



# 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](mailto:info@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk)

8<sup>th</sup> April 2026

## 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 Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026 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

***THIS MEETING MAY BE  
RECORDED<sup>1</sup>***

### 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**

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<sup>1</sup> *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.*

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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 7 - 13*

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

**Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026.**

#### 5. RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER – ARRANGEMENTS

*Pages 14 - 16*

At the Staffing Committee meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 members supported a recommendation from Corporate Services on the separation of the Responsible Finance Officer and Town Clerk roles.

Due to the timings of meeting and in order to ensure the Town Council has made suitable arrangements for an officer responsible for the administration of the council's financial affairs, members are being asked to consider this recommendation prior to the minutes of the Staffing Committee being formally accepted as a correct record and signed accordingly at its next meeting.

Members will find a report attached.

**Recommendation: To approve Minute 13519, namely, to formally recognise that the responsibilities of RFO be transferred to Head of Corporate Services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.**

#### 6. STRATEGIC POLICIES 2026/27

*Pages 17 – 86*

To provide information to members to enable a review of the Town Councils strategic policies prior to them being presented at the Town Council meeting to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

As members are aware revisions and updates to these strategic policies were given some consideration at the March Town Council meeting, however they were deferred due to the query over the transfer of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) responsibilities to the Head of Corporate Services. In light of the previous agenda item these are being represented for consideration. Subsequent to the March Town Council meeting where it was highlighted that some further adjustments were required, these too have been incorporated.

In summary the amendments include:

- Standing Orders – no amendments
- Financial Regulations - amendments to Financial Regulation 13.3 to align with section 38 of the Scheme of Delegation Scheme of Delegation - amendments included reflecting the transfer of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)
- Committee Functions & Terms of Reference - amendments included:
  - Updated table on Page 2
  - Corporate Services Committee – clarification of policies to be considered by this committee, namely legislative policies relating to Council governance, compliance, finance, data protection, health & safety, equality, and other statutory obligations
  - Environment & Leisure Committee – to extend the functions of this committee to enable it to consider and determine matters surrounding the development of a new cemetery for Houghton Regis.
  - Staffing Committee – clarification of policies to be considered by this committee, namely ‘To draft, implement, review, monitor and revise policies for staff’.
  - Inclusion of Investment Working Group
  - Deletion of proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee (see Point 3 above)
  - Replacement of Combating Crime Working Group with Community Safety Sub Committee
  - Inclusion of Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group

All amendments are shown by track changes.

**Recommendation: To recommend to the Annual Meeting of Town Council approval of the following:**

- **Standing Orders**
- **Financial Regulations as amended**
- **Scheme of Delegation as amended**
- **Committee Functions & Terms of Reference as amended**

## **7. COUNCIL CALENDAR 2026/27**

*Pages 87 - 94*

Further to the March meeting of Town Council, Cllr Jones has met with staff to review the draft Calendar of Meetings.

Members will find attached a draft calendar of meetings and events for 2026/27.

In summary, the following meetings have been diarised:

Town Council: 15<sup>th</sup> June; 12<sup>th</sup> October; 7<sup>th</sup> December 2026, 25<sup>th</sup> January and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2027

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Corporate Services Committee: 1<sup>st</sup> June; 7<sup>th</sup> September; 30<sup>th</sup> November 2026 and 1<sup>st</sup> March 2027

Community Services Committee: 20<sup>th</sup> July; 2<sup>nd</sup> November; 9<sup>th</sup> November (Grants) 2026; 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Environment and Leisure Committee: 6<sup>th</sup> July; 19<sup>th</sup> October 2026; 11<sup>th</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Planning Committee: meetings held every three weeks

Staffing Committee: 21<sup>st</sup> July; 20<sup>th</sup> October 2026 19<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Town Partnership Committee: 28<sup>th</sup> July; 27<sup>th</sup> October 2026 and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2027

Annual Towns Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> May 2027

Notes:

1. At the March Town Council meeting it was suggested that the Community Safety Sub Committee and the Community Engagement Sub Committee be disbanded as these committees primarily dealt with operational matters. Members are advised that a report is to be included on the Community Services agenda for 27<sup>th</sup> April. Should the committee decide to alter the arrangements for these sub committees the calendar will be adjusted accordingly.
2. The calendar also includes dates for Leaders Briefings. These are scheduled to be held monthly, usually the first Monday of each month at 11am. These can be adjusted should there be any changes to nominated group leaders to ensure meetings dates are convenient.
3. Tracked changes are shown in different colours as different members of staff worked on the documents

## 8. BUDGET SETTING PROCESS

Members are advised that officer consideration has been given to the timetable for the budget setting process.

The current timetable operates as follows:

- Budget reports, based on the Financial Forecast, are taken to each Standing Committee in October and November, although historically these discussions have generated limited feedback.
- Officers then consider any comments received and circulate an initial draft budget to councillors by 1<sup>st</sup> December.
- Independent / Group member review can take place during December but often appears to take place the early part of January.
- Draft budget presented to Council in the third week of January.

Several members have highlighted that this timetable places a significant concentration of work in early January, often immediately before the Town Council meeting. This can make it difficult for councillors to engage fully with the detail and can lead to feelings of pressure or frustration.

The revised timetable aims to address these concerns and support more effective scrutiny and decision-making.

The proposed timetable is as follows:

- Officers will prepare a draft budget, based on the Financial Forecast, by 30 September.
- This draft will be included on Standing Committee agendas throughout October and early November.
- A revised officer draft, reflecting committee feedback, will be circulated in early November.
- The tax base is usually received around 10 November; officers will assess its implications and, if required, issue a further updated draft.
- The final budget would then be presented to Town Council at the scheduled meeting in early December.

Should this timetable slip, there is a scheduled town council meeting in January to which the draft budget can be presented if necessary.

It is hoped that this revised timetable will provide councillors with greater space for reflection, improve the quality of scrutiny, and reduce the pressure created by the current January cycle.

Members feedback is invited.

## 9. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

*Pages 95 - 108*

Members will find attached a draft Annual Report for 2025/26 for approval.

The Annual Report provides a transparent account of the council's work over the past year, demonstrating how public funds have been used and how key decisions have supported the town's strategic priorities. It highlights progress across all committees, showcases achievements, and evidences the council's commitment to openness, accountability and good governance.

The report also serves as an important reference point for future planning. By summarising activity, identifying areas of impact and outlining ongoing priorities, it helps inform decision-making, supports partnership working and strengthens the council's ability to communicate clearly with residents, stakeholders and external bodies.

The report will be further enhanced by the insertion of photographs, evidencing the delivery which has taken place.

The preparation and approval of the Annual Report also supports the Councils application to the Local Council Award Scheme.

**Recommendation:** To approve the Annual Report 2025/26.



# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026 7.00pm.

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

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk  
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 1 (virtual)

Apologies Councillor: E Costello  
W Henderson

### 13567 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillor Costello and Councillor Henderson.

### 13568 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

### 13569 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

### 13570 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

### 13571 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Corporate Services Committee	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2025
Community Services Committee	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025
Environment & Leisure Committee	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
Planning Committee	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
	5 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
	26 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
Staffing Committee	24 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
Town Partnership Committee	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2025
	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee None

**Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.**

#### **13572 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor had attended 15 events including: the Houghton Hall Park mini forest planting; civic services; charity fund-raising events; a St Patrick's Day parade; and the South Beds Dial-a-Ride quarterly meeting.

The Deputy Mayor had also attended the St Patrick's Day parade.

#### **13573 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED**

Councillor Jones had attended the BATPC Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Accounting Committee.

The Community Governance Review had been the main topic of discussion in both meetings. There was general disappointment with the proposals in the review and the BATPC had submitted a representation in response.

Councillor Farrell informed Members that the tickets for the afternoon tea being held at the Memorial Hall had all sold out.

#### **13574 CORPORATE PLAN REVIEW & UPDATE**

The Corporate Plan had been updated and presented to Members.

The Town Clerk believed that the Corporate Plan was progressing well.

**Resolved: To note the update on the Corporate Plan.**

**13575 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT**

The majority of items in the report were recorded as 'complete'. The single Amber item was the Town Partnership Terms of Reference which was outside the control of Houghton Regis Town Council.

Councillor Carroll highlighted that he did not feel that the separation of the role of RFO from the role of Town Clerk had followed due process as it had not been approved by Town Council in accordance with Financial Regulations. As such Cllr Carroll requested that this item be deferred.

Proposed by: Cllr Carroll      Seconded by: Cllr Rollins

Councillor Jones voiced unwillingness to defer the entire Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Action Plan.

It was proposed that the recommendation should be amended from:

'To endorse the updated Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan'

To:

'To endorse the updated Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan subject to reconsideration of the status of the RFO action.'

Proposed by: Cllr Jones      Seconded by: Cllr A Slough

Councillor Carroll withdrew his proposal to defer endorsing the CPC Action Plan.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amendment which then accordingly became the substantive motion.

Members voted unanimously on the substantive motion.

**Resolved: To endorse the updated Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan subject to reconsideration of the status of the RFO action.**

**13576 FINANCIAL FORECAST**

In line with Financial Regulations and the Corporate Plan, Members were provided with a 3-year budget forecast to 2029. This was intended as a financial guide only.

Standard items of expenditure had been increased including maintenance costs and the precept by 3%.

Members requested that the transfers to an earmarked reserves needed to be against specified projects. It was suggested that funds received from additional interest could be used to reduce the precept.

**Resolved: To receive the 3-year financial forecast to 2029.**

**13577 STRATEGIC POLICIES 2026/27**

*An addendum regarding Committee Functions and Terms of Reference had been circulated to Members earlier.*

Members were requested to review the Town Councils strategic policies prior to presentation at the Town Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

- Standing Orders – no amendments
- Financial Regulations - Financial Regulation 13.3 had been amended to align with section 38 of the Scheme of Delegation.
- Scheme of Delegation – amendments to reflect the change in responsibilities for the Head of Corporate Services and RFO.
- Committee Functions & Terms of Reference – various amendments including
  - Updated table on Page 2
  - Corporate Services Committee – clarification of policies to be considered by this committee, namely legislative policies relating to Council governance, compliance, finance, data protection, health & safety, equality, and other statutory obligations
  - Environment & Leisure Committee – to extend the functions of this committee to enable it ‘To consider and determine matters surrounding the development of a new cemetery for Houghton Regis and to commission specialist services such as may be deemed appropriate in progressing options for future cemetery provision’.
  - Staffing Committee – clarification of policies to be considered by this committee, namely ‘To draft, implement, review, monitor and revise policies for staff’.
  - Inclusion of Investment Working Group
  - Deletion of proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee
  - Replacement of Combating Crime Working Group with Community Safety Sub Committee
  - Inclusion of Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group

Members highlighted that further amendments would be required to Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation arising from the separation of the responsibilities of RFO from the position of Town Clerk.

Members requested clarification on financial responsibilities within the Scheme of Delegation. The Town Clerk responded that most financial responsibilities would sit with the RFO, however strategic financial responsibilities would remain with the Town Clerk, including responsibility for writing off irrecoverable debts of up to £1000.

The Town Clerk confirmed that Members would receive advice on the suitability of the process followed to reallocate the responsibilities of RFO. If necessary, this matter would be brought back to Town Council. Further amendments to strategic policies would be reviewed.

The Town Clerk advised that a special meeting of the Town Council was being scheduled for April primarily to enable Council to determine the tender process for Project H. Policy revisions could be represented to this meeting if required. Members agreed that this would be a suitable opportunity.

