

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP  
COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 20<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021**

Present:    HRTC Cllrs:            D Jones (Chair), T McMahon, K Wattingham  
              CBC Cllrs:            P Hamill (Vice Chair), Y Farrell, S Goodchild  
              Co-opted Member:    David Gibbons  
              CBC Officers:        Sarah Hughes, Community Engagement Manager  
              HRTC Officers:      Clare Evans, Town Clerk

Also in Attendance:    HRTC Cllrs:            J Carroll, E Cooper  
                              CBC Cllr:            T Stock, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing  
                              CBC                    G Coombs, Head of Facilities Management  
                              CBC                    J Dickinson, Assistant Director, Communities  
                              CBC                    I Hooley, Head of Place Delivery  
                              BRCC                 G Croxford, Community Engagement Manager  
                              BRCC                 B McBrearty, Community Connections Advisor  
                              HR Baptist Church    T Haines, Community Worker

Members of the public:            3

Apologies:            CBC Cllrs:            A Ryan

Absent:                HRTC Cllrs:            M Kennedy

**904    ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Members were invited to elect a Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2021/22 in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

Cllr Farrell proposed Cllr Jones  
Cllr Wattingham seconded Cllr Jones

All members voted in favour of Cllr Jones as Chairman of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.

Accordingly, Cllr Jones was elected as Chairman of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.

Cllr Jones thanked Cllr Ryan for her work as the previous Chairman of the Partnership Committee.

**Resolved:    To elect Cllr Jones as Chairman of the Houghton Regis Partnership  
Committee for 2021/22.**

**905 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Members were invited to elect a Vice Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2021/22 in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

Cllr Wattingham proposed Cllr Hamill  
Cllr Farrell seconded Cllr Hamill

All members voted in favour of Cllr Hamill as Vice Chairman of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.

Accordingly, Cllr Hamill was elected as Vice Chairman of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.

**Resolved: To elect Cllr Hamill as Vice Chairman of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2021/22.**

**906 CONFIRMATION OF THE SECRETARIAT**

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Committee were required to confirm the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for 2021/22.

**Resolved: To confirm that HRTC will continue to provide the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for 2021/22.**

**907 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION**

The Terms of Reference require the list of Co-opted Members to be reviewed annually, by the Town Joint Committee. Members were advised that David Gibbons was a co-opted member during 2020/21. Mr Gibbons had expressed an interest in continuing in this role.

Members were invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. In this regard the Terms of Reference for the Committee state:

**Co-option**

To support engagement with local stakeholders the Town Joint Committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate up to a maximum of 15. Each co-opted Member will be able to engage fully in all discussions but will not have any voting rights. Co-opted members can be removed from the Town Joint Committee. Decision making around removals can either be taken by the whole Town Joint committee or by joint agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair, depending on each Town Joint Committee's preference.

**Resolved: To confirm David Gibbons as a co-opted member of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2021-22.**

**908 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ryan.

## **909 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

A concern was raised on behalf of Craft & Coffee over the future use of Bedford Square Community Centre for a Central Bedfordshire College provision. As a regular user the group felt aggrieved that they had not been advised of the future unavailability of the centre, that they had equipment stored there and concerns were expressed over the affordability of other local venues. The Chairman advised that this subject would be dealt with under agenda item 11.

Mr Haines advised that he was attending the meeting in place of Rev Skinner in relation to the item on Bidwell West.

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

Cllr Goodchild declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item on Bidwell West as she was a member of the Houghton Regis Baptist Church.

Cllr McMahan declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item on Place Delivery as she was a member of the Houghton Regis Heritage Society and a committee member of Craft & Coffee.

## **911 MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021.**

## **912 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members considered the Terms of Reference which relate to this committee.

It was requested that an agenda heading be included for Any Other Business. It was advised that this was not possible as legislation required councillors to be notified in advance of issues which they were expected to discuss. It was confirmed that the draft agenda was shared with the Chairman and Vice Chairmen so additional items could be included if required. It was advised though that sufficient notice was required in order to enable officers to prepare a full committee report.

It was confirmed that although an alternation between CBC and HRTC as Chairman was discussed during the formulation of the Terms of Reference this had not been included in the final version.

The arrangements for onward reporting of the Partnership minutes were queried. It was advised that this was an issue for all Partnership committees. A further report would be provided. In the meantime, there was an existing process where the CBC member who was the Chairman or Vice Chairman could report any issues to the Monitoring Officer who would then progress the issue with the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

**913 IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLBEING IN HOUGHTON REGIS:  
TIME 2 CONNECT**

Gina Croxford, Community Engagement Manager, and Bex McBrearty, Community Connections Advisor of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) were in attendance at the meeting to update members and respond to any queries or comments on this project.

Members were advised that significant work had been undertaken to ensure a smooth transfer of services from Community Action Bedfordshire to BRCC. Currently new marketing material was being put together for the project. A physical workspace was provided at Houghton Hall Park. The service was open Monday to Wednesday and at other times by appointment only. The service was seeing 8-12 people per day. Connections had been maintained with local services and organisations, and it was anticipated that engagements with residents would increase now social restrictions were lifting.

