

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 21st March 2022 at 7.00pm

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

YRF

Officers: Clare Evans
Louise Senior

Town Clerk
Head of Democratic Services

Public: 3

Absent: Councillor: R Morgan

11980 APOLOGIES

None.

11981 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11982 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Goodchild declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12, recommendation 4, accordingly, she did not vote on this recommendation.

Councillor Slough declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12, recommendation 4, accordingly, he did not vote on this recommendation.

11983 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2022.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2022 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11984 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members received the minutes from the following committees and considered any recommendations contained therein:

Corporate Services Committee	22 nd November 2021
Community Services Committee	1 st November 2021
Environment & Leisure Committee	15 th November 2021
Planning Committee	10 th January, 31 st January and 21 st February 2022
Town Partnership Committee	23 rd November 2021

Members received the minutes from the following sub-committees and considered any recommendations contained therein:

Office Provisions Sub Committee	15 th February 2021
Proposed New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present

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

Minute number 11964 – Public Work Loan Board - Borrowing

1. To recommend to Town Council that an annuity loan over 28 years be applied for from the Public Works Loan Board as this offers a consistency of repayment costs with repayments matching an existing capital budget provision.
2. The Chair and Vice Chair of Corporate Services Committee be authorised to liaise with the Clerk should funding be required from the CCLA Property fund.

Minute number 11965 – Internal Auditor Appointment

To recommend to Town Council, at the meeting to be held on 21st March 2022, that Company 'A' be appointed, for a period of 3 years, as the Town Councils internal auditor provider.

Minute number 11861 – Human Resources Provision

To recommend to Town Council that company C be appointed to provide this service.



Minute number 11864 - safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

1.1 To recommend to Town Council that the Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy be approved.

1.2 To recommend to Town Council that the Induction Process be approved.

1.3 To recommend to Town Council that the Ex-Offenders Recruitment Policy be approved

1.4 To recommend to Town Council that the Disciplinary Policy be approved

11985 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members received a verbal report on events that had been attended by the Town Mayor.

Members were advised that the Mayor had attended several events, highlights included:

- Presentation of the 'Loo of the Year' award for Bedford Square public toilets
- A visit to Thomas Whitehead School speaking on the roles and responsibilities of a Town Mayor
- Civic service events for various towns

Members acknowledged their appreciation for Annie and her tireless work maintaining the public toilet facilities at Bedford Square.

11986 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 Farrell advised members that a meeting at the Memorial Hall had been attended and the plans for the Memorial Hall's 60th birthday celebrations were underway and invitations would be sent out in due course, the kitchen roof had been repaired at a cost of £12,500 and the accounts had been approved.

Cllr Goodchild had attended a training session on personal safety.

Cllr Thorne:

Dial-a-Ride had not held a meeting since their emergency meeting, however members were advised that land with offices had been offered which was being prepared for use.

Citizens Advice had not held a meeting, however members were advised of a new project with training on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion and were advised that Cllr Thorne would be taking on an active role in DEI.

11987 STRATEGIC POLICES 2022/2023

Members were provided with the opportunity to consider key council policies and a calendar of meetings and events for 2022/23. In accordance with Standing Orders these would be presented the Town Council at the AGM on 11th May 2022.

Scheme of Delegation

This was considered to remain suitable and fit for purpose.

Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

Members were advised that during 2021/22 clarification was provided on the voting rights of co-opted members. The following advice was provided:

Only in certain circumstances were co-opted members allowed to vote, these were management of the land, harbour functions if the authority was a harbour authority, tourism functions and the management of a festival.

As such co-opted members on the following groups could vote:

- Events Working Group
- Allotments Working Group

However co-opted members on the following were unable to vote:

- Combating Crime Working Group
- Partnership Committee

The Council's Committee Functions & Terms of Reference in relation to these meetings had been amended to set out voting rights.

Standing Orders

In accordance with national legislation, committee members must be physically present in order to vote at meetings as per LGA 1972.