Members suggested that, in line with the CPC recommendation that HRTC improve the strategic quality of its decision making, the necessity for the following committees should be appraised:

- Community Engagement Sub-Committee
- Community Safety Sub-Committee

The Town Clerk informed Members that consideration was being given to scheduling the Community Safety Sub-Committee in alternate months. Further discussion of these proposals could take place at the April meeting.

**Resolved: To defer consideration of Strategic Policies until the April Town Council meeting.**

#### **13578 COUNCIL CALENDAR 2026/27**

Members were provided with a draft calendar of meetings and events for 2026/27.

The following meetings had been diarised:

Town Council: 15<sup>th</sup> June; 12<sup>th</sup> October; 14<sup>th</sup> December 2026, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 15<sup>th</sup> March and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2027

Corporate Services Committee: 1<sup>st</sup> June; 7<sup>th</sup> September; 1<sup>st</sup> December 2026 and 1<sup>st</sup> March 2027

Community Services Committee: 20<sup>th</sup> July; 2<sup>nd</sup> November; 9<sup>th</sup> November (Grants) 2026; 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Environment and Leisure Committee: 6<sup>th</sup> July; 19<sup>th</sup> October 2026; 11<sup>th</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Planning Committee: meetings held every three weeks

Staffing Committee: 21<sup>st</sup> July; 20<sup>th</sup> October 2026 19<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Town Partnership Committee: 28<sup>th</sup> July; 27<sup>th</sup> October 2026; 26<sup>th</sup> January and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2027

Councillor Jones requested that the 2027 Annual Towns meeting was held after the May elections but before the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> May, either on the 10<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> May. Members agreed that further consideration should be given to the timing of this meeting in an election year.

Councillor Jones requested that consideration be given to moving the following meetings back by a week:

- Budget setting meeting in January
- Audited Accounts meeting in June

The Town Clerk responded that annual accounts had to be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> June and suggested that putting back this meeting may cause difficulties should there be an issue with the annual accounts.

The Town Clerk accepted that the earlier January date caused time pressures for councillors should they leave detailed budget discussions until after the Christmas period. Councillor Jones stated he would look at the schedule and come back with some suggestions regarding meeting dates.

Members agreed to the draft calendar being represented at the April meeting.

### **13579 ANNUAL REVIEW OF COUNCIL ASSETS**

Members were provided with a list of council assets held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, as amended by additions and disposals during 2025/26.

*This report was presented for information only.*

### **13580 UNRECOVERABLE DEBTS**

The Town Clerk informed Members that there were five debts in total: four relating to invoices issued in February and as such were not of concern and one older debt where discussions were ongoing regarding payment.

The Finance Team was praised and thanked by the Town Clerk for efficiently managing the debtors list and this was echoed by Members.

*This report was presented for information only.*

### **13581 BIODIVERSITY POLICY**

Members were requested to adopt the Biodiversity Policy, which had been endorsed by the Environment and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

The policy would help the town council meet its legal obligations, benefit the community, and allow HRTC to participate in the Local Council Award Scheme run by NALC.

Members agreed unanimously to adopt the policy.

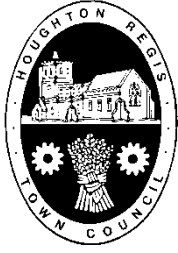
**Resolved: To adopt the Biodiversity Policy.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.07pm**

**Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of April 2026**

**Chairman**

DRAFT



## TOWN COUNCIL

## Agenda Item 5

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> April 2026</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Responsible Finance Officer Report</b>
<b>Purpose of the Report:</b>	<b>To provide to members a report on the transfer of duties of the Responsible Finance Officer</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Debbie Marsh, Head of Corporate Services</b>

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### 1. RECOMMENDATION

**To approve Minute 13519, namely, to formally recognise that the responsibilities of RFO be transferred to Head of Corporate Services as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.**

### 2. BACKGROUND

At the Staffing Committee meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 members resolved to recommend to Town Council the formal recognition that the responsibilities of RFO be transferred to Head of Corporate Services as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

Due to the timings of meeting and in order to ensure the Town Council has made suitable arrangements for an officer responsible for the administration of the council's financial affairs, members are being asked to consider this recommendation prior to the minutes of the Staffing Committee being formally accepted as a correct record and signed accordingly at its next meeting.

At the Town Council meeting held on the 16th March 2026 members received an updated Action Plan on the progress of Corporate Peer Challenge Review.

Members questioned, at this meeting, whether the separation of the Responsible Finance Officer and Town Clerk roles was something full council should have made a decision on.

### 3. INFORMATION

Members are advised this action (extract below) was included in the report and action plan presented for consideration at the special Town Council meeting held on the 16th July 2024. At this meeting members considered and resolved to endorse the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan (Minute number 12906).

CPC Report Section 5 Feedback	Action / Response	Risks & mitigation	Budget required	Timeline	Monitoring and evaluation	Accountability
	To consider separating its Responsible Financial Officer and Town Clerk roles.	Staff resource	£0	Autumn 2024	Corporate Services Committee	Head of Corporate Services

Members are advised this action was progressed, considered and supported, via a staffing forecast report, at the Corporate Services meeting held on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 – minute number 13331.

The Staffing Committee received the following recommendation at the meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 (minute number 13519) To recommend to Town Council the formal recognition that the responsibilities of RFO be transferred to Head of Corporate Services as at 1st April 2026.

#### 4. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

**Aspirations 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

- Update Council’s Scheme of Delegation to formally reflect the transfer of RFO responsibilities.
- This recommendation aligns with previous decisions and supports the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations.

##### Legal Implications

- Supports the council with its statutory requirement to employ a Responsible Financial Officer and ensures continuity of statutory RFO duties.

##### Crime and Disorder Implications

- There are no crime and disorder implications arising from the recommendation.

##### Financial Implications

- There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation.

##### Risk Implications

- Reputation
- Capacity
- Service delivery

##### 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 report does not discriminate.

**Climate Change Implications**

- There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendation.

**Press Contact**

- There are no press implications.

**6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

In order for the council to meet its statutory obligations and maintain good governance practice, Council is requested to approve the formal transfer of Responsible Finance Officer duties to the Head of Corporate Services.

Subject to approval, the Scheme of Delegation will be updated accordingly, with auditors and staff being notified of the change.

This action supports the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations and ensures the Council maintains robust financial oversight and statutory compliance.

**7. APPENDICES**

**None**



## Houghton Regis Town Council

### Standing Orders

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

Based on NALC Model Standing Orders 2018 (Revised 2020) and updated April 2022 (Update to Model Standing Order 18 only), 31<sup>st</sup> 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 **£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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.



## Houghton Regis Town Council

### Financial Regulations

Date of Approval:	16 <sup>th</sup> December 2024; 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
Date of Review:	2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2024; 17th March 2025

Based on NALC Financial Regulations 2024 updated March 2025

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## 1. General

- 1.1 These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2 Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3 Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4 In these Financial Regulations:
  - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
  - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
  - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
  - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
  - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England or Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales – A Practitioners Guide jointly published by One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks in Wales.
  - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
  - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.
- 1.5 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO;
  - acts under the policy direction of the council;
  - administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
  - determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
  - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;

- seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
- produces financial management information as required by the council.

**1.6 The council must not delegate any decision regarding:**

- **setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
- **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**
- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

**1.7 In addition, the council shall:**

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of the revenue budget provided.

**2. Risk management and internal control**

- 2.1. The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.
- 2.2. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.
- 2.4. **At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 2.5. **The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:**
  - **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
  - **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
  - **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**

- **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
  - **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
  - **ensure division of responsibilities.**
- 2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the council.
- 2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

### **3. Accounts and audit**

- 3.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.2 The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
  - **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**
- 3.3 The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- 3.4 The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.5 The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6 Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit and shall, as directed by the**

council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.

- 3.7 The internal auditor shall be appointed by the council and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.
- 3.8 The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:
- is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
  - reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
  - can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
  - has no involvement in the management or control of the council
- 3.9 Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
- perform any operational duties for the council;
  - initiate or approve accounting transactions;
  - provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
  - direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.
- 3.10 For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in The Practitioners Guide.
- 3.11 The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts, including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.12 The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

#### **4. Budget and precept**

- 4.1 **Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its council tax requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.**

- 4.2 Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the relevant committee at least annually by December for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the relevant committee.
- 4.3 No later than November each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all receipts and payments/income and expenditure for the following financial year taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.
- 4.4 Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward (by placing them in an earmarked reserve) with the formal approval of the full council.
- 4.5 Each committee (if any) shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the council not later than the end of January each year.
- 4.6 The draft budget forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the council.
- 4.7 Having considered the proposed budget, the council shall determine its council tax (England) requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.
- 4.8 **Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.**
- 4.9 The RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- 4.10 The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.
- 4.11 Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the council or relevant committee.

## **5. Procurement**

- 5.1 **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2 The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that

the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.

- 5.3 Every contract shall comply with these the council’s Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.4 **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulations 2024 or any superseding legislation (“the Legislation”), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.5 Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.6 For contracts estimated to exceed £100,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.
- 5.7 **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation<sup>1</sup> regarding the publication of invitations and notices.**
- 5.8 For contracts greater than £5,000 excluding VAT the Clerk or Head of Service shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes;
- 5.9 where the value is between £500 and £5,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk or Head of Service shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.
- 5.10 For smaller purchases, all officers shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.11 **Contracts must not be split to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.12 The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
  - ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
  - iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;
  - iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.

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<sup>1</sup> The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.

- 5.13 When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council or relevant committee. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.
- 5.14 The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- 5.15 Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:
- The Budget Holder, under delegated authority.
  - Such authorisation must be supported by a minute or other auditable evidence trail.
- 5.16 No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council.
- 5.17 No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by resolution of the council or a duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency.
- 5.18 In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to 5,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 5.19 No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into, or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the delegated committee is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.
- 5.20 An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.
- 5.21 Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO.

## **6. Banking and payments**

- 6.1 The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The council has resolved to bank with NatWest. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency.
- 6.2 The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for

example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised, and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.

- 6.3 All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by the relevant Head of Service. Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO.
- 6.4 Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5 All payments shall be made by online banking, in accordance with a resolution of the council or duly delegated committee, unless the council resolves to use a different payment method.
- 6.6 For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National Insurance, pension contributions, rent, rates, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the council or a duly delegated committee may authorise in advance for the year.
- 6.7 A copy of this schedule of regular payments shall be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is made - to reduce the risk of duplicate payments.
- 6.8 A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the Corporate Services Committee for information only.
- 6.9 The RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments in the following circumstances:
  - i. payments of up to £5,000 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.
  - ii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 or to comply with contractual terms, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Services Committee, where the RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council.
  - iii. Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the value of half the precept, provided that a list of such movements

between the councils bank accounts shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council or corporate services committee.

- 6.10 The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the agenda for the meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the council or Corporate Services committee. The council or Corporate Services committee shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by resolution. The authorised schedule shall be initialled immediately below the last item by the person chairing the meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting.

## **7. Electronic payments**

- 7.1 Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.
- 7.2 All authorised signatories shall have access, if requested, to view the council's bank accounts online.
- 7.3 No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.
- 7.4 The Service Administrator shall set up all items due for payment online. A list of payments for approval, together with copies of the relevant invoices, shall be sent by email to two authorised signatories.
- 7.5 In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.
- 7.6 Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment.
- 7.7 Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment.
- 7.8 A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next Corporate Services committee meeting.
- 7.9 With the approval of the Corporate Services Committee in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are signed/approved online by the RFO. The approval of the use

of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by the Corporate Services committee at least every two years.

