

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP
COMMITTEE
HELD AT HALL 1, ALL SAINTS VIEW, SAPPHIRE PLACE
ON 30th JULY 2024**

Present: Town Cllrs: J Carroll, Y Farrell, D Jones, C Slough
CBC Cllrs: C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill, T McMahon
CBC Officers: Sarah Hughes, Community Engagement Manager

HRTC Debbie Marsh, Head of Corporate Services
Officers: Ian Haynes, Head of Environmental & Community Services
Amanda Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: J Anderson, T Haines, C Regan

Also in attendance: Cllr E Costello, Cllr M Herber (virtual)

Apologies: David Gibbons

Members of the public: 0

1031 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Members were invited to elect a Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2024/25.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this could be a member from either authority.

Nominee	C Alderman	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	D Jones

No further nominations were received.

Accordingly, Cllr Alderman was elected as Chair of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2024/2025.

1032 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Members were invited to elect a Vice Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2024/2025.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this should be a member from the other authority.

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Nominee	D Jones	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	Y Farrell

No further nominations were received.

Accordingly, Cllr Jones was elected as Vice Chair of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2024/2025.

1033 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from David Gibbons

1034 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 had received applications for co-option from:

- David Gibbons - a co-opted member during 2023/2024, confirmed would like to be co-opted again
- Jo Anderson – a co-opted member during 2023/2024, confirmed would like to be co-opted again
- Carole Regan – a co-opted member during 2023/2024, confirmed would like to be co-opted again
- David Hill – Chairman of the Houghton Regis Heritage Society
- Roger Turner – Trustee of the Houghton Regis Heritage Society and former town and district councillor for Houghton Regis
- Tim Haines - director of HRCDC, a co-opted member of the Community Association and a resident of Bidwell West

Members were invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt further local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. Members felt that a co-optee who had an education involvement would be beneficial to the group.

Resolved: To approve the Co-optee applications from:

- **David Gibbons**
- **Jo Anderson**
- **Carole Regan**
- **David Hill**
- **Roger Turner**
- **Tim Haines**

1035 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

1036 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1037 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2024.

Members approved the Minutes with the amendment of the date from 24th April to 23rd April 2024.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

1038 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received the Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

Members felt that councillors from both authorities should work more closely in order to increase the effectiveness of the Partnership Committee. This was one of the points highlighted in the HRTC Corporate Peer Challenge report.

It was suggested that the remit of the meetings needed to change and that an action plan should be put together to explore different methods of operation and ways to improve. It was also thought that the relationship would benefit if Central Bedfordshire Council could discuss potential actions prior to decision making.

It was proposed that the Chair of the Partnership Committee could put forward, to Central Bedfordshire Council, any issues raised by the committee.

The Chair agreed to seek what mechanisms were in place for doing so.

1039 CONFIRMATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Committee was required to confirm the Secretariat for the Partnership Committee for 2024/25.

The Secretariat role had traditionally sat with the Town Clerk of Houghton Regis Town Council. The Town Clerk had suggested that the Partnership might want to take the opportunity to make a change; however, they were happy to continue in the role if Members resolved to maintain the current arrangement.

Members discussed the possibility of appointing a representative from Central Bedfordshire Council to the role and what that would mean to the Partnership.

Members agreed to maintain the status quo for the current year but agreed that this was something that could be explored further prior to confirming the Secretariat in 2025/26. In the meantime, information could be gathered to establish how such an arrangement would work and whether CBC was likely to have the capacity.

1040 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan.

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Members were invited to suggest which items from the workplan should be given priority. It was suggested that these should be:

- health and wellbeing in Houghton Regis (inc. primary health care)
- education (inc. primary school places)

It was questioned whether customers would remain at the Townsend Centre until the new facilities were available. The new site was due to open in spring 2025 but delays meant this could be extended to summer.

The Community Engagement Manager advised that colleagues were seeking approval to consult on the policy and principles to inform the draft school organisation plan and were looking at engagement opportunities to attend the joint / partnership committees to discuss priorities.

It was highlighted that many Houghton Regis residents were having to travel outside of the area for healthcare. As the provision of child services was based on doctor registrations, this would mean that figures were unlikely to provide a true representation. In addition, the Houghton Regis Medical Centre, which was the town's primary healthcare provider, was rated as Amber.

1041 CBC STRATEGIC UPDATE REPORT

Members received, for information, an update report from Central Bedfordshire Council on the following:

- HR Leisure centre
- SEND provision
- Local plan process
- HR Day Centre
- Townsend Centre
- HR Quarry

The CBC Community Engagement Manager informed the Committee that the Houghton Regis Together meetings had been reconvened to look at how local organisations could work better together to support local residents and develop a way of working following the end of Time 2 Connect. There was a potential for these meetings to be held at venues around Houghton Regis.

The Committee discussed that there was a perception that Houghton Regis was viewed as separate areas and that residents felt more isolated. The new leisure centre might alter this perception, but it was necessary to look at ways to create a greater sense of union. It was suggested that the Houghton Regis Town Crier could contribute by including more information on external groups and events.

It was suggested that, as the Town Partnership did not get to make some of the bigger decisions, perhaps it needed to set goals within the municipal year and to focus on ways of achieving them or review why they were not achieved.

It was highlighted that Bidwell West was in need of a community centre; however, this should not preclude the delivery of a community centre within Houghton Regis town centre. There was always a need for more spaces, and it was suggested that sites could be assessed by CBC and how best to utilise them.

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1042 LOCAL PLAN PROCESS

Sian Farrier, Policy and Planning Manager - Strategic Growth, CBC, gave a presentation on the Local Plans launch and engagement process.

The Local Plan was a key document that set out how Central Bedfordshire would grow in the future.

