

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the Meeting held on
1st June 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	D Jones	Chairman
		E Billington	
		M Herber	
		C Slough	(Substitute)
	Officers:	Debbie Marsh	Head of Corporate Services
		Amanda Samuels	Administration Officer
	Public:	0	
Apologies:	Councillor:	J Carroll	
		W Henderson	
		D Taylor	

ABSENCE OF THE CHAIR

Following apologies from the Chair (Cllr Taylor) and as the committee had not yet considered and appointed a Vice-Chair, the Head of Corporate Services invited members to elect a Chair for this particular meeting. On being put to the vote, Cllr Jones was duly voted Chair. No other nominations were received.

13555 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors J Carroll, W Henderson (Councillor C Slough substituted) and D Taylor.

13556 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13557 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13558 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice-Chair for the Corporate Services Committee for 2026-2027

Nominee:	W Henderson	Proposed by:	C Slough
		Seconded by:	E Billington

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Henderson became the Vice-Chair of Corporate Services for the municipal year of 2026/2027.

WCH

13559 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 2nd March 2026.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13560 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.iv Council is required to review its delegation arrangements to committees and sub committees.

These arrangements were set out in the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference. This document sets out the system of delegation to the Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups of the Council.

Members were provided with the extract from the approved Committee Functions & Terms of Reference which related to this committee.

13561 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were provided with a workplan for the municipal year 2026/27.

The workplan provided a structured approach to the committee's business throughout 2026/27, ensuring all statutory requirements and governance obligations were met in a timely manner.

Resolved: To review and approve the Corporate Services Committee Workplan, which outlines anticipated specific reports for the municipal year 2026/27.

13562 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

For information, Members were provided with the income and expenditure report for the Corporate Services committee up to the end of the 2025/2026 financial year.

In addition, Members were also provided with the income and expenditure report, for Corporate Services Committee to date (20th May 2026).

2025/26: Members queried why figures were under Committed Expenditure as this should not occur on completed accounts. The Head of Corporate Services explained that this occurred where a purchase order had been raised but the invoice had not yet been received. The relevant amounts would still appear under 2025/26 figures.

2026 to date: Members suggested that the report did not contain all the figures up to 20th May. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that this was due to the timing of the agenda going out. It was intended that the first meeting of this committee would be pushed back for the next council year in order to complete the report in good time.

Members noted that the interest on the DMADF was not stated in the report.

WGM

The item 'Transfers to Earmarked Reserves' was questioned as this was not technically earmarked reserves, but for spending against Project H. The Head of Corporate Services responded that the advice from the accountant had been to keep the money separate. Members agreed that the money should be kept separate but that previous discussions had emphasised the need to specify how the funds would be allocated. Members were advised of a discussion that took place during the budget setting meeting held on the 19th January 2026 (minute number 13501).

13563 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members were requested to receive the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for February, March and April 2026.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for February, March and April 2026;**
- 2. For these along with the original bank statements to be signed by the Chair of Corporate Services Committee and the Council's RFO.**

13564 LIST OF PAYMENTS

For information, Members were provided with a list of payments for the period February, March and April 2026. (inclusive).

13565 INVESTMENT REPORT

This report was provided in accordance with the approved Committee Functions, Financial Regulation 12 and Banking Arrangements, Investment Strategy & Investment Arrangements.

The Corporate Services Committee were to oversee and manage the financial obligations of the Council, including:

To receive quarterly reports on investments containing a forecast of capital expenditure, investment opportunities and a recommendation for further investment including where length and amount.

Resolved: To note the report.

13566 INVESTMENT WORKING GROUP

Members were provided with minutes from the Investment Working Group meeting held on the 18th May 2026.

At this meeting, members of the Investment Working Group completed its review of the Town Councils Treasury Management Strategy. Following this review, the Working Group recommended the Strategy be adopted and referred to Town Council in June for formal ratification.

Members supported the strategy and acknowledged the work involved.

W/M

- Resolved:**
- 1) **To note the minutes of the Investment Working Group meeting held on the 18th May 2026.**
 - 2) **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Treasury Management Strategy at the Town Council meeting to be held on the 15th June 2026.**

13567 VAT RETURN

In accordance with Financial Regulation 13.6 - The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.

Members were provided with a copy of the VAT Returns for quarter 4 for financial year 2025/2026. Members noted that the amount eligible to be reclaimed by the council was less than the previous year.

13568 RENEWAL OF DIRECT DEBIT, STANDING ORDER, BACS AND CHAPS PAYMENTS

Members were advised, under Financial Regulations 7.9 & 7.10, the approval of the use of Direct Debit, Standing Order, BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council every year.

Members were provided with a list of Direct Debits and Standing Orders.

- Resolved:**
1. **To approve the use of BACS method of payment.**
 2. **To approve the use of Direct Debit, Standing Order and CHAPS method of payment.**

13569 PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with the committees Terms of Reference and Financial Regulation 12, For information Members are provided with an annual report of the council's loans.

Members were provided with a report for information.

13570 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT HANDLING

The Town Councils Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Policy was being reviewed as part of the Council's routine policy review programme. The review did not reflect any changes to legislation and therefore the policy remained fit for purpose. Members were advised, however, that an amendment had been made to the policy to highlight that the Town Councils Code of Conduct had been updated and re-adopted due to changes based on the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.

Members were provided with a document highlighting the amendments.

- Resolved:**
- To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Code of Conduct Complaint Handling policy.**

WCM

13571 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

At the Community Services Committee meeting held on the 27th April 2026, Members were provided with a newly created Communications Strategy, which incorporated a draft Annual Marketing Plan (January – December). The Strategy set out how key messages would be communicated and identified tools to support officers and Members in delivering effective communications.

Members of the Community Services committee approved the Strategy and resolved to recommend its adoption to the Corporate Services committee and subsequent ratification by Town Council.

Members were provided with a copy of the newly created Communications Strategy.

Members were reminded that, at its meeting on 2 March 2026, the Corporate Services Committee reviewed the Council's existing Communications Strategy and recommended it for approval, while noting that a newly developed Communications Strategy, taking into consideration the target audience, would supersede it.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils newly developed Communication Strategy.

13572 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Members were provided with a track change document due to changes to the Equality Act 2010 which included a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees.

Resolved: To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Whistleblowing Policy

13573 MOBILE PHONE CONTRACT

The Town Council's current mobile phone contract has expired apart from two SIMs which are in contract until 31st July 2027.

The Head of Corporate Services informed Members that following some investigation into potential cost savings, three companies had been approached regarding phone contracts. Members were provided with a report and details of costs.

Members noted that the recommendation appeared in the report but was not on the agenda and agreed to propose the amendment "To enter into a 24-month contract with Company A" rather than defer it.

Proposed by: Cllr Slough

Seconded by: Cllr Herber

Members voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Resolved: To enter into a 24-month contract with Company 'A'

WGM

13574 STAFFING FORECAST 2027-2032

Members were provided with a report on the proposed five-year Corporate Services staffing plan. Members agreed that this appeared to address Houghton Regis Town Council's need in the next five years.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To support the projected staff changes within the Corporate Services team for the years 2027-2028, and to recommend to the Staffing Committee these changes be included as part of the 2027-2028 budget setting process;**
 - 2. To receive the staffing forecast for 2028-2032**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm

Dated this 7th day of September 2026

Chairman

