



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Cllr D Jones**

Tel: 01582 708540

Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

e-mail: info@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk

1st September 2026

To: **Members of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee**

Cllrs: T McMahon, E Cooper, Y Farrell, M Herber, A Slough

(Copies to other Councillors, E Farrier, Tim Haines, Friends of Windsor Drive, Parkside Ward Action Group, Ian Haynes and Tara Earnshaw for information)

Co-opted Members: K Wattingham, C Slough

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the **Community Engagement Sub Committee** to be held virtually, via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday 8th September 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](#)

All attendees are reminded that this meeting must be conducted in a respectful and considerate manner. Comments should remain appropriate and non-defamatory, as behaviour that undermines dignity, respect, or integrity will not be permitted.

Clare Evans
Town Clerk

<i>THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED¹</i>
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Agenda

1. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

¹ This meeting may be filmed by the Council for subsequent broadcast online and can be viewed at <https://houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk/council/committees>

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.

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. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

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

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

4. MINUTES

Pages 4 - 9

To receive the minutes of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee meeting held on the 9th June 2026.

Recommendation: **To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

5. COMMUNITY EVENTS

Representatives from local organisations are invited to provide updates regarding community events.

Recommendation: **To note the report**

6. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Page 10

Members will find attached a workplan for the municipal year 2026/27.

The attached workplan provides a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2026/27, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations are met in a timely manner.

Recommendation: **To review and approve the Community Engagement Sub Committee Workplan for 2026/27, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year.**

7. REPORT FROM THE EVENTS MANAGER

Pages 11 - 14

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

This report is provided for information purposes.

8. REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER

Pages 15 - 19

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

This report is provided for information purposes.

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HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on
9th June 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	T McMahon E Cooper M Herber A Slough	Chair
	Also in attendance:	E Farrier C Slough	Land Improvement Holdings, Linnere Devt Co-optee
	Officers:	Tara Earnshaw Sarah Gelsthorp Amanda Samuels	Youth & Community Manager Events Manager Administration Officer
Apologies:		T Haines K Wattingham	Bidwell West Co-optee
Absent:		Y Farrell	

CESC99 ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Community Engagement Sub-Committee Chair for 2026/27.

Nominee:	Cllr McMahon	Proposed by:	Cllr Herber
		Seconded by:	Cllr Cooper

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr McMahon became the Chair of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee for the municipal year of 2026/2027.

CESC100 ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Community Engagement Sub-Committee Vice-Chair for 2026/27.

Nominee:	Cllr Herber	Proposed by:	Cllr Herber
		Seconded by:	Cllr Cooper

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Herber became the Vice-Chair of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee for the municipal year of 2026/2027.

CESC101 CO-OPTION

Applications from Mr Ken Wattingham and Mr Chris Slough to be co-opted onto the Community Engagement Sub-Committee for 2026/2027 had been received and circulated to members of the sub-committee under separate cover. Members were requested to consider the co-option.

Resolved: To Co-opt Mr Ken Wattingham and Mr Chris Slough onto the Community Engagement Sub Committee for 2026/27.

CESC102 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from K Wattingham and Tim Haines from Bidwell West.

CESC103 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CESC104 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CESC105 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2026.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Community Engagement Sub Committee meeting held on 24th March 2026, and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

CESC106 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4, j.v., the council was required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub committees.

These arrangements were set out in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference. This document set out the system of delegation to the Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups of the Council. This was presented to the Town Council at the Annual Meeting on 20th May 2026.

The Community Engagement Sub Committee reported to the Community Services Committee and supported the strategic development of Town Council events as follows:

- Carnival (11th July 2026)
- Arts and Cultural event (25th July 2026)
- Open Air Cinema at HHP (29th July 2026)
- Open Air Theatre at HHP (18th August 2026)
- Summer Fun Activities
- Houghton Rocks (29th August 2026)

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- Heritage Day at HHP (19th September 2026)
 - Halloween at HHP (End of October)
 - Fireworks Display (6th November 2026)
 - Remembrance Sunday / Armistice Day
 - Santa's Grotto (11th December) 2026)
 - Easter Egg Hunt at HHP (20th March 2027)
 - Easter events

CESC107 COMMUNITY EVENTS

The representatives from local organisations were invited to provide updates regarding community events. The representative from Bidwell West was unavailable to provide an update.

Linnere

Two new park spaces were being introduced:

Oasis Park

This had been opened by the Town Mayor in April. Two routes were being introduced: a walking route to Houghton Hall Park and a children's walking route.

