

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 17th June 2024 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: E Cooper
J Carroll
E Billington
P Burgess
Y Farrell
M Herber
D Jones
C Rollins
A Slough
C Slough
D Taylor

Town Mayor

Officers: Clare Evans
Amanda Samuels

Town Clerk
Administration Officer

Public: 0

Apologies Councillors: E Costello
W Henderson
T McMahon

12872 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors E Costello, W Henderson and T McMahon.

12873 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12874 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

12875 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May2024.

The following amendments were suggested by Cllr Jones:

- Under Minute 12831 the New Cemetery Sub-Committee was not listed
- Under Minute 12831 E Costello was listed as the Chair of Environment & Leisure instead of Community Services
- Under Minute 12839 the date of the meeting should 22nd January 2024 rather than 2023



Resolved: To approve the amended minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12876 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the following committees and considered any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	4 th March and 30 th April 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute number 12736 Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy • Minute number 12737 References Policy • Minute number 12737 revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy • Minute number 12737 revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	None to present
Planning Committee	22 nd April 2024
Town Partnership Committee	Non to present

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

New Cemetery Sub-Committee	None to present
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It was highlighted by Cllr Jones that two additions should be included under Minute 12736 as follows:

- To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy.
- To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Resolved: To receive the amended Minutes detailed above and to the approve the recommendations contained therein as follows:

- 1) the adoption of the Town Council's Data Retention Policy
- 2) the adoption of the Town Council's References Policy.
- 3) the adoption of the revised Town Council's Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy.
- 4) the adoption of the revised Town Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

12877 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor updated members on events that had been attended. These were as follows:

- 19th May: the bowls club open day
- 1st June: CBC Volunteering Week celebration at Houghton Regis Library
- 6th June: Community Awards for Luton
- 6th June: D-Day beacon lighting
- 9th June: Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire's Thanksgiving

- 11th June: trophy presentation at TWP Flooring (presentation to be rearranged)
- 12th June: AGM for the Bedfordshire Scouts Council
- 16th June: Mayor of Harpenden's Civic Service

12878 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Councillors were requested to provide verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr A Slough reported that the Friends of Windsor Drive were delighted to be supporting Houghton Regis in Bloom and welcomed the positive collaboration with the Head of Environmental and Community Services.

The Friends of Windsor Drive had received a Highly Commended award at the Pride of Houghton Awards.

Cllr Carroll had attended a 'uniform grants' meeting at the Chews Foundation. The grants had almost doubled from 54 families in 2023 to 98 families in 2024, which highlighted a growing need regarding school uniforms.

Cllr Jones had attended the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of the BATPC. The accounts for the previous year came in just under £500 in excess of the deficit forecast.

The training programme provided by the Association was discussed at the meeting. The programme had been expanding and a summary of the programme would be shared with Councillors.

The Houghton Hall Park Board had taken place and the main points for noting were that the assistant post continued to be unfilled, and that the park pathways were going to be resurfaced.

Cllr Farrell advised that the Memorial Hall had held a race night to raise funds. The next meeting would be on 9th July 2024.

12879 WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Members were requested to nominate a further councillor to sit on the Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group as only 4 councillors were appointed at the Annual Meeting on 15th May 2024.

Current membership of this working group comprised:

Cllrs: D Jones, D Taylor, A Slough, M Herber

Nominee: Cllr J Carroll

Proposed by:

Cllr M Herber

Seconded by:

Cllr P Burgess

Accordingly, Cllr Carroll became the additional Member of the Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group for the municipal year of 2024/2025.



Resolved: To nominate a councillor to sit on the Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group.

12880 YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Members were presented with a report providing a brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members were invited to raise any queries relating to the process.

**12881 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/2024
ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/2024**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members were advised that the internal auditor completed an interim internal audit on 21st February 2023 and the year-end internal audit on 7th May 2024. Members were provided with a copy of the Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024.

Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report as attached.

12882 DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2023/2024

Members were requested to approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024.

Members were advised of the following

1. Date of announcement: 20th June 2024
2. Date of commencement: 21st June 2024
3. End date: 1st August 2024

Cllr Billington left the meeting.

Resolved: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024 as follows:

1. **Date of announcement: 20th June 2024**
2. **Date of commencement: 21st June 2024**
3. **End date: 1st August 2024**

**12883 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/2024
SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2024 is attached for consideration, approval and signature, Appendix A.

Resolved: 1. To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024.



**12884 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/2024
SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2024 was provided for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

It was queried why the figures showed only half of the total repayment of the Public Works Board Loan had been settled. Members were advised that this was due to the loan repayment dates falling 30th September and 31st March. The repayment date of 31st March 2024 fell on a weekend and as such the payment left the account on the next working day, which fell into the next financial year. It was questioned whether Houghton Regis Town Council had accrued for this interest.

Resolved: To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024 subject to external audit.

12885 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2024/25

Members were provided with a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2024/25 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

12886 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND SCHEDULE

In accordance with Financial Regulation 17.1, the council was responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk should prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements would be reviewed by the council at least annually.

A copy of the Risk Management Strategy and Schedule was provided.

This was last considered at the Town Council meeting in March 2024. At this meeting, Members were advised that, on the advice of the Internal Auditor, the review timing of this policy would change to be considered at the June Town Council meeting.

Following feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge process, it was highlighted to Members that the risk schedule had been extended to include risks on:

- Tax base changes
- Acts of God

Resolved: To approve the HRTC Risk Management Strategy & Schedule.

12887 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). A report was presented to Corporate Services Committee on 10th June.

A verbal update was provided at the meeting on the outcome of the deliberations of Corporate Services Committee and it was highlighted to Members that it had proved problematic to source a selection of internal audit providers. The following recommendation was made to Corporate Services Committee:

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.

Resolved: To appoint IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd 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.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.35pm

Dated this 16th day of July 2024

Chairman

