



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Cllr D Jones**
Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

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13th July 2026

To: Members of the Staffing Committee

Cllrs: W Henderson (Chair), E Costello, M Herber, D Jones, T McMahon, A Slough, D Taylor

(Copies to other Councillors for information)

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the **Staffing Committee** to be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street on **Tuesday 21st July 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](#)

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

THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED *

Agenda

- 1. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**
- 2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

In accordance with approved Standing Orders 1(e)-1(l) Members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

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.

**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. The use of images or recordings arising from this is not under the Council's control. No part of the meeting room is exempt from public filming unless the meeting resolves to go into exempt session.*

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. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members are invited to elect a Vice-Chair for the Staffing Committee for the municipal year 2026-2027.

5. MINUTES

Pages 6-8

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2026.

Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

6. COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

Page 9

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

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

Members will find attached the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference which relates to this committee.

This report is provided for information.

7. COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

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 Staffing Committee Workplan, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year 2026/27.

8. APPOINTMENT OF CLERKS APPOINTED PERSON

As part of the Committees Functions a member is to be appointed to support the Clerk for day-to-day matters, to handle impromptu leave requests, absences from work and to feed matters to Committee where any decisions/actions have been made.

For the 2025/2026 municipal year, the role for day-to-day contact was undertaken by Councillor David Jones.

In accordance with the Council's established arrangements, the Clerk's appraisal would typically be undertaken by the Chair of the Council, Cllr David Jones, and the Chair of the Corporate Services Committee, Cllr Debbie Taylor. However, as the previous formal annual appraisal was conducted by Cllr Michelle Herber, the Committee may wish to appoint Cllr Herber to continue in this role to provide continuity across both the annual and 6-month interim appraisal process.

Recommendation:

- 1) **To appoint a member as the designated day-to-day contact and to undertake the Clerk's appraisal;**
- 2) **To appoint a second member, in addition to Cllr Jones, to undertake the Clerk's appraisal.**

9. EYECARE POLICY

Pages 11-14

Members are advised that the Eye Care Policy is due for re-approval.

The attached report and tracked-changes policy are provided to support the recommendation for adoption of the policy.

Recommendation: **To adopt the Town Council's Eyecare Policy.**

10. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Pages 15-19

Members will find a report attached requesting Members to give consideration to the renewal of the Council's Employee Assistance Programme, which supports staff wellbeing through confidential advice, counselling and guidance services (also available to immediate family members).

Due to confidentiality and data protection requirements, only limited usage data can be provided; however, the service has been utilised by staff since its introduction.

The current contract, previously based on 20 employees at an annual cost of £450, is due for renewal. The Council currently employs 33 staff, and accordingly the cost reflects an increase.

Quotations have been obtained from accredited providers, with options including both fixed-rate and per-employee pricing structures.

Since the introduction of the EAP service, there have been some significant improvements to the services offered, as part of an enhanced package, by some service providers.

- Recommendation:**
- 1. To support the continuation of the Employee Assistance Programme.**
 - 2. To recommend that the Corporate Services committee enters into a contract with Company B for the provision of the Employee Assistance Programme for a period of five years at a cost of £535 per annum.**

11. MEMBERSHIP OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Pages 20-23

To advise members of the membership of the Senior Management Team (SMT) on relevant external professional organisations.

- Recommendation:**
- 1) To approve the continued membership of the Town Clerk, Head of Democratic Services, and Head of Environmental and Community Services in relevant external professional organisations.**
 - 2) To note that the associated membership fees, officer time, and travel costs are proportionate to the benefits gained.**

12. TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL LEAVE, OVERTIME WORKING AND SICKNESS

Annual leave

- From January 2026 to March 2026 the Clerk has had 6 day's annual leave and 3 days flexi leave.
- From April 2026 to June 2026 the Clerk has had 4 day's annual leave and 3 days flexi leave.

The following leave is requested:

- 10th – 24th August

Overtime

- During the period January 2026 to March 2026 the Clerk has attended 3 meetings or events outside of the working day.
- During the period April 2026 to date the Clerk has attended 4 meetings or events outside of the working day.

Sickness

- From January 2026 to March 2026 the Clerk has had 0 day's sick leave
- From April 2026 to date the Clerk has had 0 day's sick leave

The Town Clerk's overtime and sickness figures are for information only.

