

Town Council
14th December 2020 at 7.00pm

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

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

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: C Copleston

11443 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from C Copleston.

11444 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11445 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

11446 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2020.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11447 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Corporate Services Committee	14 th September 2020 Members were specifically referred to the following;
	11332 Councillor's Expenses Policy 11333 Flexible Working Policy & Flexi-time Policy 11334 Drug, Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy 11335 Banking Arrangement, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangement Policy 11336 Complaints Procedure 11337 Code of Conduct 11338 Risk Management Strategy and Schedule
Community Services Committee	1 st September 2020
Environment & Leisure Committee	21 st September 2020
Planning Committee	28 th September, 19 th October and 9 th November 2020.
Town Partnership Committee	21 st July 2020

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

New Office Provisions Sub-Committee	None to present.
New Cemetery Sub-Committee	14 th July 2020

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations contained therein as follows;

- **11332 Councillors' Expenses Policy**
- **11333 Flexible Working Policy & Flexi-time Policy**
- **11334 Drug, Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy**
- **11335 Banking Arrangement, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangement Policy**
- **11336 Complaints Procedure**
- **11337 Code of Conduct**
- **11338 Risk Management Strategy and Schedule**

To approve the following polices as considered at Corporate Services Committee on 23rd November:

- **11429 Whistleblowing Policy**
- **11430 Bullying and Harassment at work Policy**

11448 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were advised that the Mayor had attended an online meeting with the Mayor of Leighton Buzzard and several other Town Mayors, the Poppy Appeal Launch, the Armistice and Remembrance services and the Christmas lights switch on. Also attended was virtual bingo, which Cllr McMahon won first prize, which had been re-donated to the Mayors upcoming raffle.

The Christmas card competition had been judged, a Christmas message had been recorded, a meeting held with the Mayor of Leighton and Linslade and the Mayor of

Luton to share best practices and had attended some training.

Members were advised that she had accompanied the Santa Float for the three evenings around Houghton Regis, and Christmas gifts had been distributed to the local nursing homes.

11449 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 Kennedy updated members on the attendance at Houghton Hall Park which had been very strong, the new drinks van in situ had proved popular. The Disability Resource Centre had considered the use of Houghton Hall Park Visitors Centre, this was yet to be confirmed.

Cllr Goodchild attended a virtual meeting on upskilling councillor skills, focussing on effective communication with residents, techniques and confidence building. Cllr Goodchild advised members that she and Cllr Jones had both attended the BATPC AGM where the opportunity to share experiences of how town councils had managed their services during lockdown.

Cllr Jones had also attended the Management Executive Committee meeting; members were advised that the BATPC budget had been agreed and there would be no increase for councils' membership fees. Members were advised that John Westbury had resigned from the Finance and General Purpose Committee, and Cllr Jones had now joined this Committee as a representative of Houghton Regis Town Council.

11450 SUPPORTING TOWN CENTRES AND THE WIDER ECONOMY

HRTC had received communication from Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), looking for ideas / suggestions to support town centres and the wider economy.

The town council would like to prepare a response to this letter. A considerable amount of work had already been completed on aspirations for Houghton Regis including the town centre, namely:

1. HRTC responded to the CBC consultation on the Future High Streets fund.
2. In 2018 HRTC compiled a list of services and facilities that the council would like to see in Houghton Regis.
3. HRTC had also developed a corporate plan for 2020/24.
4. Draft Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan.

To facilitate input, a report was also presented to the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee, which provided information on the above points. Members of this committee supported the work HRTC had already completed.

Members were asked to review the above and to discuss any other issues which they would like to see.

Members raised concerns that the health crisis of 2020 would impact the ability to deliver aspects of the Vision. It was suggested that some of the aspirations may need to be placed on hold.

Members raised concerns that the timeline for a response to the letter received from Central Bedfordshire Council was a two-week window, members suggested that this was too short a period in which to effectively respond.

Members suggested that contributions from section 106 money be utilised to support the community to achieve our objectives within the Vision.

- Resolved:** **To welcome the opportunity from CBC for HRTC to put forward ideas and suggestions to support town centres and the wider economy;**
To put forward the following documentation to CBC and to welcome subsequent discussions:
- 1. HRTC response to the CBC consultation on the Future High Streets fund.**
 - 2. Minute 9722 (Town Council 10th December 2018) incorporating a list of services and facilities that HRTC would like to see in Houghton Regis.**
 - 3. HRTC corporate plan: Our Vision: Our Town 2020/24.**
 - 4. Draft Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan**

11451 UPDATE ON NEW CEMETERY

A meeting of the New Cemetery Sub Committee took place on 16th November 2020. At this meeting members were updated on the work that the Clerk and CBC officers had completed to consider options and possibilities for new burial provision with Houghton Regis. Members also considered options for next steps.

Following on from this meeting the Tier 2 site investigation had been arranged and took place week commencing 7th December at the land at Grendall Lane. The report on findings should be available shortly afterwards. These would be shared with the council and with the Environment Agency (EA). The EA would advise whether they required a Tier 3 assessment to be made.

Ahead of the Tier 2 investigations an update had been provided on the Council's website and on social media. A letter had also been sent to neighbouring landowners and occupiers informing them of the works.

Members were advised that the Tier 2 site investigation had highlighted some significant issues. This was to be discussed with the Councils cemetery consultants and a report to the New Cemetery Sub Committee would be made.

11452 PUBLIC REALM PROJECT

As members were aware over the last year or so Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) have been developing ideas to establish a Public Realm project to help town and parish councils rectify smaller scale enviro crime issues.

The concept was that CBC would provide capital funding to town councils to enable them to purchase capital equipment to deliver this project such as a vehicle, pressure washer, staff training, reporting software etc. The town council would then offer their services to surrounding parishes. The surrounding parishes would pay for work to be completed.

Houghton Regis had been paired with Dunstable Town Council and jointly would cover 14 or so local parishes.

Ongoing revenue costs would be met by town councils.

Resolved: To support the Houghton Regis Public Realm Project Proposal.

11453 TOWN RANGER

Assuming support for the CBC Public Realm Project, members were invited to consider the proposed post of Town Ranger to support the emerging CBC Public Realm Project.

This post was required to support the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Public Realm project. Without this post it was not possible to deliver this project.

As members were aware CBC would provide capital funding for the project. The ongoing revenue costs, including salaries, materials and waste disposal costs would be met by the town council.

Members were advised that, as this item crossed over three committees, in order to progress this in a more time efficient manner it had been brought directly to Town Council.

A recorded vote was requested:

Recommendation Proposed by: Cllr Carroll seconded by: Cllr Morgan

Members for: Councillors: K Wattingham, S Goodchild, Y Farrell, D Jones, D Abbott, T McMahon, J Carroll, S Thorne and R Morgan.

Members against: Councillors: M Kennedy, A Slough and D Dixon-Wilkinson

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the Job Description and Person Specification for Town Ranger;**
- 2. For the position to subject to job evaluation and for the salary scale to be approved by Personnel Committee;**
- 3. To seek to fill the position from 1st April 2021 subject to the CBC providing the supporting capital funding.**

11454 PAYROLL SERVICES

To enable members to appoint a new payroll services provider.

Resolved: To accept Company 3 as the Councils payroll provider from 1st April 2021.

Cllr McMahon wished councillors and staff a very merry Christmas and a happy healthy new year.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.17pm

Dated this 18th day of January 2021

Chairman