- 7.10 Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the Corporate Services committee provided that each payment is approved online by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained, and any payments are reported to the Corporate Services committee at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 7.11 If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed by the RFO, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the Corporate Services committee at least every two years.
- 7.12 Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the RFO and authorised signatory. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.
- 7.13 Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.
- 7.14 Remembered password facilities should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

## **8. Cheque payments**

- 8.1 Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two members and countersigned by an authorised officer.
- 8.2 A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.
- 8.3 To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.
- 8.4 Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at, or immediately before or after a council or Corporate Services committee meeting. Any signatures obtained away from council meetings shall be reported to the council or Corporate Services committee at the next convenient meeting.

## **9. Payment cards**

- 9.1 Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £1000 unless authorised by council or corporate services committee in writing before any order is placed.
- 9.2 A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the Corporate Services committee. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to Corporate Services committee and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of Corporate Services committee.
- 9.3 Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and Heads of Service and any balance shall be paid in full each month.
- 9.4 Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used under any circumstances.

## **10. Petty Cash**

- 10.1 The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £250 and may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses.
  - a) Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept, along with receipts to substantiate every payment.
  - b) Cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.
  - c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on any schedule of payments presented for approval.

## **11. Payment of salaries and allowances**

- 11.1 **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 11.2 **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**
- 11.3 Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or a duly delegated committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the Staffing committee.
- 11.4 Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.

- 11.5 Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 11.6 Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed, under an exclusion of press and public agenda item, by the Corporate Services committee to ensure that the correct payments have been made.
- 11.7 Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.
- 11.8 Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

## **12. Loans and investments**

- 12.1 Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.
- 12.2 Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.
- 12.3 The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 12.4 All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 12.5 All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 12.6 Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

### **13. Income**

- 13.1 The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 13.2 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, following a report of the Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.
- 13.3 Any sums, over £1000, found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.
- 13.4 All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.
- 13.5 Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.
- 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.

### **14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works**

- 14.1 Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.
- 14.2 Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

### **15. Stores and equipment**

- 15.1 The officer in charge of each section shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment in that section.
- 15.2 Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.
- 15.3 Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.
- 15.4 The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

## **16. Assets, properties and estates**

- 16.1 The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.
- 16.2 The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 16.3 The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.
- 16.4 No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).
- 16.5 No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £500. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

## **17. Insurance**

- 17.1 The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.
- 17.2 The Heads of Service shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 17.3 The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the Corporate Services committee at the next available meeting. The RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.
- 17.4 All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined annually by the council, or duly delegated committee.

## **18. Charities**

18.1 Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk and RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk and RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

## **19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations**

19.1 The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.

19.2 The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.

19.3 The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

## **Appendix 1 - Tender process**

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
- 2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.
- 3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.
- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order 18 and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

\* \* \*



## Houghton Regis Town Council

### Scheme of Delegation

Date of Approval:	Town Council 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2016
Date of Review:	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2017; 3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2018; 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2019; 20 <sup>th</sup> July 2020, 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2021, 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2022, 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2023, 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2024; 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2025

This Scheme of Delegation sets out how the Council delegates some of its powers and duties to Officers of the Council. These delegations are necessary for the effective day to day running of the Council and to prevent every decision having to come to a Committee/Council meeting for agreement. This Scheme of Delegation will be reviewed by Council annually alongside the review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

This scheme does not delegate to Officers any matter that is reserved by law to the Council or may not be delegated to an Officer.

The Town Clerk and Heads of Service may delegate any powers and duties to other Officers within the Council. A delegation to a subordinate Officer shall not prevent the Town Clerk from exercising the same power or duty at the same time.

The Town Clerk shall exercise these powers in accordance with:

- Approved budgets
- Council's Standing Orders & Financial Regulations
- Council's Policies
- All statutory common law and contractual requirements

Under this Scheme Officers are required to maintain an up to date schedule of decisions made, including the Scheme of Delegation reference number the decision has been made under, plus any actions arising from these delegations. This schedule is available upon request for inspection by any councillor of HRTC or member of the public, subject to compliance with the Town Councils approved Publication Scheme and GDPR

<b>GENERAL</b>		
1	To exercise any statute, regulation or order which confers functions or duties of the Proper Officer	Town Clerk
2	To sign, or where appropriate, have sealed on behalf of the Town Council any Orders, Deeds or Documents necessary to give effect to any of the matters contained in reports or in any resolution passed by the Town Council	Town Clerk
3	To take any proceedings or other steps as may be necessary to enforce and recover any debt owing or other obligation to the Council	Town Clerk
4	To institute and appear in legal proceedings authorised by the council	Town Clerk
5	To appear or make representations to any tribunal or public Inquiry into any matter in which the Council has an interest (in its own right or on behalf of the citizens of Houghton Regis)	Town Clerk
6	To alter the date or time of a Council, Committee, Sub-Committee, Working Group meeting but, before doing so shall consult the Mayor, Group Leaders or Committee Chairsmen	Town Clerk
7	To decide arrangements for the closure of the council offices in the Christmas/New Year period, subject to consultation with the Mayor	Town Clerk
8	To deal with the day-to-day matters relating to the use and hiring of Council Buildings	<a href="#">Head of Democratic Services</a> <a href="#">Head of Environmental and Community Services</a>
9	To negotiate and enter into contractual arrangements for artistes/promoters in relation to events held in Houghton Regis organised by the Town Council	<a href="#">Civic &amp; Events Manager</a> <a href="#">Head of Environmental and Community Services</a>
10	To act as the Council's Designated Officer for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000	Town Clerk
11.	To apply for planning consent for the carrying out of development by the Town Council.	Town Clerk
12.	To respond to consultations on planning applications/highway matters/rights of way matters/street naming and other matters subject to the comments of the Planning Committee	Head of Democratic Services
13	To respond to complaints made under the Council's complaints procedure and to make such ex-gratia payments in settlement of such complaints as are considered justified, subject to ratification by the Corporate Services Committee	Town Clerk
14	To manage, monitor and review the Council's internal control procedures	Town Clerk

15	To manage, monitor and review the Council's Corporate Risk Management Strategy	Town Clerk
16	To arrange all civic ceremonies and ancillary events in consultation with the Mayor	<u>Civic &amp; Events Manager Head of Democratic Services</u>
17	To maintain the Council's Standing Orders	Town Clerk
<b>FINANCIAL</b>		
18	To be the Responsible Financial Officer for the purposes of s151 Local Government Act 1972	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
19	To determine the financial management and accounting procedures and extent of financial records	Town Clerk
20	To operate the Council's banking arrangements	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
21	To pay all accounts properly incurred	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
22	To pay all subscriptions to organisations to which Council belongs.	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
23	To pay salaries and allowances	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
24	To act as the Council's Administrator for the Bedfordshire Pension Fund	Town Clerk
25	To collect all income due to the Council including appropriate interest and costs	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
26	To make all necessary arrangements for the provision of internal and external audit service for the Council	<u>Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services</u>
27	To negotiate settlements in connection with claims made by and against the Council in consultation with the Council's Insurers where appropriate.	Town Clerk
28	To incur expenditure on revenue items with the approved estimates and budgets	<u>Town Clerk Heads of Service</u>
29	To incur expenditure on capital schemes within the Council's approved Capital Programme	<u>Town Clerk Heads of Service</u>

30	To use the Repairs & Maintenance Budgets for the maintenance, replacement or repair of existing buildings, plant, vehicles or equipment	Head of Environmental and Community Services
31	To enter into leasing and/or contract hire agreements for the acquisition of vehicles, machinery and equipment on such items as are considered appropriate	Head of Environmental and Community Services
32	To accept quotations or tenders for work, supplies or services (where tenders are required by the Council's Financial Regulations) subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost not exceeding the approved budget</li> <li>• The tender being the most economically advantageous to the Council according to the criteria set out in the tender documentation</li> <li>• All the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations being complied with</li> </ul>	Town Clerk
33	To carry out virements of sums between cost centres in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations	Heads of Service
34	To exercise the powers of the Council to borrow and invest	Town Clerk
35	To manage investments. <del>Apply for and repay loans as appropriate in accordance with the Financial Regulations.</del>	<del>Town Clerk</del> Head of Corporate Services
36	<del>Apply for and repay loans as appropriate in accordance with the Financial Regulations.</del>	Town Clerk
37	To authorise action for the recovery of debts	<del>Town Clerk</del> Head of Corporate Services
38	To write-off debts up to £1000 where the sum is considered irrecoverable.	Town Clerk
39	To maintain a Register of Assets and Inventory of Equipment	<del>Town Clerk</del> Head of Corporate Services
40	To determine the Council's insurance requirements on behalf of the Council	Town Clerk
41	To make all necessary arrangements for the Council's insurances.	<del>Town Clerk</del> Head of Corporate Services
41 <del>2</del>	To enter into contracts for the purchase and supply of goods and services for the use in their respective services within estimates	<del>Town Clerk</del> Heads of Service
42 <del>3</del>	To prepare a draft budget for consideration by the Council	<del>Town Clerk</del>

		<u>Head of Corporate Services</u>
<u>434</u>	To prepare the final accounts for each financial year	<del>Town Clerk</del> <u>Head of Corporate Services</u>
<u>445</u>	To pay full compensation for loss where the Council is likely to be legally liable to pay compensation, where sued	Town Clerk
<u>456</u>	To pay any proved out of pocket expenses of complaints where complaint is upheld	Town Clerk
<u>467</u>	To provide banking facilities for the Mayor's Charity Fund and to pay the Mayor's Annual Allowance as may be determined from time to time	Town Clerk
<u>478</u>	To maintain the Council's Financial Regulations	Town Clerk
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>		
<u>489</u>	To exercise the functions of the Council's Head of Paid Service under S4 Local Government & Housing Act 1989	Town Clerk
<u>4950</u>	To manage the Council staff in accordance with the Council's Policies, Procedures and Budget	Town Clerk
<u>501</u>	To appoint posts including apprentices	Town Clerk
<u>512</u>	To appoint temporary employees as and when required within the budget estimates	Town Clerk
<u>523</u>	To prepare job description and person specifications, placing of advertisements and short-listing	<del>Town Clerk</del> <u>Heads of Service</u>
<u>534</u>	To approve individual salary grading within any job evaluation grading structure approved by Council	Town Clerk
<u>545</u>	To manage staff performance	Town Clerk
<u>556</u>	To control discipline and performance, including power of suspension and dismissal	Town Clerk
<u>567</u>	To exercise Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures in accordance with the Council's Procedures	Town Clerk
<u>578</u>	To determine approved duties for payment of travel, subsistence and car allowances to Officers where they represent the Council	Town Clerk
<u>589</u>	To approve/refuse applications for re-grading, remove any bars in salary scales and to authorise salary increments and accelerated increments.	Town Clerk
<u>5960</u>	To approve the payment of overtime	<del>Town Clerk</del> <u>Heads of Service</u>
<u>601</u>	To agree minor variations to the conditions of employment	Town Clerk
<u>612</u>	To implement and monitor arrangements for annual leave, flexi-time, sickness absence, flexible/hybrid working, maternity and paternity leave in accordance with the Council's Policies	Town Clerk
<u>623</u>	To approve changes to Council policies reflecting changes to legislation, to correct grammatical / typographical errors, and to basic / non fundamental updates such as changes to line management titles, job titles etc.	<u>Head of Corporate Services</u>

