

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
9th June 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:	Councillors:	T McMahon E Cooper M Herber A Slough	Chair
	Also in attendance:	E Farrier C Slough	Land Improvement Holdings, Linnere Devt Co-optee
	Officers:	Tara Earnshaw Sarah Gelsthorp Amanda Samuels	Youth & Community Manager Events Manager Administration Officer
Apologies:		T Haines K Wattingham	Bidwell West Co-optee
Absent:		Y Farrell	

CESC99 ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Community Engagement Sub-Committee Chair for 2026/27.

Nominee:	Cllr McMahon	Proposed by:	Cllr Herber
		Seconded by:	Cllr Cooper

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr McMahon became the Chair of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee for the municipal year of 2026/2027.

CESC100 ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Community Engagement Sub-Committee Vice-Chair for 2026/27.

Nominee:	Cllr Herber	Proposed by:	Cllr Herber
		Seconded by:	Cllr Cooper

There were no other nominations.

On being put to the vote, Cllr Herber became the Vice-Chair of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee for the municipal year of 2026/2027.

CESC101 CO-OPTION

An application from Mr Ken Wattingham and Mr Chris Slough to be co-opted onto the Community Engagement Sub-Committee for 2026/2027 had been received and circulated to members of the sub-committee under separate cover. Members were requested to consider the co-option.

Resolved: To Co-opt Mr Ken Wattingham and Mr Chris Slough onto the Community Engagement Sub Committee for 2026/27.

CESC102 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from K Wattingham and Tim Haines from Bidwell West.

CESC103 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CESC104 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

CESC105 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2026.

Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Community Engagement Sub Committee meeting held on 24th March 2026, and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

CESC106 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

In accordance with Standing Order 4, j.v., the council was 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 set out the system of delegation to the Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups of the Council. This was presented to the Town Council at the Annual Meeting on 20th May 2026.

The Community Engagement Sub Committee reported to the Community Services Committee and supported the strategic development of Town Council events as follows:

- Carnival (11th July 2026)
- Arts and Cultural event (25th July 2026)
- Open Air Cinema at HHP (29th July 2026)
- Open Air Theatre at HHP (18th August 2026)
- Summer Fun Activities
- Houghton Rocks (29th August 2026)

- Heritage Day at HHP (19th September 2026)
- Halloween at HHP (End of October)
- Fireworks Display (6th November 2026)
- Remembrance Sunday / Armistice Day
- Santa's Grotto (11th December) 2026)
- Easter Egg Hunt at HHP (20th March 2027)
- Easter events

CESC107 COMMUNITY EVENTS

The representatives from local organisations were invited to provide updates regarding community events. The representative from Bidwell West was unavailable to provide an update.

Linnere

Two new park spaces were being introduced:

Oasis Park

This had been opened by the Town Mayor in April. Two routes were being introduced: a walking route to Houghton Hall Park and a children's walking route.

Silver Birch Park

This was due to open at the end of the summer. A bandstand had been installed and a brass band would play at the opening. The date of the opening ceremony would be confirmed as soon as possible.

Upcoming events included:

- Linnere Picnic on the Park would be held on 22nd August and would feature a climbing wall, animal zoo and bug hunt. The Heritage Society, Cubs, Scouts and Brownies were also taking part. A flyer and further information would be shared when available
- Soft Play was scheduled for every Wednesday through the summer holidays
- A Youth Community skating event would be hosted on behalf of HRTC

All Saints Church

- Two coffee mornings had been held and had raised £300 for Headway and Hospice at Home charities
- A spring fair had raised £512 funds towards the church restoration. Singers from Lime Tree Academy had participated in this event
- The Civic Service was a great success and had been well attended
- The All Saints churchyard gardeners' group had started

Upcoming events included:

- June – raising funds for Thomas Whitehead Academy
- July – supporting Houghton Regis events including Carnival and the Arts & Culture Day (where the Gothic Revival display would feature)

Resolved: To note the report

CESC108 REPORT FROM THE EVENTS MANAGER

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

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- Over 700 eggs had been distributed at the Easter Egg Hunt
 - Over 500 goodie bags had been distributed at the Dragon Fun event. This had been held over two days at HHP
 - A number of measures had been taken to ensure the wellbeing of the dogs taking part in the dog show during a spell of hot weather. These included: bringing the start time forward; ensuring adequate water bowls; and the provision of air-conditioned facilities and shelters
 - The Science Fun event had attracted an average of 25 attendees at each session (four per day) over two days
 - The car show had done as well as possible given bad weather conditions and requests had been made for this event to be repeated.

Upcoming events included: Carnival; Arts and Culture event; Open Air Cinema, Open Air Theatre; Houghton Rocks; and Heritage Day.

Carnival

- Activities would begin with a steel band on the Village Green from 10am. There would also be participation from dance groups, Last of the Summer Ukeleles and circus skills. The Boxing Academy would be providing free trials, and there would be music from Roberts Family Band
- The layout had been altered but there would continue to include stalls, fairground rides and food
- Four local groups had agreed to participate so far. There would be a brass band and mascots on bikes. Bubbles, whistles and flags had been procured for those in the parade
- The Events Manager made a request for volunteers and Councillors A Slough, C Slough and M Herber offered to assist at the Village Green.
- Security and signage had been organised to assist with parking and advise drivers of any restrictions

The Arts and Culture event

This would include:

- Stalls set up in the library atrium
- Facepainting and glitter tattoos in the Community Centre
- Indian drumming and dancing in the larger Community Centre room
- A theatre show in Bedford Square
- A cultural trail around Bedford Square
- Henna tattoos
- Crafts and activities in the library and Jewels

It had been difficult to get Bedford Square shopkeepers to participate. The Events Manager invited help from anyone who could encourage greater participation

Houghton Rocks

- The full line-up was confirmed
- There had been a good response from stallholders
- The drum skin had been made and delivered, and also reusable cups

The Events Manager confirmed that data had been collected for the Easter Egg Hunt and Dragon Fun events. The information gathered was not for circulation, but it provided data on age range and post code. It was confirmed that attendees were predominately from Houghton Regis. No data was available from the dog show.

The Events Manager confirmed that a draft plan for Carnival, outlining the new routes, would be circulated. Hard copies of the programme would be distributed to key points around the town, and details would be posted on social media.

Resolved: To note the report

CESC109 REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER

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

Following on from the Events Manager's report, the Community Services Manager informed Members that the Youth Council was keen for a youth arena at Houghton Rocks.

There had been plans for a tabletop sale in Bedford Square; however, expressions of interest in booking had fallen short of expectations.

LLSG

- The group had met for three sessions, including a quiz.
- There were now 50 members
- A trip to Poplars had been held.

Family Fun Days

These included:

- Skate Jam
- Crazy golf
- Garden games
- A sensory day
- Inflatable Fun
- Roller disco
- Go-karting

A Southend trip was planned for August, but a date was yet to be confirmed. Given the popularity of these trips, HRTC would give two-weeks' notice of the tickets going live. Due to costs, there would be two coaches and the trip would be managed by Three Star coaches.

Town Centre Initiatives

- 18th July - Beach Day at Bedford Square, including water trays and sand trays
- LLSG afternoon tea and kitchen gardens at HHP
- Youth Council providing LLSG mobile lessons on a tea and treat day.

Resolved: To note the report

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.41 pm

Dated this day of 8th September 2026

Chairman