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

13. RECRUITMENT UPDATE

Members are advised of the following recruitment outcomes:

Project Manager

Members were advised at the last meeting recruitment for the Project Manager post had been unsuccessful and as an interim measure, a part-time employee was providing additional hours in support of the Head of Environmental & Community Services.

Following an internal recruitment exercise, this employee has now been successfully appointed, formalising their role within the service.

Cemetery and Allotments Officer

Following a successful recruitment process, an appointment has been made to the post of Cemetery and Allotments Officer – The successful candidate commenced employment on 1st June 2026.

Grounds Person

The Grounds Person position was re-advertised following the unsuccessful probationary outcome of the previous appointee.

Following a successful recruitment process, an appointment has been made to the post of Grounds Person. The successful candidate commenced employment on 22nd June 2026.

Finance Manager

Following a successful recruitment process, an appointment has been made to the post of Finance Manager – The successful candidate has a confirmed start date of 27th July 2026.

This report is provided for information purposes.

14. STAFF APPRAISALS

Members are advised that the majority of staff Appraisals have been completed with the remaining appraisal meetings booked over the coming weeks.

This report is provided for information purposes.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

- Staff sickness
- Job evaluation

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

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Staffing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2026 at 7pm

Present: Councillors: D Jones Chairman
E Cooper
M Herber
T McMahon
A Slough
D Taylor

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

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillor: W Henderson

13512 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

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

13513 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13514 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13515 MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 24th November 2025 for consideration.

Resolved: That the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 24th November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

13516 TOWN CLERK'S ANNUAL LEAVE, OVERTIME WORKING AND SICKNESS

Annual leave

From October 2025 – December 2025 the Town Clerk has taken 6 days annual leave and 3 days flexi Leave.

The following leave is requested:

- 19th – 24th February 2026

Overtime

During the period October 2025 – December 2025 the Town Clerk has attended 4 meetings or events outside of the normal working day within the period compared with 4 in the previous quarter.

Sickness

From October 2025 – December 2025 the Clerk has not taken any sick leave.

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

13517 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Slough Seconded by: Cllr Herber

Votes for: 6

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

13518 STAFF SICKNESS

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

This report was provided for information only.

13519 STAFFING FORECAST REVIEW – UPDATE FOR 2026-2027

Members received a review of the staffing forecast for 2026 – 2027.

Discussions were held around the report with clarification sought regarding RFO responsibilities and how this would impact the current Job Description holding this role. It was felt that re-evaluation would be required.

Resolved:

- 1. 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.**
- 2. To note the updated job descriptions for Head of Corporate Services and Head of Environmental & Community Services**

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3. To support the revised senior management salary scales following job evaluation outcomes as detailed in section 3
 4. To support the consideration of additional support solutions within Corporate Services, including outsourced Health and Safety provision, with a further report to be presented to the Corporate Services Committee on 2nd March 2026.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.46 pm

Dated this 21st day of July 2026

Chairman

DRAFT

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.
- 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.

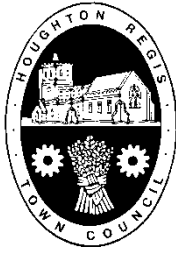


HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Staffing Committee Workplan 2026/27

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

Committee date	Report Heading	Completed / deferred / removed
21st July 2026	Election of Vice Chair Review of Committee Functions & Terms of Reference Clerk's Appointed Person Town Clerk's Annual Leave, Overtime Working & Sickness Clerks Appraisals Appointments Spring Appraisal Process Outcomes Officer memberships of outside organisations Staff Sickness Monitoring & Management Recruitment Outcomes Eyecare Policy Employee Assistance Programme Membership of External Organisations - SMT Recruitment Update Staff Appraisals Job Evaluation outcome – Town Clerk	
20th October 2026	Town Clerk's Annual Leave, Overtime Working & Sickness Staff Structure Review Staff Forecast Review And Update Staffing Committee Budget Requests Salary Payscales Review Pay Award Outcome Autumn Appraisal Process Outcomes Staff Sickness Monitoring & Management Recruitment Outcomes	
19th January 2027	Town Clerk's Annual Leave, Overtime Working & Sickness Staff Sickness monitoring AI Policy review	
12th April 2027	Town Clerk's Annual Leave, Overtime Working & Sickness Staff Sickness Monitoring & Management	



CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 9

Date:	21st July 2026
Title:	Eyecare Policy
Purpose of the Report:	To provide to members a report on amendments to the town councils Eyecare Policy
Contact Officer:	Debbie Marsh, Head of Corporate Services

1. RECOMMENDATION

To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Eyecare Policy.