		<u>Heads of Service</u>
<u>634</u>	To authorise training in line with Council's Policies	<u>Head of Service Town Clerk</u>
<u>645</u>	To authorise the provision of branded clothing & PPE	Town Clerk
<u>656</u>	To approve the payment of claims from employees for compensation for loss or damage to personal property	Town Clerk
<u>667</u>	To negotiate and agree settlements on behalf of the Council in relation to any proceedings in the Employment Tribunal	Town Clerk
<u>678</u>	To agree to premature retirement on the grounds of duly certified ill health	Town Clerk
<u>689</u>	To terminate employment during probation and to review salary on completion of probationary periods.	Town Clerk
<u>6970</u>	To commission legal and professional advice on staffing matters	Town Clerk
<u>701</u>	To represent the Council at any conference, meeting, or inquiry to which the Council is invited unless the Council has indicated otherwise and to exercise any voting rights conferred by the corporate membership of any body	Town Clerk
<u>712</u>	To offer training to Councillors	<u>Town Clerk Head of Democratic Services</u>
<u>723</u>	To exercise any functions delegated to the Town Clerk in his/her absence	Head of Corporate Services & <u>Head of Environmental and Community Services</u>
<b>PROPERTY</b>		
<u>734</u>	To manage land and property of the Council	Head of Environmental and Community Services
<u>745</u>	To agree the terms of any lease, licence, conveyance or transfer	Town Clerk
<u>756</u>	To sell surplus materials, vehicles, plant, equipment and goods, salvage scrap and other waste	Head of Environmental and Community Services
<u>767</u>	To grant easements, wayleaves and licence over Council land	Town Clerk
<u>778</u>	To initiate legal action or proceedings against unauthorised encampments or encroachments on Council land	Town Clerk
<u>789</u>	To direct the custody of Council property and documents in accordance with s226 Local Government Act 1972	Town Clerk

<u>7980</u>	To exercise responsibility for the safe custody and maintenance of the Civic Regalia	Town Clerk
<u>801</u>	To place architectural, quantity surveying, civil engineering and other similar specialist work with outside agencies within the appropriate fee scale and the Council's relevant estimates, standing orders and financial regulations	Town Clerk
<u>842</u>	To appoint the Principal Contractor and Planning Supervisors for the purposes of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations.	Town Clerk
<u>823</u>	To requisition off site services in respect of any construction contract approved by the Council for which they act as Architect or Contract Administrator	Town Clerk
<u>834</u>	To make applications for all statutory consents necessitated by any approved Council proposal or development	Head of Environmental and Community Services
<u>845</u>	To engage valuers or selling agents on behalf of the Council	Town Clerk
<b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>		
<u>856</u>	To oversee the discharge of the Council's responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974	Town Clerk
<b>LEGAL PROCEEDINGS</b>		
<u>867</u>	To take and discontinue legal proceedings in any court or at any tribunal	Town Clerk
<u>878</u>	To take Counsel's advice or instruct Counsel to represent the Council	Town Clerk
<u>889</u>	To seek injunctions and commence proceedings for the purposes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforcement in accordance with the Council's Policies</li> <li>• Recovering Money due to the Council</li> <li>• Recovering or otherwise preserving possession of the Council's land or property</li> <li>• Defending the interests of the Council</li> <li>• Appealing against a decision affecting the interests of the Council and responding to appeals against action taken by the Council</li> </ul>	Town Clerk
<u>8990</u>	To represent the Council at Court or any tribunal or to make arrangements for appropriate representation	Town Clerk
<u>901</u>	To negotiate and settle the terms of documents to give effect to a decision of the Council or any of the Committees or any officer acting under delegated powers	Town Clerk
<u>942</u>	To be the responsible officer for the co-ordination and operation of the legal requirements under the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act	Town Clerk
<u>923</u>	To serve requisitions for information	Town Clerk
<u>934</u>	To authorise any member of staff to swear affidavits as to matter within their knowledge in any court proceedings involving the Council	Town Clerk
<u>945</u>	To authorise any member of staff to appear on behalf of the Council before a Magistrate's Court	Town Clerk

<b>RECREATION &amp; EVENTS</b>		
<u>956</u>	To grant permissions for the use of recreational open space in accordance with Council Policy and statutory requirements	Head of Environmental and Community Services
<u>967</u>	To organise sporting, recreational, cultural events and entertainments in accordance with approved budget provision and the Council's Financial Regulations	<u>Civic &amp; Events Manager</u> <u>Community Services Manager</u> <u>Head of Environmental and Community Services</u>
<u>978</u>	To liaise with the Safety Advisory Group and carry out any necessary actions arising from recommendations from that body.	<u>Civic &amp; Events Manager</u> <u>Community Services Manager</u> <u>Head of Environmental and Community Services</u>



## Houghton Regis Town Council

### Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

Date of Approval:	Town Council 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2015
Date of Review:	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2016; 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2017 (amendments to HRNPSG approved 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2017); 3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2018; 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2019; 5 <sup>th</sup> May 2021, 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2022, 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2023; 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2024; 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2025

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 Meetings of Houghton Regis Town Council are to be conducted in accordance with the approved Standing Orders of Houghton Regis Town Council.

1.2 Legislation requires certain statutory functions of Houghton Regis Town Council to be discharged by the council itself. Houghton Regis Town Council cannot delegate responsibility to a committee or sub-committee for:

1. levying or issuing a precept,
2. borrowing money,
3. approving the council's annual accounts,
4. considering an auditor's report made in the public interest,
5. confirming (by resolution) that it has the statutory criteria to exercise the power of general competence or
6. adopting or revising the council's code of conduct.

1.3 The days and times of meetings will be set as far as possible on the following basis:

Town Council & Standing Committees – Mondays or Tuesdays, at 7pm

Annual General Meeting (AGM) - Wednesdays

Partnership – Tuesdays at 7pm

Sub Committees – Mondays, or the next available working day following a Bank Holiday, at 7pm

Working groups – Monday to Thursday to start no earlier than 9.30am and to conclude no later than 6.30pm

Inhouse Member training, open sessions, briefings – Mondays or Tuesdays at 6pm

<b>2. Committee Overview Houghton Regis Town Council</b>		
<b>Department</b>	<b>Areas of Responsibility</b>	<b>Democratic Management</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>	Policy review & development Financial management Democratic management Health & safety matters	Corporate Services Committee <a href="#">Investment Working Group</a>
<b>Environment &amp; Leisure Services</b>	Facilities management Leisure services Recreation management Cemetery & churchyard management Allotments	Environment & Leisure Committee
<b>Community Services</b>	Community services Youth services Communications Events Mayoral services Community grants Community safety	Community Services Committee Community Engagement Sub-Committee <a href="#">Community Safety Sub Committee</a> Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group <del><a href="#">Combating Crime Working Group</a></del>
<b>Planning</b>	Planning applications Planning policy Strategic development Highways consultations	Planning Committee Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub Committee
<b>Staffing</b>	Non legislative policy review and development Personnel matters	Staffing Committee Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Sub-Committee
<b>Town</b>	Town Centre Town development	Town Council Town Partnership Committee <del><a href="#">New Cemetery Sub Committee</a></del> <a href="#">Town Centre Community Venue Task and Finish Group</a> Complaints Sub Committee Complaints Appeals Sub Committee

### 3. Functions & Terms of Reference

#### Town Council

##### *Terms of Reference*

At the Annual meeting to conduct business in accordance with Standing Orders as follows:

- a. The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the council shall be the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council.
- b. Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Vice-Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
  - i. In an election year, delivery by the Chairman 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 Chairman 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.

At other meetings of the Council:

- To annually review the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Health & Safety Policy, Equality & Diversity Policy, Banking Arrangements/Investment Policy, and the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference
- Before the end of January to determine the Council's overall budget for the forthcoming financial year and to set the precept accordingly.
- To receive auditors' reports and other comments and make recommendations to

Corporate Services as to any policy matters arising from them.

- To receive reports from committees and recommendations made therein.
- To receive the Town Mayors' announcements.
- To consider and approve any short or long-term borrowing requirements including interest rates and borrowing period.
- To approve a 4-year rolling programme of policy review
- To receive conclusions drawn at any meeting of the Complaints and Complaints Appeals Sub-Committees.
- Monitor and review risk management issues.
- To approve the appointment of the Town Clerk.

### *Functions*

- The Town Council consists of all councillors.
- The quorum shall be one third of all councilors (five)
- 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.
- 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 may direct.
- If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm.
- 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 directs.

### **Corporate Services Committee**

#### *Terms of Reference*

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
- Review of arrangements, including any charters, with other local authorities and review of contributions made to expenditure incurred by other local authorities.
- Review of the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.
- To consider the suitability of the current office provision and the requirements of future office provision.
- To manage and maintain the Council Offices including office equipment and furniture.
- Reviewing the Council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and to take action to comply.
- To receive information relating to the number of Freedom of Information requests received by the Clerk

- ~~Reviewing policies of the council as required by legis]. To review and maintain legislative policies relating to Council governance, compliance, finance, data protection, health & safety, equality, and other statutory obligations.~~
- 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
  - To receive bank and cash reconciliation statements.
  - To receive an annual report (based on the previous financial year) on loans taken out, repayments made and outstanding liability.
  - To confirm the use of direct debits, standing orders, BACS, CHAPS
- Review and confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.
- To recommend to Council the writing off of irrecoverable amounts.
- To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30<sup>th</sup> November each year.
- To review annually (Spring / Summer) the staffing structure and staffing forecast in relation to this Committee for consideration by the Staffing Committee late Autumn to feed into the budget process.
- To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
- To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
- To set the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and to designate a single officer with overall responsibility for these functions.

### *Functions*

- The Corporate Services Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Corporate Services Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

## **Environment & Leisure Committee**

### *Terms of Reference*

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.

- To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30<sup>th</sup> November each year.
- To review annually (Spring / Summer) the staffing structure and staffing forecast in relation to this Committee for consideration by the Staffing Committee late Autumn to feed into the budget process.
- To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
- To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
- To set the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Committee and to control the collection of revenues thereof.
- Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule
- Annually review its inventory of land and assets including buildings.
- To provide and maintain all recreation grounds and pavilions, open spaces and play areas in the control of the Council.
- To manage and maintain sports provision including football pitches, the bowls green and cricket table.
- To manage and maintain the Houghton Regis Town Cemetery and All Saints Churchyard.
- To consider and determine matters surrounding the development of a new cemetery for Houghton Regis and to commission specialist services such as may be deemed appropriate in progressing options for future cemetery provision and make such recommendations to Town Council for consideration.
- To provide and maintain seats, noticeboards, litterbins and dog waste bins.
- To purchase and maintain such vehicles and equipment as may be required to carry out the Council's duties in connection with the facilities under the control of the Committee.
- To monitor all matters relating to leases and bye-laws in connection with the facilities under the control of the Committee.

### *Functions*

- The Environment & Leisure Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Environment Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

### **Community Services Committee**

#### *Terms of Reference*

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of

this Committee.

- To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30<sup>th</sup> November each year.
- To review annually (Spring / Summer) the staffing structure and staffing forecast in relation to this Committee for consideration by the Staffing Committee late Autumn to feed into the budget process.
- To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
- To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
- To set the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Committee.
  - To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
- Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule
- To encourage and regulate activities and events at Council properties, venues and locations.
- To advise Environment & Leisure Committee of events using land / buildings
- To award financial grants to local organisations within an overall budget approved by the Town Council
- To review the grant application process as necessary
- To oversee and manage the promotion of the Town and the Council, including the council's newsletter and website, Christmas lights, Pride of Houghton, events
- Consider community service provision provided by outside organisations
- To provide community support to enhance community service provision
- To liaise with other organisations on community issues
- To provide support and promotion of the Town centre and the retail offer

### *Functions*

- The Community Services Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Community Services Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

### **Planning Committee**

#### *Terms of Reference*

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.

