

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
29th April 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman
P Burgess
J Carroll
E Cooper
E Costello
Y Farrell
W Henderson
T McMahon

Officers: Ian Haynes Head of Environmental & Community Services
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: 0

12796 APOLOGIES

None.

12797 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12798 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

12799 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2024.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 5th February 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12800 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

Members were provided with a verbal update on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project, as follows:

- A date for the transformer to be installed was still awaited from UKPN. The legal contractual date is for the end of June/beginning of July.

- The water is connected.
- A quote had been received from CBC for Section 278 highway works.

With the contractor off-site, there had been more ASB incidents, and the surrounding fence had been scaled. It was suggested that a nearby storage cupboard was providing a foothold and could be moved to deter future incidents.

12801 TERRA CROFT LEISURE GARDENS UPDATE

Members were informed that the waiting list had increased from 176 to 216. At the most recent inspection, Forty-six allotments had been rated 'green', 1 was the plot was vacant, and there had been one recent termination.

It was felt that the rules and regulations of tenancy should be reviewed and shortened. Clarity about what constituted a 'structure' was needed, especially in relation to wind protection.

Members agreed that there was merit in obtaining costings for a composting toilet, and it was suggested that an amendment be made to the resolution to include water butts in the costings.

Proposed by: Cllr Mc Mahon
Seconded: Cllr Farrell

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Resolved: 1) To Consider reviewing the Tenancy Agreement and Rules and Regulations, ensuring that allotment holders are consulted to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

2) To instruct officers to obtain quotes for supplying and installing a suitable composting toilet and water butts for Terra Croft Leisure Gardens.

12802 GROUNDS MACHINERY RENEWAL

Members were presented with the anticipated machinery renewals programme for 2024/25. During the budget setting, it had been proposed that new equipment could be procured on hire purchase to replace the following items on the schedule:

- Trimax Snake
- Kubota ride on mower x 3
- Kubota flail decks x 2

The proposed new items were a flail mower and a tri-deck roller mower. These replacements' merits were that for the same carbon output, productivity would be significantly increased. Additionally, in some instances, expenditure on parts would be reduced.

Resolved: To support the Machinery Renewals Programme for 2024/25 and recommend to Council on the 15th May '24 the planned renewal/replacement funding through a hire purchase scheme. Additional funding is being sought to support additional machinery to enable the grounds team to expand their services into the growth area.

Hire purchase agreement/loan supported by Internal Auditor.

12803 'LETTERS TO HEAVEN' POST BOX

Members were asked to consider a request to install a 'Letters to Heaven' post box in Houghton Regis Cemetery.

Letters posted in the cemetery would be collected regularly and then composted. Members were generally in favour but requested that the resulting compost should be used within the cemetery or the Garden of Remembrance.

Resolved: To endorse purchasing and installing a white 'Letters To Heaven' post box within Houghton Regis Cemetery.

12804 CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY INITIATIVES

Central Bedfordshire Council wanted to support more town and parish councils to increase biodiversity and enhance the local environment by managing road verges for the benefit of wildlife.

Members were advised that HRTC could work with Central Bedfordshire Council to:

- Trial no-mow sites as part of [Plantlife's No Mow May campaign](#)
- Reduce the frequency of grass cutting in urban areas
- Promote wildflower growth on suitable road verges

Members were requested to suggest sites to be included in the project, for review by Central Bedfordshire Council Officers, and to voice any concerns. Suggested sites were:

- Parkside Drive along its length and the area at Park Road North
- Windsor Drive
- Trident Drive
- The Link

The project was scheduled to commence in the 2025 growing season. It was felt that residents should be advised of the proposed project and asked for feedback.

Resolved: To consider and recommend suitable sites to Central Bedfordshire Council.

12805 ANGLIA IN BLOOM ENTRIES 2024

Members were provided with a list of 2024 Anglia in Bloom campaign entries. They were informed that Anglia in Bloom plans to visit and conduct face-to-face judging on all main categories, while additional categories will be judged virtually using 8 photographic images of each site.

The 2024 Houghton Regis in Bloom entries will be;

Main Category

- 1) Large Town – Houghton Regis
- 2) Historic Parks and Gardens – Houghton Hall Park

Virtually Judged

- 3) Cemeteries – Houghton Regis Cemetery
- 4) Churchyard – All Saints Church
- 5) Public Park – The Village Green
- 6) Public Park – Parkside Recreation Ground
- 7) Public Park – Linnere Park
- 8) Nursing/Care Home – All Saints View Assisted Living
- 9) Nature Conservation Area/nature Reserve – Windsor Drive
- 10) Nature Conservation Area/nature Reserve – Dog Kennel Down
- 11) Nature Conservation Area/nature Reserve – Houghton Brook and Flood Storage Area

Three hours would be dedicated to showcasing the town, and the proposed route would include All Saints View, the Village Green, the Memorial Hall, Houghton Hall Park, Lime Avenue, and Windsor Drive. Final details need to be established, but Parkside Drive, Thornhill Primary, Linnere Park, Farmstead, and potentially Chiltern School would also form part of the route.

Resolved: To endorse the eleven 2024 Anglia in Bloom campaign entries.

12806 VILLAGE GREEN – CIRCUS AND FAIR VISITS 2024

Members were advised to consider the amended date for Tom Smith's Fun Fair, which had previously been declined at the February meeting (Minute 12696) due to a clash with the Houghton Rocks event. The amended proposal was as follows:

Tom Smith's Fun Fair – The Village Green

Pull on site 9th September 2024

Open 11th September till 15th September 2024 – 5 days of opening

Pull off-site 16th September 2024

Members voiced concerns about the parking issues arising from these events and enquired how this could best be managed. Members were informed that HRTC had no jurisdiction regarding parking and deferred to Central Bedfordshire Council in these matters. However, there were byelaws applying to the Village Green, and ensuring these were observed could be delegated to the police. It was also agreed that members of the public should be encouraged to use available car parking facilities and to put this request on the website.

Resolved: To determine the additional fair visit date on The Village Green.

12807 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided with the income and expenditure report highlighting significant variances for the Environment & Leisure Committee date. They were advised that everything would balance as expected if the costs for Tithe Farm—which skewed the figures somewhat—were omitted. A calculation minus the Tithe Farm costs could be produced for Members to demonstrate this.

12808 CEMETERY FEES 2024/2025 AND REVIEW OF RULES AND REGULATIONS

Members were advised that the budget for 2024/25 had been set based on fees as of 2023/24.

Members were requested to consider a zero increase in 2024/25 Cemetery Fees; however, due to a number of complaints and concerns about the charges contained within the fees, Members were asked to instruct officers to undertake a review of both the fees and the rules and regulations.

Resolved: To set Cemetery fees at zero increase under the control of the Environment & Leisure Committee for 2024/2025 and instruct officers to review the fees and the rules and regulations to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

12809 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

At the March meeting of the Town Council, Members approved allocating the objectives to standing committees to enable more detailed consideration and progression (Minute 12755).

Members were provided with the allocation of objectives for delivery by the Committee. Members were asked to prioritise a number of objectives for consideration/delivery in the next twelve months.

Members suggested the following objectives:

- To improve the signage between key sites/destinations
- To improve integration between existing and new communities
- Play equipment and an inclusive playground to be incorporated
- Sporting provision
- Community action days

These suggestions would be taken away and the methods of funding would be considered.

Resolved: Approve the Environment & Leisure Services work plan and select a number of objectives for consideration/delivery in the next twelve months.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.31pm

Dated this **XXXX day of **XXX****

Chairman

DRAFT