

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
Monday 10th June 2024 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: D Jones Chairman
J Carroll
E Costello
W Henderson
M Herber
C Rollins
C Slough (Substitution)

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillor: E Billington

12849 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr E Billington, Cllr C Slough substituted.

12850 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12851 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

12852 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice Chair for Corporate Services Committee for 2024/2025.

Nominee: Cllr Henderson Proposed by: Cllr C Slough
Seconded by: Cllr J Carroll

No other nominations were received, accordingly, Cllr Henderson became the Vice-Chair of the Corporate Services Committee for the municipal year of 2024/2025.

12853 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2024 and 30th April 2024.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2024 and 30th April 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12854 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Personnel Sub-Committee: 15th January 2024

Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting of the 15th January 2024.

12855 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.iv. Council was required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub committees.

These arrangements were set out in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference. This document set out the system of delegation to the Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups of the Council.

Members were presented with the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

It was highlighted that the item ‘monitor and review risk management issues’ could be omitted in the future as this function would come under the responsibility of Town Council.

12856 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were presented with the income and expenditure printout for the Corporate Services committee up to the end of the 2023/2024 financial year, and for the month of April 2024.

It was highlighted that the report indicated that rates for the year, for the council offices, had been paid in full when, in actuality, it was half that had been paid.

12857 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members received the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for February, March and April 2024.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statement for February, March and April 2024.**
- 2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council’s RFO.**

12858 LIST OF CHEQUE PAYMENTS

Members were provided with a list of payments for the period February to March 2024 and for April 2024.

12859 INVESTMENT REPORT

In accordance with Committee Functions, Financial Regulation 8 and Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements.

The Corporate Services Committee to oversee and manage the financial obligations of the Council, including:

To receive quarterly reports on investments containing a forecast of capital expenditure, investment opportunities and a recommendation for further investment including where length and amount.

Members confirmed that, following the last meeting of this committee, notice had been given to the CCLA in regard to the sale of the units held in the council's Local Authorities Property Fund.

12860 RENEWAL OF DIRECT DEBIT, STANDING ORDER, BACS AND CHAPS PAYMENTS

Members were advised, under Financial Regulation 6.8, the approval of the use of Direct Debit, Standing Order, BACS or CHAPS would be renewed by resolution of the council every year.

Members were provided with a list of Direct Debits and Standing Orders.

Members were informed that the town council uses BACS payment for staff salaries only.

Members were advised of an additional two standing orders. These were:

- CDS (cemetery monitoring)
- Cloudy IT

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the use of BACS method of payment.**
- 2. To approve the use of Direct Debit, Standing Order and CHAPS method of payment.**

12861 PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with the committees Terms of Reference and Financial Regulation 8, Members were provided with an annual report of the council's loans.

Houghton Regis Town Council had three loans: two relating to the Moore Crescent Pavilion and another for the Tithe Farm Project.

12862 INSURANCE CLAIMS

Members were advised that there were no insurance claims since the last meeting.

Members were informed that this item would no longer appear on future agendas unless there was something to report.

12863 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

At the Town Council meeting held on the 21st March 2022 (minute number 11984) Members supported the recommendation from the Corporate Services meeting held on the 28th February 2022 that the Town Council appoint IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd, for a period of 3 years, as the Town Council internal auditor provider. This appointment covered accounting years 21/22, 22/23 and 23/24.

Members were requested to consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor for a period of 3 years (financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7).

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council, at the meeting to be held on the 17th June 2024, that IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd be appointed as the Town Councils internal audit provider, for a period of 3 years (financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7), at a cost of £800 plus VAT per annum.

12864 TOWN COUNCIL INSURANCE PROVISION

In accordance with Financial Regulation 15 – Insurance.

Members were reminded that at the last Town Council meeting, held on the 18th March 2024, Members were advised that the Town Council's insurance provision was due for renewal on 1st June 2024. It had been proposed to present a recommendation directly to Town Council in March; however, timescales set by insurance providers, meant that insurance quotes were not able to be obtained. Members were requested and subsequently agreed (minute number 12760) to delegate the appointment of the Town Council's insurer to the Town Clerk, in conjunction with the Head of Corporate Services, and for the outcome to be reported at the next Corporate Services Committee.