- To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30<sup>th</sup> November each year.
- To review annually (Spring / Summer) the staffing structure and staffing forecast in relation to this Committee for consideration by the Staffing Committee late Autumn to feed into the budget process.
- To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
  - To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
- To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
- Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule
- To consider all planning related applications within the Parish and to make representations to the appropriate authority on behalf of the Town Council.
- To consider matters surrounding the growth proposals, including strategic development proposals and documents from local authorities and other agencies and bodies.
- To consider highways proposals from local authorities and other agencies and bodies and to make representations to the appropriate authority on behalf of the Town Council.
- To oversee the development and introduction of a Neighbourhood Plan for Houghton Regis.

#### Delegated Powers to Officers – Planning

- Delegated applications include all applications received for consultation purposes including all planning applications, advertisement and signs.
- All delegated decisions, which are recommended for approval, will be provided in writing, to Members of the Planning Committee.
- A list of proposed delegated decisions (relating to new or proposed listed buildings, conservation areas, tree preservation orders, building preservation orders, highways, byways, bridleways and footpaths) will be circulated to all Councillors. If a Councillor wishes an application to be decided by the Committee, a written request must be made to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.
- No applications will be delegated that fall into the following categories:
  - a) To which a written objection from a member of the public has been received by the Town Council
  - b) Any application for more than five dwellings (including flats, apartments and maisonettes)
  - c) Any application for retail or employment space
- The Town Clerk or their nominated officer, must be fully aware of the location and possible planning considerations of an application.

#### *Functions*

- The Planning Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.

- The Planning Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

## Staffing Committee

### Terms of Reference

- To establish and keep under review the staffing structure and staffing forecast in consultation with the Standing Committees.
- To make recommendations on staffing related expenditure to Town Council ahead of the annual budget setting process
- To draft, implement, review, monitor and revise policies for staff, ~~that fall outside of legislative requirements~~
- To note salary payscales based on job evaluation outcomes for all tiers of staff and to be responsible for their administration and annual review.
- Succession plan for key staff who may wish to retire.
- To oversee the recruitment and appointment (including the provision of signed contracts of employment) of staff to ensure that processes have been carried out in accordance with council policies.
- To determine any substantial changes to contracts (beyond the scope of point 61 in the Scheme of Delegation).
- To oversee any process leading to the dismissal of staff employed for longer than 2 years, including redundancy.
- To keep under review staff working conditions.
- To monitor sustained staff absence and to ensure that sickness management processes have been carried out in accordance with council policies.
- To note the outcome of a grievance or disciplinary matter and any appeal.
- To supervise and performance manage the Clerk's work, to administer their leave requests and monitor their absences.
- To appoint one of its members as the day-to-day contact to support the Clerk.
- To consider an appeal against a decision in respect of pay.
- To appoint two members of the committee to conduct staff appraisal of the Clerk.

### Functions

- The Staffing Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Staffing Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

## **Investment Working Group Reports to the Corporate Services Committee**

### *Terms of Reference*

- To oversee the Council's investment portfolio and ensure proper stewardship of public funds
- To develop and recommend for approval the Council's Treasury Strategy.
- To ensure that investments are compliant with legislation and align with the Council's risk appetite.
- To monitor performance and ensure transparency in reporting.
- To promote ethical, environmental and socially responsible investment, where practical.
- To evaluate new investment opportunities and provide recommendations to the Corporate Services Committee
- Submit regular monitoring reports to the Corporate Services Committee. Including:
  - Investment performance
  - Risk assessments
  - Any breaches of the Investment Policy.
- To review these terms of reference annually.
- To propose. to the Corporate Service Committee. any amendments to these terms of reference at any time
- To seek funding authorisation from the Corporate Service Committee

### *Functions*

- The Investment Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Investment Working Group shall include three members from the Corporate Services Committee and members from other standing committees.

### *Meetings*

Notes and action points arising from Working Group meetings shall be recorded (by an agreed member of the working group), circulated to members of the Working Group no later than 10 working days following each meeting and presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Services Committee.

## **Houghton Regis Town Partnership**

This is a joint Houghton Regis Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council committee. See Appendix A, attached, for relevant Committee Functions & Terms of Reference.

## **Complaints Sub-Committee (reporting to Town Council)**

### *Terms of Reference*

To act as the Complaints Committee in accordance with the Council's approved Complaints Procedure, including:

- To consider and make recommendations on any complaints received which fall under the approved Complaints Policy;
- To report its deliberations to Town Council;

#### *Functions*

- The Sub Committee shall comprise 3 councillors;
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Town Council who have not been named within the complaint.
- The quorum shall be three members.

### **Complaints Appeals Sub-Committee (reporting to Town Council)**

#### *Terms of Reference*

- To consider and make recommendations on any appeals which relate to complaints received which fall under the approved Complaints Policy;
- To report its deliberations to Town Council;

#### *Functions*

- The Sub Committee shall comprise 3 councillors;
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Town Council who were not members of the original Complaints Sub-Committee and have not been named within the complaint.
- The quorum shall be three members.

### **~~Proposed New Cemetery Sub-Committee (reporting to Town Council)~~**

#### *~~Terms of Reference~~*

- ~~1. To consider any matters referred to it by the Town Council or any other Committee~~
- ~~2. To consider and determine matters surrounding the development of a new cemetery for Houghton Regis, including but not restricted to:
  - ~~Environmental matters~~
  - ~~Policy matters~~
  - ~~Visual impact matters~~
  - ~~Design matters~~
  - ~~Public consultation matters~~
  - ~~Future operation and management of the cemetery~~~~
- ~~3. To commission specialist services such as may be deemed appropriate in progressing options for future cemetery provision.~~

~~4. To report and to make such recommendations to Town Council as appropriate.~~

~~*Functions*~~

- ~~• The Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.~~
- ~~• The Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee shall consist of 5 members. The quorum shall be half of its members (three).~~

**Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub Committee (reporting to Planning Committee)**

*Terms of Reference*

- To monitor the implementation of the Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan.
- To keep the NHP under review especially in light of any changes to national and local planning policies and to recommend any updates to the NHP as necessary.
- Review and respond to emerging national and local planning policies for their impact on the NHP
- Review planning application decisions with reference to conformity with the NHP and the responses made by the HRTC Planning Committee
- Monitor progress towards realisation of specific projects and aspirations contained with the NHP
- Review any significant changes to the local area and assess their impact on the NHP's projects and aspirations

*Functions*

- The Sub-committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Sub-committee shall consist of five Councillors and shall include the Chair of the HRTC Planning Committee. The quorum shall be half of its members (three)
- The Sub-committee shall meet at least twice each year.
- The Sub-committee shall report to the Planning Committee
- The draft minutes shall be presented to the HRTC Planning Committee to enable the Planning Committee to consider the work of the Sub Committee in a timely fashion.

**Community Engagement Sub Committee (reporting to Community Services Committee)**

*Terms of Reference*

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.

- 
- To consider and submit to the Community Services Committee the scope, nature and form of the Council's community activities and council events (Programme of Events) for the following council year no later than 30th November each year.
  - To assemble and submit to the Community Services Committee estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Sub Committee no later than 30th November each year.
  - To monitor periodically the income and expenditure relevant to the Sub Committee.
  - To consider and refer to the Community Services Committee any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
  - To recommend the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Sub Committee to the Community Services Committee.
  - To monitor and review the Council's events.
  - To monitor and review the Council's community activities.
  - To advise Environment & Leisure Committee of events using land / buildings.
  - To monitor and review each event and activity to ensure all areas of the town are covered by the annual programme of events.
  - Delegate all operational decision-making and activities to the Head of Environmental and Community Services, Civic & Events Manager and Community Services Manager to take decisions on the arrangements for council events. The Community Engagement Sub Committee is to take a strategic view, and act as a critical friend to ensure the Council's activities and Events get better.
  - To support and promote town wide events and activities to promote the town.
  - To report to the Community Services Committee on the outcome of its deliberations.

### *Functions*

- The Community Engagement Sub Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Community Engagement Sub Committee shall consist of five Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (three).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

### *Co-option*

- To support engagement with local stakeholders the sub committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate, up to a maximum of 5. 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 sub committee by joint agreement of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- The list of co-opted Members should be reviewed annually.

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**Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee Group (reporting to Staffing Committee)**

*Due to the sensitive nature of the matters raised under this Sub-Committee, these meetings are not open to the public.*

*Terms of Reference*

- Delegated powers to hear and action, as appropriate, employee disciplinary, grievance and appeal matters where these are beyond the authority delegated to the Clerk in the Scheme of Delegation;
- To consider and recommend to Town Council any disciplinary, grievance or appeal relating to the Clerk

*Functions*

- The Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Sub-Committee shall consist of 3 Councillors.
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Staffing Committee.
- The quorum shall be three members.

**Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group (reporting to Community Services Committee) (meetings to be held within normal working hours)***Terms of Reference*

- To consider the nominations put forward from members of the public in relation to the Pride of Houghton Award scheme and determine the award winners.

*Functions*

- The Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group shall consist of 5 councillors. The quorum shall be three members.
- The Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group shall not comprise of any co-opted members or members of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee.

**~~Combating Crime Working Group~~ Community Safety Sub Committee (reporting to Community Services Committee) (meetings to be held within normal working hours)***Terms of Reference*

- To monitor the Council's Service Level Agreement with Bedfordshire Police for the provision of additional policing within the parish of Houghton Regis known as Operation Hanna

- To receive bi-monthly written reports and monthly verbal reports from Bedfordshire Police on the work completed under Operation Hanna
- To consider the forthcoming months actions by Bedfordshire Police under Operation Hanna
- To monitor the Council's Service Level Agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council for the management of the re-deployable CCTV cameras
- To manage the formulation and implementation of the Council's Community Safety Strategy
- To manage action under the Council's enviro crime project
- To report its decisions to Community Services Committee

### *Functions*

- The Combating Crime Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Combating Crime Working Group shall consist of five councillors. The quorum shall be half its members (three).

## **Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group**

### *Terms of Reference*

The Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group is to take a strategic view of the project and acting as a critical friend to ensure the progression of the project. Operational decision-making is delegated to the Town Clerk and Head of Environmental and Community Services.

The Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group is to consider matters surrounding the development of a Town Centre Community Venue for Houghton Regis, including but not restricted to:

- Lease detail
- Legal advice
- Tenders and Contracts
- Design matters
- Public consultation
- Income and expenditure monitoring
- Future operation, management and finances, including future partners and stakeholders
- Sourcing and securing of grant opportunities

The Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group will cease upon practical completion of the project. The Venue will subsequently fall under the remit to Community Services Committee.

### *Functions*

- The Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Town Centre Community Venue Task & Finish Group shall consist of 7

| Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).

