

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 20th May 2026 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: E Billington
J Carroll
E Cooper
E Costello
W Henderson
M Herber
D Jones (Chair)
T McMahon
C Rollins
A Slough
C Slough
~~Vacancy~~ QJJ.

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Also present: Public 9 (1 virtual)

L Senior Head of Democratic Services
E Holland Support Officer (Democratic)

Apologies: Councillor: Y Farrell
D Taylor

13538 ELECTION OF THE TOWN MAYOR

The retiring Town Mayor, Cllr Herber, invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the period May 2026 to May 2027.

Nominee: Cllr D Jones Nominated by: Cllr E Costello
Seconded by: Cllr E Cooper

There were no other nominations made.

Those in Favour of electing Cllr Jones as Town Mayor: 10.

On being put to the vote Cllr Jones was duly elected as Town Mayor for the municipal year 2026 – 2027.

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

The new Town Mayor adopted the role of Chairman and signed the 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office'.

QJJ.

The new Town Mayor gave an acceptance speech in which they promised to be diligent in representing the community and the town in all spheres. The Mayor hoped to live up to the example of previous mayors fortunate enough to hold the office twice.

The Mayor was touched and honoured by the support received and hoped to satisfy expectations. The coming year would be one of progress for Houghton Regis and they looked forward to playing their part and hoped to be worthy of the support.

A vote of thanks was proposed to the outgoing mayor by Cllr McMahan.

Cllr McMahan highlighted Cllr Herber's dedication and commitment. The mayoral year had been extremely busy with attendance at over 150 council, civic and community events in addition to council obligations.

Through mayoral and council events, Cllr Herber had raised in excess of £13,500 for Hospice at Home Volunteers, Keech Hospice and Houghton Regis Children's Centre. Thanks to Cllr Herber's cake-making skills, fundraising stalls at events had brought crowds and welcomed funds.

Members were requested to take a moment to acknowledge Cllr Herber's consort and family for their support, and to give thanks to Cllr Carroll for carrying out the role of Deputy Mayor.

Sincere thanks were extended to Cllr Herber and all happiness wished for her future.

The outgoing mayor and consort medals were presented.

The outgoing mayor was called upon to reply.

Cllr Herber responded that she had never imagined holding the role of mayor but had been proud, honoured and humbled to hold the position. Any fears about succeeding in the role had been directed into making the best effort possible during her term in office, and especially to raising as many funds as possible for her nominated charities.

Thanks were extended to family, friends, HRTC council officers and staff for all their help. Cllr Herber thanked the volunteer groups for their time and dedication, Deputy Mayor J Carroll and everyone who had joined them on the journey. Special thanks were expressed to support officers Louise Senior and Elizabeth Holland for their guidance and organisation.

A donation of £250 would be made to Houghton Regis Helpers and Friends of Houghton Hall Park as a gesture of thanks for their help; and a cheque for £6,500 had been sent to Hospice at Home Volunteers. The balance of funds would be distributed shortly.

Cllr Herber thanked everyone who had attended events, made donations and volunteered.

Cllr Herber expressed gratitude for the experience and for the honour of representing HRTC. It had been inspirational to meet the people who were the heartbeat of Houghton Regis: the volunteers, fundraisers, community leaders, teachers, caregivers and local heroes, plus the partner organisations, businesses and community groups

DJJ.

The new Town Mayor confirmed that they would continue to support two of the charities supported by the outgoing mayor: Keech Hospice and Hospice at Home Volunteers. The Motor Neurone Disease Association would be their third nominated charity.

13539 ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR

The Town Mayor invited nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor for the period May 2026 to May 2027.

Nominee:	Cllr E Cooper	Nominated by:	Cllr E Costello
		Seconded by:	Cllr J Carroll

There were no other nominations made.

