

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP  
COMMITTEE  
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET  
ON 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

Present: Town Cllrs: **E Costello (sub), Y Farrell, M Herber (sub) and D Jones**

CBC Cllrs: **T McMahon (Chair), C Alderman, S Goodchild and P Hamill**

CBC Officers: Sarah Hughes, Community Engagement Manager  
Chloe Brennan, Youth Support Service Manager  
Martin Westerby, Head of Public Health Programmes

HRTC Officers: Clare Evans, Town Clerk  
Amanda Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: D Gibbons  
J Anderson  
C Reagan

Also in attendance: Cllr R Hares

Members of the Public: 2

**1019 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Cllr Carroll (Cllr Herber substituted) and Cllr Slough (Cllr Costello substituted).

**1020 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

An update was given on sports hall provision in Houghton Regis, an item previously raised at Town Council on 18<sup>th</sup> March (Minute 12749). Andrew Selous had received a response from the Director of Place and Communities that was felt to be inconsistent between CBC's own leisure strategy and what appeared to be taking place. It was thought that provision of sports hall within the Houstone school would be insufficient to meet demand and HRTC was requested to help facilitate a solution. Cllr Hamill encouraged members of the public to attend the CBC committee to express these concerns. The Town Clerk confirmed that HRTC was following up this item from the Town Council meeting in March and requested a copy of the correspondence from the Director of Place and Communities.

**1021 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**1022 MINUTES**

Members were requested to:

Approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**1023 NEET UPDATE**

Members were provided with an update on NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) by the Youth Support Service Manager at CBC.

There were four primary functions:

- Track and report to the Department of Education on school leaver participation
- Information advice and guidance
- Youth workers
- Delivery of youth work

The latest figures were slightly higher compared to Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard and related predominately to 17-year-olds and males. The breakdown was as follows:

- 35 NEETS
- 0 unknown (which was positive as it meant that all young people were accounted for)
- 19 were engaged with services
- 17 continue to be tracked every three months and contacted
- 9 of the 17 had refused support or advise they do not require support at this stage
- 9 had mental health needs
- 7 had special educational needs
- 7 were not ready for education, employment or training
- 3 were new to the area
- 2 had experience of care
- 2 were known to the Youth Offending Service

Members were informed that there were points of contact for young people within all schools and further education providers. Data was received from the schools to help track those young people with no destination for September.

Community Services currently receive some grant funding from Youth Support Services to support their youth work and young people's access to positive activities.

There is a new, shared mobile engagement van to widen interaction with the youth workers (and Youth Careers Advisors) in the Youth Support Service, this will be needs-led.

The Skills for All Strategy consultation has just ended, this will inform future work and partnerships. It was agreed, however, that more needed to be done and further ongoing analysis was required to establish trends and tackle issues earlier. It was suggested that HRTC might be able to assist by offering work experience, helping create connections with local businesses, and involving the youth council.

**1024 TIME 2 CONNECT UPDATE**

An update was provided by the Head of Public Health Programmes, CBC, who confirmed that funding for this service had been extended twice.

The original aim of the scheme had been to deliver sustainable improvement in wellbeing and reduce inequality through community-centred and asset-based means. It looked at ways to improve assets, build resilience and improve community connections and capacity. It was hoped these targets would be achieved by:

- Recognising skills and assets locally
- Making and maintaining community connections
- Mobilising, sharing and co-producing assets

This would facilitate communities to do more for themselves by utilising and strengthening the skills, experience and abilities that already existed.

Time 2 Connect had been effective at what it had done, but delivery had been for a smaller number of people than anticipated at the outset, due to some complex community needs. This had been the unforeseen repercussions of the pandemic and T2C had filled a void to meet these needs without making wellbeing more sustainable in the longer term.

Following an evaluation, it was decided that it would not be possible to fund a scheme along the same lines because a) the project had not fulfilled its original purpose due to the impact of pandemic and local need and b) funding pressures meant that it was not sustainable in its current form.

