

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Community Services Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
9th February 2021 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: K Wattingham Chairman
J Carroll
C Copleston
Y Farrell
S Goodchild
M Kennedy Substitute
T McMahon

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Tara Earnshaw Community Development Officer
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 6

Apologies: Councillors: A Slough

11492 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Slough (Cllr Kennedy substituted)

11493 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Members of the public were in attendance at the meeting to raise concerns over the possible future development of Windsor Drive under agenda item 12, Community Assets. Queries were raised as to whether members of the public could do anything to support the possible application of the land at Windsor Drive becoming a Community Asset.

It was advised that any application to register a site as a community asset had to be supported by evidence of community use.

11494 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

11495 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2020.

Members were requested to note that the Bulk Waste Subsidy scheme was launched on 1st January 2021. During January a total of 4 collections had been completed under this scheme. Further updates on this initiative would be provided through the Community Safety Initiative report as presented every other month to CCWG.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Community Services Committee meetings held on 2nd November 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11496 REPORT FROM GROUNDWORK

Diane Hegley, Groundwork, was in attendance to update members on the work completed on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members were advised that due to Covid-19 services had remained limited, but Groundwork were hoping to provide one evening a week at Bedford Square on an invitation only / limited number basis, with a maximum of 15 young people, after the half-term school break. A mentoring evening at Bernados Centre was also planned which would likewise be on an invitation only basis.

Members were advised the Lead Youth Worker for Houghton Regis had left Groundwork's employment, but would remain as an occasional worker to offer continuity for the young people of Houghton Regis.

11497 HRTC YOUTH SERVICES

Members received an update report on work undertaken by the Community Development Officer between November 2020 to January 2021.

Members requested specific updates on Shop Local and the Youth Council.

Members were advised that the Shop Local scheme had encountered difficulties due to Covid-19 restrictions as many shops had been unable to open. Some of the Youth Council members were leaving the council as they were growing older and their priorities were changing. Recruitment for new members would take place when possible.

Resolved: To note the report.

11498 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members received the income and expenditure report, highlighting significant variances, for Community Services Committee to date.

11499 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING WORKING GROUPS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Events Working Group	29 th October and 3 rd December 2020.
Combating Crime Working Group	21 st October, 18 th November and 16 th December 2020.

Members were requested to note that Minute EWG604 Additional Budget Requirements:

To request an additional £3500 from Community Services, bringing the total budget request to £42,500 for community events in financial year 2021-2022.

This request had been superseded by the HRTC budget setting process. The budget for Events for 2021/22 had been set at £35,000.

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

11500 REVIEW OF TOWN CRIER

After the delivery of the last Town Crier it was requested that a review be completed on the content and style (in terms of the balance of text and pictures).

The following was previously agreed at the Community Services on 25th June 2018, Minute 9482:

Resolved: To provide a biannual newsletter to every household in the parish.

Further consideration was given to the Town Crier on 5th November 2018, where the following was agreed, Minute 9647:

Resolved: To publish the Crier in accordance with the following:

Delivery – door to door

Frequency – bi-annually

Size – 8 pages

Page size – A4

Colour – full colour

Contents –

- *Council contact details*
- *Meeting dates*
- *Mayoral foreword, events attended, events planned*
- *Details on forthcoming council events*
- *Review of events*
- *Notification of publication of Annual report*
- *Notification of precept and budget*
- *Promotion of community events 8/2/21*
- *Town council and committee updates of work completed / undertaken and of forthcoming considerations*
- *Details of HRTC grants scheme*
- *Competition*

List of events to cover the life of the issue

Members were advised of the available budget for the Crier in 2021/22 was £4,400. This budget was sufficient to produce and deliver an 8 page bi-annual publication on recyclable paper.

The report was noted.

11501 TOWN CRIER – SPRING 2021 EDITION

As members were aware the Council produce and distribute a Town Crier newsletter to all residents in March each year. Members were asked to consider the March 2021 edition. The following points were highlighted:

At the time of the meeting, the council could not be confident that it would be possible to distribute an edition due to lock down restrictions. In addition, the content of the Crier had a strong focus on past and future events. As past events had been very different and future events were not confirmed, it was difficult to foresee what the content of a Spring Town Crier would look like.

As an alternative, members considered:

1. Making copies available at key locations, such as town centre retail outlets and neighbourhood retail outlets. However, these opportunities were very limited for various reasons (against company policy, not wanting to handle paper copies, space restrictions etc), although the concerns over content remained.
2. Not to produce a Spring edition but to continue to use social media and the council's website to communicate out.
3. Delay publication until June time when restrictions may be lifted, although the concerns over content remained.
4. Plan for a bumper edition in Autumn (funding from 2020/21 would need to be carried over).
5. Make more use of the council's noticeboards and / or banners. One of the aims of the Town Crier was to reach residents who do not access online sources of information, members could consider this an alternative. Members were provided with a draft example to give an impression of a possible banner.