Those in favour of electing Cllr Cooper as Deputy Town Mayor: 10

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

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

13540 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair drew Members attention to the resignation of the councillor for Parkside Ward, Pam Burgess. Houghton Regis Town Council passed on its thanks to Pam for her service, during which she steadfastly put forward the views and concerns of the Parkside residents and ensured that their needs were always taken into consideration.

If requested, a by-election would take place in due course to elect a new councillor. If no by-election was called, the council would be invited to seek co-option.

Apologies were received from Cllr Farrell and Cllr Taylor.

13541 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13542 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13543 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2026.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

OJJ.

13544 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	23 rd February 2026
Environment & Leisure Committee	12 th January 2026
Planning Committee	9 th and 30 st March and 20 th April 2026
Staffing Committee	None to present
Town Partnership Committee	27 th January 2026

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.

13545 COUNCIL CALENDAR FOR 2026-27

The draft Council Calendar, including meeting dates, councillor briefings dates, and council and civic event dates for 2026/27 had been presented at the Town Council meeting held on the 14th April 2026. Subsequent to this meeting, Community Services Committee had agreed an adjustment to the frequency of meetings for both Community Engagement Sub Committee and Community Safety Sub Committee such that they would meet up to a maximum of six times a year. The draft calendar had been adjusted accordingly.

As usual, the Council Calendar included the date of the Annual Towns' Meeting, for the following year and was shown on 17th May 2027. The meeting had to be held between 1st March and 1st June. As such it would be held in fairly close proximity to the Annual Meeting of Houghton Regis Town Council. These two meetings had a significantly different remit and purpose, yet the meeting names were similar. To help clarify the difference, Members were invited to consider changing the title of the Annual Towns Meeting to the Houghton Regis Annual Town Assembly.

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.

Resolved: To approve the Council Calendar for 2026/27 with the alteration to the name of the Annual Towns Meeting to the Houghton Regis Annual Town Assembly.

13546 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.

DJJ.

These arrangements were set out in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference. This document sets 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 14th April 2026. As detailed under Minute 13495, Strategic Policies 2026/27.

Resolved: To approve the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference as presented for 2026/27.

13547 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 (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

<i>Partnership Committee</i>	8 members (4 Town Cllrs & 4 CBC Cllrs)
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Sub-Committees

Complaints Sub-Committee	3 members
Complaints Appeal Sub-Committee	3 members
Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee	3 members
Community Engagement Sub-Committee	5 members
Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee	5 members
Community Safety Sub-Committee	5 members

Working Groups

Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group	5 members
Investment Working Group	3 members Corporate Services + ad hoc members from other standing committees

Task & Finish Groups

Town Centre Community Task & Finish Group	7 Members
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DJJ

Decisions regarding committee membership were agreed as follows:

- Cllr Carroll volunteered to fill the vacancy on Community Services Committee
- Vacancies on Planning Committee and Corporate Services Committee remained to be filled by the councillor who filled the current vacancy.
- Cllr Carroll volunteered to stand down from Staffing Committee which had received an additional nomination
- Cllr C Slough volunteered to withdraw from Community Engagement Sub-Committee, which had received an additional nomination, and hoped to attend as a co-opted member
- Cllr A Slough withdrew from the Pride of Houghton Working Group in order to sit on the Community Engagement Sub-Committee.
- Cllr C Slough and Cllr Billington submitted their names for Pride of Houghton.
- The remaining vacancy on Pride of Houghton would be filled by the new councillor
- Cllr Taylor would join Community Venue Task & Finish Group

The nominations for Chair were agreed as follows:

- Cllr D Taylor Corporate Services Committee
- Cllr A Slough Environment and Leisure Committee
- Cllr T McMahan Community Services Committee
- Cllr D Jones Planning Committee
- Cllr W Henderson Staffing Committee

Members were invited to vote for these nominations.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the nominations.

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

13548 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 2026/27 along with councillors who had 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.

