



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Councillor M Herber**
Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

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19th September 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 29th September 2025 at 7pm.

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

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

Clare Evans
Town Clerk

<i>THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED¹</i>
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*A Minutes Silence will be held in memory of former Houghton Regis Town
Mayor and Councillor Rae Bird.*

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.

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.

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

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

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

4. **MINUTES**

Pages 5 - 12

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2025.

Recommendation: **To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2025.**

5. **PUBLIC SESSION ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A TOWN CENTRE COMMUNITY VENUE**

Town council are being asked to consider in more detail the report presented under agenda item 9 which sets out considerations for the establishment of a town centre community venue. It is envisaged that this venue will provide a vibrant hub for residents, local stakeholders and service providers, will support enhanced youth and community work and provide space for a larger more inclusive council chamber. This subsequent report is presented in private session due to the commercial sensitivities that are involved.

However to facilitate community and stakeholder input at this stage, this agenda item has been included to encourage public participation on this matter. The following points are highlighted:

- The HRTC Corporate Plan supports improved services in the town centre and the stronger development of a 'sense of place'. To view the Corporate Plan, please follow this link [Council Plans](#). Consultation feedback on the Corporate Plan was supportive of the creation of modern, vibrant community spaces.
- The CPC Action Plan supports strategic work with CBC and the development of a plan to support improved council offices and community centres. To view the CPC Action Plan, please follow this link [Council Strategies](#).
- By HRTC utilising additional investment income, the establishment of a town centre community venue can be delivered at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

Members of the public and local stakeholders are invited to feed in their thoughts on the establishment of a town centre community focused venue for residents, local stakeholders and service providers, which will support significantly enhanced youth and community work and provide space for a larger more inclusive council chamber.

Members of the town council are respectfully requested to listen to the views expressed and to consider them under Agenda item 9.

6. **PARKSIDE AND TITHE FARM RECREATIONS GROUNDS**

Pages 13 - 15

To consider seeking the transfer of these open space areas from CBC to HRTC under freehold ownership.

- Recommendation:**
- 1. To approve a formal approach to CBC to seek the freehold transfer of Parkside and Tithe Farm recreations grounds.**
 - 2. To use 190-4059, Central Services, Other Professional Fees to cover associated legal fees.**

7. MAINTENANCE OF SPECIFIED AREAS OF OPEN SPACE

Pages 16 - 18

- Secure the maintenance of planted roundabouts to enable the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place) and offer sponsorship options to local businesses.
- Secure the maintenance of grass cutting at East End.
- Secure the maintenance and community involvement in the Woodside Orchard.

- Recommendation:** To enable the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place), support Anglia in Bloom and offer sponsorship options to local businesses, to approve a formal approach to CBC to secure:
- the maintenance of planted roundabouts
 - grass cutting at East End
 - the maintenance and community involvement in the Woodside Orchard

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- Town Centre Community Venue

- 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.

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 16th June 2025 at 7.00pm.

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

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 2

Apologies Councillor: E Cooper
E Costello
C Rollins

13244 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllrs E Cooper, E Costello and C Rollins.

13245 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13246 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13247 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 14th May 2025.

The following amendments were requested:

- E Cooper duplicated as an attendee - amend first instance to E Billington
- Min 13199: amend 2024 to 2025
- Minute 13203: replace 'land' with 'area' in resolution

Members were happy to approve the Minutes with these amendments.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13248 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the following committees and were requested to consider any recommendations contained therein.

Corporate Services Committee

3rd March 2025

Minute number 13131: Banking & Signing Arrangements

To recommend to Town Council the inclusion of the following, officers on the approved bank mandate have delegated responsibility for electronically approving online payments and transfers between bank accounts and investments, on behalf of the Council.

