

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
21st April 2026 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman
P Burgess
T McMahon
C Rollins
C Slough (Sub)
D Taylor

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

Public: 1

Apologies: Councillors: Y Farrell
W Henderson

13508 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Y Farrell and Cllr W Henderson.

13509 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public was in attendance to enquire whether Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) had received any contact from Groundwork regarding the Himalayan Balsam in Houghton Brook.

It was stressed that the problem would not be resolved in a year and that there was a tight schedule to carry out the necessary work. Permissions would be required from landowners before commencement and conservation areas were involved. Funds were available for the work once it could progress.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that there had been no contact from Groundwork, but HRTC was ready to give permissions where they could. The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed they would contact the representative from Groundwork to ascertain details of the current situation.

13510 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

13511 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2026.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 12th January 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13512 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

For information, Members were provided with a work plan 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.

13513 HOUGHTON HALL PARK

The Head of Environmental and Community Services provided Members with a verbal update on Houghton Hall Park (HHP)

HHP continued to progress well. The Board had met to work through financial issues. The Board would also carry out detailed work with Central Bedfordshire Council on improving the Joint Venture Agreement.

HHP developments included:

- Installation of a tiny forest
- Birdwatch would carry out monitoring
- Friends of HHP, who assisted in the gardens, would be holding their AGM soon
- The box hedge was being removed
- The 83,000 bulbs that were planted were coming through
- Establishing how to improve HRTC's offer on Houghton Regis in Bloom – the Friends of HHP had expressed an interest in adopting the winter bedding display
- The bore hole was up and running
- HHP had seen its first commercial hirer
- It was anticipated that HHP would be entered for the same awards as the previous year.

13514 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members had been provided with a copy of the income and expenditure report.

The Head of Environmental and Community Services informed Members some end-of-year work remained to be carried out.

The main points of note were:

- Spend and variance figures were as expected with the exception of utilities and some maintenance
- Thorn Park budget figures were not yet in but would be less than the committee had approved

- HHP figures were as expected. There was a transfer from earmarked reserves to cover the cost of replacement blinds
- The cemetery income had increased; therefore, the deficit was not as large as anticipated

In answer to a request from Members regarding the timeframe for reaching capacity within the vaults, the Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that they would produce an estimated timeframe.

13515 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

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

The S278 requirements for the entrance had been completed.

The Scheduling Team required three months' notice on works where roadworks and traffic management were necessary. It was hoped the work would take place over the school summer holidays.

13516 REVIEW OF OPEN SPACES AND SPORT AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Members had been provided with a breakdown of existing open spaces with regard to: use and function; accessibility and connectivity; quality; and condition.

As part of the review, Members were asked to consider the opportunities for additional sports and equipment provision. The recommendations were aspirational and did not reflect a commitment from Members at this stage.

Following a request from Members regarding benchmarking HRTC's provision of facilities, the Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that a benchmarking exercise could be carried out that covered:

- Town provision
- Town Council-delivered provision

Resolved:

- 1) Approve the findings of the open spaces and outdoor sports review as set out in this report.**
- 2) Endorse the progression of a prioritised action plan to improve the quality, accessibility and functionality of existing open spaces, timescale subject to available resources.**
- 3) Agree that further feasibility work is undertaken with partners in respect of:**
 - **additional outdoor sports provision (tennis, outdoor gym, cricket and netball); and**
 - **the potential delivery of a second all-weather pitch at Thorn Park.**
- 4) Request that officers explore external funding and partnership opportunities to support delivery, and report back with costed options.**

13517 ANNUAL REVIEW OF LAND AND ASSETS

Members were presented with the annual review of the Council's land and building assets, including condition, insurance and planned maintenance arrangements.

Resolved: To endorse the continued management of the Council's land and building assets in accordance with good asset management practice, current insurance valuations and planned maintenance information.

13518 PLAY AREA TENDER

Members were requested to approve that officers secured the S106 commuted sum of £97,000 from CB/21/03369/FULL - Hand Post Field north of Thorn Road, Houghton Regis, and invite tenders for the potential refurbishment of The Village Green play area with a project value of up to £250,000 potentially leaving £42,000 in the earmarked reserve.

The commuted sum could only be spent on The Village Green; however, this did not apply to the money in reserves. Members questioned how much it would cost to refurbish the Parkside Upper play area. The Head of Environmental and Community Services confirmed that they would carry out a costing exercise.

Members proposed amending recommendation 2 to include Parkside Upper.

Proposed by: Cllr A Slough Seconded by: Cllr C Slough

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Members voted on the substantive:

Proposed by: Cllr McMahon Seconded by Cllr C Slough

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amended recommendation.

Resolved:

- 1) Approve the application to secure the S106 commuted sum of £97,000 from CB/21/03369/FULL - Hand Post Field north of Thorn Road, Houghton Regis.**
- 2) Approve an open tendering process for the refurbishment of The Village Green and Parkside Upper play areas from suitable and experienced suppliers.**
- 3) To approve the use of an electronic tendering process in accordance with the provision within Appendix 1, point 2 of Financial Regulations.**
- 4) To approve the Proper Officer and Town Mayor to open the tender submissions on behalf of HRTC, in accordance with Standing Order 18, d iv, and final designs to come back to the Environment & Leisure Committee.**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.49pm

Dated this 6th day of July 2026

Chairman

DRAFT