

# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: J Carroll Town Mayor  
N Batchelor  
E Billington  
E Costello  
E Cooper  
Y Farrell  
W Henderson  
M Herber  
T McMahon  
C Rollins  
A Slough  
C Slough

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

Public: 2

Apologies Councillor: P Burgess  
D Jones

### 12485 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Jones and Cllr Burgess.

### 12486 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

### 12487 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

### 12488 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

**Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

### 12489 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MINUTES

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

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Corporate Services Committee	27 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Planning Committee	24 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee      None to present

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

**To recommend to Town Council to adopt a revised Town Councils Leave and Other Absences Policy and to adopt a new Family Friendly Policy that covers all leave entitlements other than Annual Leave.**

#### **12490      TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor updated members on events that had been attended, which had included Bowls Club Open Day. The Town Mayor advised members that instead of nominating individual charities for the Municipal year, he would donate to a different local charity for each Mayoral event, with Tea on the Green going to the friends of Houghton Hall Park.

#### **12491      REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED**

Councillors were requested to provide verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr A Slough updated members on the Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space Group with the success of the summer activities, and encouraged promotion of these events where possible.

Cllr Jones had provided a report to be shared in his absence:

BATPC – County Committee and Finance and General Purpose meetings had been attended, members were advised the Chairman Councillor Blaine had resigned and the post had temporarily been taken on, until the AGM in October, by Councillor Russell of Biggleswade Town Council. The office move from Biggleswade to Shefford was completed at the end of April 2023, and the committee meetings were being held in the Chamber of Shefford Town Council. The draft accounts for 2022/2023 had shown a loss of £5,618, this was a larger amount than had been budgeted for but had occurred due to the under forecasting of the salary increase and costs incurred from the office move.

A Government technical consultation had been completed in relation to the infrastructure levy as part of the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration bill which was in the process of going through Parliament. This would replace the current developer contributions through s106 funding. It was agreed to submit a response supporting the present neighbourhood share arrangements, criticising the proposed reduction in the amount of the share and urging the retention of an incentive in the rates of share in the encouragement of parishes to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.

Three new Councillor induction sessions had been arranged primarily for newly elected councillors but were open to all.

Hospice at Home Volunteers – a meeting had been attended during May at which the draft accounts of 2022/2023 were presented showing a loss of £6,408. The Charity continued to lose money. It was suggested to the charity that a key partner grant from Houghton Regis Town Council be applied for, members were advised an application may be received.

The code of conduct policy was reviewed and was amended to incorporate new legislation and modern caring practices. The AGM was due to be held in July.

Cllr Carroll attended a meeting at CHEWS, which had proven to be informative and included discussion on their uniform grant policies, which was due to restart in December 2023 and would run for 6 months.

#### **12492 YEAR END ACCOUNTS**

Members received a report providing brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members were invited to raise any queries which related to the process.

*Members received this report for information.*

#### **12493 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2022/2023**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members were presented with the completed Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

Members were advised that the internal auditor completed an interim internal audit on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 and the year-end internal audit on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/2023 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report as attached.**

#### **12494 DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2022/2023**

Members were requested to approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

Members were advised of the following

1. Date of announcement: 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023
2. Date of commencement: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023
3. End date: 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023

**Resolved: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 as follows:**

- 1. Date of announcement: 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023**
- 2. Date of commencement: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023**
- 3. End date: 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023**

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**12495 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023  
SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

Members were advised that the Interim Internal Audit identified an issue of non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. Members received a report which enabled consideration of the comment made during the interim internal audit as it related to Assertion 3.

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2022 is attached for consideration, approval and signature, Appendix B.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To note that the failure to display the external auditors report by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 is non-compliance with Regulation 13 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations;**
  - 2. To confirm that as it has not had a significant financial effect on the ability of the council to conduct its business or manage its finances, as included in Assertion 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2022/2023, that the council can respond positively to Assertion 3.**
  - 3. To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023.**

**12496 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/2023  
SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 was received for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

- Resolved: To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 subject to external audit.**

**12497 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2023/24**

Members received a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2023/24 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

It was suggested that the use of funds from the EMR for New Office Provision be considered.

*This report was provided for information only, ear marked reserve movements were confirmed at year end.*

**12498 RECEIPT OF PETITION**

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Members were requested to note that a petition had been submitted to the Town Council on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at the Annual Town's meeting.

The wording of the petition was as follows:

*Petition for the town meeting Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 7pm St Thomas'*

*We, the undersigned note that, following the elections, there has been a change at Houghton Regis Town Council.*

*We ask our councillors to act on the following:-*

*Insist Grendall Lane is brought back to the full town council for further discussion.*

Subsequent to this, Members were advised that a Motion was submitted on 30<sup>th</sup> May to the Town Clerk as follows:

*From Cllrs; Jimmy Carroll proposer of the motion and Tracey McMahon seconder of the motion.*

*Motion.*

*To Instruct the Clerk and Chair of the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee of Houghton Regis Town Council to:*

- 1. To open negotiations with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding land owned by Central Bedfordshire Council at Grendall Lane Houghton Regis for its suitability as a future Cemetery for the Town of Houghton Regis.*
- 2. To proceed and complete the T3 investigations at the Grendall Lane site subject to Central Bedfordshire Council as land owner. To fund the investigations of the Grendall Lane from EMR 348 and general reserves up to £20,000.*
- 3. To contact CDS cemetery consultants to inform them of the change of motion by the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee as to Grendall Lane and to continue with the investigations into the Grendall Lane possible cemetery site.*

At the time of preparing this report, the motion was to be debated at the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

Members were requested to note that the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference for the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee enabled it to consider and determine all matters relating to the development of a new cemetery.