**914 PLACE DELIVERY**

Ms Hooley, Head of Place Delivery, Central Bedfordshire Council was in attendance at the meeting to update members on the Welcome Back Fund (WBF) and the Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

Members were advised the LUF application had been submitted in June 2021. The project related to the Kingsland site and includes community, health, wellbeing and sport facilities. The total project cost was anticipated to be £24m, an application for £19.4m had been made. An announcement from central government was anticipated in the Autumn. In the meantime, CBC would continue with the initial design steps of the project on an at risk basis.

The name for the new school on this site had recently been announced as Houstone. This name had been chosen due to its links back to the historical and cultural past of the area.

The Welcome Back Fund business plan had been agreed by central government. The project was now in its implementation stage.

Mr G Coombs, Head of Facilities Management, Central Bedfordshire Council was in attendance at the meeting to update members on the future use of Bedford Square Community Centre. Due to a pressing need for accommodation by Central Bedfordshire College for SEND and NEET service providers, discussions had taken place to enable the use of this building for this service. Members were advised that the pre covid use of the site had been considered and was deemed to be low usage and as such CBC had looked at possibilities to run CBC services from the site.

It was confirmed that CBC would work with users to support them in providing another venue.

Members expressed the following concerns:

- Local councillors had not been informed
- The community had not been informed
- There had been no community engagement about the change in use of the building in terms of availability, affordability, ease of access, storage etc
- Other local community facilities had been lost
- Although other local community facilities were planned these were some years off delivery
- The building was poorly managed by CBC which was reflected in its usage
- Significant efforts were being made by CBC and HRTC to encourage footfall in the town centre, this undermined this work

In response it was advised:

- The college would be there under a 12 month agreement
- Concerns of the Partnership Committee would be shared with other departments within CBC
- The previous venue in Dunstable for this service was no longer available
- CBC saw this as an opportunity for post 16 education, not as a decision to close a community centre
- The youth club would continue to be able to operate from the Centre
- It is anticipated that the College will cover all associated revenue costs for the venue. The CBC Corporate management team would be considering the issue of rent for the venue

It was confirmed that arising issues would be considered further by CBC.

## **915 BIDWELL WEST**

Mr Haines, Community Worker, attended the meeting to update members on the Bidwell West community facility. The following was advised:

- The land for a community centre had been allocated
- It was hoped to submit a Business Plan to CBC by the end of the year, there would be community engagement on this Plan
- It was hoped to be able to provide a temporary community building, work was continuing on this.

## **916 TITHE FARM SPORTS PROVISION**

Members received the agenda report as presented to the HRTC Environment & Leisure Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021. A further update was provided:

- Letters included a FAQ sheet was being delivered to local residents this week to advise them of the project. This would also be on the website and social media
- The planning application was to be submitted in July / August, this would include the community space
- The tender was underway for the all-weather pitch and car parking improvements
- The tender process would commence soon for the pavilion

## **917 INFORMAL INFORMATION SHARING**

Members were referred to Minute 898. The previously involved CBC members expressed concerns over the format proposed. The Chairman acknowledged that this was disappointing.

It was noted that Cllr Stock attended as many meetings of Partnership Committees as possible so that the Committee had a link into the CBC Executive.

## **918 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan.

The Community Engagement Manager confirmed that a report would be presented to the next meeting on governance. It was also advised that the Community Engagement Manager would look at timings for other regular agenda items.

It was requested that a report be made as soon as possible on the future management and maintenance of the Chalk Pit.

The following items were also suggested:

- An 18 hole putting green in Houghton Hall Park
- Recruitment, employment and skills

## **919 CBC UPDATE REPORT**

Members received the CBC update report for information. The following points were highlighted:

The report provided a broad reflection and perspective for the locality

Community Safety

Safer Communities and Partnerships Team

This team was doing a lot of work and were keen to know of local issues. They were working to create a Community Safety Plan

Parking Enforcement

364 visits were conducted between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 25<sup>th</sup> June, which resulted in 20 PCN's being issued

During the pandemic there had been a more relaxed approach to parking enforcement in residential areas. A normal approach was now being employed.

Leisure, Libraries and Countryside

Houghton Regis Leisure Centre

Use of the centre was increasing due to restrictions being lifted. Incentives were being worked on.

Houghton Regis Library

There had been a number of changes to library services in response to the recent lifting of restrictions. These would be kept under review to ensure that staff and visitors were kept safe.

Houghton Hall Park

The café re-opened at the end of May.

Time 2 Connect were based there.

Business, Investment, Employment & Skills

The team had worked hard to deliver the business support funding to those eligible.

Transformation

Community Assets Grant Scheme

An outcome on applications would be available early August.

Members requested that more meeting time be allocated to considering the CBC Update report.

The remote access to the meeting failed at 9.15pm, accordingly the meeting was closed at this point.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.15pm**

**Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day of October 2021**

**Chairman**