2. BACKGROUND

The Corporate Services committee last reviewed this policy at the meeting held on the 28th November 2022.

3. INFORMATION

The Eyecare Policy has been reviewed as part of the Council's routine policy review programme. The review does not reflect any changes to legislation; the policy remains compliant with Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992.

Amendments made to the policy are operational in nature and are shown as tracked changes. These amendments clarify the types of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) covered by the policy and reflect an updated specified contribution towards DSE single-vision spectacles.

The Town Council continues to appoint a local optician to provide eye examinations at NHS rates and to supply DSE single-vision spectacles at a subsidised cost. Employees may continue to use an alternative optician, with reimbursement capped at the agreed Council rate, in line with existing arrangements.

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

- The adoption of the updated Eyecare Policy supports the Council's commitment to safeguarding employee health and wellbeing and ensures consistent application of health and safety arrangements across the organisation.

Legal Implications

- Compliance with the Health and Safety (DSE) Regulations 1992.

Crime and Disorder Implications

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

Financial Implications

- Budget provided, amendments reflect updated costs rather than any new financial commitments.

Risk Implications

- Failure to maintain an up-to-date Eyecare Policy could expose the Council to health and safety risks and potential non-compliance. Adoption of the amended policy mitigates these risks by ensuring current and clear arrangements are in place.

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 recommendations

Press Contact

- There are no press implications.

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The policy remains current, effective and reflective of operational practice.

Members are requested to recommend the amended policy be presented to Town Council for adoption.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Eyecare Policy – Track change



Houghton Regis Town Council

Eye Care Policy

Date of Approval:	26 th March 2018
Dates of Re approval:	20 th March 2023; 21st July 2026 1st June 2026
Dates of Review:	28 th November 2022; TBC

Based on: HSE 'Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992'

Contents

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Policy

3.0 Review

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees. It recognises that employees need to be protected from any risks associated with Display Screen Equipment (DSE) such as PC's laptops, tablets and smartphones.
- 1.2 The Display Screen Regulations 1992 only apply to employees who regularly use DSE as a significant part of their normal work (daily, for continuous periods of an hour or more). These workers are known as DSE users.
- 1.3 If a user or a potential user requests an eye examination the Town Council is required to provide one. If the test shows that the user needs glasses specifically for DSE work, the Town Council must pay for a basic pair of frames and lenses.

2.0 POLICY

- 2.1 Houghton Regis Town Council will:
 - i. Provide an eye examination for those employees covered by the DSE regulations (up to the cost of £25).
 - ii. Pay up to a specified amount for DSE (single-vision) spectacles (currently ~~£49~~ £59), if required.
 - iii. Reimburse employees to a specified amount, not exceeding the value already agreed with the Town Councils appointed Optician, to those employees deciding to use an alternative Optician.
- 2.2 Employees will:
 - i. Discuss with their Manager their request for an eye examination, prior to booking.
 - ii. Complete an eye examination request form, to be signed by their Manager and to provide a copy of this form, to the Town Councils appointed Optician, at the time of examination.
 - iii. Pay direct any monies due over and above the specified agreed amount.
 - iv. Pay direct any costs incurred in using an alternative Optician.

3.0 POLICY REVIEW

- 3.1 This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or as required by the ~~Corporate Services~~ Staffing Committee.



STAFFING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 10

Date: 21st July 2026

Title: Employee Assistance Programme Provision

Purpose of the Report: To provide members with information to review the provision of the Town Councils Employee Assistance Programme.

Contact Officer: Louise Senior, Head of Democratic Services

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1. To support the continuation of the Employee Assistance Programme.**
- 2. To recommend that the Corporate Services committee enters into a contract with Company B for the provision of the Employee Assistance Programme for a period of five years at a cost of £535 per annum.**

2. BACKGROUND

Since 2016 (Minute No. 8835), the Town Council has provided an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to support the wellbeing of its employees. The continuation of this service beyond the initial contract term was subsequently approved by the Town Council (Minute No. 11879).

The current contract is due for renewal in February 2027. Members are advised that to enable consideration of future provision, the attached appendix provides a comparison of quotations received and the services offered by providers currently operating in this sector.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Current Provision

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides employees with access to confidential support and advice on a range of personal and work-related matters, including mental health and wellbeing, financial matters, legal issues and counselling services.

