

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
20th October 2025 at 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillors:	A Slough P Burgess Y Farrell D Jones W Henderson T McMahon C Rollins	Chairman
	Officers:	Ian Haynes Amanda Samuels	Head of Environmental & Community Services Administration Officer
	Public:	0	
	Apologies:	Councillors:	D Taylor
	Also present:	Councillors:	J Carroll

13374 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Taylor, Cllr Jones substituted.

13375 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13376 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

13377 MINUTES

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

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

13378 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN

Houghton Hall Park Board

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

13379 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were presented with a workplan for the municipal year 2025/26.

The workplan 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.

13380 HOUGHTON HALL PARK

Members received a verbal update on the day-to-day operations of Houghton Hall Park (HHP) management.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members that the Management Advisory Group, and Board continued to meet. HRTC had shared with them the results of the Green Flag Award where banding had attained the highest achievable level.

Interviews for the role of Community Gardener had been conducted and an offer had been made.

13381 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided with the income and expenditure report, with appropriate commentary.

Following a question from Members, the Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that the receipt of an external grant was the last draw down from the Football Foundation.

Members were informed that the request to charge UKSPF monies to general reserves had been approved.

13382 ANNUAL PLAY AREA INSPECTIONS

Members were updated on the outcomes of the annual play area inspection. The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed reports were available if Members wished to read them.

The play areas had been independently assessed and HRTC risk band scoring was predominantly low, with the exception of the skate park.

HRTC carried out any necessary repairs and play areas continued to be as safe as practically possible.

13383 ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE FEES 2026/27

Members were provided with the schedule of fees for 2026/27, annotated to show the suggested 0% increase. A zero increase in fees had been suggested to support local clubs while considering the economic pressures facing the council.

Members were requested to consider the current year's fee structure and determine a suitable one for 2026/27.

While some caution was recommended in view of inflation levels, Members were in favour of the proposed 0% increase to ensure community accessibility.

Members questioned if figures were available to indicate the demand for sports fields and the Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that this information could be made available.

Resolved: **To set fees under the control of the Environment & Leisure Committee for 2026/2027 at a zero increase on 2025/26 fees.**

13384 MOORE CRESCENT PAVILLION ALTERATIONS

A review to prioritise potential future expenditure had been carried out. This had resulted in the Head of Environmental and Community Services, in conjunction with the Houghton Regis Bowls Club, identifying several alterations which would not only benefit the bowls club but would also improve a town council asset.

It was proposed that: the external bin store, which already had a roof structure, be bricked up and knocked through to the hall and used as a bar facility; the kitchen be extended into the storeroom. Houghton Regis Bowls Club had enjoyed a good level of success, and this would raise the potential to hold bigger events, including blue ribbon regional events, at the pavilion.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that funding would be provided solely by HRTC and would benefit older members of the community. While many Members were in favour in principle, reservations were raised regarding security, and that public funds would be seen to finance a private bar. The Head of Environmental and Community Services responded that security was unlikely to be an increased issue, and that the footprint of the community area would be improved for all users.

Members suggested that, in light of these works, it was potentially worth revisiting the rental fee in the upcoming year. It was also suggested that consideration was given to potential uses for the venue when it was not used by the bowls club.

Members voted as follows on the recommendation:

Proposed by: Cllr McMahon
Seconded by: Cllr Farrell

In favour: Cllrs Henderson, Farrell, Jones, Slough, Rollins, McMahon
Against: Cllr Burgess

Resolved: **To approve the alterations of the Moore Crescent Pavillion and approve that expenditure be taken from 299/4871.**

AT

13385 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

A verbal update was provided to Members on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members that the Section 278 Agreement had been agreed. HRTC was now at the stage of agreeing a bond to be put in place and for the work being slotted into the Highways programme. A completion date was still awaited, but Members would be informed as soon as a date was confirmed.

13386 HOUGHTON REGIS IN BLOOM

Members were provided with the results for Houghton Regis in Bloom. These were as follows:

Large Town – Houghton Regis → Silver-Gilt
Historic Parks & Gardens – Houghton Hall Park → Gold
Cemeteries – Houghton Regis Cemetery → Silver
Churchyard – All Saints Parish Church → Silver-Gilt
Public Park – The Village Green → Gold and Joint Category Winner
Public Park – Parkside Recreation Ground → Gold
Public Park – Linmere Park → Gold
Nursing/Care Home – All Saints View Assisted Living (CBC) → Silver-Gilt
Special Award Nominations & Wins

Four Special Award nominations were also received.

Nominations:

Julie at Houghton Regis Memorial Hall – Best Floral Display by an Individual
All Saints View Assisted Living – Best Sheltered Housing/Assisted Living

Winners:

Houghton Hall Park – Best Community Special Award
The Chiltern School – Best Young People's Project (12–18 yrs)

The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that the programme was progressing in an extremely positive manner.

Members were informed that category winners were not eligible to receive the same award the following year; therefore, HHP had been entered for Best Community Special Award, which it had won. It was also a notable achievement to receive Joint Category Winner for the Village Green.

Resolved: To formally thank everyone involved in making the Houghton Regis in Bloom initiative a blooming success.

13387 BUDGET REQUESTS 2026/27

Members were provided with the draft budget for 2026/27 along with budget forecast figures for financial years 2027 to 2030.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services highlighted the following points:

- A reduction in income would affect net income over expenditure.
- Burial income figures needed to be set at a more pragmatic level.
- The appointment of a project manager would look to raise awareness of the cremated remains vault services.
- The Tithe Farm grass pitch removal would negatively impact figures.
- The HHP budget would have a positive impact. The Board had proposed that the Town Council increase their contribution and under the agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council, HRTC would submit a request to them for £120,000
- Staff members at Thorn Park were funded under the Section 106 payment received. At year end, remaining funds would go into earmarked reserves and be drawn down on annually for maintenance.

An item of note was the rent for the depot, which would have a significant impact on the budget. The possibility of renting the adjacent depot had also been budgeted for and was, therefore, a possible cost saving.

There had been an increase in the budget to cover a full flower display and potentially a winter display; there would be a potential saving if Members decided not to proceed.

Members highlighted that the budget figure for horticultural supplies had been cut this year, with a view to gradually increasing provision for flowers. The proposed £30,000 for the following year's budget would be a 300% increase.

Members highlighted that while not all non-domestic business rates had increased, some had increased quite significantly. It was felt that HRTC should amend its budget to accommodate potential rises:

271-4011 Currently £1,200, should be increased to £1,700
291 4011 £18,800, which would be an increase of over £6,000 on what had been provided this year.

Resolved:

- 1. To consider and comment on the draft budget for the financial year 2026-2027 for the Environment & Leisure Committee budget responsibilities.**
- 2. To note the budget forecast figures for financial years 2027 to 2030.**

13388 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr D Jones
Seconded by: Cllr W Henderson
Votes in favour: 7

AD

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.

13389 STAFF SALARIES

Members were provided with a breakdown of staff salaries for 2026/27; these were reviewed and accepted.

Resolved: To approve the staff salaries under the control of the Environment & Leisure Committee for 2026/2027.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:20 pm

Dated this 12th day of January 2026

Chairman