In addition to the draft list, the following councillors also put their names forward:

- BATPC Cllr J Carroll
- Citizens Advice Bureau Cllr T McMahon
- Houghton Regis North Cllr J Carroll
Stakeholder Group
- Sorted Vacancy

Resolved: 1. To appoint the councillor representatives for the listed outside organisations for 2026/27, as attached;
2. To note the reporting back mechanism as set out.

13549 STANDING ORDERS

At the Town Council meeting held on the 14th April 2026, Members discussed whether Standing Orders could be amended to allow non-members of committees, sub-committees, working and other groups to remain at a meeting when the meeting moved into private and confidential session.

Following this meeting, clarity had been sought and Members were provided with a report stating that non-members of committees, sub-committees, working and other groups only had the same rights as those of the public and as such were not permitted to take part in meetings during private sessions.

Members were happy to accept the ruling but requested that consideration be given to including this restriction in bold in Standing Orders.

Members requested that Standing Order 7a (as set out in point 4 of the report) be added as a footnote for clarification.

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.vii. Council was 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.

Members were satisfied to agree the recommendation with the standing orders in point two to read 'as amended' rather than 'as presented'.

Proposed by: Cllr Henderson Seconded by: Cllr A Slough
Members voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Resolved: 1. To note the advice as provided;
2. To approve Standing Orders as amended.

13550 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 Financial Regulations were reviewed at the Town Council meeting held on the 14th April 2026.

Resolved: To approve Financial Regulations as presented.

13551 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 14th April 2026 and was recommended for approval.

Resolved: To approve the Scheme of Delegation as presented.

13552 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.

13553 BANKING & SIGNING ARRANGEMENTS

At the Town Council meeting held on the 14th May 2025 the banking arrangements for the council’s bank accounts were approved as follows (minute number 13202).

D.J.

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 6.1 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.

13554 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) determined to facilitate a further consultation as part of the Community Governance Review (CGR), specifically on the possibility of creating a new ward for the Linnere area.

Through this consultation, CBC was seeking views on whether creating a new ward would provide dedicated representation at town council level and help ensure local decision-making reflected the needs of residents and businesses.

The relevant extract of the HRTC Resolution (Minute 13505) in relation to Linnere was:

Request a wording change for clarification to as follows:

Draft Recommendation 6: undertake a further community governance review of the parish in 2030 to align with the local elections in 2031 to ensure effective community governance arrangements in light of the development at Linnere

DJJ

A request had been submitted to CBC seeking an extension to allow the matter to be considered at the next scheduled Town Council meeting. In the event the request was refused, a special meeting of the Town Council would need to be convened.

Members stated that there were fewer residents registered at Linnere than the average for councillor representation at HRTC.

In response to a question from Members, the Town Clerk confirmed that the same number of seventeen councillors would be retained; however, it was to be established whether one of the councillors would represent Linnere or whether Linnere would become part of the Tithe Farm Ward. HRTC had originally stated that at this stage Linnere should remain part of Tithe Farm Ward.

The Chair advised Members that a further response from HRTC was required expanding on the details of its previous rejection. The Town Clerk asked Members if they would agree to extend the recommendation to include the re-establishment of nominated councillors on this matter to construct a more detailed response. Members agreed to providing the nominated councillors with the authority to expand on its reasoning, including points raised at the AGM.

The Town Clerk confirmed that it would be possible for HRTC to share information on the consultation in order to encourage public involvement.

Members of the public in attendance informed the Council that there was some confusion among residents regarding a new ward and enquired whether HRTC could put out an explanatory note to clarify the situation and its implications. The Town Clerk confirmed that it would be possible to do this via social media.

Resolved: That HRTC reaffirms its previously submitted response to the Community Governance Review, namely that a further CGR should be undertaken in 2030 to ensure that governance arrangements for Linnere remain effective, proportionate, and reflective of the community's continued development.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.10pm

Dated this 15th day of June 2026

D.J. Jones.

Chairman