

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Corporate Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
Monday 7th September 2026 at 7.00pm.

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

13673 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Carroll, King and Taylor (Cllr Farrell substituted).

13674 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

13675 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

13676 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 1st June 2026.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

13677 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2026-2027

Members were reminded that this committee's workplan, for the municipal year 2026/2027, was approved at the meeting held on the 1st June 2026.

For information, Members were provided with an updated workplan for this committee.

13678 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members were provided with a copy of the income and expenditure report, for Corporate Services Committee to date.

The Head of Corporate Services had proposed three options to cover the impact of the deficit resulting from the by-election in the current financial year.

Members agreed that two by-elections had impacted the allocated funds. Members also agreed and that the May 2027 standalone election was likely to be in excess of the estimated £20,000.

Members had no objection to option two as the preferred option but highlighted that the contribution from EMR 332 of £3,102 needed to be amended to £3,799.

Members questioned whether the request to Town Council to vire between codes that were under the same committee was required. Following discussion, Members agreed to the removal of the text 'To recommend to Council' from the recommendation.

Members highlighted that the report continued to show a transfer to earmarked reserves rather than specifying Project H. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that this had been change would show for the 2027/28 financial year but would make enquiries if an amendment, within the Councils accounts software, was possible for the current year.

Resolved: To authorise a virement of £1,660 from budget code 190-4011 Rates to budget code 102-4131 Elections and a contribution of £3,799 from Elections Earmarked Reserve (EMR) 332 to cover the deficit within budget code 102-4131 Election Costs.

13679 BANK AND CASH RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS

Members were requested to receive the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 2026.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the monthly bank and cash reconciliation statements for May, June and July 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.**

13680 LIST OF PAYMENTS

Members were provided with a list of payments for the period May, June and July 2026. (inclusive).

13681 INVESTMENT REPORT

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

The Corporate Services Committee are 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.

13682 INVESTMENT WORKING GROUP REPORT

Members were provided with the draft minutes from the Investment Working Group meeting held on the 6th August 2026.

In addition to the minutes members were also provided with a report.

Following discussion Members agreed to the following.

- Resolved:**
- 1) To note the minutes of the Investment Working Group from the meeting held on the 6th August 2026.**
 - 2) To support Minute IWG39 namely:**
 - **To retrospectively support the transfer of £2,000,000 from the Town Councils CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund to the Town Councils Debt Management Deposit Fund account for a period of three months.**
 - **To support the opening of the approved Money Market Fund (MMF) accounts, with an initial investment of £1,000,000 in each fund.**
 - **To support that, if additional time is required to open the MMF accounts, the £2,000,000 invested in the DMADF be reinvested for a further one-month period.**
 - **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Council's Banking Arrangements Policy**

13683 REVIEW OF CHARGES 2027/2028

Financial Regulation 13.2 states:

The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process.

Members were provided with a schedule of charges for 2026/27 that fell under the control of this Committee. To support users of these facilities, Members were asked to consider applying the same charges for 2027/28.

Members were requested to note that the hire charge for the Mayor's/Members' Room had been removed, as this space had been converted into office workspace and equipped with desks.

Resolved: To approve the charges for 2027/28 as attached.

13684 REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP TO OTHER BODIES

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to annually review the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.

For information, Members were provided with a list detailing fees paid for financial year 2026-2027 and indicative fees for financial year 2027-2028.

13685 DRAFT 2027/2028 BUDGET

Members were provided with a copy of the Corporate Services Committee Officer Draft Budget for 2027/28. Members were requested to give initial consideration and comment.

Following discussion regarding inclusion of the 4% precept as proposed income, the Head of Corporate Services confirmed that this calculation would be removed from the document.

Members questioned the increase in the figure for Financial Management Fees as this services was provided at a fixed fee. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that the contract stated a fixed fee along with an annual increase associated with RPI.

Members suggested increases were made to the following items:

- 4203 Mayors Christmas appeal fund
- 4009 Travel (including mayoral)
- 4101 Mayors allowance
- 4106 Mayors Civic events
- 4131 Elections

In respect of the Elections budget, Members felt that in addition to the £10,000 in earmarked reserves, there should be a charge of £25,000 in the budget for 2027/28.

Members also made the following comments and observations:

- Confirmation of any rent-free period on Project H
- Project H rates figure should be restored to £10,500.
- That a suitable budget was planned for ready for the elections 2031/2032 along with provision for a minimum of one by-election.

Members enquired why there was an annuity loan payment on Project H rather than the usual set amount with interest. The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that the Town Clerk intended to provide more detail at the Town Council meeting in October. Members agreed that more information was required before discussing this topic further.

Resolved: To consider and comment on the draft Corporate Services budget for financial year 2027-2028.

13686 APPOINTMENT AND INDEPENDENCE OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members were requested to confirm the appointment of IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as the Town Council independent Internal Auditor for work relating to the 2026/27 Annual Return as per the existing contract.

Members were provided with a report.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To recommend Council formally consider and confirm the independence of the Town Council's appointed Internal Auditor for audit work in relation to the 2026-2027 Annual Return.**
 - 2. To confirm the appointment of IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as the Town Council independent Internal Auditor for audit work in relation to the 2026/27 Annual Return.**

13687 CO-OPTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Town Councils Co-option Policy & Procedure was last reviewed on the 17th June 2019 and whilst it still contained the key principles of co-option, it no longer fully reflected current legislation, best practice guidance or the latest advice issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Members were provided with a report.

- Resolved:** **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Co-option Policy and Procedure document.**

13688 FRAUD & ETHICS POLICY

Members were advised that a review of the Council's Fraud & Ethics Policy had been undertaken as part of the continuing review of the Council's governance framework. The review concluded that the policy would benefit from updating to reflect changes made through the Internal Control Policy (2025) and Banking Arrangements Policy (2026).

Members were provided with a report.

- Resolved:** **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Fraud & Ethics Policy.**

13689 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Members were advised that this policy had been revised to ensure it remained compliant with current health and safety legislation and reflected the latest guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Members were provided with a report along with the Head of Corporate Services highlighting the main changes.

- Resolved:** **To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Health & Safety at Work Policy.**

13690 INSURANCE COVER 2026-2027

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was required to confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.

Members were reminded that the Town Council was in a long-term agreement with Zurich Municipal until the 31st May 2027.

Members were provided with a copy of insurance cover for the period 1st June 2026 to 31st May 2027.

Members were advised that the Head of Corporate Services was currently seeking quotations for the renewal of this provision; however, providers were unable to provide quotations this far in advance. This exercise was therefore being undertaken to gather information at this stage, with final details to be confirmed closer to the renewal date.

Members expressed appreciation at being provided with this information and questioned whether the next renewal would be considered after the election in 2027. It was suggested that a meeting could be scheduled for a time between 19th May and the end of the month to enable further discussion on the item. The Head of Corporate Services suggested that additional information might be available for the November meeting, or this could potentially be presented at Town Council.

Resolved: To confirm arrangement of insurance cover for the period 1st June 2026 to 31st May 2027.

13691 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

In accordance with the approved Committee Functions and Terms of Reference the Corporate Services Committee was to receive information relating to the number of Freedom of Information requests received by the Clerk

Members were advised that since the last meeting of the committee, the Clerk had received one Freedom of Information request. This request was replied to within the statutory 20 working day timescale.

Resolved: To note the information.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.20pm

Dated this 30th day of November 2026

Chairman