Resolved: Not to produce a Spring edition but to:

- 1. continue to use social media and the council's website to communicate out.**
- 2. make more extensive use of the Council's noticeboards and install banners in key locations.**

11502 VISION

Members received an extract from the approved Vision 2020/2024 as it related to the work of this committee. Members comments were invited.

Members acknowledged that delivery of the Vision had been different to their initial expectations due to Covid-19.

Members were advised that although Houghton Regis Town Council had been limited by Covid-19 restrictions, virtual events had still been offered to residents albeit on a smaller but more regular scale.

Members wanted to assure members of the public that items on the Vision were still being progressed wherever possible.

11503 COMMUNITY ASSETS

In 2015 the Council made a number of applications for Assets of Community Value.

The following table summarises the applications:

<i>Location</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Expiry</i>
Bedford Square Community Centre	Accepted	12/02/21
Dunstablans Rugby Club	Accepted Now expired	16/02/21
Former Netto Site	Rejected	-
HR Leisure Centre	Accepted	08/02/21
HR Library	Accepted	12/02/21
Land at Windsor Drivee	Accepted	12/02/21
Parkside Neighbourhood Centre	Accepted	02/03/21
St Vincent's Social Club	Accepted Now expired	16/12/20
The Red House	Rejected	-

Members had been advised that the listing for Dunstablans Rugby Club and St Vincent's Social Club were due to expire.

The CBC website details all the applications made for properties in Houghton Regis and whether or not they were accepted as an Asset of Community Value. Where an application was rejected the reasons were provided.

Members were invited to consider, reflecting on the supporting guidance, any further applications, either new applications, or renewals.

The guidance detailed the process and outlined the criteria and the benefits of having an asset listed. The evidence required was more stringent than previously applied.

Members were advised that at the Planning Committee on 25th January, members of that committee suggested that it may be suitable to seek to have land at Windsor Drive and HR Leisure Centre listed. Both sites were listed but were nearing their expiry date. It was highlighted to members that should these applications be successful, it would only provide the local community group a chance to make a bid and purchase the asset on the open market. The listing would not protect the site from future development.

Concerns were raised about managing residents' expectations. Concerns were shared that residents may feel that the listing of a site as a Community Asset would protect it from future development. This was not the case.

It was advised that as the land at Windsor Drive was owned by Central Bedfordshire Council it would be unlikely that this site would ever come forward on the open market.

A member suggested that the members of the public could form a 'Friends of Windsor Drive' group which would give them a stakeholder interest.

A member raised concerns over the lack of medical provision within the town. Members were reminded that this was for the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide this facility and this process had been held up due to the re-allocation of staff resources due to the impact of Covid-19.

Members were advised the need for medical facilities had been highlighted at the Town Partnership Committee meeting and would be a standing item within the work programme on future Town Partnership Committee agendas.

Members of the public were given an additional opportunity to speak.

A member of the public requested clarification on the decision-making process on the re-application of Windsor Drive as a community asset. It was advised that the vote at the end of the item would determine the outcome.

A member of the public requested further information regarding photographic evidence which would be limited due to the government restrictions for the year 2020. It was advised that specifically recent evidence of community value was required.

Members of the public requested sight of the original document submitted for the previous Community Asset application for the land at Windsor Drive.

It was advised that the Town Clerk would seek to find the original document, however, if the previous application had been submitted via a web-based submission form, it would not be available through Houghton Regis Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council would need to be contacted for this information.

A member of the public suggested that government funding may be made available to assist with mental wellbeing and could this land be considered for this funding as it was considered valuable within the community for the health and mental wellbeing of residents.

Members of the public raised concerns that this would set a precedence for other green spaces within Houghton Regis.

A member suggested that the possibility of negotiating a land swap could be considered as there was additional land at the rear of Windsor Drive.

Members were advised that Houghton Regis Town Council would not be in a position to purchase this land without funding through the public work loan board.

Members voted on the recommendation:

To submit applications for Asset of Community value for the following sites:

- *Land at Windsor Drive*
- *HR Leisure Centre*

A recorded vote was requested:

Proposed by: J Carroll Seconded by: T McMahon

Members for: J Carroll, T McMahon, K Wattingham

Members against: M Kennedy, S Goodchild, C Copleston, Y Farrell

Accordingly, the motion was not carried.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Dated this day of

Chairman

DRAFT