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## APPENDIX A

### Houghton Regis Town Partnership Committee <sup>1</sup>

#### Purpose

1. To influence decisions and help shape initiatives and their delivery for the benefit of the whole town taking into account the needs of the town, customers, employees, residents, visitors, traders, property owners and developers.
2. To develop and encourage public participation and engagement and take into consideration the resident voice in the work of the Committee

#### Objectives

1. Help improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural vitality of the town
2. Ensure a partnership and collaborative approach to achieve the delivery of town regeneration, including influencing Section 106 funding received for town improvements and community facilities.
3. Opportunities to delegate funding decisions to the Committees should be explored, such as Section 106 received to spend on community facilities.
4. The Committee will make decisions on any joint funding allocated to it.
5. Influence and help shape strategies / plans that impact on the future viability of the town.
6. Provide a forum for briefing Members of the Joint Committee on all key issues affecting the town, at the discretion of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
7. Make recommendations on strategically significant projects to the relevant Council's decision-making committees, including Committees of the Town Council.
8. Develop and maintain joint branding of communication, agendas and minutes.
9. To enable communities to discuss services and influence decisions at the local level as to how these services are delivered.
10. To provide a forum for two-way communication about public service delivery and the implementation and effectiveness of policies affecting the town.

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<sup>1</sup> These were considered by the Partnership Committee at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April. The Terms of reference remain to be formally approved by Central Bedfordshire Council.

11. Promote resilience by encouraging communities to do more for themselves and champion local solutions.
12. Consider the ways in which proposals and initiatives can help to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

### **Membership**

1. Four Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and four Councillors from Biggleswade Town Council (Biggleswade Joint Committee).
2. Four Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and four Councillors from Houghton Regis Town Council (Houghton Regis Partnership Committee).
3. Five Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and five Councillors from Leighton-Linslade Town Council (Leighton-Linslade Partnership Committee).
4. Five Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and five Councillors from Dunstable Town Council (Dunstable Joint Committee).

*Who must be elected representatives of the wards.*

5. Two substitutes from each Council will be permitted to attend meetings as full Committee representatives. A Councillor who sits on both CBC and the Town Council can substitute. Central Bedfordshire Council Councillors shall not substitute a Town Councillor on the Committee and vice versa.
6. Substitutes for Central Bedfordshire Council Members on the Joint Committee must be a ward councillor in the town in the first instance or if not available a substitute must be an Executive Member. Substitutes for the Town Council Members of the Joint Committee will be a ward town councillor.
7. Members are appointed annually.
8. All Members of the Committee should have the interests of the town as a priority, not their own wards.

### **Meetings and Quorum**

1. At least 3 Members from each Council must be in attendance for the meeting to be quorate.
2. Meetings will be held a minimum of once per year and up to 4 per year and take place at venues in the area
3. The Committee may also organise extra ordinary meetings at the discretion of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
4. In addition to the Committee meetings, the Committee can organise other forms of engagement to take place such as themed discussions / task and finish groups and community conferences, including joint meetings or events with other Joint Committees in Central Bedfordshire.
5. All meetings will be open to the public unless exempt items are discussed

### **Chairman and Vice Chairman**

1. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be appointed from and by the Joint Committee's core membership; each Council must be represented in either role.
2. The appointed Chairman and Vice-Chairman will hold their post for a period of one year, after which they may stand for re-election.
3. The Vice Chairman will preside in the absence of the Chairman. If neither is present, the Committee members in attendance will appoint a Chairman from amongst them for the duration of that meeting.
4. The Chairman and Vice Chairman will be responsible for the content of the Committee agendas and will allow committee members and other stakeholders to submit agenda topics which will be included unless the proposed agenda item is not relevant to the Purpose and/or Objectives of the Joint Committee.

### **Secretariat**

1. Either Council can administer the Joint Committee, according to their own Standing Orders. The Committee will decide annually which Council is to administer the Committee.
2. Agendas, minutes and press releases will be issued under joint branding.
3. The secretariat will prepare, monitor and keep up to date an annual work plan to set the broad direction and priorities for the Committee.

### **Decision making arrangements**

1. Only members of the Committee can vote. Co-opted Members have no voting rights.
2. The Committee will not have any decision-making powers regarding planning applications and will not seek to duplicate or hinder the work of Central Bedfordshire Council as the Local Planning Authority.
3. The Committee will reach decisions by a simple majority. The Chairman will have the casting vote in the case of a tie.

### **Co-option**

1. To support engagement with local stakeholders the 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 Committee by joint agreement of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
2. The list of Co-opted Members should be reviewed annually.

## **Governance**

1. The Minutes and action log for the Joint Committee will be presented to Central Bedfordshire Council. The detail of where this will be presented will be determined by Central Bedfordshire Council and reported back to the Joint Committee.

## Calendar of Meetings, Briefings and Events 2026 / 2027

Colour Key	Bank Holiday	No Scheduled Meeting	Events Manager Event	Youth & Community Manager Event
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Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
16th	May	2026	Saturday		Arts and Cultural Event	TBC	Daytime	Events Manager
20th	May	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
20th	May	2026	Wednesday	<b>Town Council (AGM)</b>		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
23rd	May	2026	Saturday		Dog Show	Houghton Hall Park	Daytime	Events Manager
25th	May	2026	Monday	Spring Bank Holiday				
26th	May	2026	Tuesday	Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
27th/ 28th	May	2026	Wednesday/ Thursday		Half Term Holiday events		TBC	Events Manager
1st	June	2026	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
1st	June	2026	Monday	Corporate Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Corporate Services
2nd	June	2026	Tuesday	Councillor Briefing		Hybrid meeting	6pm	Town Clerk
2nd	June	2026	Tuesday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
6th	June	2026	Saturday		Classics in the Park	Houghton Hall Park	Afternoon	Events Manager
8th	June	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
9th	June	2026	Tuesday	Community Engagement Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	TBC	Events Manager

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
15th	June	2026	Monday	Town Council		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
17th	June	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
22nd	June	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
29th	June	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
6th	July	2026	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
6th	July	2026	Monday	Environment & Leisure		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
11th	July	2026	Saturday		Carnival		All Day	Events Manager
13th	July	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
15th	July	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
20th	July	2026	Monday	Community Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
21st	July	2026	Tuesday	Staffing Committee		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
23rd	July	2026	Thursday		Skate Jam	Tithe Farm Skate Park	Daytime	Community Services Manager
27th	July	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
28th	July	2026	Tuesday	Town Partnership		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
29th	July	2026	Wednesday		Open Air Cinema	Houghton Hall Park	2pm onwards	Events Manager
3rd	August	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
10th	August	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
17th	August	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
18th	August	2026	Tuesday		Open Air Theatre		Daytime	Events Manager
19th	August	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
24th	August	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
29th	August	2026	Saturday		Houghton Rocks	Parkside	All Day	Events Manager
31st	August	2026	Monday	Bank holiday Summer				
7th	September	2026	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
7th	September	2026	Monday	Corporate Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Corporate Services
8th	September	2026	Tuesday	Community Engagement Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	TBC	Events Manager
14th	September	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
15th	September	2026	Tuesday	Councillor Briefing		Hybrid meeting	6pm	Town Clerk
16th	September	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
19th	September	2026	Saturday		Heritage Open Day		Daytime	Events Manager
21st	September	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
28th	September	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
5th	October	2026	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
5th	October	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
12th	October	2026	Monday	Town Council		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
19th	October	2026	Monday	Environment & Leisure		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
20th	October	2026	Tuesday	Staffing Committee		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
21st	October	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
26th	October	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
27th	October	2026	Tuesday	Town Partnership		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
2nd	November	2026	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
2nd	November	2026	Monday	Community Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
7th	November	2026	Saturday		Fireworks Display		Afternoon/ Evening	Events Manager
8th	November	2026	Sunday		Remembrance Sunday	All Saints Church	Morning	Events Manager
9th	November	2026	Monday	Community Services (Grants)		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
10th	November	2026	Tuesday	Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
11th	November	2026	Wednesday		Armistice Day	Memorial Stone	Morning	Events Manager
16th	November	2026	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
17th	November	2026	Tuesday	Councillor Briefing		Hybrid meeting	6pm	Town Clerk
18th	November	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
23rd	November	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
24th	November	2026	Tuesday	Community Engagement Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	TBC	Events Manager
30th	November	2026	Monday	Corporate Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Corporate Services
5th	December	2026	Saturday		Carol Service and Christmas Light Switch on		Afternoon/ Evening	Events Manager
7th	December	2026	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
7th	December	2026	Monday	Town Council		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
8th	December	2026	Tuesday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
12th	December	2026	Saturday		Santa's Grotto			Events Manager
14th	December	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
16th	December	2026	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
21st	December	2026	Monday	XXXXXX				
25th	December	2026	Friday	Bank Holiday Christmas Day				
28th	December	2026	Monday	Bank Holiday Boxing Day				
1st	January	2027	Friday	Bank Holiday New Year's Day				
4th	January	2027	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
4th	January	2027	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
11th	January	2027	Monday	Environment & Leisure		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
12th	January	2027	Tuesday	Councillor Briefing		Hybrid meeting	6pm	Town Clerk

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
12th	January	2027	Tuesday	Community Engagement Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	TBC	Events Manager
18th	January	2027	Monday	XXXXXX				
19th	January	2027	Tuesday	Staffing Committee		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
20th	January	2027	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
25th	January	2027	Monday	Town Council		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
26th	January	2027	Tuesday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
1st	February	2027	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
1st	February	2027	Monday	XXXXXX				
15th	February	2027	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
16th	February	2027	Tuesday	Councillor Briefing		Hybrid meeting	6pm	Town Clerk
17th	February	2027	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
22nd	February	2027	Monday	Community Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
1st	March	2027	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
1st	March	2027	Monday	Corporate Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Corporate Services
8th	March	2027	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
15th	March	2027	Monday	XXXXXX				
16th	March	2027	Tuesday	Town Partnership		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
17th	March	2027	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
20th	March	2027	Saturday		Easter Egg Hunt	Houghton Hall Park		Events Manager
22nd	March	2027	Monday	Town Council		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
23rd	March	2027	Tuesday	Community Engagement Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	TBC	Events Manager
26th	March	2027	Friday	Bank Holiday Good Friday				
29th	March	2027	Monday	Bank Holiday Easter Monday				
30th	March	2027	Tuesday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
5th	April	2027	Monday	Leaders Briefing		Virtual meeting via Teams	11am	Town Clerk
5th	April	2027	Monday	Environment & Leisure		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
11th	April	2027	Sunday	Civic Service		All Saints	3pm	Head of Democratic Services
12th	April	2027	Monday	Staffing Committee		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
19th	April	2027	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services
21st	April	2027	Wednesday	Community Safety Sub-Committee		Council Chamber	11am	Community Services Manager
26th	April	2027	Monday	Community Services		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Environmental and Community Services
3rd	May	2027	Monday	Bank holiday Early May				
6th	May	2027	Thursday	ELECTIONS				
17th	May	2027	Monday	Annual Towns Meeting				

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

Date	Month		Day	Committee meeting	Event	Venue	Time	Lead Officer
19th	May	2027	Wednesday	<b>Town Council (AGM)</b>		Council Chamber	7pm	Town Clerk
24th	May	2027	Monday	Planning		Council Chamber	7pm	Head of Democratic Services

Meetings, briefings, events and training sessions may be subject to change, please check the website and social media for updates.

# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2025–2026



**Prepared by:**

Houghton Regis Town Council  
Council Offices, Peel Street, Houghton Regis

**Publication Date:** [Insert date]

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## FOREWORD

This year has been one of meaningful progress, community pride, and continued development for Houghton Regis. As our town grows and evolves, the Town Council has remained focused on delivering high-quality services, supporting residents, and ensuring that Houghton Regis remains a welcoming, vibrant, and resilient place to live. We have delivered a full programme of community events, invested in our parks and facilities, supported local groups, and strengthened our governance and financial planning.