The petition was signed by some 175 residents, although not cross checked with the electoral role, it was taken that the signatories were all residents of Houghton Regis.

There was no legislation or local policy directing how the council was to respond to the receipt of a petition. The Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee was advised at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June that a petition had been received, what it said and how many people signed it.

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Additionally, the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee was provided with the option of referring this matter to Town Council in accordance with Standing Orders.

As the Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee had full knowledge of the existence of the petition and it was acting within its remit, the advice was that the Town Council should note the receipt of the petition.

It was highlighted that there was no procedure for petitions and a suggestion was made that a policy was produced.

Members were advised that the Corporate Services Manager would look into procedure with intention to report at the next Corporate Services Committee meeting.

Members were reminded that the substance of this petition had been addressed at the New Cemetery Sub-Committee.

*Members received this report for information.*

#### **12499 START TIME FOR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS**

Members were requested to consider a suitable start time for meetings of Working Groups.

Members were reminded there were three working groups to consider:

- Allotment Working Group – current start time was 3pm, members agreed to move this to 5.30pm
- Combating Crime Working Group – current start time was 11am. It was highlighted that this working group incorporated partnership working with both Bedfordshire Police and Central Bedfordshire Council Officers. It would be investigated whether a change of time would fit in the other attendees working patterns.

**Resolved: To change the start time of Allotment Working Group to 5.30pm.**

#### **12500 ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE NOMINATION**

Members were requested to consider the suitability and desirability of nominating the land at Windsor Drive as an asset of community value.

Members highlighted the community value of open space, particularly as some of the new developments locally were flats. Members were mindful that Windsor Drive would be held on the asset list for 5 years, after this time it would be deregistered. It was requested that this be monitored to enable the listing to be renewed in due course assuming that it did become listed.

**Resolved: To support the request from the Friends of Windsor Drive group to nominate the land at Windsor Drive as an Asset of Community Value.**

#### **12501 COMMITTEE, SUB-COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

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As members may recall at the AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 it was agreed to defer nominating to the Town Partnership Committee until this meeting.

For information Central Bedfordshire Council appointed CBC councillors were: Cllrs C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill and T McMahon to the Houghton Regis Partnership committee.

The Town Council was required to nominate 4 cllrs to sit on this committee. Several members showed an interest on sitting on this committee, Cllrs C Slough, D Jones, Y Farrell, J Carroll and M Herber.

Members were requested to vote in favour for the councillors who requested to be considered to sit on the Town Partnership Committee.

Cllr Carroll - 9 votes in favour  
Cllr Farrell - 8 votes in favour  
Cllr Herber - 4 votes in favour  
Cllr Jones - 8 votes in favour  
Cllr C Slough 9 - votes in favour

Accordingly, Cllrs J Carroll, Y Farrell, D Jones and C Slough were elected to sit on the Town Partnership Committee.

## **12502 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

As members may recall at the AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 it was agreed to defer nominating to the Houghton Hall Park Board and Houghton Hall Park Management Advisory Group until this meeting.

### *Houghton Hall Park Board*

In accordance with the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) the council were requested to appoint 3 members to the Board, one of whom must be from the governing body. To date the council had nominated 2 members, the Clerk had also been a member.

For information Central Bedfordshire Council had appointed CBC Cllrs Y Farrell and T McMahon to the Houghton Hall Park Board.

Cllr Jones and Cllr Batchelor expressed an interest in sitting on the Houghton Hall Park Board. It would be requested as to whether two members would be permitted in addition to the Clerk.

### *Houghton Hall Park Management Advisory Group*

In accordance with the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) the Group would comprise of members appointed by the Board. The Board was required to ensure that there were at least 6 group members, being 2 from each council, one from the local friends group and one or more from other interested parties.

Accordingly, the council was not required to appoint to this Group. However, should any members be interested in being a member of this Group, they were invited to contact the Clerk in due course. The MAG would continue to be supported by the Head of Environmental & Community Services.

Cllr Carroll expressed an interest in sitting on the Houghton Hall Park Management Advisory Group.

**Resolved:** To appoint Cllr Jones and Cllr Batchelor as representatives for the Houghton Hall Park Board and to put forward Cllr Carroll as the representative for Houghton Hall Park Management Advisory Group for 2023/24.

### **12503 APPROVED TOWN COUNCIL PLEDGES**

As this was a newly elected council, it was suitable to advise / remind councillors of pledges / declarations made.

- Civility & Respect Pledge:
- Climate change
- Cost of Living Crisis

*Members received this report for information.*

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.20pm**

**Dated this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of October 2023**

**Chairman**