

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Community Services Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on**  
**21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present:	Councillors:	E Costello E Cooper Y Farrell M Herber T McMahon C Slough	Chair      (Sub)
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	Officers:	Ian Haynes  Amanda Samuels	Head of Environmental & Community Services Administration Officer
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Also present:	Public:	6
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Apologies:	Councillor:	P Burgess A Slough
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**13014 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Burgess (Cllr Herber substituted) and Cllr A Slough.

**13015 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**13016 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Cllr Farrell declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant for the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall as they were a Trustee for the Memorial Hall.

**13017 MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024

**Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Community Services Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**13018 KEY PARTNERS - ANNUAL REVIEW OF EXISTING**

Representatives from Key Partner organisations were invited to the meeting to present an annual review/update. Members received updates from South Beds Dial-A-Ride, Keech Hospice, Houghton Regis Memorial Hall and Full House Theatre.

Members were reminded that Key Partner status had been awarded to these organisations for the financial years 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Key Partner awards were as follows:

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Amount requested</b>
Dunstable & District CA	£2,612.50
SORTED	£1,100
Keech Hospice Care	£2,750
South Beds Dial A Ride	£1,375
Houghton Regis Memorial Hall	£2,200
Full House Theatre	£2,750
Community Link Project – Singing Care Initiatives	£2,200

**Resolved:** To approve the release of funding as detailed for the financial year 2025/26.

### 13019 PROJECT GRANT SCHEME

Members were advised that the following applications had been received for a Project Grant.

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Total project cost</b>	<b>Amount requested</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
Parkside over 50's Club	£1023.50	£700	A trip for participants to the theatre or similar
Houghton Regis Ladies Group	£1000	£800	An outing to a national trust location, a spring workshop for flower arranging and a Christmas craft workshop.
The Children's Society	£899	£719	Gaming Table for Youth Club
Dunstable Hunters Pickleball Club	£640	£512	New Nets for pickball will increase participation from Houghton Regis residents.
Hospice at Home	£388.02	£310.41	Local marketing to raise awareness of services

Members were advised that £3,200 remained in this budget for 2024/25

**Resolved:** To approve the Project Grant applications as follows:  
**Parkside Over 50's Club - £700**  
**Houghton Regis Ladies Group - £800**  
**The Children's Society - £719**

**Dunstable Hunters Pickleball Club - £512**  
**Hospice at Home - £310.41**

**13020 HRTC GRANT SCHEME**

Members were invited to discuss the renewal of the HRTC grant scheme, considering that the budget-setting process had not yet commenced.

Members questioned whether a more robust method of determining grants was required and if the funding levels should be increased. The Head of Environmental and Community Services highlighted that Houghton Regis Town Council did not currently fully fund its Key Partners, but should it choose to do so, a sum above £25,000 would be required. Alternatively, Members had the option of agreeing to a lower sum, which would be used to fund more organisations.

The budget for the previous year had been £15,000, but the overall spending had increased to £15,788. With current population growth levels, it was likely that the budget would need to double to maintain the current standard. There had been some previous frustration at the inability to award projects thoroughly, and members were invited to propose an increase to address this issue. Following the Corporate Peer Challenge Review, there was a desire to establish a five-year financial plan and the grant budget and the anticipated increase required would be figured into the process.

It was highlighted that Houghton Regis Town Council was one of the few remaining councils to award grants. Members were keen to ensure that grants were suitably allocated and in line with the Council's policies. Members agreed that it would be necessary to factor in population growth and changing needs when setting a budget.

It was acknowledged that a matrix was required against which applications could be assessed. It was suggested that requiring all applications to make reference to the Corporate Plan would be one possible means of achieving this and would allow Members to review applications before the committee. This would mean that if the current level of 50% funding were maintained, the full 50% would be awarded if all criteria were met, up to a maximum value. The maximum value will be lower if the application fails to meet all criteria.

Members had been provided with the following options for consideration:

- Require potential key partners to express interest before the budget-setting process for key partner grants.
- Implement yearly financial increments during budget-setting to align with housing growth. 52 / 71 Page 4 of 6
- Consider increasing funding limits for both project grants and small grant applications.
- Consider a new grant scheme to support initiatives that align with the corporate plan and promote community events, such as the carnival or Houghton in Bloom.

- Review Key Partner Funding, reassess the current practice of granting only 50% of requested funding to key partners, exploring options for increased support.
- Enhance the budgeting process to ensure sufficient grant funding is available before meetings.

It was suggested that Members propose their preferred three options for further consideration.

Members were reminded that the recommendation could be amended to instruct officers to remove it and produce a rationale matrix for a fair and transparent scheme. There would also be merit in increasing the budget to achieve more within the community. Once officers and Members had agreed on a scheme, a report would be produced and released into the public domain.

Members agreed to wording a proposed amendment as follows:

Officers should take this away and deliberate on creating a structured and robust process for consideration at a future meeting.

Amendment proposed by: Cllr McMahan

Seconded by: Cllr Slough

Members voted unanimously in favour of the substantive

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amended recommendation.

**Resolved: Officers should take this away and deliberate on creating a structured and robust process for consideration at a future meeting.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.00 pm.**

**Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of February 2025**

**Chairman**