Minute number 13134: Sexual Harassment at Work Legislation – Policy Update

To recommend to Town Council, the adoption of the following updated policies:

- a) Bullying and Harassment Policy
- b) IT Policy
- c) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- d) Disciplinary Policy
- e) Social Media Policy

Minute number 13135: Holidays and Other Absences

To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Holidays and Other Absences Policy.

Community Services Committee

None to present

Environment & Leisure Committee

None to present

Planning Committee

22nd April and 12th May 2025

Staffing Committee

None to present

Town Partnership Committee

None to present

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee 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.

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

1. Banking and Signing Arrangements (Minute number 13131)
2. In light of the Sexual Harassment at Work Legislation (Minute number 13134) to adopt the following updated policies;
 - a) Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - b) IT Policy
 - c) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - d) Disciplinary Policy
 - e) Social Media Policy
3. Holidays and Other absences Policy (Minute number 13135)

13249 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were informed that Hospice at Home Volunteers had been added to the Mayor's list of charitable causes.

Fourteen events had been attended, including:

- Mayor-making and inauguration ceremonies
- The HRTC Dog Show and HRTC Classic Car Show
- Bidwell Community Engagement event

13250 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Councillors provided verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Jones provided the following update:

BATPC

Items discussed at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting, and the County Committee meeting had included:

- The English Devolution White Paper
- NALC's emphasis on campaigning rather than their advisory role
- Accounts for 2024/25 which showed a loss but had been budget for

The Chews Foundation

Updates from the June committee meeting included:

- Three rooms had been leased and the flat now had a tenant
- The Little Theatre was expanding its work with young people
- Grants had been awarded for 2025/26

Hospice at Home Volunteers

- Training had been carried out for 6 new volunteers
- There had been fewer referrals

- There had been no financial loss
- 2026 would be 40th HHV's anniversary

Cllr McMahon provided the following update:

Houghton Hall Park

Items discussed at the HHP Board Meeting included:

- Establishment of procedures not covered in the JVA, e.g. deputising
- Minuting meetings and sharing these with HRTC
- Rebranding
- Park Run numbers

Cllr Farrell provided the following update:

The Memorial Hall

- Surplus money was available which would be used for new furniture and floor refurbishment
- Over 65s event had been well attended
- Race night event had taken place

13251 YEAR END ACCOUNTS

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

13252 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2024/2025 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2024/2025

In accordance with Financial Regulation 3.5, Members were advised that the internal auditor completed an interim internal audit on 20th November 2024 and the year-end internal audit on 6th June 2025.

Members were provided with a copy of the Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Following a recommendation from the Internal Auditor, the council had been requested to consider and confirm the effectiveness of its internal control system at the year end internal audit.

Resolved:

- 1. To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report;**
- 2. To confirm the effectiveness of the council's internal control system in accordance with the approved Internal Control Policy.**

13253 DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2024/2025

Members were requested to approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Members were advised of the following

1. Date of announcement: 19th June 2025
2. Date of commencement: 20th June 2025
3. End date: 31st July 2025

Resolved: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2025 as follows:

1. Date of announcement: 19th June 2025
2. Date of commencement: 20th June 2025
3. End date: 31st July 2025

**13254 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2024/2025
SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2025 was presented for consideration, approval and signature.

Resolved: To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2025.

**13255 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2024/2025
SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025 was presented for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

Members were advised that the column headed Year Ending 31 March 2024 had been headed 'Restated' in accordance with the Internal Auditors Observation and an explanation had been provided for reference.

Members felt it was disappointing that the loss on the investment had not been included accurately within the Statement of Accounts, although it was noted that this adjustment had been made on the revised Statement of Accounts as circulated and published on 16th June 2025. The Town Clerk confirmed that the amended version of the Statement of Accounts would be presented for approval.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2025 subject to external audit.**
 - 2. To approve the restated explanation for submission alongside the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for 2024/25.**

13256 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2025/26

Members were provided with a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2025/26 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

Members highlighted that the General Reserved figure needed amending as it contained figures from the previous year.

