

Town Council
9th December 2019 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: M S Kennedy Town Mayor
D Abbott
J Carroll
C Copleston
D Dixon-Wilkinson
Y Farrell
S Goodchild
D Jones
T McMahon
R Morgan
A Slough
S Thorne
K Wattingham
T Welch

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

11084 APOLOGIES

None.

11085 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11086 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Goodchild declared an interest in item 12: HRN1 Community Building and advised members that she was a member of the Baptist Church. Cllr Goodchild left the room for discussion.

Cllr Carroll declared an interest in item 13: Councillor Allowances.

11087 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2019.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2019 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11088 COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	4 th September 2019 and 23 rd September 2019 10063 Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy and Investment Arrangements 10065 Risk Management Strategy & Schedule 10067 Mayoral Robes Policy
Community Services Committee	2 nd September and 28 th October 2019
Environment & Leisure Committee	17 th September
Planning Committee	9 th September, 30 th September, 21 st October 2019
Town Partnership Committee	23 rd July 2019

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

Office Provisions Sub Committee	18 th June 2019
New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations contained therein as follows;
10063 Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy and Investment Arrangements
10065 Risk Management Strategy & Schedule
10067 Mayoral Robes Policy

11089 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were advised that several events had been attended by the Town Mayor, the highlights being visits to elderly people residential homes. Also attended was Central Bedfordshire Council Youth Awards where Houghton Regis Youth Council were very well presented.

11090 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Members provided verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr McMahon advised members that she had hosted Pride of Houghton Awards on behalf of the Town Mayor, had attended Recycled Teenagers Christmas Lunch, Aylesbury Christmas Carol Service and Harpenden High Sherriff's Curry Night.

Cllr Dixon-Wilkinson advised members that he had not received an invitation to attend any Citizen Advice meetings.

Cllr Jones advised members that he had attended the BATPC AGM, updates received at the meeting included East West Rail and London Luton Airport. Members were advised that Cllr Jones was now on the BATPC Committee.

Cllr Copleston advised members that she had been fully briefed on the meeting of Hospice at Home, and informed members that they had organised two fundraiser events.

Cllr Farrell advised members that she had attended a meeting at the Memorial Hall and Cllr Wattingham was Chair of the Memorial Hall Management Committee.

Cllr Goodchild advised members that she had attended the BATPC meeting with Cllr Jones.

Cllr Thorne advised members that she had attended a Dial-a-Ride meeting. A new bus had been purchased to replace two older buses.

Cllr Kennedy advised members that he had attended the NALC National conference. Members were advised that Cllr Kennedy had found the workshops had focussed on Parish Councils, rather than Town Councils. Also attended was Houghton Hall Park Steering Group. Members were advised that there may be a shortfall in funding once the Heritage lottery funding completed which may require council consideration. Discussed was the possibility of extending the opening hours to enable venue hire.

Members were advised that the new gardener had made a positive impact on the kitchen gardens and had developed a strong volunteer base.

11091 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received the approved Terms of Reference for the Partnership Committee along with a covering report provided by Central Bedfordshire Council. These had been approved by Central Bedfordshire Council and had been reported to the Partnership Committee. The Council's Committee Functions and Terms of Reference would be updated accordingly.

Resolved: To note the updated Partnership Committee Terms of Reference.

11092 VISION

Members received the draft Vision 2020/2024 and were requested to confirm next steps.

Members discussed the promotion of the vision and agreed to handing out information at the next Town Council event. Members requested the Town Clerk prepare a survey/information pack to hand out to residents and several members volunteered their availability to speak to residents on the day.

Members agreed to remove an item under objective 3 from the vision as there was predicted funding issues preventing the delivery of this item.

Resolved: To approve the draft Vision 2020/24 subject to consultation.

11093 CODE OF CONDUCT - OUTCOME

Members received the outcome of 2 code of conduct complaints.

Members queried why the outcome of this complaint was being delivered differently to previous outcomes. Members were advised that this outcome was delivered in line with the revised Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Policy.

Resolved: To note the report.

11094 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Members received the councils Financial Regulations in light of revised NALC model Financial Regulations.

Members queried the process of bringing this item to Town Council rather than the Corporate Services Committee.

Members were advised that due to restricted timelines, it was more prudent to present to Town Council for approval before the new financial year.

Resolved: To approve the Financial Regulations.

11095 HRN2 COMMUNITY BUILDING

Cllr Goodchild left the room for discussion on this item.

Members were requested to consider the councils position in relation to the proposed community building within HRN2.

Members were advised that the funding was to be issued in three instalments, any plans should take this into account.

Members were advised that communication from Central Bedfordshire Council was expected before the next Town Council meeting. Members suggested that a sub-committee be assembled to focus on this project.

Resolved:

- 1. To welcome the provision of community facilities within the HRN2 development;**
- 2. To confirm that HRTC are keen to be involved in the development, delivery and management of the facility working in partnership with a third party group such as the Churches Group.**

11096 COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES

A report was provided to the Corporate Services Committee on 25th November 2019 regarding Councillor Allowances. The report was presented due to a revised Legal Topic Note (LTN 33) from NALC. Corporate Services Committee requested that the matter be raised at Town Council for consideration.

Members were advised that currently the Town Council cover travel and subsistence costs associated with Members undertaking authorised work of the Council such as attending meetings of outside bodies on which they were a nominated representative.

Historically Members had decided to not pursue a scheme of councillor allowances. As such the role of a Houghton Regis town councillor was undertaken on a completely voluntary basis. Members were reminded that the Town Council does pay a Chairman's (Mayor's) Allowance to cover civic expenses only.

Informal feedback from members indicated a preference for the payment of expenses rather than the provision of an allowance, for accountability and transparency to the electorate.

In carrying out councillor duties members may incur costs relating to travel, subsistence, dependents' carer's allowance, printing and communication.

Members were advised of the following:

Travel - members could already claim a mileage allowance for authorised council duties

Subsistence - members could already claim a subsistence allowance when certain conditions apply

Dependents' carer's allowance - in England local councillors were not entitled to claim this allowance under Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Printing – the council was able to print off any documents relating to town council business for councillors to collect

Communication – this related to the provision of a telephone and a tablet. These could be provided direct by the council for members to use.

Members were requested to consider if a scheme of members allowances in accordance with the Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 was required.

The alternative would be to consider a HRTC policy to capture the payment of expenses.

After discussion, members agreed the recommendation.

Resolved: To request that Corporate Services Committee consider and recommend to Town Council a Councillor's Expenses Policy covering travel and subsistence.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.09pm

Dated this 20th day of January 2020

Chairman