Silver Birch Park

This was due to open at the end of the summer. A bandstand had been installed and a brass band was scheduled to play at the opening. The date of the opening ceremony would be confirmed as soon as possible.

Upcoming events included:

- Linnere Picnic on the Park would be held on 22nd August and would feature a climbing wall, animal zoo and bug hunt. The Heritage Society, Cubs, Scouts and Brownies were also taking part. A flyer and further information would be shared when available
- Soft Play was scheduled for every Wednesday through the summer holidays
- A Youth Community skating event would be hosted on behalf of HRTC

All Saints Church

- Two coffee mornings had been held and had raised £300 for Headway and Hospice at Home charities
- A spring fair had raised £512 funds towards the church restoration. Singers from Lime Tree Academy had participated in this event
- The Civic Service was a great success and had been well attended
- The All Saints churchyard gardeners group had started

Upcoming events included:

- June – raising funds for Thomas Whitehead Academy
- July – supporting Houghton Regis events including Carnival and the Arts & Culture Day (where the Gothic Revival display would feature)

Resolved: To note the report

CESC108 REPORT FROM THE EVENTS MANAGER

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

- Over 700 eggs had been distributed at the Easter Egg Hunt
- Over 500 goodie bags had been distributed at the Dragon Fun event which had been held over two days at HHP
- A number of measures had been taken to ensure the wellbeing of the dogs taking part in the dog show during a spell of hot weather. These included: bringing the start time forward; ensuring adequate water bowls; and the provision of air-conditioned facilities and shelters
- The Science Fun event had attracted an average of 25 attendees at each session (four per day) over two days
- The car show had done as well as possible given bad weather conditions, and requests had been made for this event to be repeated.

Upcoming events included: Carnival; Arts and Culture event; Open Air Cinema, Open Air Theatre; Houghton Rocks; and Heritage Day.

Carnival

- Activities would begin with a steel band on the Village Green from 10am. There would also be participation from dance groups, Last of the Summer Ukeles and circus skills. The Boxing Academy would be providing free trials, and there would be music from Roberts Family Band
- The layout had been altered but the event would continue to include stalls, fairground rides and food
- Four local groups had agreed to participate so far and there would be a brass band and mascots on bikes. Bubbles, whistles and flags had been procured for those in the parade
- The Events Manager made a request for volunteers and Councillors A Slough, C Slough and M Herber offered to assist at the Village Green.
- Security and signage had been organised to assist with parking and advise drivers of any restrictions

The Arts and Culture event

This would include:

- Stalls set up in the library atrium
- Facepainting and glitter tattoos in the Community Centre
- Indian drumming and dancing in the larger Community Centre room
- A theatre show in Bedford Square
- A cultural trail around Bedford Square
- Henna tattoos
- Crafts and activities in the library and Jewels

It had been difficult to get Bedford Square shopkeepers to participate. The Events Manager invited assistance from anyone who could encourage greater participation

Houghton Rocks

- The full line-up was confirmed
- There had been a good response from stallholders
- The drum skin had been made and delivered, plus reusable cups

The Events Manager confirmed that data had been collected for the Easter Egg Hunt and Dragon Fun events. The information gathered was not for circulation, but it provided data on age range and post code and confirmed that attendees were predominately from Houghton Regis. No data was available from the dog show.

The Events Manager confirmed that a draft plan for Carnival, outlining the new routes, would be circulated. Hard copies of the programme would be distributed to key points around the town, and details would be posted on social media.

Resolved: To note the report

CESC109 REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER

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

Following on from the Events Manager's report, the Community Services Manager informed Members that the Youth Council was keen for the inclusion of a youth arena at Houghton Rocks.

There had been plans for a tabletop sale in Bedford Square; however, expressions of interest in booking had fallen short of expectations.

LLSG

- The group had met for three sessions, including a quiz.
- There were now 50 members
- A trip to Poplars had been held.

Family Fun Days

These included:

- Skate Jam
- Crazy golf
- Garden games
- A sensory day
- Inflatable Fun
- Roller disco
- Go-karting

A Southend trip was planned for August, but a date was yet to be confirmed. Given the popularity of these trips, HRTC would give two-weeks' notice of the tickets going live. Due to costs, the trip was limited to two coaches and would be managed by Three Star coaches.

