

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Environment & Leisure Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on**  
**30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman  
P Burgess  
J Carroll Substitution  
Y Farrell  
W Henderson  
T McMahon  
D Taylor

Officers: Ian Haynes Head of Environmental & Community Services  
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: C Rollins

**12983 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Rollins (Cllr Carroll substituted).

**12984 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**12985 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**12986 MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

**Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**12987 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE**

Members were advised the pavilion had been completed, with the anticipated handover date set for 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

The S278 agreement remains outstanding pending confirmation from the Central Bedfordshire Council.

The solicitor was reviewing the lease. Bedfordshire FA would assume full responsibility for the pitch, pavilion, and associated car park for a 21-year term.

The annual sink fund would be around £32,000 to allow for replacement in around 10 years, which also fell under the Beds FA.

Members queried the potential impact of phasing out rubber crumb on the project post-completion. They were assured that the UK had not currently implemented a ban. Any future ban would likely apply only to new installations, not existing pitches. Responsibility for any necessary modifications would remain with Bedfordshire FA.

### **12988 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Members of the Environment & Leisure Services Committee had been provided with a copy of the income and expenditure report, along with relevant commentary.

It was noted that the financial year had reached its halfway point, and Members were informed that no risks had been identified at this stage.

Additionally, Members were advised that football pitch usage was at a healthy capacity, with expectations of further growth as Bidwell came on board.

### **12989 TERRA CROFT LEISURE GARDEN UPDATE**

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

1. Waiting list and plot status:
  - The number of residents on the waiting list remained high.
  - Current plot occupancy:
    - 46 out of 48 plots held green status
    - 1 plot was at red status
    - 1 vacant plot had been split into two smaller plots
  - Some plot holders had implemented measures to protect their plots from high winds.
2. Wind protection:
  - Members inquired about methods to break or reduce wind flow.
  - While solutions existed to slow wind, their implementation was deemed cost-prohibitive.
3. Composting toilet:
  - It was announced that cost estimates for a composting toilet would be presented at the next Environment and Leisure Committee meeting.

### **12990 UKSPF APPLICATION**

Members reviewed the newly acquired planters and were advised that their colour scheme had been carefully chosen to complement the aesthetic of All Saints View.

The Committee was provided with a breakdown of costs, revealing that each hanging basket had been procured at a price of approximately £35.

### **12991 HOUGHTON REGIS IN BLOOM**

The Houghton Regis in Bloom team announced that Houghton Regis had performed well at the Anglia in Bloom Awards. The awards were as follows:

Large Town – Houghton Regis (Silver-Gilt)  
Historic Parks and Gardens – Houghton Hall Park (Gold and Overall winner)  
Cemeteries – Houghton Regis Cemetery (Award of Merit)  
Churchyard – All Saints - Houghton Regis Parish Church (Silver award)  
Public Park – The Village Green (Silver award)  
Public Park – Parkside Recreation Ground (Silver-Gilt)  
Public Park – Linmere Park (Silver award)  
Nursing/Care Home – All Saints View Assisted Living (Silver-Gilt)  
Nature Conservation Area – Windsor Drive (Award of Merit)  
Nature Conservation Area – Dog Kennel Down (Award of Merit)  
Nature Conservation Area – Houghton Brook (Award of Merit)

Houghton Regis also received nominations for three Special Awards, signifying that these projects or schemes were among the finest in the Anglia region. The town's achievements extended further as it clinched victory in one category, establishing itself as the best of the best in the area.

Congratulations were extended to

- Julie at Houghton Regis Memorial Hall for her nomination in the Best Floral Display by an Individual category
- The Chiltern School for their nomination in the Best Inclusivity Garden category
- The Houghton Hall Park Team for winning the Best Grow Your Own Project Special Award

**Resolved: To formally thank everyone involved in making Houghton Regis in Bloom initiative a blooming success.**

## **12992 ANNUAL PLAY AREA INSPECTION**

Members were updated on the results of the annual play area inspections.

It was advised that all play areas were deemed fit for purpose, and any required repairs had been promptly addressed.

Concerns were raised regarding the maintenance of play areas managed by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members were advised to refer any concerns regarding the upkeep of CBC-owned play areas to either the Housing Team or the Leisure Team at Central Bedfordshire Council.

## **12993 ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE FEES 2025/26**

Members were advised to exercise prudence in helping to set the budget for 2025/26; a review of 2024/2025 was considered helpful. Although no budget pressure existed to increase fees, it was highlighted that the annual budget-setting process was difficult.

Members received the schedule of fees for 2025/26 for reference, with annotations to show the suggested 3% increase.

A 3% increase in some fees was suggested to support local clubs while considering the council's economic pressures.

Members were requested to consider the current year's fee structure and determine a suitable increase for 2025/26.

Members requested a breakdown of how many bookings were held for the pavilions. It was advised that this would be looked into, and statistics will be provided at the next meeting.

Members were advised that the Bowls Club had successfully recruited new members, increasing their numbers.

**Resolved: To set fees under the control of the Environment & Leisure Committee for 2025/2026 at a 3% increase on 2024/25 on highlighted fees.**

#### **12994 VILLAGE GREEN – CIRCUS VISIT 2025**

Members were advised to consider a new request for a circus to visit the Village Green in 2025.

*Circus Fantasia – The Village Green*

Pull on site 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025

Open 4<sup>th</sup> June till 8<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – 5 days of opening

Pull off-site 8<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Due to the long-standing relationship between the usual annual requests, Members were asked for consideration to be given to the following:

- Suitability of location
- Other on-site uses such as council events, sports events
- Impact on local residents from noise
- Impact on local residents from traffic and parking
- Local events for families
- And the potential overuse of our sites.

Members expressed concerns regarding the potential overuse of the Village Green.

The exploring of alternative sites was suggested for future years to mitigate this issue. The committee requested that this feedback be conveyed to Circus Fantasia.

#### **12995 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 1)
- HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 2)
- HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 3)

**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.

**12996 HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 1), HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 2), HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 3)**

Members reviewed project proposals for:

HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 1)

HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 2)

HRTC-2024-E&L- 12693 (Lot 3)

Members were advised of costs and the breakdown of facilities included in the tenders.

Members discussed the three lots at length, considering factors such as vulnerability to vandalism, associated risks, and their locations, access points and the potential impact on surrounding areas.

It was agreed to proceed with the proposed course of action, with Lot 3 to be revisited at a future meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee.

The Head of Environmental & Community Services contacted Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss the release of S106 funding.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.25 pm**

**Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of January 2025**

**Chairman**