

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on
25th November 2025 at 7.00pm.

Present:	Councillors:	Y Farrell E Cooper T McMahon C Slough	Chair
	Co-opted members:	K Wattingham	
	Also in attendance:	E Farrier	Linmere Devt
	Officers:	Sarah Gelsthorp Tara Earnshaw Amanda Samuels	Events Manager Youth and Community Manager Administration Officer

Apologies: Councillors: C Rollins

CESC71 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Rollins.

CESC72 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CESC73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CESC74 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2025.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

CESC75 EXTERNAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Linmere

The representative from Linmere updated Members on events taking place:

- A Christmas event for residents was scheduled for 11th December
- Free soft play was organised for every school half term and for five weeks during the summer holidays 2026



- On 24th January class makers would showcase their classes including yoga, Pilates, Kickboxing and Zumba. Each slot would be 30 minutes long and free of charge. Children's activities would also be available.
- Silver Birch Park was a new space for residents containing a playground, bandstand and a cycle route. The date of the opening ceremony was to be confirmed
- Bounce camp for older children would take place in May

All Saints Church

The representative for All Saints informed Members of the following:

- Funds had been raised for Macmillan Cancer Support
- The Mayor's Carol Service would take place on 6th December
- There was a Christmas Fayre planned for 13th December and would include a choir from Limetree Academy
- Carols by Candlelight would be held on 21st December
- A Christmas Eve Family Service would take place in the afternoon
- Midnight Mass would be held on Christmas Eve and the Christmas Day services in the morning

The representative from All Saints questioned whether Linnere could publicise events on their website. The representative from Linnere confirmed this was possible and that the Civic and Events Manager could provide contact details.

Memorial Hall

The following events had taken place:

- Race nights
- Easter Fair
- Halloween Party. This had been the inaugural year and would be repeated next year
- Upcoming Christmas Fair
- Craft fairs, Easter and Christmas events, race nights, and afternoon tea for over 65s were planned for 2026

Houghton Regis Helpers

- The group had returned to the meeting room in Houghton Hall Park
- Seniors Christmas Party had been arranged

Houghton Regis Library

A representative was invited to the meeting but did not attend.

Resolved: To note the report.

CESC76 EVENT MANAGERS REPORT

Members were provided with a report from the Events Manager regarding past and forthcoming events.



- Houghton Rocks had been well attended. Members were informed that the car show and the dog show would be held as stand-alone events at Houghton Hall Park in going forward. 2026 would mark the 10th anniversary of the event and commemorative patches, and potentially cups, would be produced. The Civic and Events Manager confirmed they would attempt to get the same stage for next year's event.
- The first Heritage Day had been a success. It was hoped that it would take place again in 2026, depending on budget, with minor amendments to the layout. All Saints Church confirmed they would be participating again in Heritage Week. The Civic and Events Manager informed Members that Heritage Open Days would be willing to promote local events.
- Approximately 350 people attended the free Halloween event. There were plans to repeat this in 2026, depending on budget.
- The Fireworks Display had proceeded well. It would be necessary, however, to consider future safety arrangements to ensure compliance with Martyn's Law.
- On Saturday 6th December the Christmas lights would be switched on. Road closures were planned.
- Santa's Grotto would be held at Houghton Hall Park on 13th December; this was free of charge but would be ticketed. It was planned that groups of twenty would gather in a heated marquee to hear a story from Santa and receive a gift. At the Visitors Centre there would be stalls, face painting, Robbie the Train, reindeer and Elftastic. The marquee would be set up in advance so that minimal preparation was required on the day. Members were invited to volunteer.
- The Rotary Club had expanded their offer to hold Santa's Float in Houghton Regis to four dates in December. They would cover Parkside Drive, Tithe Farm Road, Linmere, Thorn and Houghton Regis Central. Details would appear on the Rotary Club website and those wishing to volunteer could contact them.
- Teaching Talons would take place at Houghton Hall Park 18-20 February 2026.

Resolved: To note the report.

CESC77 COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER REPORT

Members were provided with a verbal update from the Community Services Manager.

- LLSG attendance had grown significantly, and the group now met at All Saints View on the first and third Tuesday of every month. Upcoming events included:
 - 6th December, crafts
 - 9th December, panto at The Grove Theatre
 - 16th December, Christmas party
- Arrangements were being made for Easter and Family Fun activities in 2026
- Youth provision was being decided for April 2026 – March 2027
- A residential visit for the youth group was being planned
- Youth Council were volunteering at Santa's Grotto and would also be involved in the carol service
- A meal with the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor had been arranged as a thank you to the young people for volunteering at events.

Resolved: To note the report.



CESC78 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members voted on the exclusion of the press and public:

Proposed by: Cllr Slough

Seconded by: Cllr McMahon

Votes in favour: 4

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.



CESC79 PRIDE OF HOUGHTON AWARDS

Members were requested to decide if the Pride of Houghton Awards should continue on an annual basis or be held in alternate years. There had been some feeling that event attendance needed to increase and that nominations should encompass a broader scope of the community.

Members were of the opinion that this item should also be discussed at the Community Services Committee; however, the following decisions and suggestions were put forward:

- The next Pride of Houghton Awards to be held in 2027
- Potential changes to the format, categories and nominations for the awards to be considered
- To assemble an informed panel, potentially including local groups, businesses and councillors to help expand the range of nominations

The Civic and Events Manager suggested that the video of the 2025 event might encourage future participation and nominations. The Civic and Events Manager confirmed they would contact Members with ideas for future changes and event suggestions for 2026.

Members were requested to vote on a proposed recommendation:

- To hold the Pride of Houghton Awards every other year with the next ceremony to be held in 2027
- To organise an alternative event for 2026

Proposed by: Cllr McMahon


Seconded by: Cllr Cooper

Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation.

- Resolved:**
- To hold the Pride of Houghton Awards every other year with the next ceremony to be held in 2027.
 - To organise an alternative event for 2026.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.10pm

Dated this 20th day of January 2026


Chairman