

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 14th May 2025 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	E Cooper P Burgess J Carroll E Cooper E Costello Y Farrell M Herber D Jones T McMahon C Rollins A Slough C Slough D Taylor	(Chair)
	Officers:	Clare Evans Amanda Samuels	Town Clerk Administration Officer
	Public	8	
Also present:	L Senior E Holland	Head of Democratic Services Support Officer (Democratic)	
Apologies:	Councillor:	W Henderson	

13187 ELECTION OF THE TOWN MAYOR

The retiring Town Mayor, Cllr Cooper, invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the period May 2025 to May 2026.

Nominee:	M Herber	Nominated by:	J Carroll
		Seconded by:	T McMahon

There were no other nominations.

Those in Favour of electing Cllr Herber as Town Mayor: 12.

On being put to the vote Cllr Herber was duly elected as Town Mayor for the municipal year 2025 – 2026.

The new Town Mayor retired to receive the mayoral robes and the Chain of Office from the retiring Town Mayor.

The new Mayor adopted the role of Chairman and gave an acceptance speech.

The Mayor thanked Members for the opportunity to represent Houghton Regis. Thanks were expressed to the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Cooper, for their time in office and for their dedication and support for local causes.

The Mayor looked forward to working with Members for the benefit of the town and to engaging with the local community.

The Mayor nominated Keech Hospice Care and Tithe Farm Children's Centre as their chosen charities during their time in office.

The new Town Mayor read and signed the 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office'.

Cllr Jones proposed a vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Cooper. Cllr Cooper's participation in local events and tackling local issues was highlighted and their achievements acknowledged.

Cllr Herber was thanked for their help and support in their role of Deputy Mayor.

Cllr Cooper was thanked again for their dedicated service.

The outgoing Mayor thanked Members for the opportunity to represent Houghton Regis over the previous year and Cllr Carroll was thanked for his support during Cllr Cooper's term as Deputy Mayor.

The outgoing mayor had enjoyed a wonderful year of stand-out moments. They wished the new Mayor good luck for their mayoralty

Both of Cllr Cooper's charities would be receiving cheques in the coming days.

13188 ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR

The Town Mayor invited nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor for the period May 2025 to May 2026.

Nominee:	J Carroll	Nominated by:	P Burgess
		Seconded by:	D Jones

Those in favour of electing Cllr Carroll as Deputy Town Mayor: 12

On being put to the vote Cllr Carroll was duly elected as the new Deputy Town Mayor.

Cllr Carroll read and signed the 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office'.

13189 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson.

13190 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13191 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13192 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2025.

Resolved: To approve the amended minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13193 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	None to present.
Community Services Committee	None to present.
Environment & Leisure Committee	13 th January 2025
Planning Committee	10 th and 31 st March 2025
Town Partnership Committee	28 th January 2025

To receive the minutes of the following sub-committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

New Cemetery Sub-Committee None to present.

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

13194 COUNCIL CALENDAR FOR 2025-26

The draft Council Calendar, including meeting dates, member briefing dates, and council and civic event dates, for 2025/26 had been presented at the Town Council meeting held on the 17th March 2025. At this meeting Members noted the draft Council Calendar, made some suggested alterations and recommended its approval at the Annual Meeting of Town Council.

The approval of the calendar of council meetings including the time and place of ordinary meetings of the council up to and including the next annual meeting of the council was in accordance with Standing Order 4.j.ix.

The proposed adjustments to the calendar presented at the March meeting were as follows:

- Members open sessions changed to Councillor Briefings to accord with the CPC Action Plan
- Community Services Committee on 24th November changed to 3rd November
- Staffing Committee on 3rd November changed to 24th November
- Removed Members Open Session / Councillor Briefings on 23rd Dec
- Staffing Committee on 19th May 2025 removed as too close to AGM
- Staffing Committee on 7th July brought forward to 3rd June (Tuesday)

The Town Clerk proposed one further adjustment which was to remove the Staffing meeting scheduled for 18th May 2026 as this was close to the AGM on 20th May 2026.

Members requested that the date of the Skate Jam event be checked and rectified.

Members were happy to accept the meeting calendar with these amendments.

Resolved: To approve the Council Calendar for 2025/26.

13195 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.v. Council was required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub-committees.

These arrangements were set out in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference. This document set out the system of delegation to the Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups of the Council.

The approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference were reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on the 17th March 2025. As detailed under Minute 13155, Strategic Policies 2025/26.

Resolved: To approve the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference as presented for 2025/26.