The launch had commenced in July and would run until September. The purpose of the launch was to:

- Raise awareness of the local plan
- Build understanding of the benefits of the Local Plan
- Shape early thinking with initial questions to understand aspirations and inform strategy direction

The Local Plan was due to be adopted in December 2028, but it was emphasised that engagement was a priority in addition to keeping everyone informed throughout the process.

One of the core aims of CBC's Strategic Plan was to get the right homes in the right places and ensure housing growth and infrastructure were carefully considered. The Local Plan played a key role in achieving this.

The approach to engagement would be predominantly digital, but paper copies of documents would be available from libraries and on request. It was critical that underrepresented groups and young people would also form part of the process.

Councillors would be enabled to share information using a toolkit of information. There would be a clear feedback loop to ensure optimum communication, and a bespoke website had been created.

Six main themes were being covered:

- Green space and nature
- Jobs
- Homes
- Transport
- Local facilities
- Enhancing the unique character of local areas

Residents would be kept involved and feedback options would be available, including map-based feedback.

A toolkit was also available for ward members and town and parish councils to help circulate the information.

The Town Partnership was invited to contribute and promote the plan.

Members raised the subject of the new Government's planning policy proposals and the impact these proposals would have on the Local Plan. The Policy and Planning Manager confirmed that CBC would form a response to these. It was also questioned whether the Local Plan would align with the Neighbourhood Plan. The Policy and Planning Manager

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informed Members that the Neighbourhood Planning Officer, Jane Hubbard, would be liaising with communities to provide them with guidance.

Assurance was sought that public engagement would be a listening exercise and that there was no set agenda. It was emphasised that the feedback loop was particularly important and that the process would be transparent.

1043 HRTC CORPORATE PLAN - TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

At the previous meeting it was agreed that the Partnership Committee would support HRTC's request to help deliver on 3 objectives within the HRTC Corporate Plan. The objectives were:

- 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

An update on town centre improvements was provided by Beverley Gaynor, Central Bedfordshire Councils Programme Manager, on relevant work her team were undertaking. Members were advised that this was the final year of the UKSPF which covered three elements:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting local business
- People and skills

Town centre improvements would be the focus of the last year of delivery. An investment plan had been put together and the following items were currently being worked on:

- Parking problems outside All Saints View
- Supporting inclusion in Britain in Bloom
- Improving the power supply for the Christmas lights
- Highways improvements close to Chequers roundabout being discussed.
- A rain garden

There were also funds to support cultural activities in the area being progressed to encourage integration.

CBC was in the process of procuring benchmarking reports to compare the current situation to allow evaluation when then projects had been delivered. A Community Grant Fund had been applied for and a Cultural Grant Fund to support cultural groups.

Members raised the issue that gateway signage did not encompass the new developments. New signage would be welcomed, along with noticeboards to help the feeling of inclusion. It was highlighted that this would be done once the land had been transferred to the Town Council.

1044 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A verbal update was provided by Ian Haynes, Head of Environmental & Community Services, HRTC, on the work HRTC was undertaking in engaging with young people.

Houghton Regis Town Council had received investment from the Youth Investment Fund up until the end of March 2025. At the Community Services Meeting (Minute no 12918), it

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had been agreed for the town council to include funding, at budget setting, to allow the work to continue in 2025/26. It was envisaged, that future funding, would allow for a full-time qualified youth worker to be employed along with an apprenticeship role being created. In appointing to these posts would allow for outreach work to continue.

Lisa Wright Youth and Participation Manager – Children’s Services, provided members with an update.

Members were informed that CBC had a Youth Parliament that young people were elected to for a two-year term. Thirty-eight young people worked on campaigns requested by young people in Central Bedfordshire; these were common themes across Central Beds. Members of the parliament had individual issues they stood for as part of the election process. There had been much success in encouraging young people to take part in the transportation consultation and would be ensuring that young voices were heard in the Local Plan process. Work with The Authentic Voice panel for domestic abuse had also been carried out helping to create awareness of these issues amongst young people. There had also been a meeting with the Strategic Alliance: a group including the DCS and other lead representatives who impact on children’s services.

1045 ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Members had previously been advised of the CBC process to determine further consideration, at CBC committee level, of items and issues.

Members of this committee were able to use this process to forward items for CBC’s attention via the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair.

Members were requested to identify and confirm if there were any requested items for CBC’s attention.

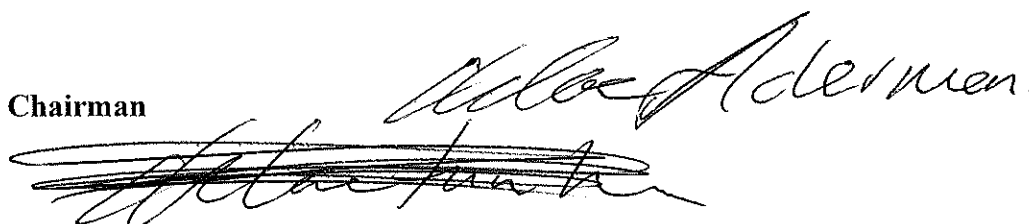
Members requested that the Chair pursue the Town regaining possession of the community centre in Bedford Square. It was understood that lease would expire in July 2026 and Members agreed that it was necessary to plan the next step now. The Chair agreed to pursue this issue.

It was highlighted that a review of principles and plans for school places was scheduled for September 2024. There was a need for accurate data to be captured since current boundaries no longer reflected the full scope of Houghton Regis and children were attending school outside of their area. More funding was needed for schools and new schools needed to be built.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.00pm

Dated this 22nd day of October 2024

Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Alderman', is written over a horizontal line. Below this line, there is another horizontal line with some scribbled-out text underneath it.