

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP
COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET
ON 29th April 2025**

Present: Town Cllrs: J Carroll, Y Farrell, D Jones
CBC Cllrs C Alderman (Chair), S Goodchild, T McMahon
Co-opted J Anderson, D Gibbons, T Haines, C Regan, R Turner
members:
CBC S Hughes, Community Engagement Manager, CBC
Officers:
HRTC C Evans, Town Clerk
Officers: A Samuels, Administration Officer

Also in attendance: Cllr R Goodchild, CBC

Apologies: Cllr Hamill and Cllr Slough

Members of the public: 2

1073 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Hamill and Cllr Slough.

1074 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A representative from the Houghton Regis Badminton Club emphasised the need to retain the sports hall facility for residents of Houghton Regis until a new facility was available.

A representative from Luton and Houghton Regis Basketball Club informed Members that Schools+, who managed the sports hall at Houghton School, operated as a commercial business and were not able to adapt their business model to reduce costs. Availability and affordability therefore continued to be significant barriers to access.

Be Active Beds had provided funding for four sessions until early May; however, there would be no sports hall access during the exam period, May- July. The Leisure team were aware of this and would investigate the cost of raising the exam tables and explore the possibility of scheduling a weekly session at Dunstable Leisure Centre.

A handout was distributed to Members headed 'How is it ok for residents of Houghton Regis to not have the same access and considerations as residents of neighbouring towns?' This reiterated the points raised at various meetings over the past fourteen months.

1075 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1076 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 28th January 2025.

One amendment was requested to Minute 1065 to alter CBC to ICB.

Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2025 as amended.

1077 INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW INTEGRATED CARE BOARD (ICB) PLACE TEAM

ICB Place Team were in attendance to introduce the Town Partnership Committee to the roles and responsibilities of the Integrated Care Board Place Team;
K Conroy, Head of Central Bedfordshire ICB Place Team
S Daly, Senior Integrated Primary Care Manager
S Gutteridge, Head of Integrated Primary Care

The Place Team was part of the ICB operating across Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. Place Plan priorities were as follows:

- Reducing excess weight in children and adults
- Earlier diagnosis of cancer
- Positive mental health for children and young people
- Improving mental health services and support for people with learning disabilities and autistic people
- Improving access to primary care, including dentistry
- Improving out of hospital services

The team sought to establish the needs of residents while also focussing on evidence-based criteria. Integrated Neighbourhood Working looked to improve the health outcomes and experience for local residents by connecting and optimising resources

The Primary Care Core Team looked to improve access into primary care. Over the past year Pharmacy First had been launched, which was a scheme encouraging people to use the services available at their local pharmacy. There had also been efforts to promote the NHS app which would enable residents to take a more proactive approach to their own healthcare.

Members raised a number of questions including the following:

Was it possible to share any examples of preventative interventions that had been implemented using population data for the residents of Houghton Regis and what results had been shown?

The Team confirmed that a response would be provided at a later date.

How would the needs of a growing community be met with no additional capacity for residents to visit their local GP?

The ICB was connected with Central Beds Council and aware of the proposed growth. Work was carried out with the council to plan future healthcare provision.

A more in-depth response would follow.

What were the top three priorities for HR.

Work was being undertaken with Public Health on population health management data to gather evidence-based information that would inform the plan for each of the neighbourhoods.

Members noted that while preventative health was a significant factor, this did not align with the recent loss of a local sports facility that benefited the whole community.

Was the data collected specific to Houghton Regis or to the whole of Central Bedfordshire?

The work with Public Health would look to provide data relating to each neighbourhood.

Members were keen to establish that data sources would be an adequate indicator of the needs of Houghton Regis. It was highlighted that, out of necessity, residents were often accessing services outside of the area, e.g. G.P.s; therefore, there was a risk that data would be incomplete. The Place Team informed Members that a variety of service providers would be included and that where people lived would be taken into account. This would be checked and verified, however.

It was requested that the Place Team provide clarity on the data sources and demonstrate how all relevant information would be captured.

1078 UPDATE ON FORMAL SPORTS PROVISION IN HOUGHTON REGIS

The new leisure and community centre opened to the public on Saturday, 29th March 2025 and was operated by Everyone Active.

The representative from Houghton Regis Badminton Club circulated handouts among Members and provided an update.

CBC had stated they were unable to exert any influence on the current agreement between Houghton School and Schools+ since neither party was a CBC asset.

A number of avenues were being pursued, including:

- A petition
- Contacting the local ombudsman
- A legal review
- Crowd funding
- Holding a public meeting

The representative from Luton and Houghton Regis Basketball Club circulated handouts outlining the deficits of current sports hall provision.

A recent survey had highlighted the significant inequalities that persisted across different demographics. The Sports Minister had stressed the need for a cross-government approach and had called on local authorities to develop local plans to encourage physical activity. The current lack of sports hall provision appeared to be in contravention of Government policy.