13196 COMMITTEE, SUB-COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Members were requested to:

1. Nominate and approve membership on the Town Council's Committees, Sub-Committees, Working and other Groups (Standing Order 6d);
2. To appoint Chairs of Standing Committees accordingly Groups (Standing Order 6dv).

The following summarised the committee structure and associated membership:

Standing Committees

Corporate Services Committee	7 members
Environment & Leisure Committee	7 members
Community Services Committee	7 members
Planning Committee	7 members
Staffing Committee	7 members

Joint Committees

Partnership Committee	8 members (4 Town Cllrs & 4 CBC Cllrs)
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Sub-Committees

	To be appointed as and when required
Complaints Sub-Committee	3 members
Complaints Appeal Sub-Committee	3 members
Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee	3 members

Proposed New Cemetery Sub Committee	5 members
Community Engagement Sub-Committee	5 members
Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee	5 members

<i>Working Groups</i>	5 members
Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group	5 members
Combating Crime Working Group	5 members

The Town Clerk informed Members of the following items:

- The Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee would include Cllrs Carroll, Cooper, Herber, Jones and C Slough.
- Cllr Cooper would sit on the Pride of Houghton Committee.

Members appointed chairs of Standing Committees:

Chair of Corporate Services Committee

Nominees:	D Jones	Nominated by:	Y Farrell
		Seconded by:	J Carroll

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Jones was elected as Chair of Corporate Services Committee.

Chair of Environment & Leisure Committee

Nominees:	A Slough	Nominated by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	D Jones

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr A Slough was elected as Chair of Environment & Leisure Committee.

Chair of Community Services Committee

Nominees:	T McMahon	Nominated by:	J Carroll
		Seconded by:	P Burgess

On being put to the vote, Cllr McMahon was elected as Chair of Community Services Committee.

Chair of Planning Committee

Nominees:	M Herber	Nominated by:	D Jones
		Seconded by:	J Carroll

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Herber was elected as Chair of Planning Committee.

Chair of Staffing Committee

Nominees:	W Henderson	Nominated by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	D Jones

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Henderson was elected as Chair of Planning Committee.

Resolved: 1. To nominate and approve membership on the Town Council's Committees, Sub Committees, Working and other Groups;
2. To appoint Chairs of Standing Committees accordingly.

13197 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Town Council was invited to appoint representatives to outside organisations to act as a link between the Town Council and the organisation.

Members were provided with a list of outside organisations to which the Council was invited to appoint representatives for 2025/26 along with Cllrs who have expressed an interest in being appointed as the Council representative.

Reporting Mechanisms

Members who were appointed as representatives were requested to attend meetings of the organisations and to report to them items / issues of relevance from Houghton Regis Town Council and in turn to report back to the Town Council or the specified committee on the activities of the organisation. There was a standing item on Town Council agendas to facilitate this.

The Town Clerk advised Members that Cllr Jones had expressed a willingness to sit on the Chews Foundation.

Resolved: 1. To appoint the councillor representatives for the listed outside organisations for 2025/26 as attached;
2. To note the reporting back mechanism as set out.

13198 STANDING ORDERS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.vii. Council is required to review its Standing Orders.

Standing Orders are 'the written rules of a local council. they are used to confirm a council's internal organisational and administrative procedures, procurement and procedural matters for meetings'.

Members expressed disappointment that there appeared to be a dilution of retribution/sanctions for breach of Code of Conduct.

Resolved: To approve Standing Orders as presented.

13199 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.vii. Council was required to review its Financial Regulations.

Financial Regulations were ‘the “standing orders” of a local council that regulated and controlled its financial affairs and accounting procedures’.

The approved Financial Regulations were reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on the 17th March 2024. However, since the agenda for the above meeting was issued, NALC had provided an updated version of Financial Regulations. The regulations were updated due to new legislation, The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulation 2024, that had come into force. The changes are to Financial Regulations 5.4, 5.7 and 5.11. Members were provided with a track change document and requested to adopt the amended version as presented.

Resolved: To approve Financial Regulations as presented.

13200 SCHEME OF DELEGATION

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.v. Council was required to review its Scheme of Delegation.

The Scheme of Delegation authorised the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, Heads of Services, Council and Standing Committees of the Council to act with delegated authority in the specific circumstances detailed.

A revised Scheme of Delegation was reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on 17th March 2025 and was recommended for approval subject to amendments.

Resolved: To approve the Scheme of Delegation as presented.