The Council has provided an EAP since 2016 and the service forms part of the Council's wider approach to employee wellbeing and staff support.

Review of Provision

The current contract expires in February 2027. To ensure value for money and that the service continues to meet the needs of employees and the Council, a review of available providers has been undertaken.

Quotations and service comparisons have been obtained from a number of providers and are attached at Appendix A. Members are requested to consider the comparative information, including:

- Annual costs.
- Range of services provided.
- Accessibility of support services.
- Additional wellbeing resources available.
- Reporting and management information provided.
- Contract terms and service standards.

Benefits of an Employee Assistance Programme

The continuation of an EAP may provide a number of benefits, including:

- Supporting employee wellbeing and mental health.
- Providing access to professional and confidential advice services.
- Assisting employees to address personal concerns before they impact attendance or performance.
- Contributing to staff retention and engagement.
- Supporting the Council in meeting its responsibilities as an employer.

HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

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

- 4.1 Develop a 5-year financial & staffing plan.
- 4.5 Enhance the role of the council.
- 4.6 To actively consider and weight the impact of new and existing initiatives and services.

IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- The Employee Assistance Programme forms part of the Council's employee wellbeing arrangements and supports the Council's commitment to maintaining a healthy, resilient and effective workforce. There are no direct implications for other committees arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications

- The Council has powers as an employer to provide employee welfare and wellbeing support services. Should the recommendations be approved, a contract

will be entered into with the selected provider in accordance with the Council's procurement and financial procedures.

Crime and Disorder Implications

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

Financial Implications

- Continuation of an Employee Assistance Programme assists in mitigating risks associated with employee wellbeing, absence, retention and workforce resilience. Failure to provide appropriate wellbeing support may impact staff morale and service delivery.

Risk Implications

- Should the Council decide not to continue the provision of an EAP, employees would lose access to the additional support currently available through the scheme. This could reduce the range of wellbeing support available to staff and may have implications for employee wellbeing and resilience.

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.

The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all eligible employees and provides equitable access to confidential support services. The recommendations do not discriminate against any individual or group with a protected characteristic.

Climate Change Implications

- There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations

Press Contact

- There are no press implications arising from the recommendations

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Employee Assistance Programme has been provided by the Town Council since 2016 and forms part of the Council's commitment to supporting employee wellbeing. A review of available providers has been undertaken in advance of the expiry of the current contract in February 2027.

Members are requested to consider the information contained within Appendix A. Subject to approval, arrangements will be made to implement the new contract upon expiry of the existing agreement.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: EAP Provider Comparison Table

Appendix A

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D	Company E
Annual Cost	£1,500	£535.16	£1,216.70	£1,659.68	£638.50 (5 sessions) £691 (6 sessions) £774 (8 sessions)
Contract Length	3 Years	5 Years	5 Years	5 Years	Annual Pricing Provided
24/7 Telephone Counselling Helpline	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24/7 Medical Information Helpline	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial & Legal Advice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family Care / Housing Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clinical Assessment / Triage	✓ Clinical First	Not Specified	Not Specified	Not Specified	✓
Structured Counselling Sessions	Clinically Appropriate (typically 4–12)	8	10	10–12	5–8 depending on package
Face-to-Face Counselling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video Counselling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Live Chat Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	Not Evidenced
Wellbeing App / Portal	✓ Health One	✓ Wisdom	✓ Wisdom	✓ Wisdom	✓
SilverCloud CBT	Similar Digital Programmes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support for Family Members	Up to 5 Household Members	Dependants	Dependants	Dependants	Family Members (16+)
Available to Councillors	✓	Not Evidenced	Not Evidenced	Not Evidenced	Not Evidenced
Management Support Line	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
People Leader Support	✓	✗	✓	✓	Manager Helpline

Life Coaching	6 Sessions	✗	✗	4 Sessions	✗
Financial Wellbeing Coaching	✓	✗	3 Sessions	3 Sessions	Guidance
Virtual GP Service	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓ Anytime HealthLine
Menopause Support	✗	✗	✗	✓	Not Evidenced
Critical Incident Support	✓	Not Evidenced	Not Evidenced	Not Evidenced	Available at Extra Cost
Mental Health First Aid Training Included	✗	✗	1 Place	2 Places	✗
Occupational Health Support Included	✗	✗	10% Workforce	25% Workforce	✗
Promotional Materials Provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated Account Manager	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Usage Reporting / Analytics	Advanced Analytics & Benchmarking	Standard	Enhanced	Enhanced	Standard



Date: 21st July 2026

Title: Membership of external organisations

Purpose of the Report: To advise members of the membership of the Senior Management Team (SMT) on relevant external professional organisations.