It was question how the Tithe Farm project was progressing. The Town Clerk informed Members that the project team were examining the costs for finalising the junction and liaising with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

13257 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND SCHEDULE

In accordance with Financial Regulation 17.1, the council was responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk 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 was provided and Members were requested to note that the register has been extended to include reference to s106 / deferred income.

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

13258 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members were reminded that the Council had appointed IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as the Town Councils internal audit provider, for a period of 3 years covering financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7.

13259 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Members were provided with a copy of the Town Council Draft Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. Members were advised that this was a wholly rewritten Policy.

This policy had been presented to and reviewed by members of the Community Services Committee at the meeting held on the 24th February 2025. At this meeting Members resolved (minute number 13121) that the approval of the Town Council Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy be made by the Corporate Services Committee along with a recommendation to Town Council to adopt the policy.

At the Corporate Services Committee meeting held on the 9th June 2025, Members approved this policy and recommended it be adopted by Council. Due to the timings of meetings and as this policy was vital for supporting the safety of children and young people in the community, Members agreed for this policy be recommended at the Town Council meeting to be held on the 16th June 2025, so as not to delay the implementation of this policy.

Once adopted, all staff and councillors would be issued a copy of the policy and would be required to sign to confirm they had read and understood it and in particular those elements highlighted in Appendix A.

Following this, training would be provided either in-house, via the Designated Safeguarding Leads, or by an external provider.

The policy would undergo an annual desktop review by staff who would report all recorded incidents to Community Services Committee in private session once a year.

Members sought clarity on: how training would be delivered; whether there was any scope for bespoke training; and what training could be offered to councillors who volunteered. The Town Clerk confirmed that training was expensive but was vital for those in the most relevant roles. More generic training would be provided to everyone else, but options were still being explored.

Resolved: To adopt the Town Councils Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

13260 REQUEST TO SITE A CABIN ON PARKSIDE RECREATION GROUND TO SERVE AS A LOCAL COMMUNITY SPACE

Members had been invited to consider a request from Parkside Action Group to site a cabin on Parkside recreation ground to serve as a local community space.

Members raised a number of questions with the Town Clerk:

HRTC were looking at transferring the freehold from CBC to HRTC. What would be CBC's reaction to a sub-lease?

This would be researched further to establish what was allowed under the current lease.

Had consultation been sought from interested stakeholders, what had been the outcome?

A number of community groups had been approached and responses had varied. Groups would find it difficult to commit to a project until more detail was available.

Would any future larger community space be compromised by having this facility in place?

Community centre availability had been researched and shared with members. This proposition had been presented for Members to discuss.

Would HRTC incur any costs?

No requests for financial assistance had been received but any future requests would be negotiated and subject to council consideration.

If HRTC were agreeing to providing community space, should this facility be opened to others, especially as PAG were looking to work alongside council officers in developing the project?

Parkside Action Group would need to oversee any approach from other community groups. The area would be a defined area and would need to be complementary to the pavilion and other surrounding land uses.

- 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 Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.45pm

Dated this 13th day of October 2025

Chairman



TOWN COUNCIL

Agenda Item 6

Date: 29th September 2025

Title: PARKSIDE AND TITHE FARM RECREATIONS GROUNDS

Purpose of the Report: To consider seeking the transfer of these open space areas from CBC to HRTC under freehold ownership.

Contact Officer: Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

1. To approve a formal approach to CBC to seek the freehold transfer of Parkside and Tithe Farm recreations grounds.
2. To use 190-4059, Central Services, Other Professional Fees to cover associated legal fees.

2. BACKGROUND

The main recreation grounds at Tithe Farm and Parkside are under a leasehold from CBC to HRTC. The leases expire as follows:

Tithe Farm recreation ground – 2061, lease cost £50/annum

Parkside recreation ground - 2061, lease cost £5/annum

Consideration of this was initiated under Minute 12675 [Town Council 22/01/2024](#)

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Both these leases have been in place since the 1960's. Both sites are fully managed and maintained by HRTC.

