

## HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 7.00pm

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

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

Public: 5

Apologies: Councillors: C Copleston  
S Thorne

Absent: M S Kennedy

#### 12290 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Copleston and Cllr Thorne.

#### 12291 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

#### 12292 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

#### 12293 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 29<sup>th</sup> September and 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022.

**Resolved:** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 29<sup>th</sup> September and 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

#### 12294 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES



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

Corporate Services Committee	30 <sup>th</sup> May, 18 <sup>th</sup> August and 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2022
Community Services Committee	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
Environment & Leisure Committee	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
Planning Committee	27 <sup>th</sup> September, 10 <sup>th</sup> October, 31 <sup>st</sup> October and 21 <sup>st</sup> November
Town Partnership Committee	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2022

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

Office Provisions Sub Committee	21 <sup>st</sup> February 2022
Proposed New Cemetery Working Group	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2022

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

**12208: To recommend to Town Council that the Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements policy be approved.**

**12209: To recommend to Town Council that the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting & Review Policy and Internal Audit Specification be approved.**

**12210: To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Working Safely with Coronavirus Policy.**

**12211: To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Menopause Policy.**

**12212: To recommend to Town Council that the Freedom of Information Act (2000) Policy and the Model Publication Scheme be approved.**

**12213: To recommend to Town Council that the Late Payments and Bad Debts Policy be approved.**

#### 12295 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were advised the Town Mayor had attended many events since the last meeting, including the Civic Reception at La Bella Calabria, Thorn Springs Care Home opening event, Circus, Halloween film screening, Remembrance Day, Recycled Teenagers Christmas buffet, Youth Council Christmas meal and attended the Churches of Houghton Regis Vigil for the tragic lives lost in the Tithe Farm Road murders.

#### 12296 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 advised members she had attended two meetings at SORTED, one of which was the AGM.



A meeting of CHEWS Foundation Trust had been arranged, however Cllr Goodchild was unable to attend due to a diary clash.

Also attended was accredited training provided by Central Bedfordshire Council on carbon literacy, which totalled six sessions with a certificate provided on completion.

Cllr Goodchild also attended a ten year anniversary celebration of the food bank.

Cllr McMahon had attended a Houghton Hall Park Project Meeting which had discussed designated BBQ areas in the park, concerns had been raised at the slow speed of the renewal process of the re-tender for the café provision. The topic of event cancellations had arisen and the availability of insurance from Central Bedfordshire Council as part of their climate mitigation strategy had been discussed. Positive feedback had been received regarding the themed flowerbeds in the Kitchen Garden with plans in place to install a children's area.

Cllr Wattingham advised members that the Memorial Hall were to fit a ramp for ease of access, policies had been looked at and quotes were being obtained for kitchen and toilet refurbishments.

Cllr Jones advised members that there had been three BATPC meetings, one of which had presented a diary clash, therefore he attended two of the three. Speakers were in attendance at the meetings and updated members of BATPC on NALC developments and discussions were held around flood resilience. At the Finance and General Purpose Committee the new premises move was discussed, it was also advised there would be a 3% membership increase for the next financial year.

#### **12297 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

Members were advised that Cllr Copleston was unable to remain as the Town Council representative on Hospice at Home.

It was confirmed the next meeting of Hospice at Home was to be held on Wed 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 1pm at Neville's Funeral Parlour.

Members were requested to consider and appoint another representative.

Cllr Jones volunteered to represent the Town Council for this organisation.

**Resolved: To appoint Councillor Jones as the town council s representative for Hospice at Home.**

#### **12298 CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE**

To advise members of the national Civility & Respect Project.

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**Resolved:** To take the Civility & Respect pledge as follows:

**By signing the Pledge, Houghton Regis Town Council is agreeing that the council will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that it:**

- **Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff**
- **Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors**
- **Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy**
- **Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise**
- **Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens**
- **Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the Local Council Award Scheme**
- **Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate**

#### **12299 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

Review of this policy was to be carried out annually by Town Council.

Members were advised that advice was sought from the Town Councils HR provider as to the suitability of the Town Councils current policy. The response was that whilst the current policy remained suitable the Town Council may like to consider updating the policy, by going one step further than the basic equal opportunity policy (which reflected compliance with the law) and positively encourage a more diverse workforce.

Members received a report and policies.

**Resolved:** To adopt the Town Councils Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

#### **12300 HONORARY FREEMAN & FREEWOMAN POLICY**

Review of this policy was to be carried out every 4 years by Town Council.

Members were reminded that the Town Council had the power to confer the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, s249.

Members requested the dates be removed from the policy.

**Resolved:** To approve the Town Councils Honorary Freeman and Freewoman Policy

#### **12301 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – FINAL DRAFT**



Members were advised that the Town Councils planning committee considered the final draft of the Town Councils Neighbourhood Plan at the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022. A copy of the plan was circulated to all members of the town council on the 13<sup>th</sup> December, for their consideration.

The Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (HRNPSG) were anticipating that this final version of the plan, subject to councils' approval, would be subject of a further public consultation in January 2023. The need for an additional consultation was in part due to the responses received from the statutory consultation that took place in August 2021 and also due to the inclusion of governments national First Homes Policy Guidance. All Neighbourhood Plans now needed this guidance to be included within one of the policies. It was proposed that a light touch public consultation was all that would be required.

The HRNPSG had been hopeful that by meeting the January consultation milestone, the referendum on the Plan could be included at the May elections. This would depend on whether this expectation would accord with Central Bedfordshire Councils timetable for their statutory public consultation on the plan. Members requested clarification as to whether this would be completed by May, it was confirmed that this would not be the case.

Members requested the acknowledgement of the dedication and commitment from members of the Neighbourhood Steering Group and the local community had shown throughout the process and wished them to be thanked formally, and for this to be added to the recommendations.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To adopt of the final version of Houghton Regis Town Councils Draft Neighbourhood Plan.**
  - 2. To allow minor changes to the text to be made up until the plan is presented for public consultation.**
  - 3. To note that the plan will be subject to a 6 week, light touch, public consultation period starting early 2023.**
  - 4. To formally thank members of the Steering Group for their input and dedication to the Neighbourhood Plan.**

#### **12302 KEY PARTNER GRANT – HOUGHTON REGIS MEMORIAL HALL**

Members were advised that the Community Services Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> October was unable to confirm the release of Key Partner Grant Funding to the Memorial Hall as the meeting was not quorate for the particular application. Members received the Renewal Form from the Memorial Hall which confirmed that they remained operating in accordance with their original application for Key Partner Status.

- Resolved: To approve the release of funding for the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall under the Key Partner Status for 2022/23.**

#### **12303 JOINT WORKING GROUP**

To enable members to consider the option of setting up a joint working group with Bedfordshire Police and the CBC Community Safety Team.

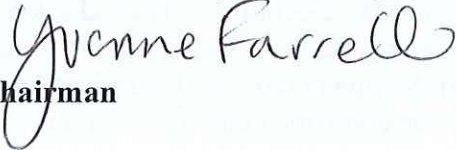


Members discussed at length the options to support a joint working group. Members felt that extending the Combating Crime Working Group would not be a viable way forward. It was suggested that directing residents to the appropriate support professionals would offer the best support for the community.

Members requested a networking meeting for local organisations who had a remit on crime and anti-social behaviour and fear of crime covering Houghton Regis to be set up in the new year to discuss and identify any gaps in provision enabling residents to be directed to the right support appropriate for their needs. The Memorial Hall was offered to the Town Council as a suitable venue for the meeting to be held.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.37pm**

**Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of January 2023**

  
**Chairman**