

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP
COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET
ON 27th JANUARY 2026**

Present: Town Cllrs: D Jones, M Herber, C Slough, D Taylor
CBC Cllrs C Alderman, Y Farrell (Substitute), S Goodchild, T McMahon
CBC S Hughes, Community Engagement Manager
Officers: S Mooring, Head of Sustainability (virtual)
HRTC C Evans, Town Clerk
Officers: A Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: 0

Also in attendance: 0

Apologies: Cllr Hamill, J Anderson, D Gibbons, T Haines, C Regan and R Turner

Members of the public: 0

1117 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Hamill (Cllr Farrell substituted), J Anderson, D Gibbons, T Haines, C Regan and R Turner.

1118 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

1119 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1120 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 21st October and 26th November 2025.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 21st October and 26th November 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

1121 TOWN CENTRE BENCHMARKING

Stephen Mooring, Head of Sustainability at Central Bedfordshire Council briefed members on the recent town centre benchmarking report.

The report, commissioned by CBC, highlighted the following points:

- Vacancy rates were in line with national average but had risen since 2021.
- Houghton Regis provided a local, convenience-led role rather than a destination point.
- Comparison retail had declined since 2019 but convenience and service use had increased.
- Higher share of multiple retailers; fewer independent retailers.

Positive

- Convenience
- Ease of walking
- Access to Services
- Business confidence was high
- Car parking capacity was high (although the perception was that this was an issue)

Negative

- Physical appearance (although improvements had been made since the survey)
- Safety
- Footfall was low compared to national average
- Parking dissatisfaction among residents

It was proposed that the positives could be enhanced by:

- Strengthening the town centre role as a high-quality local centre
- Public realm improvements
- Visible action on safety and ASB
- Use of events, pop-ups and markets to boost footfall and dwell time
- Building business confidence and growing walk-in use.

Members questioned how Houghton Regis could be made safer, especially for the older community, and improvements made to the physical appearance of some areas.

Mr Mooring stated that funding was an issue for local government and that UKSPF funding would not be available in the upcoming year. It would be necessary to establish short, medium and long-term goals and to decide what was deliverable when funding was available.

Members queried what historical data was available. Mr Mooring responded that the report contained data going back to 2017.

1122 SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL PLAN

Sarah Hughes joined the meeting.

This was an interim update to Members on the CBC considerations of the School Organisational Plan progress as reported through Children's Services on 11th November and Executive on 2nd December.

Given the timescales indicated it was suggested that a report back be requested at a later meeting in 2026. The Community Engagement Manager suggested that a July

meeting would be the preferred option. It was also important to ensure suitable officer / member representation at future meetings where this was an agenda item.

Resolved: To formally request that the relevant officer attend a HR Partnership Committee meeting to update the committee.

1123 CBC UPDATE REPORT

The Community Engagement Manager presented the update report from CBC

Safer Communities	<u>July 1st – December 31st 2025</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 87 cases open (predominantly fly tipping, pollution and noise). - 5 weapon sweeps - Various visits and letter drops <p>Consultation on powers to tackle vehicle ASB taking place. Penalty charges: 65 in November, 43 in December.</p>
Business Investment Sustainability	<p>14 applications from HR businesses for UKSPF support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food Summit scheduled for 24th February - A survey was underway to gather information on local food projects and activities - Local schools taking part in the Eco Schools programme - Eco Forum on school menu planning and redistribution of school uniforms
Highways	<u>September – November 2025</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 56 potholes, 134 Streetlights 8 bollards and signs repaired in HR - A list of consultations on highway schemes was provided - Fly tip clearances carried out
Engagement & Consultation	<p>Cllr R Goodchild appointed Deputy Executive Member for Town and Parish Councils and Town Centres.</p> <p>The TPC Forum meeting to discuss the budget had been well attended.</p> <p>A Voluntary Community Sector forum had been successful. An online session was planned for March.</p> <p>Applications to the Ward Councillor Grant Scheme in the year 2025/26 would close in February and Members were provided with relevant deadlines.</p> <p>CBC continued to work hard to meet Armed Forces Covenant obligations.</p> <p>Household Support Fund: CBC had been working with HRTC to channel support through local partners.</p> <p>Consultations: budget was the main one.</p>

Members informed the Community Engagement Manager that the camera at Farmstead was out of operation and Members were informed that this would be investigated.

Members requested that Primary Care was included on the Workplan.

1124 COMMUNITY BUILDINGS IN HOUGHTON REGIS

The Committee's workplan included reference to the following community buildings:

Project H / Unit 1 All Saints View (HRTC)

Lease negotiations were well underway.

HRTC was working with a wider project team to develop a tender pack for the fitting out of the property.

HRN 2 Community Building

A planning application had been submitted. CBC was working to get the land transferred from the consortium and to get a lease drawn up. It was hoped the site would open in the autumn.

1125 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

At a previous meeting of the HR Partnership Committee support was given to a report being presented to the October Partnership meeting on the Committee Functions and Terms of Reference (CF&ToFR) (Minute 1092). Unfortunately, CBC were unable to provide advice on the appetite within CBC to review the CF&ToFR and in what form the review should take place.

Other Clerks from the Partnership network were contacted but there didn't appear to be strong enthusiasm at this stage.

Stronger direction and a shared commitment from the Partnership network within Central Bedfordshire were needed to create the momentum required to move this forward.

A Member stated that this meant an attendance rate of 75% from both councils was required to remain quorate, which was onerous compared to the requirements of other committees.

It was recommended that the position continued to be monitored and that a review was pursued in due course.

1126 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2025/26.

The need for primary care to be a specific item on the workplan was reiterated.

It was felt that the GP surgery would benefit from a better understanding of the resources and processes available to them, e.g. business plans and S106 funding. It was suggested that a meeting might also prove beneficial to understand the issues and pressures they faced and to share information regarding s106 funding, perhaps following this up by engagement with the ICB.

1127 HOUGHTON REGIS SPORTS HALL USAGE DATA

Following the Partnership meeting in October, contact had been made with Schools Plus to follow up on the establishment of a Management Committee and on usage data availability.

No update had been received at this time.

A Member informed the committee that the prices had risen and that rental for one court was £14.17 and £62.00 for the whole hall (four courts).

The Community Use Agreement would be an item on the CBC agenda later in the week.

1128 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION

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 state:

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.

Cllr McMahon informed Members that an approach had been made by Parkside Action. The Town Clerk advised that it would be necessary for an individual member of the group to submit a completed co-option form to HRTC. Cllr McMahon confirmed that this information would be referred back to Parkside Action.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.25pm

Dated this 28th day of April 2026

Chairman