

# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Community Services Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors: C Slough Chairman  
P Burgess  
E Cooper  
Y Farrell (Sub)  
D Jones  
A Slough

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

Public: 7

Apologies: Councillors: E Costello

Absent: T McMahon

### 13028 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Costello, and Cllr Jones was substituting for him.

### 13029 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Members of the public were advised that any questions relating to the Houghton Regis Sports Hall could be raised during item 4 on the agenda, which related to this subject.

### 13030 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

### 13031 HOUGHTON REGIS SPORTS HALL

At previous meetings, it was highlighted to Members that there was concern regarding the potential future lack of indoor sports hall access in Houghton Regis. Suggested actions were:

- Propose to Central Bedfordshire Council that HRTC manage the current facility.
- HRTC give consideration to financing a replacement.

Members were asked to consider what Houghton Regis Town Council could do to support the Houghton Regis Sports Hall users.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services felt it would assist matters if a proposal could be made at the Extraordinary Town Partnership meeting for officers to

engage with CBC officers and explore options. Efforts could be made to seek a cost-neutral plan, which could then be formed into a business plan for consideration by the Town Council.

Members agreed that a resolution needed to be reached with CBC to enable continued use of the sports hall but suggested that a feasibility study to establish the costs of maintaining the site would also be merited.

Members felt that clarity was required regarding the following:

- Would it be possible for the sports hall to function independently?
- What would the costs be for an independently functioning sports hall?
- What grants would be available?
- What were the costs involved in the Community Use Agreement?
- What times were offered by the school, and what were the practicalities of the arrangements between the school sports hall and the leisure centre?

The Head of Environmental and Community Services suggested the following recommendation be made:

*HRTC's Community Services Committee requests that the Town Partnership Committee instructs CBC officers to engage with Town Council officers to proactively look at the operations of the Houghton Regis Sports Hall*

Members expressed a wish for the Committee to take a more active approach and proposed the following recommendations were put forward:

*This Committee requests officers to conduct a feasibility study on the possibility of the sports hall remaining open when the leisure centre closes and the costs this would involve.*

*To request CBC officers to advise on the proposed use of the Houstone school sports leisure facilities under the Community Use Agreement.*

Amended recommendations

Proposed by Cllr A Slough

Seconded by Y Farrell

Members voted unanimously in favour

**Resolved: This Committee requests officers to conduct a feasibility study on the possibility of the sports hall remaining open when the leisure centre closes and the costs this would involve.**

**To request CBC officers to advise on the proposed use of the Houstone school sports leisure facilities under the Community Use Agreement.**

**13032 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING WORKING GROUPS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN**

Combating Crime Working Group 19<sup>th</sup> June '24, 17<sup>th</sup> July '24, 21<sup>st</sup> August '24

**Resolved: To receive the following Minutes:**

**Events Working Group 25<sup>th</sup> June '24**  
**Combating Crime Working Group 19<sup>th</sup> June '24, 17<sup>th</sup> July '24, 21<sup>st</sup> August '24**

### **13033 CHANGES TO THE PRIDE OF HOUGHTON AWARDS WORKING GROUP**

The Pride of Houghton Awards was set up by the Town Council in 2002 to honour the work of the town's unsung heroes and the work that may not always be recognised.

Members had expressed concerns about potentially knowing many, or even all, of the nominees and had raised the possibility of removing councillors from the process. It was proposed that the introduction of a panel of previous award recipients, supported by officers, to assess the awards would resolve this issue.

Members also suggested that the process would be improved if:

- Nominations were seen to be equal, containing all relevant data and submissions of similar length
- Officers provided assistance in writing nominations, thereby making the awards accessible to all.

It was agreed that Honorary Freemen could also form part of the panel in addition to previous award winners. It was suggested that the recommendation be amended to read 'previous award recipients/Honorary Freemen'.

Proposed by: E Cooper

Seconded by: A Slough

Members voted in favour of the substantive

The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed it was not necessarily the intention to remove all councillors from the panel and that the working group would remain in place; however, the changes would allow councillors to step back if they felt conflicts of interest.

There was further discussion on making the awards more anonymous, but Members agreed that the process could be reviewed later after the selection panel was introduced.

Members voted in favour of the amended recommendation.

**Resolved: To consider the introduction of previous award recipients/Honorary Freemen to the selection panel.**

### **13034 ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE**

Members were reminded that parish councils and community groups with a connection to the local area could make nominations for Assets of Community Value.

In the event that Central Bedfordshire Council accepted the nomination, there would be an opportunity to develop a bid for the asset when it went up for sale.

Members were encouraged to identify suitable assets within the town for review by officers in collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Council. It was suggested that consideration be given to the following locations:

- Houghton Regis Day Centre
- Houghton Regis Library
- Bedford Square Community Centre
- St. Thomas Meeting House C of E
- St. Vincent's Centre
- Houghton Regis Sports Hall

Members agreed with the proposed list in principle but requested that the Scout Hut on Cemetery Road also be included.

A public member referred to earlier discussions regarding a feasibility study on purchasing the Houghton Regis Sports Hall: they highlighted that if the process of registering the site was started, with support from the community, CBC would be unable to sell the sports hall for the stipulated six-month period allowed for its potential purchase. Members would then have the opportunity to explore funding options.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that Houghton Regis Sports Hall would be the first nomination. Members would be kept updated as nominations progressed, and further sites could be added to the list in the future. Expiry dates would then be monitored so that the assets continued to be listed.

**Resolved: To provide officers with clear guidance on proposed Assets of Community Value.**

### **13035 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Members were provided with a copy of the income and expenditure report for the Community Services Committee to date for information purposes.

The period of expenditure covered was questioned, and it was confirmed that the report was correct as of 5<sup>th</sup> November.

Two items were expected to show higher expenditure

- Salaries, National Insurance and Superannuation 3924001, 3924002 and 3924003
- Other Professional Fees 3064059

It was confirmed that:

- the figure for Salaries, National Insurance and Superannuation had been corrected following an input error
- Operation Hana fees were late

*Cllr Burgess left the meeting*

**13036 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- **HRTC-2024-CS-12716**

**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.

**13037 HRTC-2024-CS-12716**

Members were informed that bids had been received for the Christmas lights contract. A purchase order had been raised for the five-year contract, which was within budget and met regulations.

Members noted and approved the information.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20.30 pm.**

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

**Chairman**