We extend our thanks to residents, volunteers, partners, and our dedicated staff team for their commitment to our community.

**INSERT MAYORAL SIGNATURE**



## HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### About Houghton Regis Town Council

Houghton Regis Town Council is the 'parish council' for the town of Houghton Regis.

Houghton Regis Town Council's work covers three main categories:

- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Representing the local community
- Striving to improve quality of life in Houghton Regis

The council is also a consultee and lobbying force with Central Bedfordshire Council and other strategic partners, putting forward the wishes and needs of the local community.

### Who makes up the Town Council

The Town Council is made up of 14 [Councillors](#) representing three parish wards, who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the Council. The Council as a whole is responsible to the people it represents – that's you, the local community.

Finding out what we do is easy; have a look around our website and social media channels, read our resident's newsletter, speak to your local councillors or attend a council meeting.

### Council Services

The Town Council provide the following services:

*Democratic representation & management;*

- Councillors
- Town Mayor
- Deputy Town Mayor
- Town Mayor's Christmas Cards and gift

- Statutory consultee for planning applications and other strategic plans and policies
- Civic events
- Mayoral events

*Recreation grounds, play areas & pavilions;*

- Village Green
- Moore Crescent Recreation Ground
- Parkside Recreation Ground including multi-use games area
- Tithe Farm Recreation Ground including multi-use games area, skate park and all-weather pitch
- Orchard Close Recreation Ground
- Houghton Hall Park including the Kitchen Garden and Formal Garden
- Thorn Park

*Sports facilities*

- Football
- Cricket
- Bowls

*Open spaces*

- Windsor Drive
- Dog Kennel Down & Former Railway line
- Thorn Park Countryside site

*Burial grounds*

- Houghton Regis Cemetery
- All Saints Churchyard (closed churchyard)

*Allotments*

- Terra Croft allotment site

*Street furniture*

- Noticeboards
- Seats
- Litter bins
- Dog bins

*Community events including*

- Easter Egg Hunt
- Carnival
- Pride of Houghton Awards
- Houghton Rocks
- Fireworks
- Santa's Grotto
- Christmas Lights Switch on
- Fair visits
- Circus visits

#### Communications

- Website
- Facebook
- X (formally Twitter)
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Town Crier Newsletter (bi-annual)

#### *Community services*

- Community grants scheme
  - Key Partner scheme
  - Project grants
- Later Living Group
- Town centre public toilets
- HR Youth Council
- Young Persons Pop Up Café
- Youth outreach and detached work
- Community safety
  - High visibility policing initiative – Operation Hana
  - Bulk Waste removal subsidy scheme
  - Redeployable CCTV cameras

## Our Committees

<b>Department</b>	<b>Areas of Responsibility</b>	<b>Democratic Management</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>	Policy review & development Financial management Democratic management Health & safety matters	Corporate Services Committee Investment Working Group
<b>Environment &amp; Leisure Services</b>	Facilities management Leisure services Recreation management Cemetery & churchyard management Allotments	Environment & Leisure Committee
<b>Community Services</b>	Community services Youth services Communications Events Mayoral services Community grants Community safety	Community Services Committee Community Engagement Sub-Committee Community Safety Sub Committee Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group
<b>Planning</b>	Planning applications Planning policy Strategic development Highways consultations	Planning Committee Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub Committee
<b>Staffing</b>	Non legislative policy review and development Personnel matters	Staffing Committee Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Sub-Committee
<b>Town</b>	Town Centre Town development	Town Council Town Partnership Committee Town Centre Community Venue Task and Finish Group Complaints Sub Committee Complaints Appeals Sub Committee

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

### Income Sources 2025/26

<i>Income Source</i>	<i>Income Value</i>
• Precept (Code 1076)	£1,660,722
• External grants (Code 1074, 1078, 1087)	£69,127
• S106 income <sup>2</sup> (Code 1077)	£3,154,957
• External Grants & Donations inc HHP (Code 1091)	£139,246
• Venue hire & lettings (inc sports lettings, fair & circus lettings) (Code 1082)	£20,282
• Burial fees (Code 1084)	£15,097
• Sponsorship (Code 1094)	£1,021
• Interest and dividends (Code 1096)	£144,233
• Events (Code 1097)	£3,294

### Expenditure Summary 2025/26

<i>Expenditure Summary</i>	<i>Expenditure Value</i>
• Corporate management	£16,967
• Democratic Representation	£5,211
• Central services	£85,361
• Corporate Services Staff costs	£334,186
• Parks and open spaces	£458,375
• Houghton Regis Cemetery	£2,291
• Allotments	£2,544
• Play areas	£6,403
• Street furniture	£11,778
• Outside services	£104,797
• Environment & leisure staff costs	£371,124
• UKSPF (grant)	£22,499

<sup>1</sup> Provisional figures, to be updated following year end.

<sup>2</sup> S106 in 2025/26 was over £3m, this is unprecedented and is not anticipated in subsequent years. The funding is ring fenced for the maintenance of Thorn Park.

• Environment & leisure capital costs	£77,242
• Community services	£83,893
• Communications	£2,166
• Events	£63,543
• Community grants	£28,898
• Community safety	£42,276
• Civic services	£5,768
• community service staff costs	£286,810
• Community services capital costs	£5,543
• Growth area planning	£850

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2025/26

### Corporate Services Committee

- Secured a **£3.09m Section 106 commuted sum** and established an Investment Working Group to develop a long-term Treasury Management Strategy ensuring strong stewardship of public funds.
- Actively promoted and engaged with the **Central Bedfordshire Council Community Governance Review**, ensuring the council's position and community interests were clearly represented.
- Initiated a major project to develop a **new town centre community space (Project H)**, aimed at improving council openness and transparency, supporting local partners and stakeholders, and providing high-quality community facilities.
- Delivered significant **website improvements**, including new sign-up options for page-update notifications, clearer on-page updates, an accessibility statement, and a dedicated consultation link to strengthen public engagement.
- Developed a **three-year financial plan** to support long-term financial resilience and strategic planning.
- Strengthened governance through updated policies and procedures aligned with legislation, invested in HR software, and put in place plans for professional investment support.

- Reviewed major contracts, service level agreements and external memberships to ensure value for money.

## Environment & Leisure Committee

- Continued investment in the maintenance and enhancement of parks, recreation grounds, pavilions, play areas and open spaces, ensuring they remain safe, accessible and well maintained for residents of all ages.
- Delivered **town centre planters and hanging baskets**, contributing to improved visual appeal and seasonal colour across key public areas.
- Developed a **maintenance plan for key council assets**, supporting long-term sustainability and effective asset management.
- Received **Thorn Park** into council stewardship, ensuring its ongoing care and integration into the wider network of green spaces.
- Planted a new '**Tiny Forest**', enhancing biodiversity, environmental education opportunities and local climate resilience.
- Oversaw ongoing stewardship and management of **Houghton Hall Park**, supporting its role as a major recreational green space and community wellbeing asset, including partnership working with local user groups.
- Supported town-wide environmental initiatives, including **Houghton Regis in Bloom**, delivering enhanced floral displays and achieving multiple **Green Flag Awards**.
- Delivered planned works and routine maintenance across allotments, burial grounds and leisure facilities, supporting long-term asset sustainability.

## Community Services Committee

- Continued delivery of a wide range of community services, including youth initiatives and support for residents through council-managed facilities.
- Worked with partners to **distribute the Household Support Fund**, ensuring assistance reached vulnerable residents.
- Delivered a **diverse programme of community events**, strengthening civic pride, community participation and local identity.

- Continued partnership working to support **community safety initiatives**, including Operation Hana (high-visibility policing), a bulk-waste subsidy scheme and deployment of redeployable CCTV.
- Progressed the **Project H Community & Youth Hub**, advancing plans and partner engagement for a major new town centre community asset.
- Provided **grants to local charitable and not-for-profit organisations**, supporting groups delivering community benefit.
- Commenced the roll-out of the new **'Houghton Regis' branding logo**, enhancing consistency and recognition across council communications and assets.
- Continued development of the council's communications and online presence, improving awareness of services, events and opportunities for involvement.

## Planning

- Considered **over 140 planning items** and provided detailed comments on more than 50 applications, including full permissions, reserved matters and council-led developments.
- Ensured planning decisions balanced **growth, design quality and heritage protection**.

## Staffing

- Delivered multiple successful **recruitment** campaigns
- Reviewed **staffing structures** and developed a workforce forecast through to 2030.
- Maintained **oversight of staff** wellbeing, sickness absence and senior officer arrangements.

## Neighbourhood Plan Implementation

- Invited residents to join the committee as **co-opted members**, strengthening community involvement.
- Introduced improved **monitoring** of Neighbourhood Plan use, including an annual monitoring report.

- Developed a consistent **template for planning responses** to ensure Neighbourhood Plan policies are fully considered.

### Community Safety Sub-Committee

- Maintained regular oversight of **local safety priorities** through scheduled meetings.
- Continued **partnership working** with Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Police and other agencies.
- **Supported initiatives** focused on crime prevention, antisocial behaviour reduction and community reassurance.
- Provided a **forum for residents** to raise concerns and ensured issues were escalated appropriately.

### Community Engagement Sub-Committee

- Supported delivery of **major community events**, including the Pride of Houghton, celebrating local people, organisations and achievements.

## LOOKING AHEAD

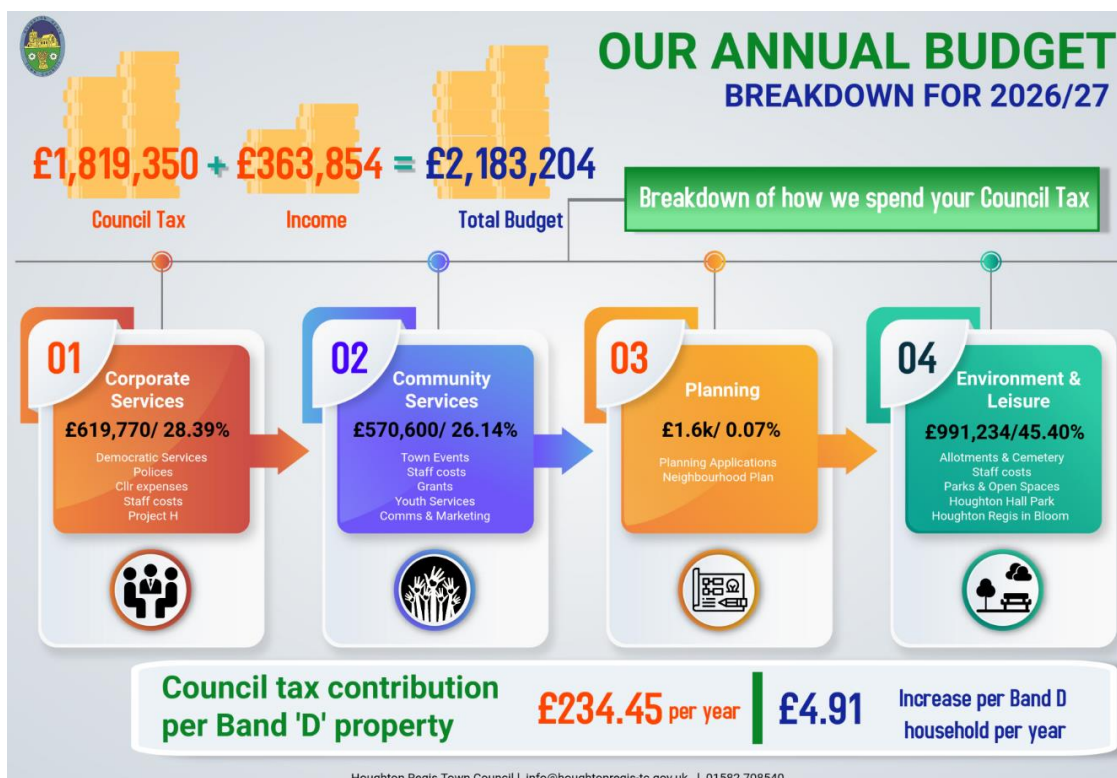
### Summary

In 2026/27 we are looking forward to delivering on the following:

- **Strengthening our financial resilience** by acting on professional investment advice to ensure council funds remain secure, ethical, and deliver long-term community benefit.
- **Encouraging strong democratic participation** by promoting awareness and engagement ahead of the May 2027 local elections.
- **Launching Project H**, opening the doors to a new community asset that will expand opportunities for residents of all ages.

