

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

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman
P Burgess
J Carroll (Substitute)
Y Farrell
D Jones (Substitute)
C Slough (Substitute)

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

Public: 1

Apologies: Councillors: W Henderson
T McMahon
C Rollins
D Taylor

13286 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Henderson (Cllr C Slough substituted), Cllr McMahon, Cllr Rollins (Cllr Carroll substituted) and Cllr Taylor (Cllr Jones substituted).

13287 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13288 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Nominee:	Cllr D Taylor	Proposed by:	Cllr Y Farrell
		Seconded by:	Cllr J Carroll

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Taylor became the Vice-Chair of Environment and Leisure for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

13289 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2025.

AS

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 28th April 2025, and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13290 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Houghton Hall Park Board 23rd May 2025

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations contained therein

13291 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

These arrangements are outlined in the Committee's Functions & Terms of Reference. This document outlines the system of delegation to the Council's Committees, Sub-Committees, and Working Groups.

Members were provided with a copy of the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference, which related to this committee.

13292 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Members were provided with a copy of the work plan for the 2025/26 municipal year.

The work plan provided a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2025/26, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations were met in a timely manner.

Members were advised that items could be categorised as deferred, completed, removed, or brought forward, and that it was within their remit to request changes to the work plan.

Resolved: To review and approve the Environment and Leisure Services Committee Workplan for 2025/26, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year.

13293 STAFFING FORECAST 2026-2027

Members were provided with the staffing forecast for the period of 2026-2027.

The primary item to note was the review of the Head of Environmental and Community Services position, with options for consideration including a separation into two individual dedicated roles or the recruitment of an additional supportive resource.

PS

supplies and building rates were logged as fully spent, which would bring the overspend percentage down.

Members discussed and noted the cost centre 293 UKSPF and wished to make a recommendation to the Town Council that this money be drawn from the general reserves.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council that the expenditure in Cost Centre 293 UKSPF be drawn from general reserves.

13297 COMMUTED SUMS FOR HRN2 CB/15/00297/OUT

Members were provided with a breakdown of the commuted sum received for HRN2 CB/15/00297/OUT and consideration to reasonable expenditure within the first 12 months.

The proposed expenditure would be used to secure the site and purchase equipment for its upkeep. While this involved significant initial expenditure, this would be significantly reduced going forward.

A further proposal was for appropriate signage, bins, goal posts etc to be installed, and repairs made to the existing fence.

Members discussed the options regarding the site name and were in agreement that Thorn Park was the preferred option.

Resolved: To note the value of commuted sum received for HRN2 CB/15/00297/OUT to be used for the ongoing maintenance of the transferred sites only.

- i) Approve the expenditure of up to £200,000 to improve, secure the site and purchase new equipment funding through a hire purchase scheme.
- ii) To consider the appropriate naming of the site, either Option 1 or Option 2

13298 PARISH BOUNDARY WALK

Members' views were sought on the investigation and possible implementation of a parish boundary walk.

It was suggested to Members that the car park at Thorn Park would provide a convenient base to explore the park, the quarry and on through the town.

A boundary walk had originally formed part of the Neighbourhood Plan, before being removed when it was thought likely that it would be incorporated under another project. Interest in establishing a walk remained and this would be picked up by the project officer once they were appointed.

MS

Members questioned whether supplementary financial information was available to inform their decision-making. Members were advised that, should they vote in favour of Option 2, the Staffing Committee would possess the necessary level of detail, which would be fed into the budget process.

Members resolved to vote in favour of Option 2, recommending that the matter be referred to the Staffing Committee.

Resolved: To consider and recommend Option 2

13294 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

Members were provided with a verbal report on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

The Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Highway Agreement Officer had signed off and approved the road safety audit for the proposed works to the car park entrance. Costs were likely to be as anticipated, and it was now a matter of the contractor contacting CBC to schedule the works.

13295 HOUGHTON HALL PARK

Members were provided with a verbal update on the day-to-day operations of Houghton Hall Park management.

The vacancy for Community Gardener would soon be advertised and a garden designer had been consulted with a view to redesigning the formal gardens.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services was compiling a garden manifest to inform the community gardener role and the development of a harvest plan was also being considered.

The new uniform had been released and had been well received.

13296 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

For information, Members were provided with a copy of the income and expenditure report, with appropriate commentary, for the Environment & Leisure Services Committee. It was highlighted that although salaries were not yet included, figures were otherwise in line with expectations.

It was brought to the attention of Members that, although they had been informed of all UKSPF monies received, some costs had been paid in the current financial year that had not been budgeted for. The funds had been allocated to general reserves at the end of the previous financial year, and Members were therefore asked to consider that the total expenditure in cost centre 293 UKSPF be covered from general reserves. If Members agreed with the recommendation, this proposal would be submitted for approval at the next Town Council meeting.

Members highlighted that there was an overspend on some accounts. The Head of Environmental and Community Services responded by saying that horticultural

A phased approach was now suggested that would include introducing maps, way markers and an app to provide heritage details.

Members agreed that the walk would be a welcome addition to Houghton Regis.

Resolved: To consider and support the phased development of a Parish Boundary Walk, building on initial exploratory work. The project presents a valuable opportunity to enhance local walking infrastructure, promote community engagement, and celebrate the parish's heritage and natural assets

13299 SPORTS PAVILION PLANNED MAINTENANCE SYSTEMS

Members were provided with a completed planned maintenance system developed for five of the town council's sports pavilions.

Members were advised that the document was very much at an early stage and the figures were likely to be subject to significant change. It was also anticipated that the suggested dates would be postponed by a year.

The report had been carried out by a chartered building surveyor; however, there was very little in terms of briefing, and Members were presented with a 'worst case' scenario.

By approving the recommendation at this stage, Members would signal the completion of a Corporate Peer Challenge recommendation. Amended expenditure figures would be presented at a later date.

Resolved: To note the report and ask the Head of Environmental and Community Services to review and prioritise potential future expenditure.

13300 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Carroll Seconded by: Cllr Slough

Votes for: 6

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.



13301 DEPOT LEASE

HRTC had received notification from CBC that continued use of the depot would be incumbent upon signing a three-year lease at a significantly increased rate. A review of alternative depots had established that the CBC proposed rate was in line with other similar facilities. Agreeing to the lease would mean a higher budgeted cost for the first three months of 2026; however, it was suggested that this would be the preferred option in the short term while other options were explored.

Members voiced disappointment that CBC did not appear willing to negotiate terms, despite the letter stating the terms were a basis for negotiation.

Following the discussion, Members agreed to the proposed recommendations:

- To note the financial pressure on the budget during the first three months of 2026.
- To enter into a three-year lease whilst exploring alternative options

Resolved:

- 1. To note the financial pressure on budget code 291-4013 during the first three months of 2026**
- 2. To enter into a three-year lease with CBC whilst continuing to explore alternative options**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.18 pm

Dated this 20th day of October 2025

Chairman