Contact Officer: Louise Senior, Head of Democratic Services

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1) To approve the continued membership of the Town Clerk, Head of Democratic Services, and Head of Environmental and Community Services in relevant external professional organisations.
- 2) To note that the associated membership fees, officer time, and travel costs are proportionate to the benefits gained.

2. BACKGROUND

Over time the council has supported the professional membership and involvement in a number of external professional organisations by staff members. This report is provided to outline to members the range, scope and benefits of these memberships.

The memberships held are professional in nature and relate directly to the functional responsibilities of each officer. They typically include:

- Access to sector updates and legislative changes
- Networking with peers across other councils and organisations
- Opportunities to share and learn best practice
- Attendance at meetings, seminars, and training events

Such memberships are common across local government and the parish/town council sector and support officers in maintaining up-to-date knowledge, professional standards and sector awareness.

3. MEMBERSHIPS HELD

Town Clerk

The Town Clerk holds membership of a number of professional bodies and participates in sector peer networks relevant to the role of chief officer for a local council.

These include:

- Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) – Board Member, 4 Board mtgs per annum (2 x in person, usually tied in with National and Practitioners conferences, 2 x virtual)
- Bedfordshire Branch of SLCC – Committee Secretary. 4 meetings per annum, locally held, plus some ad hoc administrative work
- National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- CPC Register of Peers (likely to conclude in 2026 due to a lack of further government funding)

Participation requires officer time and incurs travel costs.

Head of Environmental and Community Services

The Head of Environmental and Community Services undertakes professional sector roles as a judge for both the Green Flag Award Scheme and Anglia in Bloom.

These roles are undertaken on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year and require officer time during normal working hours. They provide valuable insight into national best practice in parks, open spaces and environmental management, enabling knowledge and experience to be applied directly to the Council's own services.

The anticipated annual time commitment is approximately:

Green Flag judging – up to 6 working days per year.

Anglia in Bloom judging – up to 8 working days per year.

These commitments are scheduled around operational requirements. Participation requires officer time and incurs travel costs.

Head of Democratic Services

The Head of Democratic Services is a member of Association of Democratic Officers. Virtual meetings are held on a regular basis. Participation requires officer time

Benefits to the Town Council

While the organisations are external, there are clear benefits to the Town Council, including:

- Improved service delivery: Officers can apply best practice and innovative ideas gained through their networks.
- Professional development: Continuous learning strengthens officer capability and resilience.

- Strategic awareness: Early awareness of policy, funding opportunities and sector trends.
- Partnership working: Enhanced relationships with neighbouring authorities and sector bodies.
- Reputational benefit: Active engagement in the sector positions the Council as outward-looking and proactive.

Cost Considerations

Annual membership subscriptions have already been approved by the Council through the budget-setting process.

The primary ongoing costs associated with participation are:

- Officer time attending relevant meetings, events and professional activities.
- Officer time undertaking recognised external judging roles where these support professional development and the Council's objectives.
- Travel expenses where physical attendance is required.

Value for Money

Participation is managed to ensure:

- Attendance is targeted and relevant
- Learning outcomes are applied within the organisation
- Activities support the Council's objectives

This ensures that officer involvement represents good value for money.

5. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

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

4.5 Enhance the role of the council.

4.6 To actively consider and weight the impact of new and existing initiatives and services.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- Supports staff development and cohesive partnership working.

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

Crime and Disorder Implications

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

Financial Implications

- Officer time
- Travel expenses
- Membership costs

Risk Implications

- There are no risk implications arising from the recommendations

Equalities Implications

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

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

Membership of external professional organisations by senior officers provides clear and demonstrable benefits to the Town Council through improved knowledge, networking, and service delivery.

The associated costs are proportionate, consisting primarily of staff time and travel, membership fees and represent good value for money.

Memberships will continue to be monitored to ensure alignment with Council priorities and delivery of ongoing benefit.

8. APPENDICES

None