13201 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

In order for the Town Council to continue to use the General Power of Competence it needed to resolve that it met the eligibility criteria (specified below) as contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011:

- At least 2/3 of Members were elected at ordinary elections or at a by-election
- The clerk held the following recognised qualifications
 - (i) The Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy;
 - (ii) The CiLCA module on the General Power of Competence

Resolved: To confirm that Houghton Regis Town Council meets the eligibility criteria for the General Power of Competence as contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

13202 BANKING & SIGNING ARRANGEMENTS

At the Town Council meeting held on the 17th May 2023 the banking arrangements for the council's bank accounts were approved as follows (minute number 12437).

Banking Arrangements

To approve the bank mandate be set up as follows:

- 2 signatories from Group A (councillors) and 1 signatory from Group B (officers);
- Group A to comprise current serving councillors
- Group B to comprise Clerk & RFO and Head of Service

To remove all other signatories.

To accord with banking requirements the following resolution was also passed:

- if we add or remove Authorised Signatories in the “Add or Remove Authorised Signatories” section on the “About your request” page of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's “About your business” section
- if we change the Signing Rules in the “Change the Signing Rules on the Mandate” section on the “About your request” page of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's “About your business” section
- and the current mandate will continue as amended.

Signing Arrangements

Councillor Jones and Councillor Herber were nominated as the 2 members to receive, check and authorise the payment of invoices.

Members were advised that the following signatories are now authorised on the banks mandate:

Group A (councillors)

J Carroll
E Costello
Y Farrell
W Henderson
M Herber
D Jones
T McMahon
A Slough
C Slough

Group B (officers)

Town Clerk
Head of Corporate Services
Head of Environmental & Community Services
Head of Democratic Services

Financial Regulation 5.1 states:

The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the council; banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee. They shall be regularly reviewed for safety and efficiency.

Resolved: Bank Mandate

To approve the bank mandate be set up as follows:

- **2 signatories from Group A (councillors) and 1 signatory from Group B (officers);**
- **Group A to comprise current serving councillors**
- **Group B to comprise Clerk & RFO and Heads of Service**

To accord with banking requirements the following resolution is also passed:

- **if we add or remove Authorised Signatories in the “Add or Remove Authorised Signatories” section on the “About your request” page of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's “About your business” section**
- **if we change the Signing Rules in the “Change the Signing Rules on the Mandate” section on the “About your request” page of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's “About your business” section**
- **and the current mandate will continue as amended.**

Signing Arrangements

For Councillor Jones and Councillor Herber as the 2 members to receive, check and authorise the payment of invoices.

13203 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members were reminded that at the March 2025 meeting (Minute 13159), authority was granted for five members of the Town Council to work with officers on the Community Governance Review. The councillors had subsequently convened twice and additionally met with Chalton Parish Council to discuss the suitability of the current boundaries between the two councils. A report had been circulated to Members. CBC had provided four points for consideration and had requested feedback from the Town Council by 31st May 2025. The point for discussion were:

- The creation; merger; alteration; and abolition of parishes.
- The naming of Parishes
- Electoral arrangements for existing parishes, including council size, the number of councillors and parish warding
- Grouping of parishes under a new common parish council

Cllr Jones suggested that the recommendation be moved in order for an amendment to be proposed.

Proposed: C Slough
Seconded: E Cooper

Cllr Jones requested that 'no comment' was deleted from the item 'Alteration' and instead insert:

"Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) wishes to suggest that that part of Chalton Parish Council's area bounded by the Houghton Regis parish boundary, the Luton Borough Council boundary, the Motorway M1 and the A5 - M1 Link Road (Dunstable Northern Bypass) be transferred to HRTC."

This was an attempt to revert to an agreement made at the Town Council meeting in October 2021 (Minute 11804). This had been presented to CBC who had not moved forward with the proposal until a full Community Governance Review across the whole area was completed.

There had been a difference of opinion among the nominated councillors at their meetings as to whether this course should be pursued, or to maintain 'no comment'; therefore, no recommendation had been made.

The following points were raised:

- Ease of electoral arrangements needed to be taken into consideration in addition to equity in terms of current and future residents of Houghton Regis.
- Services within Houghton Regis were also more extensive.
- A part of the conurbation would vote in mid-Bedfordshire, rather than Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable.

Members voted on the proposed amendments. A recorded vote was requested.

For: Cllrs Costello, Billington, C Slough, A Slough, Jones, Taylor, Farrell and Cooper
Against: J Carroll, P Burgess and C Rollins
Abstention: Cllr McMahon

The amendment was duly carried and became the substantive motion for consideration.