Town Centre Initiatives

- 18th July - Beach Day at Bedford Square, including water trays and sand trays
- LLSG afternoon tea and kitchen gardens at HHP
- Youth Council providing LLSG mobile lessons on a tea and treat day.

Resolved: To note the report

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.41 pm

Dated this day of 8th September 2026

Chairman

DRAFT



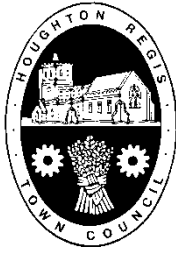
HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Community Engagement Sub-Committee Workplan 2026/27

The following Workplan indicates anticipated specific reports in addition to regular/standard reports¹:

Committee date	Tasks / Report Heading	Completed/deferred/removed
9th June 2026	Election of Chair	9th June 2026
	Election of Vice-Chair	9th June 2026
	Future of Events 3-year draft programme	Deferred as agreed with IH
	Youth and Community Manager Update	9th June 2026
	Event Manager Update	9th June 2026
8th September 2026	Committee Workplan	8th September 2026
	Youth and Community Manager Update	8th September 2026
	Event Manager Update	8th September 2026
24th November 2026	Committee Workplan	
	Youth and Community Manager Update	
	Event Manager Update	
12th January 2027	Committee Workplan	
	Youth and Community Manager Update	
	Event Manager Update	
23rd March 2027	Committee Workplan	
	Youth and Community Manager Update	
	Event Manager Update	

¹ Include: Draft Minutes, Income & Expenditure Report, and Committee Workplan



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 7

Date:	19th August 2026
Title:	Event Managers Report
Purpose of the Report:	To provide Members with an update on past and forthcoming events.
Contact Officer:	Sarah Gelsthorp, Events Manager

1. RECOMMENDATION

This report is provided for information purposes.

2. BACKGROUND

Houghton Regis Town Council delivers a variety of community events throughout the year, on Town Council land and also at Houghton Hall Park.

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

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Past events:

Carnival – 11th July 2026

The Carnival was a great success with an increase in the amount of stalls. The walking parade was successful, and it is envisaged that this will continue to grow each year. The new layout of the stalls seemed to work well as did the variety of music on offer.

Arts and Cultural Event – 25th July 2026

The Arts and Cultural Day featured stalls, Indian Drumming and Bhangra Dancers, World Foods, Story Telling, Arts and Crafts, Music and shows from Full House Theatre. The Town Council has received some very positive feedback about the event, which was well attended.

Open Air Cinema – 29th July 2026

The Open Air Cinema was a big success, but the attendance was reflected by the temperatures on the day. Approx. 500 people attended across the whole day.

Open Air Theatre – 18th August 2026

The Open Air Theatre was well attended, with 400 people attending across both shows. The capacity at this event is smaller, by its very nature, but was well received by all who attended.

Houghton Rocks 2026 – An update will be provided at the meeting

3.2 Future events from 9th September 2026 until 24th November 2026 (next meeting)

- 19th September 2026 – Heritage Day (HHP)
- 30th October 2026 – Halloween Fun (HHP)
- 6th November 2026 – Fireworks Display
- 8th and 11th November 2026 – Services of Remembrance

3.3 HERITAGE DAY

The Heritage Day will take place on 19th September 2026, and the following items are planned for the day:

- Stalls
- Display from Houghton Regis Heritage Society
- Display from All Saints Church
- School of Jesting from Devil Stick Peat
- Wryngwrym (pronounced Ringworm) Viking re-enactors who will set up the Viking Village Display and include free coin striking demonstrations
- Rebellion Re-enactments who are bringing 2 horses
- Knights of Honour re-enactors

3.4 HALLOWEEN FUN

A day of Halloween fun is being planned at Houghton Hall Park, which will include:

- Facepainting
- Prize Halloween Trail Around Houghton Hall Park
- Arts and Crafts
- Storytelling

3.5 FIREWORKS DISPLAY

The contractors for the event are now in place, and the display will take place at Thorn Park, on Friday 6th November 2026.

3.6 SERVICES OF REMEMBRANCE

The Services of Remembrance are currently being planned, and all external contractors (Security etc) are in place for 8th and 11th November 2026.

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

None

5. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

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

1.1 Improve integration between existing and new communities.

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

1.6 Promotion and protection of the cultural and heritage assets.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications - There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications - There are no legal implications.

Financial Implications—Some funding opportunities will naturally end during the new financial year. Therefore, during the 2026/27 budget-setting process, consideration must be given to whether these activities will continue.

