

# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: J Carroll  
E Cooper  
Y Farrell  
S Goodchild  
D Jones  
M S Kennedy  
T McMahon  
R Morgan  
A Slough  
C Slough  
S Thorne  
K Wattingham

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

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: C Copleston

*A Minutes silence was held to mark the passing of former Mayor Mrs Shirley Gilchrist and of the passing of serving Cllr Don Dixon Wilkinson.*

### **11900 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Copleston.

### **11901 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

### **11902 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

### **11903 MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

### **11904 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

---

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

Corporate Services Committee	None to present
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	None to present
Planning Committee	29 <sup>th</sup> November and 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2021
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

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

Office Provisions Sub Committee	None to present
Proposed New Cemetery Working Group	None to present

**Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.**

#### **11905 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members had received apologies from the Town Mayor therefore an update at the meeting was unavailable, a report would be circulated in due course.

Members received a verbal report on events that had been attended by the Deputy Town Mayor who had attended Harpenden's Burns Night and had aided the delivery of Christmas gifts to local schools.

#### **11906 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 Goodchild had attended Local Government Association webinar, the impact of Covid on young people and the elderly community was highlighted, and the economic inequalities of communities.

Cllr McMahon had attended Houghton Hall Park MAG meeting, Members were advised that Houghton Hall Park were advertising for a Head Gardener.

Cllr Jones attended the BATPC Finance and General Purpose meeting, which had given further consideration to the relocation of the BATPC offices to enable improved disability access. Members were advised a consultation had been launched by Ofcom into the postal service, feedback at the meeting had been to conserve the remaining Post Offices, particularly in rural areas.

Cllr Thorne had attended:

- Citizens Advice AGM, budget, polices and usage had been discussed. Members were advised of an increase in use of the service, however, this remained virtual.
- Dial-a-Ride meeting, members were advised that new premises were still being

---

sought to accommodate office and vehicles.

- Memorial Hall meeting, Members were advised that bookings had returned and an increased number of enquiries had been received. A new accounts system had been introduced and grant funding had been received. Members were reminded that 2022 would see the Memorial Hall's 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, further details of the upcoming celebration would be shared in due course.

### **11907 2022/23 BUDGET AND PRECEPT**

Town Council received the draft budget for 2022/23 for consideration and members were requested to approve a budget for 2022/23 and set a precept.

The Officer recommendation was proposed by: Cllr C Slough, seconded by: Cllr McMahan

A recorded vote was requested:

Members in favour: Cllrs: J Carroll, C Slough, A Slough, T McMahan.

Members against: Cllrs: M Kennedy, R Morgan, D Jones, E Cooper, S Goodchild, S Thorne, K Wattingham

Abstentions: Cllr Farrell

Accordingly, the motion was not carried.

An amendment to the officer recommendation was proposed to read:

To approve the budget as amended by the proposed amendments and allocations as set out in Appendix B and to set a precept of £1,119,236.

Proposed by: Cllr Jones seconded by: Cllr Morgan

Members in favour: Cllrs Y Farrell, M Kennedy, D Jones, K Wattingham, E Cooper, S Goodchild, R Morgan and S Thorne

Members against: Cllrs A Slough, C Slough, J Carroll

Abstentions: Cllr T McMahan

**Resolved: To approve the budget as amended by the proposed amendments and allocations as set out in Appendix B and to set a precept of £1,119,236.**

### **11908 REVIEW OF EAR MARKED RESERVES**

At the June 2021 Town Council meeting it was requested that a system be put in place to review ear marked reserves on a 6 monthly basis. Accordingly, members would receive a report on ear marked reserves at the January and June town council meetings.

**Resolved: To note the report and in particular:**

- 1. EMR 352- to transfer out from this fund £3000 per annum for maintenance of the Former railway Line in budgets subsequent to 2022/23;**
- 2. Deferred income – to use this funding to support the Tithe Farm All Weather project**

### **11909 INTERNAL AUDIT, PLANNING AND REVIEW**

A system of internal control was designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk or failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It thus provided a reasonable, not absolute, assurance of effectiveness. A system of prioritisation therefore pertains.

It was the responsibility of Council to determine the scope of audit, without undue influence from the internal auditor, to ensure his/her independence and that planning and reporting access was effective and direct

Members received the current policy. The policy had been reviewed and it was considered that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

**Resolved: To approve the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting & Review Policy.**

#### **11910 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010. The legislation covered a prescribed set of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

It also covered prohibited conduct including discrimination, adjustments for disabled persons, victimisation and harassment; services and public functions; premises; employment; contracts; and, advancement of equality. The latter provision specified a public sector equality duty, which applies equally to town and parish councils.

Members received the current policy. The policy had been reviewed and it was considered that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

**Resolved: To approve the Equality and Diversity Policy.**

#### **11911 COUNCILLOR VACANCY**

A councillor vacancy had arisen from the passing of Cllr Don Dixon Wilkinson. Members were advised the vacancy would be announced on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

#### **11912 CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL 2022 BUDGET CONSULTATION**

Members were formally advised that Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) had launched their budget consultation exercise which was open for public consultation until 31<sup>st</sup> January.

A consultation leaflet had been produced to summarise the headlines which was available to collect from the Library. Additionally, a questionnaire was available for feedback.

Members were invited to consider the proposals and to submit their comments individually.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.43pm**

**Dated this 21<sup>st</sup> day of March 2022**

**Chairman**