

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP  
COMMITTEE  
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET  
ON 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024**

Present: Town Cllrs: **C Slough (Vice-Chair), J Carroll, Y Farrell and D Jones**

CBC Cllrs: **T McMahon (Chair), C Alderman, S Goodchild and P Hamill**

CBC Officers: Anna Bosworth, Head of Investment, Employment & Skills (virtual)  
Beverley Gaynor, Place Programme Manager (virtual)  
Sarah Hughes, Community Engagement Manager (virtual)  
Fiona Steeley, Senior Community Engagement Officer (virtual)  
Tobin Stephenson, Head of Services, MANOP (virtual)

HRTC Officers: Clare Evans, Town Clerk  
Amanda Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: D Gibbons  
J Anderson  
C Reagan

**1007 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

**1008 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None

**1009 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR  
DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**1010 MINUTES**

Members were requested to:

Approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023  
and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

*In order to provide context for Agenda Items 5 & 6, it was agreed to bring forward Agenda  
Item 10*

## 1011 BUSINESS SUPPORT SCHEMES

Representatives from CBC presented an update on schemes to support local businesses including new schemes under the UKSPF programme.

CBC had been allocated £4.6 million to deliver the missions from this fund. The breakdown was as follows:

### **Communities and Place - £1.98m**

- Improvements to town centres and high streets
- Community & neighbourhood infrastructure projects and the Community Grant Scheme had been launched
- Reduce the cost of living, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, climate change
- Funding to support relevant feasibility studies

### **Supporting Local Business - £2.06m**

- Business innovation
- Business start-up
- Export grants
- Local business decarbonisation

### **People and Skills - £0.4333m**

The programme was due to end in March 2025.

## 1012 CBC UPDATE REPORT

Members were provided with the CBC report for information and the following items were highlighted:

### **Community Safety**

- Largest volume of cases related to noise pollution
- The CCTV report gathered data but was not a reflection of police response
- The Leisure Centre was seeing a positive trend in attendance and swimming instructors had been recruited
- The new community and leisure centre was progressing

### **Active Lifestyles Scheme**

- The Falls Prevention programme was a part of this and was an important programme for older members of the community and online services continued to be provided.
- The library had been the venue for a number of service activities, including council events, a baby sensory centre and coffee mornings
- Houghton Hall was in consultation regarding the installation of play equipment for older children

### **Business, Investment, Employment & Skills**

- Houghton Regis has seen an increase in commercial property enquiries
- The town centre vacancy rates remained stable.

**Social Care Health & Housing**

- CBC were working through an evaluation with Beds RCC regarding Time2Connect but, in the meantime, attendance continued to grow
- Drop-in sessions were being held at the library
- CBC had just embarked on a national NHS survey being delivered to adults aged 18 and over who use adult social care.

**Environmental Services**

- Large fly tip clearances had taken place in 5 areas
- Grass cutting commenced in March
- In the period 1 Nov – end Dec there had been 28 instances of abandoned vehicles

**Communications, Insight & engagement**

- The monthly town & parish council bulletin was sent out every month
- On-line topic sessions continued
- Warm spaces were being provided. CBC had been working with 23 community venues and providing financial contribution to help with energy and food. A directory of venues had been updated
- There was still money available for the Ward Cllr Grant Scheme and applications needed to be submitted by early March for processing
- A list of live consultations was provided

In response to the report, Members raised the following points:

- Hillborough Crescent had no penalty notices despite constant parking problems in the area
- Would Time2Connect funding be extended beyond March 2024?
- It was queried why CCTV had been put in place on Windsor Drive. The Camera from Johnson Court has been moved but not to the requested spot. Both issues would be followed up with the relevant person.
- The figures in the NEET report were queried. Sarah Hughes confirmed she would speak with a colleague to gather further detail.
- Skills programmes appeared to be numeracy based rather than on literacy. CBC confirmed that the Government-funded programme was focussed on numeracy; however, literacy options were offered by CBC as part of their services and were available to those aged 19+. A Skills for All consultation looking at joining up with children's services and colleges would be starting soon.

**1013 HRTC UPDATE REPORT****Corporate Services**

- Adoption and approval of the Corporate Plan. A consultation would take place in late February/early March
- Possible asset transfer update – HRTC agreed to make preliminary approach to CBC

**Environment & Leisure**

- Parkside Recreation Ground – installation of exercise equipment in Spring
- Tithe Farm Sports Project – work outstanding relates to UKPN, chasing CBC highways to sign off Section 278 agreement

- Grendall Lane Proposed Cemetery - ground water levels are being monitored until Autumn 2024)
- Public Realm Improvements
- Continuing with the Town Ranger Scheme
- Houghton Brook – completing winter works from Village Green past Windsor Drive
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Applications submitted
- UK Rural Prosperity Fund – Application not successful

#### **Community services**

- Youth services – application with Department of Levelling Up to extend delivery into Houghton Hall ward
- Events

#### **Planning**

- NHP – A response had been sent to the Inspector. It was hoped that the NHP Referendum would take place Spring / Summer 2024.