Risk Implications - There are no risk implications.

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

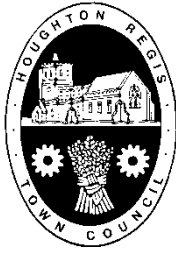
These projects/issues do not discriminate.

Climate Change Implications - There are no climate change implications.

Press Contact - Deliveries of these projects will continue to be communicated to the press.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This report summarises the ongoing projects being delivered and plans for future initiatives provided by the Events Manager.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 8

Date:	12th August 2026
Title:	Houghton Regis Town Council Community Services Update
Purpose of the Report:	To provide Members with an update on recent community work.
Contact Officer:	Tara Earnshaw, Community Services Manager

1. RECOMMENDATION

To note the report

2. BACKGROUND

Houghton Regis Town Council delivers a variety of community initiatives that are inclusive of its residents. This includes Community Activities, School Holiday Activities and Activities for retired residents.

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

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Summer Fun Activities

The planned summer fun activities were delivered across Houghton Regis during the summer holidays:

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

Within the activities delivered, the Skate Jam, Crazy Golf and Sensory Day were not as well attended as the other activities. This could be due to a combination of location and families being on holiday. However, the attendance for Sensory Day was ideal for those who took part, as it attracted families with children who have special educational needs and the quieter environment suited them well.

Inflatable Fun was relocated to the Village Green due to the hot weather, as the trees provided shade for the inflatables. Roller Skating was delivered in four sessions of 30 participants, and each session was fully booked. A longer overall session would have given more people the opportunity to take part. Go Karting was also extremely busy, with a continuous queue of children. As this was the first time this event has been delivered, reflection suggests that more go-karts and possibly another activity, such as segways, would have helped prevent long waiting times.

Due to a limited budget, only two coaches were booked this year for Southend, and all seats were sold within 30 minutes. In reflection, I think we should revert back to three coaches.

3.2 Future Recommendation

2027/28 Summer Fun Activities

Going forward, although the Skate Jam was not as well attended by families as in previous years, it attracted a higher number of young people. Because of this, I recommend delivering the Skate Jam in the evening as an enhanced youth activity.

Due to the expansion of Houghton Regis and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, Holiday Activities are becoming increasingly popular, demonstrating the need to provide more resources and extend activity durations to reduce queueing times. With this in mind, it is recommend delivering one activity in each of the five wards over a 4–5 hour period, with an additional activity specifically designed to engage children with Special

Educational Needs. I also recommend booking three coaches to Southend and delivering two activities over the Easter period.

3.3 Community Activities

Beach Day

Beach Day was delivered in Bedford Square on 18th July. The event included a DJ, photo booth, giant deck chair, ice cream van, sand and water play in trays, and crafts. To theme the event, deck chairs and bunting were used. This activity was very popular with residents and attendance was great.

Crafty November

Staff are planning crafty activities that will be themed around Christmas.

3.4 Later Living Social Group (LLSG)

The volunteers at LLSG continue to meet monthly to plan enhanced activities and trips, as well as organise the Tea and Treat sessions. These sessions take place on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at All Saints View, with an average of 50 retired residents attending each time. The afternoon tea at the kitchen gardens was particularly well received; participants enjoyed strawberries grown on site and took part in a raffle as part of the activity.

The volunteers are currently planning a trip to Bourton-on-the-Water and a Christmas outing to the Grove Theatre for the pantomime.

This group was established a few years ago and originally operated from Jewels Café. At that time, around 10 residents attended the Tea and Treat sessions, which were held once a month. As attendance increased, the group relocated to All Saints View, and due to the growing demand for the provision, a second monthly session was introduced. With two sessions now running each month and significantly higher participation, the group continues to evolve to meet the needs of local retired residents.

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

To deliver eight Family Fun Activities across all five wards, with each session running for 4–5 hours. This approach would provide consistent coverage during both the Easter and Summer school holiday periods, ensuring a balanced offer for families and supporting increased participation across the town.

5. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

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

1.1 Improve integration between existing and new communities.

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

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

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

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications - There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications - There are no legal implications.

Financial Implications— There are no financial implications

Risk Implications - There are no risk implications.

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

These projects/issues do not discriminate.

Climate Change Implications - There are no climate change implications.

Press Contact - Deliveries of these projects will continue to be communicated to the press.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This report summarises the ongoing projects being delivered and plans for future initiatives provided by the Community Services Manager.