Following the outcome of enquiries, Members were informed that the Town Council had entered into a long-term agreement with Zurich Municipal for a period of three years, starting from 1st June 2024, at a cost of £15,528.45 per annum. Entering into a long-term agreement had brought with it a level of discount. This cost did not include cover for the new Bidwell West Pavilion, as this building had not, as yet, been transferred to the council.

Budget allocation for this provision was £17,000.

Members were informed that the insurance premium provided cover for the new pavilion at Tithe Farm and the 3G pitch.

12865 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN – CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

At the Town Council meeting held on the 11th December 2023, Members approved the HRTC Corporate Strategy for 2024-2028 (minute number 12645). At the March meeting of the Town Council, Members approved allocating the objectives to standing committees to enable more detailed consideration and progression. As Members were aware, the plan included 4 Pillars under which were a number of objectives, along with some suggestions as to how these objectives could be achieved. In order to progress the plan, Members agreed that these objectives would then be presented as committee workplans to the respective committees for more detailed consideration of delivery mechanisms and subsequent monitoring. Members were provided with the allocation of objectives for delivery by this committee. Members were asked to prioritise a number of objectives for consideration/delivery in the next twelve months.

Members felt that the objectives in progress, plus the financial plan were sufficient for the moment. This could be revisited as other items were decided.

IT cabling had been completed and could be removed for the work plan.

Members agreed that the costs relating to the Local Council Award Scheme and Investors in People accreditation should be explored and reported back at a future meeting.

The important items were the 5-year financial and staffing plan, and the succession planning, which had been picked up as a potential risk area by the Corporate Peer Challenge review.

Resolved: To approve the Corporate Services Committee work plan and select those objectives for consideration/delivery in the next twelve months.

12866 VAT RETURNS

Members were provided with the Town Council VAT returns for quarters 1,2,3 & 4 of the financial year 2023-2024.

12867 POLICY REVIEW SCHEDULE

Policies and procedures play an important role in governing the Town Councils responsibilities. Policies and procedures set out expectations, from both the Council and employees, and confirmed legal compliance.

This schedule was provided annually at the first Corporate Services meeting following the Town Councils Annual General Meeting.

Members received a list of suggested policy review dates that coincided with dates of the meetings for this committee for the municipal year 2024-2025.

12868 POLICY UPDATES

Policies and procedures play an important role in governing the Town Council's responsibilities. Policies and procedures set out expectations, from both the Council and employees and confirms legal compliance.

Members were provided with a report and details of amendments for the following policies:

- 1) Family Friendly Policy
- 2) Flexible Working Policy
- 3) Capability Policy
- 4) Grievance Policy
- 5) Officer/Member Protocol
- 6) Training Agreement
- 7) Training Statement of Intent

Three policies had been amended: the Flexible Working Policy, the Family Friendly Policy and the Training Statement of Intent. The most significant changes related to the Flexible Working Policy.

Members were questioned whether they were willing to accept reviewed policies under one agenda item rather than several separate items. It was agreed that since the listed policies followed HR protocol it was acceptable to agree them as one item; however, in future there should be the option to discuss more discretionary items individually.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council, that the following policies be re-adopted:

- 1) **Family Friendly Policy**
- 2) **Flexible Working Policy**
- 3) **Capability Policy**
- 4) **Grievance Policy**
- 5) **Officer/Member Protocol**
- 6) **Training Agreement**
- 7) **Training Statement of Intent**

12869 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- **Staff Plan**
- **Council Offices**

Resolved: In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

12870 STAFFING PLAN

Members discussed the officers report.

Resolved: To support the recommendations contained in the report.

12871 COUNCIL OFFICES

Members discussed the officers report.

Members supported, in principle, the conclusion and next steps as outlined in the report but requested that a further report be presented at a special meeting of this committee. It was agreed that a suitable date for this meeting be found in the month of July.

Resolved: To defer this item and to reconsider it at a specially convened meeting of this committee.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.06pm
Dated this 9th day of September 2024**

Chairman