft minutes in accordance with standing order 16(e) and standing order 30(a) and following a resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, the draft minutes or recordings of the meeting for which approved minutes exist shall be destroyed.

17. ACCOUNTS AND ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

- a “Proper practices” in standing orders refer to the most recent version of “Governance and Accountability for Local Council’s – a Practitioners’ Guide”.
- b All payments by the council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the council’s financial regulations.
- c The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each member a list of all receipts and payments.
- d The Responsible Financial Officer shall provide to each Standing Committee meeting a statement to summarise:
 - i. the committees’ income and expenditure for the year to date;
 - ii the committee’s aggregate income and expenditure for the year to date;
 - iii the balances held which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.
- e As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible

Financial Officer shall provide:

- i. each councillor with a statement summarising the council's receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the last quarter and the year to date for information; and
 - ii. to the full council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 2 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- f The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and applying the form of accounts determined by the council (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for a year to 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to each councillor at least 14 days prior to anticipated approval by the Council. The annual governance and accountability return of the council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.

18 FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT

- a The Council's financial regulations may make provision for the authorisation of the payment of money in exercise of any of the Council's functions to be delegated to a committee, sub-committee or to an employee.
- b The council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
 - i. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
 - ii. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the council;
 - iii. the work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;
 - iv. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
 - v. whether contracts with an estimated value below ~~£30,000~~ **£100,000** due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.
- c Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.
- d Subject to additional requirements in the financial regulations of the council, the tender process for contracts for the supply of goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:
 - i. a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works

- shall be drawn up;
- ii. an invitation to tender shall be drawn up to confirm (i) the council's specification (ii) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders (iii) the date of the council's written response to the tender and (iv) the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process;
 - iii. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
 - iv. tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least one councillor after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;
 - v. tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- e Neither the council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.
- f Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Government from time to time, the Council must consider whether the contract is subject to the requirements of the current procurement legislation and if so, the Council must comply with procurement rules. NALC's procurement guidance contains further details.**

19 ESTIMATES / PRECEPTS

- a. The Council shall approve written estimates for the coming financial year at its meeting before the end of January. Once the Estimates have been accepted they shall be known as the Budget.
- b. Any committee desiring to incur expenditure shall give the Proper Officer a written estimate of the expenditure recommended for the coming year no later than 30th October.

20 EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b Subject to standing order 20(a) above, any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

21 MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

See also standing order 31.

- a **The Council shall have in place and keep under review, technical and organisational measures to keep secure information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. Such arrangements shall include deciding who has access to personal data and encryption of personal data.**
- b **The Council shall have in place, and keep under review, policies for the retention and safe destruction of all information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. The Council's retention policy shall confirm the period for which information (including personal data) shall be retained or if this is not possible the criteria used to determine that period (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980).**
- c **The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential information or personal data without legal justification.**
- d **Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.**
- e To assist councillors and staff such information will normally be printed on pink papers and marked as confidential.

22 HANDLING STAFF MATTERS

- a Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.
- b The council shall keep all written records relating to employees secure. All paper records shall be secured and locked and electronic records shall be password protected and encrypted.
- c In accordance with standing order 21(a), persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing order 22(a).
- d Access and means of access by keys and/or computer passwords to records of employment referred to in above shall be provided only to the Clerk.
- e The Clerk shall conduct an appraisal of all Council employees and shall keep a

written record of it. The Chair of the Council and the Chair of Corporate Services Committee or in their absence, the Vice-Chair of the Council shall conduct an appraisal of the Clerk and shall keep a written record of it. Significant outcomes of the appraisals shall be reported to the Corporate Services Committee.

- f Any grievance shall be handled in accordance with the Council's approved Grievance policy.
- g Any disciplinary matter shall be handled in accordance with the Council's approved Disciplinary policy.
- h Any staff sickness shall be handled in accordance with the Council's approved Sickness Management policy.

23 VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS

- a Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chair of the meeting.

24 CANVASSING OF AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY COUNCILLORS

- a. Canvassing of members of the Council or of any committee, directly or indirectly, for any appointment under the Council shall disqualify the candidate for such appointment. The Proper Officer shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.
- b. A councillor or a member of a committee or sub-committee shall not solicit a person for appointment to or by the Council or recommend a person for such appointment or for promotion; but, nevertheless, any such person may give a written testimonial of a candidate's ability, experience or character for submission to the Council with an application for appointment.
- c. This standing order shall apply to tenders as if the person making the tender were a candidate for an appointment.

25 CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS

See also standing order 1(u).