### **1014 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE TOWNSEND DAY CENTRE FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

Tobin Stephenson, Head of Service – MANOP (Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People), Social Care, Health and Housing updated Members on the CBC consultation regarding the future of the Townsend Day Centre.

A consultation would run from 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

Mr Stephenson reported that the site was no longer considered fit for purpose. CBC had agreed to invest £1.25 million as part of the new HR leisure centre to meet the needs of people with additional needs with a view to consulting on this as alternative provision for Townsend Centre. This would provide increased opportunity for service users to use leisure centre facilities including the swimming facilities, gym and café.

Members questioned the suitability of the proposed location and whether the funds could have instead been used for the refurbishment of the Parkside Day Centre. It was suggested that the Parkside Day Centre offered a more suitable premises especially for adults with disabilities who may need a quieter space.

Members strongly believed that something bespoke was required for those with SEND needs, that would be more readily provided with the familiarity of consistent surroundings. It was felt access to the leisure centre facilities would be provided for all members of the public, of all abilities, and this proposal offered nothing of significance in addition to adults with disabilities. It was suggested that, perhaps, a more bespoke area should have been included as part of the leisure centre planning from the outset.

Members also questioned why community space had been reduced at All Saints View and now it was proposed to do the same at the leisure centre. It was felt that this was a cost-cutting exercise.

Mr Stephenson responded that space was not being taken away but that a community asset was being added. It had been designed in collaboration with various departments, with the

sensory experience very much in mind. Regarding the vacated land, the value of this would not outstrip that of the Kingsland site investment.

Members returned to the fact that facilities for the disabled should already be available and questioned what the significant additions were. Mr Stephenson highlighted that there were several significant additions that included an extra room, a sensory room, a wet-side changing space and a hoist.

There was still some dispute as to the benefits of the proposal; however, it was felt that this matter needed to be called to a halt in order to cover the remainder of the agenda. Mr Stephenson reiterated that he was happy to discuss the proposal further outside of the meeting.

#### **1015 UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE REVIEW**

Members were advised that an informal meeting was arranged by CBC between the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Clerks of the 5 Partnership Committees across Central Bedfordshire in December 2023.

Mrs Hughes, Community Engagement Manager, CBC, provided an update.

In early December, Executive Members for community liaison, including joint and partnership committees, had met to discuss how committees could work going forward and increase collaboration between the two tiers of councils. This was an evolution of the joint committees, encouraging more integration and co-operation and looking at what actions could be put in place to implement this. One of the short-term initiatives was to put the Executive Forward Plan on the Agenda, which provided the opportunity for councillors to see upcoming significant events.

It was highlighted that working collaboratively would be beneficial to all as shared information was a powerful asset. Members generally agreed but felt that transparency was required as part of the process. Suggestions to further this included getting abstracts of minutes from other meetings to gather salient points. Sarah Hughes suggested that a further option would be for each of the joint committees to produce their own workplan and these could be brought under one report.

#### **1016 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan.

Members were provided with the CBC Forward Plan of Key Decisions from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025. This would be included on future Partnership agendas to enable Members to consider items listed.

Including this item on future agendas would enable the Committee to see the key decisions CBC has to make and identify forthcoming items of interest. It would also provide an opportunity for discussion prior to consultation.

**1017 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION**

It had been requested that potential co-option onto this committee remain as a Standing Agenda item.

Members were invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. In this regard the Terms of Reference for the Committee state:

**Co-option**

1. To support engagement with local stakeholders the Town Joint 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 Town Joint Committee. Decision making around removals can either be taken by the whole Town Joint committee or by joint agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair, depending on each Town Joint Committee's preference.

The list of Co-opted Members should be reviewed annually by the Town Joint Committee

**1018 ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members had been advised of the CBC process to determine further consideration, at CBC committee level, of items and issues.

Members of this committee were able to use this process to forward items for CBC's attention via the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair.

As such, members were requested to identify and confirm if there are any requested items for CBC's attention.

Although the following items had been identified in the discussions during the course of the meeting, they were not considered to be matters needing to be put forward to the Executive:

- Proposed move of Townsend Day Centre to the leisure centre – consultation to be responded to by Members
- More detailed information on NEET statistics and work to reduce numbers of young people identified as NEET

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm**

**Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of April 2024**

**Chairman**