During the pandemic, when the emergency legislation had expired to facilitate remote attendance, other meeting attendees i.e. councillors who were not committee members, officers and other third parties (e.g. co-opted members of committees or invited guests) were encouraged to join remotely to assist in limiting numbers of attendees whilst still enabling participation in the democratic process.

Standing orders were presented as approved, however, as the council agreed to continue to facilitate remote access to meetings, Standings Orders would be revised to reflect this when they were presented for formal approval at the May Town Council Annual General Meeting.

Financial Regulations

This was considered to remain suitable and fit for purpose.

Council Calendar 2022/23

The calendar for 2022/23 reflected the pattern of meetings as in 2021/22 aside from the Allotments Working Group, the frequency of this meeting had been reduced from every 6 weeks to 2 months.

Members highlighted some discrepancies and requested amendments to be made to the calendar.



Members acknowledged that Planning must be held every three weeks to ensure that all applications could be considered by the committee, however it was suggested that consideration be given to delay the meeting proposed for 3rd January to 9th January. It was also suggested that the Annual Town's meeting in 2023 be delayed until after the election to avoid it being held during Purdah.

Resolved: To recommend to the Annual Meeting of Town Council approval of the following subject to the amendments discussed:

- Scheme of Delegation
- Committee Functions & Terms of Reference
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Council Calendar 2022/23

11988 COUNCIL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Members were requested to consider the nature and format of council meetings going forwards.

Members received a report highlighting the requirement of members to be present in person at committee and sub-committee meetings, the report acknowledged that this requirement did not apply to residents, officers or external guests at meetings.

Members discussed the merits of hybrid meetings and the technological pitfalls. The convenience of hybrid meetings was acknowledged, particularly when other agencies were invited to attend. Members also acknowledged that more stringent management of public participation was needed.

An additional motion was proposed to read: To review the management of public participation in support of the chair of the committee.

Proposed by: M Kennedy seconded by: K Wattingham
Members voted in favour of the additional motion.
Accordingly, this became recommendation 3.

Members voted on recommendation 3:
Proposed by: M Kennedy seconded by: K Wattingham
Members voted in favour of recommendation 3.

- Resolved:**
1. Meetings of committees and subcommittees will be held in the council chamber with remote access being available to non-members and residents;
 2. Meetings of individual working groups and other informal meetings will consider how they would like to meet (in person, hybrid or remote)
 3. To review the management of public participation in support of the chair of the committee.

11989 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW



Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) had acknowledged receipt of HRTC's request to carry out a Community Governance Review of the parish of Chalton. Before this could be formally considered by Central Bedfordshire Council, the following must be in place:

- the views of Chalton Parish Council (CPC); these had been provided to CBC by Chalton Parish Council and were summarised as below
- further research to be carried out by CBC officers

Once completed the matter could then be considered by the CBC General Purposes Committee.

In summary the response from CPC included:

- CPC consider a boundary review at this time to be unnecessary due to a review having been held in 2017/18
- An area wide Community Governance review was anticipated to be in 4/5 years time when all boundaries could be reviewed. This would give a more strategic view of the boundaries and recent developments.

Members were advised it had not been possible to provide a timeline for the consideration of this by CBC this at the meeting.

11990 RECEPTION OPENING HOURS

Members were requested to consider the opening hours of Reception.

Members received a report outlining a conflict with hybrid working and the Flexi-Time Policy.

Members clarified that staffing would be available to answer any incoming calls between 4pm and 5pm, members were assured that there would be staff available answering calls until 5pm.

- Resolved:**
- 1. For Reception opening hours to be adjusted to 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday.**
 - 2. For the telephone switchboard hours to remain as 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.**

11991 CBC HIGHWAYS RURAL MATCH FUNDING SCHEME

Members were requested to consider the funding opportunity from CBC to bring forward a match funded highways improvement scheme.

Members acknowledged the need for improved safety around schools. It was highlighted that issues were not necessarily speeding, but inconsiderate parking, which presented traffic concerns.

Members suggested that Op Hana be requested to patrol the roads by the schools periodically to ensure the safety of the area during peak times.

YGF

It was confirmed to members that the potential 50% costs payable would be for the design fees, however, this would not be determined until the acceptance of the scheme had been confirmed.

