

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

Present: Town Cllrs: Y Farrell, D Jones, M Herber, C Slough
CBC Cllrs C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill
CBC Mrs Hughes, Community Engagement Manager
Officers:
HRTC C Evans, Town Clerk
Officers: A Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: J Anderson, D Gibbons, C Regan, T Haines, R Turner

Also in attendance: 0

Apologies: CBC Cllrs T McMahon

Members of the public: 1

1085 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2025/26.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this could be a member from either authority.

Nominee:	C Alderman	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	D Jones

There were no other nominations.

Accordingly, Cllr Alderman was elected as Chair of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

1086 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr McMahon. Cllr R Goodchild had also advised that he would not be attending this meeting as his preliminary work with town and parish councils and partnership committees continues.

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1087 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this should be a member from the other authority to the Chair.

Nominee:	D Jones	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	Y Farrell

No further nominations were received.

Accordingly, Cllr Jones was elected as Vice Chair of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for the municipal year of 2025/2026.

1088 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

1089 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1090 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2025.

Following on from her email, the Chairman took the opportunity to remind Members that Cllr Watkins had declined the suggested open public meeting to discuss sports hall provision. It was suggested that Cllr Watkins' decision to decline the meeting should be noted.

The Town Clerk emphasised that Cllr Watkins had declined to attend an open public meeting but would be willing to participate in the October Town Partnership meeting when the sports hall would be on the agenda.

The October Town Partnership meeting would be used to gain feedback from councillors and members of the public on strategic matters relating to the new Leisure Centre, on whether there were continued issues with access to the Houghton Sports Hall and whether there remained a demand for sports hall access during school hours.

Members were reminded that CBC's Sustainable Communities Committee were anticipating reviewing the suitability of Houghton Sports Hall to serve Houghton Regis at its meeting on 6th November 2025. Any issues raised at the October HR Partnership meeting would be fed into the CBC meeting on 6th November 2025.

A formal request would be extended to Cllr Watkins to attend the next Town Partnership meeting.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2025.

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1091 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION

The Terms of Reference required the list of Co-opted Members to be reviewed annually by the Town Joint Committee.

Members had received applications for co-option from:

- David Gibbons
- Jo Anderson
- Carole Regan
- Roger Turner
- Tim Haines

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

Co-option

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.

Resolved: To approve the Co-optee applications from:

- David Gibbons
- Jo Anderson
- Carole Regan
- Roger Turner
- Tim Haines

1092 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were provided with the Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

As requested at the April 2025 Partnership meeting, a report on the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Committee had been included in the Committee Workplan (October).

1093 CONFIRMATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Committee were required to confirm the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for 2025/26.

It was agreed that Houghton Regis Town Council would continue to act as the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

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1094 TOWN CENTRE MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

Members had requested an exploration with CBC of their intentions and aspirations for developing a Town Centre Management Plans for towns within the authority's area. CBC had responded that funding and capacity constraints currently prevented them from developing or updating Town Centre Management Plans.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that Houghton Regis had previously had a Town Centre Management Plan which was now very outdated and more recently developed Town Centre Action plan (2023). Although more recent, the Action Plan may require an update to reflect the changes that had subsequently taken place within the town. The plan did, however, contain a number of actions that were worth revisiting and updating.

Members were also reminded that HRTC had previously commissioned a benchmarking survey of the town centre. A repeat survey had recently been commissioned by CBC to facilitate an evaluation of the "new normal" high street economy. With this in mind, Members queried what the current priorities should be and the relevance of town centre development, especially with the Bidwell and Linnere sites being established.

During discussion, the following suggestions were made:

- Adoption of a phased approach to achieve some of the aspirations for the town centre within the Action Plan.
- To explore funding possibilities.
- To set up a task and finish group to establish specific needs within the town - especially in relation to deprivation - and establish costings.
- Establish cross-sector engagement.
- The creation of a dedicated role (grant assisted) to promote the town centre and pursue funding opportunities.

The Community Engagement Manager informed Members that they had spoken to the Lead Officer regarding the benchmarking survey. The officer was happy to come to the Partnership Committee to discuss the findings which could potentially inform how the Partnership could move forward on this topic.

The proposed actions were:

- Establish which items from the Town Centre Action Plan could potentially be taken forward.
- The Town Clerk and the Community Engagement Manager To discuss eligibility for funding ahead of the next meeting.
- Establish the Terms of Reference for a potential task and finish group.
- To establish what the mechanisms may be to take actions forwards within CBC and / or HRTC.
- Consider the benchmarking report at the next meeting to help inform what could be achieved with the Town Centre Action Plan.

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1095 COMMUNITY BUILDINGS IN HOUGHTON REGIS

Members were provided with a verbal update on community buildings as follows:

HRN2 Community Building in Bidwell

The CBC Community Engagement Manager informed Members that a project team was now in place, with input also being provided by the CBC Planning and Assets teams. A business plan had been produced which supported the delivery in a phased approach.