- **Enhancing the town’s appearance** through expanded and improved floral displays across the town centre and key gateways.
- **Completing a full tree survey** to safeguard the health, safety, and long-term management of all Town Council-owned trees.
- **Taking on the management of Houghton Regis Quarry**, ensuring this important natural space is protected and accessible for the community.
- **Assuming responsibility for three estate-based play areas in Thorn**, enabling consistent maintenance and future improvements.
- **Delivering the pavilion enhancement project at Moore Crescent**, improving facilities for sports clubs, community groups, and local families.
- **Continuing to support local organisations** through grants and donations that strengthen community wellbeing, inclusion, and resilience.
- **Maintaining our commitment to community safety**, working with partners to support initiatives that help residents feel safe and supported.

Budget 2026/27

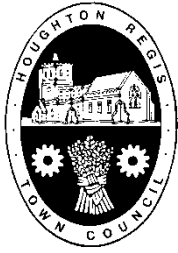


## Closing Summary

Over the past year, the Council has continued to deliver meaningful improvements for residents, strengthen its governance, and invest in the long-term wellbeing of the town. Across all committees, significant progress has been made in enhancing community services, managing public assets responsibly, supporting local partnerships and ensuring that decision-making remains transparent and accountable.

As the Council looks ahead, it remains committed to building on this year's achievements and responding proactively to the opportunities and challenges facing Houghton Regis. By working collaboratively with residents, partners and stakeholders, the Council will continue to shape a thriving, resilient and inclusive community, ensuring that the town's growth is matched by high-quality services, strong local identity and a shared sense of civic pride.

We look forward to continuing to serve and support our community in the year ahead.



**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026

**Title:** PROJECT H

**Purpose of the Report:**

1. To confirm details of the tender process, including tender evaluation.
2. To seek approval for the Council to go out to tender for Project H (in accordance with Standing Order section 18).

**Contact Officer:** Clare Evans, Town Clerk

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## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Tender Process:

1. To approve a selective tendering process for Project H, based on the identified benefits of inviting a small number of proven contractors, thereby ensuring a competitive exercise, reducing procurement risk, and securing value for money. (Suspension of Financial Regulation 5.6)
2. To approve the use of an electronic tendering process in accordance with the provision within Appendix 1, point 2 of Financial Regulations).
3. To approve the Proper Officer and Town Mayor to open the tender submissions on behalf of HRTC, in accordance with Standing Order 18, d iv.

### Venue Name

4. To undertake a public consultation based on a shortlist to select the final name with the results going to the Community Venue Task & Finish Group for a decision.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The council agreed to seek a lease with Central Bedfordshire Council for Unit 1, All Saints View at its meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2025, with the intention of fitting out the unit as a community space and council chamber. The relevant agenda and minutes can be viewed [here](#)

At this meeting it was also agreed to establish a Community Venue Task & Finish Group. This group have met periodically since to be updated of progress.

Detailed design work has taken place and a guide to costings has been circulated within the project team. Members are reminded that the project team consists of Stockton Bradley (Building Surveyor), Common Works (Design Architect) and Lowe & Oliver (Electrical & Mechanical Contractors). Devonshires Solicitors are supporting the Town Council with reviewing and challenging any terms of the lease.

External advice has also been secured on ventilation options and currently the project team are sourcing advice on audio and visual specifications.

As both the design and ancillary works are nearing completion the project team are now focussing on issuing an invitation to tender for detailed design and fit out including electrical & mechanical and audio & visual.

The tender process is set out in [Standing Orders](#) Section 18 and [Financial Regulations](#) Section 5.

### 3. TENDER PROCESS

The nature of this project would fall under the definition of Public Works (Construction)<sup>1</sup>. The thresholds within the Procurement Act that apply to councils from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027 are:

- £207,720 including VAT when procuring goods or services
- £5,193,000 including VAT for public works (construction).

The Procurement Act requires that where a contract is below the “works” threshold and includes a mixture of works and goods or services, the council must consider whether the goods or services could be supplied under a separate contract.

If they could and the value of that contract would exceed the "goods and services" threshold, the council must follow the rules in Section 5 of the 2023 Act to determine whether the whole contract should be treated as an above-threshold contract.

The anticipated value of goods and services (£100,000 excluding VAT) for this project are below the Procurement Act threshold as stated above.

As such Members are advised that this project does not fall under the Procurement Act 2023.

Whilst this is a Below Threshold procurement process that falls outside the scope of the Procurement Act 2023, the Town Council must still follow its own tender process, as outlined below.

The tender process to be followed will be in accordance with Section 18 of Standing Orders, specifically Sub Section d. In response to Section 18 d members are advised:

- The project team have drawn up a specification of works

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<sup>1</sup> "Works" are defined in Schedule 3 of the Procurement Regulations 2024 and include construction, demolition, earthworks, repair, restoration, refurbishment, installation of equipment and the work of tradespeople such as plasterers, carpenters and glazers. NALC Advice Note 03/02/2026

- The invitation to tender will include the council’s specification; the time, date and address for the submission of tenders;
- The date of the council’s written response to the tender and the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process.

Section 18 goes on to require that tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer; 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; tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility (in this case, tenders will be presented to Town Council).

In considering the requirements of Financial Regulations, members are referred to paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 which state that for contracts estimated to exceed £100,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1 of Financial Regulations.

Members are requested to consider the following variations to these requirements:

- **Open tender**  
The wider project team has recommended that, rather than issuing a full open tender, the Council undertakes a selective (or “particular or pre-selected supplier”) tendering process.  
This would involve identifying 4–6 suitable contractors and making initial contact to outline the project and assess their interest. This suggestion is being put forward for the following reasons:
  - A selective process increases competitiveness for bidders, as each has a realistic chance of securing the contract.
  - All proposed contractors will have a proven track record, and their previous schemes can be visited and verified.
  - The Council can be more confident that 3–4 tenders will be returned, thus reducing the risk associated with an open tender, where the Council may receive either no bids or an unmanageable volume of responses, both of which would place significant pressure on resources, creating either procurement failure or excessive administrative burden.
- **Means of Tender Submission**  
Standing Orders 18 d iii states that tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer.  
Appendix 1 of Financial Regulations enables the council to consider an electronic tendering process. If this is agreed the council is required to use a specific email address (such as [tenders@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk](mailto:tenders@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk)) that will be set up (at no extra cost to the council) to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.  
Members are requested to approve the use of an electronic tendering process.
- **Tender Opening**

Members are requested to authorise who is to open the tender submissions. It is suggested that this be the Proper Officer and Town Mayor. Once opened they will be forwarded to the appointed consultant for analysis. The project team are suggesting scoring tender submissions as follows:

70% on cost

30% on quality

To assist with securing value for money, costs will be scored as deviation from mean rather than lowest cost.

On completion of the tender process, a further report will be made to Town Council to approve the selected contractor and to consider and confirm how the project will be funded (use of existing funds or borrowing)

#### 4. VENUE NAME

Members are asked to consider options for naming the new community space, or alternatively to agree a process through which the name will be selected.

To assist with the thought process the following is advised:

The new community space within All Saints View will serve as a central venue for activities, meetings, events, and community engagement. A clear, memorable, and aspirational name will support its identity, promote community use, and strengthen its presence within the town centre.

Members are therefore asked to consider whether they wish to:

- Select a name at this meeting, or
- Agree a process to determine the name.

A name for the venue should ideally:

- Reflect the aspirational and community-focused purpose of the space
- Be distinctive within Houghton Regis
- Be easy to communicate and promote
- Align with the wider identity of Houghton Regis
- Incorporate “HR” if Members wish to reinforce the town-wide brand identity

The following options have been developed to provide an aspirational, modern identity while incorporating the “HR” element:

1. **HR Horizons** - A sense of growth, opportunity, and looking forward.
2. **HR Inspire** - Warm, motivational, and well-suited to a community-focused venue.
3. **HR Elevate** - Suggests lifting people up, ideal for wellbeing, learning, and community activity.
4. **HR Uplift** - Short, energetic, and very community-positive.
5. **HR Venture** - Modern and dynamic — suggests creativity, enterprise, and new ideas.
6. **HR Envision** - Forward-thinking and aspirational.
7. **HR Aspire** - Simple, strong, and directly communicates ambition.
8. **HR Connect** - Community-focused, inclusive, and modern.

9. **HR Advance** - Suggests progress, development, and moving the town forward.

Members may also wish to consider a more neutral naming structure such as:

10. **Centre HR**

11. **Venue HR**

Members are invited to consider one of the following approaches:

Option A – Select a Name Now

Choose one of the suggested names listed above or add to the list.

Option B – Develop a Shortlist

Agree a shortlist of preferred names for further Member discussion.

Option C – Public Engagement

Undertake a short public consultation or community vote based on a shortlist to select the final name with the results going to the Community Venue Task & Finish Group for a decision.

Option D – Delegate to the Community Venue Task & Finish Group to bring back a final recommendation.

Members are requested to either select a name for the new community space from the options provided above or suggested at the meeting or agree a process for determining the name.

## 5. **HRTC CORPORATE PLAN**

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

1.1 Improve integration between existing and new communities.

1.2 Support the sense of arrival and identity.

1.3 Create a stronger, more robust and engaging town centre offer.

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

1.5 Improve the visual appearance of the town centre.

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

2.3 Establish a town centre hub for the delivery of centrally based services, such as HRTC's offices, a youth centre and a tourist information/ heritage centre.

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

3.3 Improve access to services and support through the provision of a network of Parish-wide community hubs.

3.4 Improve existing and develop new opportunities for young people across the parish.

### **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.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

### **Corporate Implications**

- Policy implications – as referred to in the body of the report.

### **Legal Implications**

- Power available to carry out project – LG(MP)A 1976 s.19
- Contract – as referred to in the body of the report.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

- reduces, prevents or does not negatively impact crime or anti-social behaviour
- supports partnership working (e.g., Police, CBC, local community safety partners)
- aligns with the HRTC Corporate Plan priority 2.2 (“Continue to work with key partners to address crime and anti-social behaviour”).

### **Financial Implications**

- Financial Regulations – as referred to in the body of the report.
- Budget available – as referred to in the body of the report
- Quotes / tenders sourced

### **Risk Implications**

- The tender analysis process to be managed by a competent consultant to ensure that the contract is suitably awarded
- Contract management to be undertaken by a competent consultant to ensure that the contract is suitably delivered
- Reputational risk should tender analysis or contract management fall short of requirements

### **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

## 7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The recommendations set out in this report are to enable the council to complete an efficient, effective and successful tender process for Project H.

## **8. APPENDICES**

**None**