

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
28th April 2025 at 7.00pm

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

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

Public:

Apologies: Councillors:

13171 APOLOGIES

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

13172 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13173 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

13174 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2025.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 13th January 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13175 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

The facility was being used, although the Section 278 for site access was still awaited. A design was yet to be approved; however, a safety audit was imminent, and this would inform the design. A new height barrier would be installed to replace the current one which was cumbersome and hindered access.

The annual maintenance had been carried forward after being delayed by the contractor. The Legend on a bench had been relocated.

13176 HOUGHTON HALL PARK

Houghton Regis Town Council had taken over management of Houghton Hall Park in December.

Work had been carried out on the website which would be updated imminently. New branding and a new copyright protected logo would also be introduced to the website and social media.

Planned works included the replacement of the entrance sign, refurbishment of the foyer and removal of the corporate branding. Central Bedfordshire Council had redecorated the Visitors Centre and resurfaced the car park and drainage works were also scheduled to take place.

Events had been well received, with future events planned. Schools were also using the facility and engagement would take place to tailor programmes according to their preferences.

The purchase order was still awaited from CBC still awaited. Members were informed that 75% of the available budget would be paid up front and would be reassessed in December.

In response to a question regarding ongoing issues at Visitors Centre, the Head of Environmental and Community Services highlighted that CBC had contracts in place and HRTC did not currently have access to the reporting platform. This would be investigated further; however, in the meantime the HRTC team would deal with smaller issues but follow the reporting process for more expensive items.

13177 UKSPF UPDATE

CBC had given approval for landscaping work to commence. Progress had been made on licence from Highways to undertake the works and work on the planters would commence in May.

Funding for improvements to events had been fully spent, and work had commenced on the heritage film. HRTC had received the full amount of funds from CBC.

13178 CORPORATE PLAN REVIEW & UPDATE

Members reviewed and updated the Corporate Plan Action Plan for the Environment & Leisure Committee. Amendments were made as follows:

Pillar

21

Café on the Green

Discarded. This conflicted with nearby facilities, including those at Houghton Hall Park

- 36 Identify and strengthen a series of key views
Discarded. The Planning Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan already afforded protection on these matters. Members voted for this item to be forwarded to the Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee.
- Proposed by: Cllr Carroll
Seconded by: Cllr McMahon
Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal
- 102 Strengthen a primary cycling route across the parish
While Members agreed that this came under CBC's jurisdiction, it was discussed whether HRTC could carry out some signposting and mapping. It was felt that liaison with CBC was necessary to progress this further. Members agreed to discard this item, but to maintain the spirit of the initiative as part of pillar 101.
- 106 Improve local and regional transport links
Discarded. This did not fall within the remit of HRTC.
- Resolved: To forward Pillar 36 of the Corporate Plan to the Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee.**

13179 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

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

Members were informed that net income over expenditure showed no significant overspend.

It was highlighted that the Houghton Regis Cemetery had missed its income by 25%. The production of a brochure of the cemetery vaults was suggested as a way to highlight some of the facilities available .

Members queried the overspend on water rates and maintenance at the Village Green. The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members that the Houghton Hall Park Kitchen Garden was fed from the Village Green and accounted for the majority of the spend.

Maintenance costs at Parkside had gone overbudget and the opportunity had been taken to increase the amount of maintenance carried out, offsetting costs against the income. Works carried out on the roof at Moore Crescent had also caused an overspend.

Beds FA were being charged for electricity at Tithe Farm and would arrange their own supplier on the anniversary of the current contract.

A plan for preventative maintenance had been completed which would be presented to Members. It was suggested that maintenance for all assets be grouped together.

In response to a request from Members, the Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that should maintenance costs be brought under one budget, it would still be possible to provide a breakdown detailing any overspends.

Regarding water usage by Houghton Hall Park, Members were informed that approximately 95% of the cost could be attributed to Houghton Hall Park. Members suggested that in addition to exploring water harvesting measures, it would also be possible to explore the possibility of a bore hole. It was confirmed by the Head of Environmental and Community Services that further investigation would be made.

13180 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- Houghton Chalk Pit

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.

13181 HOUGHTON CHALK PIT

Resolved:

- Approve that the Chair of Environment and Leisure signs the lease once it is finalised.**
- To authorise the Head of Environment and Community Services to undertake the required due diligence and appoint a legal representative to review the attached draft lease.**
- Approve the receipt of circa £1,000,000 commuted sum for managing and maintaining Houghton Chalk Pit.**
- Approve developing a suitable Management Plan that meets the requirements of Natural England.**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.24pm.

Dated this 28th day of July 2025

Chairman