The amended motion was:
Proposed by Cllr C Slough
Seconded by Cllr Taylor

Members voted on the new proposal as follows:

For: Cllrs Costello, Billington, C Slough, A Slough, Jones, Taylor, Farrell and Cooper.
Against: Cllrs Carroll, Burgess and Rollins
Abstention: Cllr Mc Mahon

The proposed amendment was adopted by Members.

Resolved: To notify CBC of the following response to the town and parish council consultation on the Community Governance review:

-
1. The creation, merger, alteration or abolition of parishes:
 - *Creation* – no comment
 - *Merger* – no comment
 - *Abolition* – no comment
 - *Alteration* – Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) wishes to suggest that that part of Chalton Parish Council's land bounded by the Houghton Regis parish boundary, the Luton Borough Council boundary, the Motorway M1 and the A5 - M1 Link Road (Dunstable Northern Bypass) be transferred to HRTC.
 2. The naming of parishes and the style of any new or revised parish – no comment
 3. Electoral arrangements for existing parishes including council size, the number of councillors to be elected to the council, parish warding
 - *council size* – no comment
 - *no. of Cllrs* – to ensure adequate demographic representation given the population growth of Houghton Regis it is requested that the number of HR councillors be increased to 16 (from 14)
 - *parish warding* – given the recent growth of Houghton Regis, a 4th ward to cover the growth area of Bidwell would support suitable demographic representation. This new ward should be named Thorn ward as it is reflective of historic name for this area. The suggested ward boundary would be from Bedford Road following the line of the public right of way to Blue Waters. At this time HRTC are unable to comment on how 16 councillors should be split across the 4 wards (as proposed) as CBC have not released population / electorate data in support of the CGR process. HRTC request that HRTC councillors be split across the proposed 4 wards as evenly as possible such that each councillor represents the same number of electorate. Alternatively, CBC are requested extend the town and parish council deadline to 30th June 2025 to enable the data to be released and considered by HRTC.
 - Grouping parishes under a new common parish council with any of their surrounding areas – no comment

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.48pm

Dated this 16th day of June 2025

Chairman
COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2025 / 2026

STANDING COMMITTEES – 2025 / 2026**Corporate Services**

Cllrs: D Jones (Chair), E Billington, J Carroll, E Costello, W Henderson, M Herber, C Rollins

Environment & Leisure

Cllrs: A Slough (Chair), P Burgess, E Cooper, Y Farrell, W Henderson, T McMahon, C Rollins

Planning

Cllrs: M Herber (Chair), E Billington, E Cooper, Y Farrell, D Jones, C Slough, D Taylor

Community Services

Cllrs: T McMahon (Chair), P Burgess, E Cooper, Y Farrell, A Slough C Slough, D Taylor

Staffing Committee

Cllrs: W Henderson (Chair), E Costello, M Herber, D Jones, T McMahon A Slough, D Taylor

OTHER COMMITTEES – 2025 / 2026**Town Partnership**

Cllrs: D Jones, Y Farrell, M Herber, C Slough

SUB-COMMITTEES – 2025 / 2026**Complaints Sub-Committee (Reporting to Town Council)**

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Complaints Appeal Sub-Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee (Reporting to Corporate Services)

Cllrs: To be appointed as required.

New Cemetery Sub Committee (Reporting to Town Council)

Cllrs: M Herber, D Jones, T McMahon, A Slough, D Taylor

Community Engagement Sub Committee (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: E Cooper, Y Farrell, T McMahon, C Rollins, C Slough

Neighbourhood Plan Implementation (Reporting to Planning)

Cllrs: J Carroll, E Cooper, M Herber, D Jones, C Slough

WORKING GROUPS – 2025 / 2026**Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)**

Cllrs: E Cooper, M Herber, D Jones, A Slough, D Taylor

Combating Crime Working Group (Reporting to Community Services)

Cllrs: E Cooper, Y Farrell, M Herber, T McMahon, C Slough

OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS – 2025 / 2026

Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils	Cllrs: M Herber, Cllr Jones, Cllr C Slough
Bedfordshire Bus Users	Cllr T McMahon
Chews Foundation	Cllr D Jones
Citizens Advice	Cllr E Cooper
Hospice at Home Volunteers	Cllr D Jones
Houghton Hall Park Project Board	Cllrs: D Jones, D Taylor
Houghton Hall Park MAG	Cllr E Cooper
Houghton Regis North Stakeholder Group	Cllr D Jones
Memorial Hall Committee	Cllrs: J Carroll, Y Farrell
South Beds Dial-a-Ride	Cllr M Herber
Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space	Cllr A Slough
NALC	Cllrs: J Carroll, D Jones, C Slough