The scheme would need to transition after July and would need to meet the following criteria:

- It needed to be a sustainable model that was financially resilient
- The new model would need to be flexible, shaped and driven by the community
- Driven by a developing Community Engagement Strategy
- Link the future model to key community assets
- Measure progress and outcomes
- Develop a future Time 2 Connect with partners

It was necessary to get the engagement timing and the partnership right and it was suggested that local groups should be invited to contribute to the process. Local groups had previously been involved in Houghton Regis Together and the Community Engagement Manager would look to reconvene this.

**1025 CBC UPDATE REPORT**

A Representative from CBC presented an update.

**Leisure, Libraries & Countryside**

- The issue of sports hall facilities had been raised with CBC and was being followed up
- Everyone Active had hit pre-Covid figures
- The library had worked with HRTC on Easter events
- Houghton Hall Park had been working with Houghton Regis Town Council for the first Houghton Regis in Bloom
- The new play equipment for Houghton Hall Park would be going to tender following a period of consultation
- The Full House Theatre had provided workshops for children with special needs. This had been funded by UKSPF
- The Housing Team were holding monthly drop-in sessions
- The Culture Grant Scheme had been launched for those working within the cultural sector. A consultation would be held for Central Bedfordshire's first cultural strategy
- Highways had reported the repair of 129 potholes and 64 streetlights in Houghton Regis
- 72 PCNs had been issued in the last quarter and 110 visits had been carried out by the Community Safety team
- The Electric Car Club had launched in Bidwell West and Linnere
- An investment plan for the town centre with UKSPF funds was being drafted

**Supporting Local Business**

- 4 businesses had signed up for the Entrepreneurship Programme
- There had been an increase in enquiries for commercial property
- Vacancy rates had remained stable

**Social Care, Health & Housing**

- Phase two had reached practical completion at All Saints, providing 57 additional apartments

**Environmental Services**

- 50 abandoned vehicles had been reported

Members felt that parking issues were not being dealt with effectively. Parking at All Saints View remained a problem, and it was requested that the planned planters were put in place to combat damage incurred by vehicles. It was highlighted that parking was still available at All Saints View, which was not being utilised and could potentially be used by local workers.

A breakdown of the leisure centre figures was requested, detailing who used which facilities at what times. Currently there were waitlists for activities like swimming due to high demand.

The Community Engagement Manager highlighted the current Have Your Say consultations which included the Local Nature Recovery Strategy were other avenues to highlight local issues.

**1026 HRTC UPDATE REPORT**

It was agreed to accept the report as read and questions were invited from Members regarding the report.

A progress report was requested following the Peer Review Challenge. Members were informed that a draft report was awaited. Houghton Regis Town Council were obliged to publish the report within three months of the review and formulate an action plan in response to the report within five months. An action plan would be put forward at the June meeting of the Town Council.

**1027 POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS**

HRTC had completed a corporate plan, the three aspirations of which were to:

- Improve the visual appearance of the town centre
- Work with partners to improve the quality and accessibility of the public realm in the town centre
- Stimulate local business development and employment and training opportunities.

HRTC requested that the Partnership Committee consider the objectives of the HRTC Corporate Plan Objectives and provide feedback.

This was supported by the committee. It was advised that more detailed reports would be presented.

**1028 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2023/24 and to consider any changes for 2024/25.

Members were also provided with the CBC Forward Plan of Key Decisions which would be included on future agendas for consideration.

It was confirmed that a calendar of meetings had been drafted and would be checked with CBC prior to final agreement.

**1029 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION**

It had been requested that potential co-option onto the Town Partnership Committee remained as a Standing Agenda Item.

This would be the last meeting of the Committee in the council year. The Town Clerk would contact the current co-opted members to determine whether they would like to continue in their role, and whether there were any other members of the community who would benefit the Committee.

**1030 ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members were invited to identify and confirm whether there were any requested items for CBC's attention.

Cllr Hamill informed Members that a colleague was looking at ways that Partnership Committee minutes could be presented to CBC.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.08pm**

**Dated this XX day of XX 2024**

**Chairman**

DRAFT