

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

Present: Councillors: E Billington (Sub)
P Burgess
Y Farrell
T McMahon
C Rollins
C Slough (Sub)
D Taylor

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

Public:

Apologies: Councillors: W Henderson
A Slough

Also present: J Carroll

Absent:

12924 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson, Cllr Billington substituted and Cllr A Slough, Cllr C Slough substituted.

12925 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12926 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

12927 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice-Chair for Corporate Services Committee for 2023/2024.

Nominee: Cllr Farrell Proposed by: Cllr Taylor
Seconded by: Cllr C Slough

Nominee: Cllr McMahon Proposed by: Cllr Rollins
Seconded by: Cllr Burgess

A recorded vote was requested.

Members in favour of Cllr Farrell: Cllr C Slough, Cllr Billington, Cllr Farrell and Cllr Taylor

Members in favour of Cllr McMahon: Cllr Rollins, Cllr McMahon and Cllr Burgess

Accordingly, Cllr Farrell was duly appointed as Vice-Chair of the Environment and Leisure Committee for the municipal year of 2024/2025.

12928 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2024.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 29th April 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12929 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

A verbal update was provided to Members on the progress of the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

Members were informed that UKPN works had been completed. A date for the installation of the electricity meter was awaited, after which contractors would need to return to complete enabling works on the floodlights, pavilion, and car park lighting.

Members were advised that Section 278, relating to site access, had not progressed as quickly as hoped.

12930 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

At its meeting on the 16th July 2024, the Town Council endorsed the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan. The Environment & Leisure Services Committee was allocated a number of small projects to be funded through general reserves. The first for delivery was:

Develop a long-term financial plan.	Consider external support to assess maintenance and refurbishment requirements for key assets	Budget availability	£2,000	Autumn 2024	E&L Committee	Head of E&C
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The £2,000 would be used to seek professional advice regarding HRTC key assets. Costs would be broken down according to mechanical and electrical factors, plus the fabric of buildings

Resolved: To delegate authority to the Head of Environmental & Community Services to deliver these projects in liaison with the Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, who will agree on the required detail and scope.

12931 NOTICEBOARDS

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Members were asked to consider purchasing 6 corporately branded noticeboards for The Village Green, Tithe Farm Recreation Ground, Parkside Recreation Ground, Houghton Hall Park, Orchard Close Recreation Ground, and Houghton Regis Cemetery.

Members questioned whether consideration had been given to purchasing electronic noticeboards and what factors had influenced the decision not to pursue this option. The Head of Environmental and Community Services responded that the purchased noticeboards had three bays, which could be used to display council notices, HRTC events, and external events. Available funds also meant that six noticeboards could be purchased, as opposed to one electronic noticeboard and strategically placed.

Members also questioned whether personnel costs had been factored in. It was confirmed that updating the noticeboards would be covered by existing staff as most of the sites were visited regularly.

- Resolved:**
- 1) **To agree to the purchase of 6 x Contemporary green aluminium noticeboards for The Village Green, Tithe Farm Recreation Ground, Parkside Recreation Ground, Houghton Hall Park, Orchard Close Recreation Ground, and Houghton Regis Cemetery. Funds to be taken from the Environment and Leisure schedule earmarked reserves (324) Street Furniture with available funds of £11,251.00**
 - 2) **To agree on the removal of all existing noticeboards (excluding the Council Office one).**
 - 3) **To agree where possible, the branded noticeboards should be re-used on suitable sites, i.e., allotments.**

12932 ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT 2024/25

In accordance with the Committee's functions, a periodic review of the Committee's income and expenditures should be undertaken.

Members were provided with the budget report for the Environment & Leisure Services Committee alongside the Budget Explanation.

Of note was the overspending of the street furniture. This was for the purchase of planters, barrier baskets and hanging baskets which the UKSPF would fund.

12933 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided with the income and expenditure report, with appropriate commentary, for the Environment & Leisure Services Committee.

12934 TERRA CROFT LEISURE GARDEN UPDATE

Members received an update on the management of the Town Council-owned allotment.

The allotment had done well over the past year, with 223 people currently on the waiting list.

Following a recent allotment inspection, figures were as follows:

45 plots were rated green
1 plot was rated amber
1 plot was rated red and likely to be terminated
1 plot was vacant

It was questioned whether support was provided to those struggling to maintain their allotment. It was explained that the traffic light system in place allowed adequate time and flexibility for improvement to be made and that those who failed to maintain their allotment often voluntarily surrendered the tenancy. Legislation meant that the allotments needed to crop once per year and were required to be weed-free for the remainder of the year. A groundsman carried out the inspections to ensure compliance with the regulations.

12935 UKSPF APPLICATION

Members were provided with an update on the UKSPF applications.

Given the objectives of the corporate plan and the unsuccessful application in round 1, it was felt prudent to consider what project could be resubmitted and how 'Men in Sheds' would tie in with Tithe Farm.

The application has been returned to CBC for submission.

Resolved: To support the application made under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Community Grant Fund – Round Two 2024/2025.

12936 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr McMahon

Seconded by: Cllr Taylor

Carried.

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.

12937 JVA DELIVERY

Members considered a proposal for the operational management of Houghton Hall Park to be transferred from CBC to HRTC.

Resolved: To approve that the operational management of Houghton Hall Park be transferred from CBC to HRTC to deliver a more sustainable service with no alterations to the existing governance structures and local percentage of authority financing;

- i.) Approve that the Chair of Environment and Leisure sign the Deed of Variation, as this will be an appropriate way to ratify the changes.
- ii.) To commence with the TUPE transfer of the three CBC employees to HRTC.
- iii.) The Park Manager post (currently vacant) will be deleted, and the Head of Environment and Community Services will undertake the park management role.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.57pm

Dated this 30th day of September 2024

Chairman