- a All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the council.
- b Unless he has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in

- which he has a disclosable pecuniary interest. He may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he had the interest.
- c Unless he has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he has another interest if so required by the council's code of conduct. He may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he had the interest.
- d **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer** as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.
- e A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a meeting of the council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required and that decision is final.
- f A dispensation request shall confirm:
- i. the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
 - ii. whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
 - iii. the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
 - iv. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- g Subject to standing orders 25(d) and (f), dispensations requests shall be considered at the beginning of the meeting of the council, or committee or a sub-committee for which the dispensation is required.
- h **A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 25(e) if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following apply:**
- i. **without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business or**
 - ii. **granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the council's area or**
 - iii. **it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.**

26 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

- a **Upon notification by the Principal Council that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the council's code of conduct, the council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.**

27 RESTRICTIONS ON COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES

- a. Unless authorised by a resolution, no councillor shall:
 - i. inspect any land and/or premises which the council has a right or duty to inspect; or
 - ii. issue orders, instructions or directions.

28 COMMUNICATING WITH DISTRICT AND COUNTY OR UNITARY COUNCILLORS

- a An invitation to attend a meeting of the council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the Unitary Council representing the area of the council.

29 RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA

- a Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

30 RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

See also standing order 31.

- a **In accordance with freedom of information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to requests for information held by the Council.**
- b **The Council shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015.**

31. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION (Below is not an exhaustive list).

See also standing order 21

- a The Council may appoint a Data Protection Officer.

- b. **The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning his personal data.**
- c. **The Council shall have a written policy in place for responding to and managing a personal data breach.**
- d. **The Council shall keep a record of all personal data breaches comprising the facts relating to the personal data breach, its effects and the remedial action taken.**
- e. **The Council shall ensure that information communicated in its privacy notice(s) is in an easily accessible and available form and kept up to date.**
- f. **The Council shall maintain a written record of its processing activities.**

32 STANDING ORDERS GENERALLY

- a All or part of a standing order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.
- b A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least 2 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 11.
- c The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible after he has delivered his acceptance of office form.
- d The decision of the chair of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

33. VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE

- a A councillor who attends, virtually, a meeting of the council, or as an appointed member of a committee or sub-committee, may not take part in any discussion (unless specifically agreed to by the Chair) and has no right to vote.
- b Virtual attendance, by virtue of not being physically present, may render a meeting inquorate, see standing order 1w. Therefore, any councillor who intends to attend a meeting, virtually, must inform the Chair of their intention, prior to the meeting taking place, in order to avoid the meeting being inquorate.
- c An appointed member of a committee or sub-committee, who is unable to attend a meeting in person, in the first instance shall seek a substitute.

APPENDIX A

Procedure for recording meetings

The Openness of Local Bodies Regulations 2014 allows any person attending a public local government meeting to report proceedings by taking photographs, filming, audio recording, or by using social media.

It is courteous to advise the council or committee via the clerk that recording will take place.

Where the council has been notified of filming in advance a notice shall be displayed "Please note that filming, recording or photography may take place at this meeting when the public and press are not lawfully excluded"

1. The council and officers shall afford reasonable facilities for the recording of the meeting.
2. Any filming, recording or photography of meetings shall only be permitted from the Public Seating Areas.
3. No additional lighting or flash photography shall be used except by agreement of the chair.
4. Recording equipment shall not be left unattended at meetings.
5. Devices that may emit an alarm tone shall be switched to silent mode.
6. Persons recording the meeting shall not interrupt or interfere, or cause to make such noise as the chair regards as disruptive, while a meeting is in progress. The chair may direct recordings to stop if the interruption, interference or noise prevents the smooth running of the meeting.
7. Commentary by the recording person(s) shall not be permitted during the recording.
8. Only council members and council officers may be expressly recorded. Permission to record other persons present must be agreed with those persons. Permission to record those under 16 must be given by their parent or guardian.
9. All recording shall be visible to anyone at the meeting.
10. The council shall not be liable for any publishing actions of the person(s) making the recording. Permission to publish content identifying a member of the public is advisable.
11. Recording will be suspended if a resolution is passed by the meeting to exclude the public.
12. Recording will be suspended if the Chair suspends the meeting due to disorderly conduct.

13. Anyone reporting proceedings by making use of social media should not disturb the business of the meeting,
14. Any kind of reporting or filming of the meeting should be compliant with the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the laws of libel and defamation.
15. Only the official signed minutes of the council and its committees will be recognised as the formal, statutory and legally binding record of the meeting.

Interim audit summary Houghton Regis Town Council

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



Audit 1 Date 11 November 2025

Internal Control Objective		N/A	Tested	Positive	Negative	Observations	Non Compliance
Box A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	-	6	6	-	-	
Box B	This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	3	35	30	2	3	
Box C	This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	1	9	7	1	1	
Box D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	2	16	13	1	1	
Box E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	-	10	10	-	-	
Box F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	-	9	9	-	-	
Box G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	-	-	-	-	-	
Box H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	-	-	-	-	-	
Box I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	1	7	6	-	1	
Box J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	-	2	2	-	-	
Box K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 AGAR tick "not covered")	-	-	-	-	-	
Box L	The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	-	1	-	1	1	
Box M	The authority, during the previous year (2024/25) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	-	5	5	-	-	
Box N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	-	6	5	1	1	
Box O	(For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee	-	-	-	-	-	
Totals		7	106	93	6	8	-