A representative from Bidwell highlighted that this was a charity delivering a community facility partially funded by S106 money as such there had been arising complications to resolve; however, it was hoped that a planning application for the first phase would be submitted by September 2025.

Bedford Square Community Centre

The Town Clerk informed Members that there was no further update on that provided at the April 2025 Partnership meeting (Minutes 1080).

Parkside Community Space

The town council had considered a request from the Parkside Action Group to site a cabin on Parkside recreation ground to serve as a local community space. The following was Resolved:

1. To provide permission in principle for Parkside Action Group to site a cabin on Parkside recreation ground to serve as a local community space
2. To request that Parkside Action Group provide detail on the following matters: planning and building control; legal issues including a lease; safety & technical matters; utilities; operational details; and finance.

The Red House

The HR Heritage Society had approached the town council to suggest a way forward and this was being considered by HRTC.

HR Day Centre

The Community Engagement Manager had no update. An update on plans for the site was requested.

Townsend Centre

The future of the building would be considered at Executive in August. It would not be possible to reutilise the building until the transfer of occupants had been completed. It was requested that a consultation be carried out to help shape future plans for the site.

1096 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2025/26. This had been extended to include the following items on the October agenda:

- Sports hall provision
- Review of the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

The Town Clerk had confirmed that Health remained on the Workplan, in line with a request from Members.

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Members wished to pursue the matter of school provision within Bidwell West. A School Organisation Plan was adopted by CBC in April. Members requested that this was discussed at Town Partnership at the earliest opportunity. Members also requested clarity on the delivery of the primary school and the anticipated number of available school places.

Regarding sports hall provision, it was felt that the report should focus on the actions that had been requested rather than historical detail. The Chair confirmed that the Town Partnership would consider any continuing issues and formulate a comment for Sustainable Communities.

The committee discussed various ways to structure the agenda item. The Chair confirmed that these suggestions were noted and would be taken into account.

It was highlighted that a number of substantial items had been requested for the next agenda and concern was expressed that there may be insufficient meeting time available.

To assist it was suggested that in relation to a review of the Committee Functions and Terms of Reference that this item presented a consideration to set up a Task & Finish Group to undertake this work. It was hoped that this would reduce the discussion time enabling a full discussion on the other matters scheduled for the meeting.

Members highlighted that Economy and Retail was a bullet point on the workplan 2025/25 and questioned whether this should read Town Centre Plan. The Town Clerk confirmed this could be added to the same line.

1097 CBC UPDATE REPORT

The Chair asked if Members had any questions or observations relating to the report. The following points were raised:

- Emphasised the need to keep Health on the agenda.
- CBC were keen to support the doctor's practice in relocating to within the Bedford Square centre however the rooms were not fit for purpose and did not allow for examinations or certain procedures to be carried out.
- Since 2022 Drury Lane had been due to have drainage and resurfacing works carried out but this remained outstanding. The cost of the works had escalated significantly.
- Roundabouts were overgrown and CBC was not maintaining them. It was felt that HRTC could take this on at a cost.
- Nuisance bikes continued to be a significant issue.
- There was an encroachment by a resident into the land within Windsor Drive. Planning Enforcement were involved. Details were to be shared.

In response to a question from Members, the Chair confirmed they would investigate whether it would be possible to have a police presence at Town Partnership meeting.

There was general dissatisfaction with the police response to problems in the area and it was felt by some that the cost of HRTC's high visibility policing initiative, Op Hana, did not represent good value. Members expressed disappointment that the Combating

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Crime Working Group had not become a Sub-Committee to improve transparency and provide an opportunity to address a police representative directly.

Members questioned whether the camera at Tithe Farm Road was operational. There were continuing parking problems at this location and it did not appear that tickets were being issued. This would be investigated.

The Community Engagement Manager drew Members' attention to the following current live consultations:

Changes to the Licensing Policy
Community Governance Review
Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Refresh of the SEND Strategy

Members were encouraged to review these items.

1098 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.

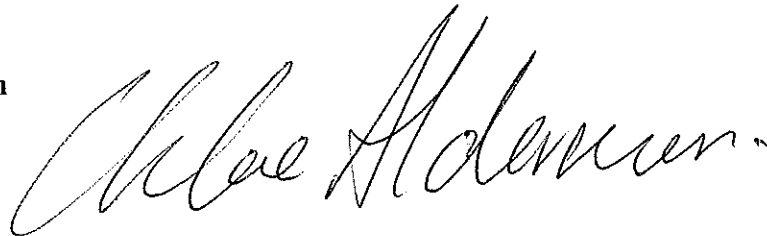
As such, Members were requested to identify and confirm if there were any requested items for CBC's attention.

Although not an item to forward for CBC's attention, concerns were expressed over road repairs.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.19 pm

Dated this 21st day of October 2025

Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chloe Alderman', written over a horizontal line.