

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 11th December 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: J Carroll
N Batchelor
E Billington
P Burgess
E Cooper
E Costello
Y Farrell
M Herber
D Jones
T McMahon
C Rollins
A Slough
C Slough

Town Mayor

Officers: Clare Evans
Ian Haynes
Amanda Samuels

Town Clerk
Head of Environmental &
Community Services
Administration Officer

Public: 2

Apologies: Councillors: W Henderson

Also present Cllr S Goodchild CBC

12637 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson.

12638 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairman of the Memorial Hall raised the issue of the Market Charter (item 12 on the agenda) and the licence fee incurred from a recently held event. It was suggested that the charging policy was not applied equally and that Market Charter rights only applied on specified market days.

12639 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

12640 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2023. A minor alteration was requested to amend the New Cemetery Working Group to New Cemetery Sub-Committee.

Jc

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2023 subject to the above amendment and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12641 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	17 th July 2023
Environment & Leisure Committee	None to present
Planning Committee	4 th September, 25 th September, 16 th October and 6 th November 2023
Town Partnership Committee	18 th July 2023

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

Proposed New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present
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Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

12642 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

In total, 62 events had been attended since the previous meeting, some of the most notable were:

- The opening of Houstone School
- The topping out ceremony for the new leisure centre
- Breaking ground at the new Tithe Farm sports project
- A visit from the Lord Lieutenant to the council offices

It was noted that the economic crisis was having a negative impact locally. In anticipation of a budget underspend in 2023/24, it was requested that this be utilised in 2024/25.

The Deputy Mayor gave an update on events that had been attended, which included:

- The Irish Person of the Year
- The ABF Soldiers' Charity
- Mayor of Kempston's Charity
- Opening of Ashbourne Day Nursery
- Mayor of Aylesbury's charity Latina evening
- Luton and Dunstable Hospital Light up a Life
- The Youth Council Christmas Dinner
- The Speaker of Bedford's Borough Council Carol Service

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12643 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 A Slough thanked the Mayor on behalf of the residents of Windsor Drive for the recent donation of £446 and for his ongoing support. The Town Clerk was also thanked for submitting an application which had resulted in Windsor Drive being listed as an Asset of Community Value.

Cllr C Slough had attended the BATCP AGM in October and the All Saint's View Stakeholders' meeting where it had been discussed how best to tackle parking issues.

Cllr Jones had attended the Hospice at Home volunteers meeting, where the need for funding had been raised; however, it was noted that referrals for people had been falling. Cllr Jones had been unable to attend the November meeting at Houghton Hall Park but had attended the AGM meeting of the BATPC with Cllrs Carroll and C Slough. The Finance and General Purposes meeting had also been attended where the budget for the coming year had been discussed and a 3% raise in affiliation fees was agreed. The County Committee meeting had included an item which confirmed that available training places had been quickly taken up and further opportunities were to be arranged.

Cllr McMahon had attended the Board of Houghton Hall Park. There had been some staff changes, including a new community park ranger and a replacement gardener who had been recruited. Plans for a dog-washing facility had been postponed due to costs but signage was in place for the dog agility area. A new piece of play equipment was being sought for the site previously occupied by the log stack.

Cllr Farrell had visited the Community Safety team who had been visiting various locations in Houghton Regis.

12644 INTERNAL AUDIT PLANNING, REPORTING & REVIEW POLICY AND INTERNAL AUDIT SPECIFICATION

Members were provided with a copy of the approved document. There had been no changes in legislation; therefore, it was suggested that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

Members were asked to consider and approve the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting & Review Policy and Internal Audit Specification.

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

12645 HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

Members were presented with the draft HRTC Corporate Plan for review and approval.

Jc

It was noted that 'Regis' had been omitted on several occasions and that it was important to be mindful of the historical relevance of the name.

It was also highlighted that on page 5 of the plan "2. Our Mission", this should read "3. Our Mission"; on page 11 there was no full stop after the text in the left-hand column and, on page 12, there was a semi-colon instead of a full stop in the 5th box on right.

It was suggested that the reference to The Red House on page 12 of the plan be removed as it had not been brought forward to Council. The advisability of incurring substantial costs related to the upkeep of a Grade 2 listed building was questioned, although further consideration could be given if a business case were produced to demonstrate how it might be financed. A discussion followed regarding whether the wording stated an intention of ownership of the Red House, or reflected the aspirations of the town.

A recorded vote was requested:

Cllr Jones proposed the removal of "the Red House" from the plan.

Cllr C Slough seconded

In favour: Cllrs Billington, Cooper, Costello, Farrell, Jones, A Slough, C Slough,

Against: Cllrs Batchelor, Burgess, Carroll, Herber, McMahon, Rollins

Reference to the Red House would be removed.

Resolved: To approve the HRTC Corporate Plan 2024/2028 with agreed amendments.

12646 TOWN BRANDING SCHEME

Members were asked to consider the development of a town branding scheme. The scheme was supported by Members and it was agreed that this should initially be carried out in-house.

Resolved: To begin to develop a town branding scheme to develop and encourage a sense of place and community.

12647 UKSPF

Members were provided with an update on the UKSPF applications. The decision on the application to the Rural England Prosperity Fund was awaited. If successful, the funding was to be spent by March 2024. Feedback on the UK Shared Prosperity draft submission was outstanding.

Resolved: In relation to the Rural England Prosperity Fund to:

- 1) Support the application made under the Rural England Prosperity Fund; To confirm the match funding requirement and that if successful the match funding will come from General Reserves**

Jc

In relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to:

2) Support the application made under the UK Shared Prosperity funding.

12648 MOTION RE MARKET CHARTER

The following Motion was received from Cllr T McMahon:

To formally request that Dunstable Town Council present a report to a Dunstable Town Council meeting to enable members to consider the negative impact of DTC exercising its rights under the Dunstable Market Charter to charge a licence fee to event organisers within a 6.25-mile radius where the event includes more than 5 commercial market stalls.

Members were provided with a report presented to Town Council in June 2022 by way of background and were invited to consider the Motion.

Cllr Jones invited Cllr McMahon to withdraw the Motion on the grounds that this was perhaps not the best approach. Cllr McMahon declined to withdraw the Motion.

Members were informed that Cllr Alderman had raised the matter at the full Dunstable Town Council meeting. There were legal implications surrounding Dunstable's market rights which would have to be explored and any change to policy would need to be equitable across all jurisdictions.

There was a wish among Members to collaborate with Dunstable and to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship; however, this had been an ongoing issue and the levy was considered unfair by many people locally.

The Town Clerk of Houghton Regis had been in contact with the Clerk at Dunstable and been informed that Dunstable would be holding further discussions on the matter at a meeting in early 2024.

The motion was proposed by: Cllr Mc Mahon

Seconded by: Cllr Burgess

Members voted unanimously in favour of the Motion.

Resolved: To formally request that Dunstable Town Council present a report to a Dunstable Town Council meeting to enable members to consider the negative impact of DTC exercising its rights under the Dunstable Market Charter to charge a licence fee to event organisers within a 6.25-mile radius where the event includes more than 5 commercial market stalls.

12649 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

Members were asked to consider and approve for Houghton Regis Town Council to engage with the NALC Corporate Peer Challenge Review programme.

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Resolved: To welcome the opportunity for Houghton Regis Town Council to engage in the LGA / NALC Corporate Peer Challenge Review programme.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.58pm

Dated this 22nd day of January 2024.

Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul', followed by a period.