As part of the consultation, CBC had stated they would facilitate the CUA for the Houghton Regis community to access Houstone, which had not been honoured. It was discussed if the Town Partnership could trigger a review of the situation and whether there was potential to make a legal challenge. Members remained uncertain whether the CUA had been signed.

Cllr McMahon quoted Condition 19 in the planning application submitted at the DMC which stated that ‘the planning permission for the secondary school within the campus includes a condition for the CUA to be agreed prior to the occupation of the secondary school’.

The Chair requested that Cllr McMahon forward this condition

The Chair confirmed they would enquire:

- Whether the CUA had been signed?
- If not, what date would it be completed?
- Could a copy of the signed document be provided?
- Had Condition 19 of the planning application been met?
- If not, could an explanation be provided for the violation of this condition?
- How could a review of the agreement be triggered?

Members suggested that if the CUA was unsigned, it would also be possible to declare the current arrangements unsatisfactory and request that the terms were renegotiated. If the agreement was signed, however, it should be investigated whether the contract between Houstone School and Schools+ worked within the CUA.

Cllr McMahon confirmed they would explore the specifications for the Levelling Up funding for the leisure centre and whether those specifications had been met.

The Chair was organising a meeting for representatives from the Houghton Regis Badminton Club, Houghton Regis Basketball Club and the Academy of Central Bedfordshire to meet with Cllr Watkins of CBC to discuss sports hall provision. The Chair would enquire whether it would be possible for the meeting to be open and allow members of the public to attend.

1079 CBC SUPPORT TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Cllr R Goodchild addressed Members regarding his role as unofficial deputy to the portfolio holder for Town and Parish Liaison, Cllr John Baker, and a secondary position under Cllr Steve Watkins for Town Centre Development. The objective was to help achieve the CBC Strategic Plan and would involve working closely with the Community Engagement Team and meeting with all town councils.

Cllr Goodchild would be looking at how communication could be improved between CBC and the towns and parishes and was keen to work closely with the Joint and

Partnership Committees to this end. Improved collaboration was also sought from residents.

It was the intention to establish a parish charter setting out how all parties would work together. A working group, incorporating volunteers from towns and parishes, would be assembled to put the charter together.

It was agreed that a formal discussion would be included on a future Town Partnership agenda to address how best to improve the effectiveness of the Committee.

Members were informed that the first in a proposed schedule of forums had been held recently. The forums, comprising of town and parish councils, would be held regularly with set agendas on strategic matters.

1080 COMMUNITY BUILDINGS IN HOUGHTON REGIS

A verbal update was provided by the CBC Community Engagement Manager on the planned community centre in Bidwell.

The charity had received guidance on CBC's expectations of the development. A meeting had taken place to discuss the business plan, which had subsequently been submitted by the end of April deadline. Advice had also been provided in relation to which proposals were acceptable and viable within planning terms.

A verbal update was provided by Cllr Alderman on the formal request made to CBC for a public consultation on the Bedford Square Community Centre prior to the end of the current lease to the College.

CBC's response had stated that the building was dual use and was still required for CBC to meet its statutory requirements to educate young people up to 25 with SEN. Consultation was already conducted and an executive decision made that there was no rationale or purpose to revisiting the situation.

1081 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2024/25 and the draft workplan for 2025/26.

It was requested that Parkside community space remained on the workplan as an ongoing issue.

It was recommended that an additional item on the workplan should be to schedule a formal discussion on how to improve the Town Partnership Committee.

1082 HRTC UPDATE REPORT

It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee was an addition to the 2025/26 calendar of meetings. The dates would be confirmed at the Town Council AGM on 14th May 2025.

1083 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION

It had been requested that potential co-option onto this committee remained on the agenda as a Standing Agenda item.

Members were invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. In this regard the Terms of Reference for the Committee state:

Co-option

1. To support engagement with local stakeholders the Town Joint Committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate up to a maximum of 15. Each co-opted Member will be able to engage fully in all discussions but will not have any voting rights. Co-opted members can be removed from the Town Joint Committee. Decision making around removals can either be taken by the whole Town Joint committee or by joint agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair, depending on each Town Joint Committee's preference.

The list of Co-opted Members should be reviewed annually, by the Town Joint Committee

1084 ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Members had been advised of the CBC process to determine further consideration, at CBC committee level, of items and issues.

Members of this committee were able to use this process to forward items for CBC's attention via the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair.

As such members were requested to identify and confirm if there were any requested items for CBC's attention. Members submitted the following items:

- Health
- Delivery of the Bidwell West school
- Sharing appropriate information with residents to avoid misinformation
- Reintroduction of the Town Centre Management Plan

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.26pm

Dated this 29th day of July 2025

Chairman