An amendment was proposed to recommendation 5 to read: To fund any agreed works from the council budget in 2023 / 2024

The Officer recommendation read: To fund any agreed works from General Reserves.

The amendment was proposed by: Cllr Kennedy, seconded by: Cllr Jones

- Resolved:**
- 1. To apply under the Local Transport Fund Integrated Programme - Rural Match Funding 2022/23 to 2023/24 for replacement gateway signage and features at Bedford Road, Park Road North and Houghton Road;**
 - 2. To contact the promoters of Linnere to explore opportunities for a gateway feature on Sundon Road;**
 - 3. To seek to work with CBC on assessing the traffic speeds on Sandringham Drive to help determine whether a speed reduction scheme is required;**
 - 4. To seek to work with CBC on a project based around driver education and softer projects such as a school walking bus to help address parking issues around Tithe Farm Primary School**
 - 5. To fund any agreed works from the council budget in 2023 / 2024**

11992 LOCATION OF TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND MAYORAL RECEPTION

Members were requested to consider the location of Town Council Annual General Meeting and Mayoral Reception.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To hold the Town Council Annual General Meeting and Mayor Making in the Council Chamber on 18th May 2022:**
 - 2. To invite the Mayor to hold a Mayoral Reception during the course of their term of office.**

11993 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT - BORROWING APPROVAL

Members were requested to consider the request from Environment & Leisure Committee for an application to the Public Works Loan Board for borrowing of £500,000 to part fund the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project and the Recommendation from Corporate Services Committee authorise an annuity loan over 28 years from the Public Works Loan Board as this offers a consistency of repayment costs with repayments matching an existing capital budget provision.

Members were advised that there had been an increased offer in s106 monies, with the original figure of £38,000 being increased to approximately £280,000.



- Resolved:**
1. To seek the Secretary of State's approval for the proposed borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board of £500,000 as an annuity loan over 28 years;
 2. To fund associated repayments from 299 4871 in 2022/23 and for subsequent repayments to be funded from a new code in cost centre 299 specifically set up for loan repayments associated with this project.

11994 SUPPORT TO THE UKRAINE

Members received a General Briefing 1-22 – Ukraine released by NALC. The document provided advice on how the town and parish council sector could assist in this crisis.

Options included:

- Solidarity and support – flying the Ukrainian flag
- Lighting up buildings with the Ukrainian colours
- Holding vigils or moments of silence
- Publishing statements of support and solidarity
- Co-ordinating donations of items
- Signposting to charities and aid agencies
- Making a financial donation

It was suggested that the following actions be undertaken:


1. Expressing solidarity through signing up to the statement from the political leadership of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).
2. Flying the Ukrainian flag from one of the flag poles on the Village Green
3. Lighting the flag poles with the Ukraine colours
4. Expressing support for the Ukraine through the councils website and social media
5. Make a financial donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee and the British Red Cross. Members were advised that £3000 remained in the Small Grants Budget. It was suggested that this budget be used to fund donations of £1500 each to Disasters Emergency Committee and the British Red Cross.

Members expressed their gratitude at the council being in a position to be able to support the Ukraine.

An amendment to recommendation 5 was proposed to read: Make a financial donation to the British Red Cross of £1500 each 305 4218.

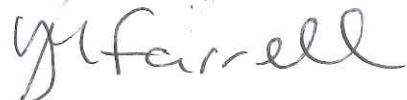
The officer recommendation read: Make a financial donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee and the British Red Cross of £1500 each from 305 4218.

The amendment was proposed by: Cllr Kennedy, seconded by: Cllr Wattingham

- Resolved:**
1. To sign up to the statement from the political leadership of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).
 2. Fly the Ukrainian flag from one of the flag poles on the Village Green
 3. Light the flag poles with the Ukraine colours
 4. Express support for the Ukraine through the councils website and social media
 5. Make a financial donation to the British Red Cross of £1500 from 305 4218.
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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.33pm

Dated this 18th day of May 2022

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "G. Farrell".

Chairman