This suggestion is supported by the HRTC Corporate Plan.

From a resident's perspective there will be no change in how the sites are managed and maintained.

There will be no change in the costs of managing and maintaining the sites.

Securing the freehold offers HRTC the following advantages:

- Complete autonomy
- Long term security and protection from disposal
- Ease within grant processes

4. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

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

1.6 Protection and promotion of cultural and heritage assets.

2 Local Services and Facilities: To provide a broad range of high quality services and facilities for our residents, visitors and businesses

2.4 Maximise the value of HRTC assets.

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

- Legal support will be required
- CBC may look for some security to prevent HRTC from disposing of the site or seeking to change its function from the of formal and informal open space.

Financial Implications

- CBC may look for their legal fees to be covered as this initiative is being put forward by HRTC
- To use 190-4059, Central Services, Other Professional Fees to cover associated legal fees

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

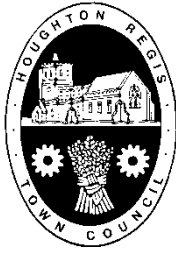
- There are no press implications arising from the recommendations

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

These recreation grounds have been managed and maintained by HRTC for some 60 years. The end of the leases are in 2061. It is suggested that HRTC seek to have the freehold for autonomy and long term security in particular.

7. APPENDICES

None.



Date: 29th September 2025

Title: MAINTENANCE OF SPECIFIED AREAS OF OPEN SPACE

Purpose of the Report: To consider:

- Secure the maintenance of planted roundabouts to enable the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place) and offer sponsorship options to local businesses.
- Secure the maintenance of grass cutting at East End.
- Secure the maintenance and community involvement in the Woodside Orchard

Contact Officer: Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATION

To enable the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place), support Anglia in Bloom and offer sponsorship options to local businesses, to approve a formal approach to CBC to secure:

- the maintenance of planted roundabouts
- grass cutting at East End
- the maintenance and community involvement in the Woodside Orchard

2. BACKGROUND

This is being put forward in support of the Corporate Plan as detailed in section 4.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Members are requested to support this initiative to enable the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place), support Anglia in Bloom and offer sponsorship options to local businesses:

- Secure the maintenance of planted roundabouts to enable the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place) and offer sponsorship options to local businesses.
- Secure the maintenance of grass cutting at East End
- Secure the maintenance and community involvement in the Woodside Orchard

Although these are additional areas of maintenance, it is felt that the council has the capacity within the existing staff team to take on this extra work.

HRTC is not looking to secure the freehold or leasehold of these areas, only to take on their management and maintenance for the benefit of the local community and local businesses.

Ordinarily a decision on this matter would be presented to Environment & Leisure Committee. However it forms part of a wider package of initiatives being considered at this meeting and for completeness it is suggested that Town Council consider the matter.

4. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

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

- 1.1 Improve integration between existing and new communities.
- 1.2 Support the sense of arrival and identity.
- 1.3 Create a stronger, more robust and engaging town centre offer.
- 1.7 Strengthen Houghton Regis's landscape character and agricultural heritage.

2 Local Services and Facilities: To provide a broad range of high quality services and facilities for our residents, visitors and businesses

- 2.6 Stimulate local business development and employment and training opportunities.
- 2.7 Promote awareness of our town, its assets and opportunities for businesses and investment.

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

- 4.5 Enhance the role of the council.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- Implications for other committees – to advise Environment & Leisure Committee
- Staff implications – none, can be delivered within the current staff team

Legal Implications

- Contract / SLA – to be sought, it is not envisaged that legal advice will be necessary

Financial Implications

- Budget available – seek to include budget in 2026/27

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

This initiative enables the council to promote the Houghton Regis identity (sense of place), support Anglia in Bloom and offer sponsorship options to local businesses.

7. APPENDICES

None.