

# HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 7.00pm.

Present:	Councillors:	D Jones E Billington E Cooper Y Farrell W Henderson M Herber T McMahon A Slough C Slough	Town Mayor
	Officers:	Clare Evans Debbie Marsh Amanda Samuels	Town Clerk Head of Corporate Services Administration Officer
	Public:	0	
Apologies	Councillor:	J Carroll E Costello C Rollins D Taylor	

### **13583 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Carroll, E Costello, C Rollins and D Taylor.

### **13584 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

### **13585 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

### **13586 MINUTES**

To approve, as amended, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

**Resolved: To approve, as amended, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

### **13587 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Members received the minutes of the following committees and were requested to consider any recommendations and to adopt any policies contained therein.

---

Corporate Services Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2026 <b>Minute number 13554 – AI Policy</b> 1) To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the AI policy. 2) To recommend to Town Council that it formally commits to the Venice Pledge. <b>Minute number 13555 – Communication Policy</b> To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the Town Councils Communication Policy
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	None to present
Planning Committee	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
Staffing Committee	None to present
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

To receive the minutes of the following sub-committee and consider any recommendations contained therein.

New Cemetery Sub-Committee None to present.

**Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations and to adopt the policies contained therein:**

**Minute number 13554 – AI Policy**

- To adopt the AI Policy
- To formally commit to the Venice Pledge

**Minute number 13555 – Communications Policy**

- To adopt the Town Councils Communication Policy

## **13588 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor informed members that he had attended the following:

- Two Town Council events at Houghton Hall Park
- Five external events: Dunstable Sea Scouts Awards; the Aylesbury Mayoral inauguration; Mayor of Harpenden's Civic Service; Dunstable District Scout Council AGM; and the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire's garden party
- Mayoral fund-raising events were being developed and would be announced as soon as possible

The Deputy Mayor informed Members that they had attended a vintage event in Newport Pagnell.

## **13589 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED**

Councillors provided verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Councillor Farrell reported on the Memorial Hall

- the afternoon tea held in the hall had been a great success and another one had been requested
- there was a race night scheduled for July
- the Memorial Hall had been entered into Houghton Regis in Bloom
- the hall floor and stage was due to be revarnished
- the 70th anniversary of the hall was coming up and suggestions for celebratory events were invited.

Councillor Jones provided the following updates:

BATPC

- attended the Finance and General Purposed Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> May and the County Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> May. CBC Cllr Russell Goodchild had given a presentation at the County Committee on plans for a parish charter designed to 'encourage co-operative relations between the parties'.
- suffered a small financial loss in 2025/26.
- the impact of Martyn's Law on town and parish councils had been discussed in relation to venues and public events
- NALC was carrying out Project Keystone to consider ways in which the services provided to members could be improved

Hospice at Home Volunteers

- there had been a trustees and volunteers training day in April. Requests had been received for more training on dealing with dementia
- at the committee meeting held in May the possibility of expanding the charity's client area was discussed
- the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner had been a great success
- the AGM was scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> July in the Memorial Hall

Chews Foundation

- the charity, which provided student school uniform grants, had received 152 applications and £11,175 had been awarded.
- Income from lettings would be down due to a tenant serving a notice to leave Chews House. Rooms would be remarketed soon.
- Operational costs of running Chews House and The Little Theatre may not be covered due to the impact reduced letting income. Funds available would require close monitoring.

**13590 INDEPENDENCE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL APPOINTED INTERNAL AUDITOR**

D1 of the interim internal audit, undertaken on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025, reported:

- It was noted that the Council had not formally considered the independence of the Internal Auditor as set out in the Practitioner's Guide paragraph 4.11

The report recommended the following:

- The Council to ensure that, on an annual basis, it formally considers the independence of the Internal Auditor. It may be appropriate for this to be done at the same time as the Council considers the Annual Internal Audit Report.

*Cllr Henderson joined the meeting.*

**Resolved: To formally consider and confirm the independence of the Town Council's appointed Internal Auditor for audit work in relation to the 2025-2026 Annual Return.**

**13591 CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2026/27**

Members were reminded that the Council appointed IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as the Town Council's internal audit provider, for a period of 3 years covering financial years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/7.

For compliance purposes, Members were requested to confirm the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2026/2027.

**Resolved: To confirm the appointment of IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as the Town Council's internal audit provider for the financial year 2026/2027**

**13592 INTERNAL AUDIT, PLANNING AND REVIEW POLICY**

Members were requested to consider the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting and Review Policy for Houghton Regis Town Council.

The policy set out the framework for the Council's internal audit arrangements, including planning, reporting procedures and the annual review of effectiveness. It ensured compliance with legislative requirements under the Accounts and Audit Regulations and supported the Council in maintaining a robust system of internal control, risk management and good governance.

**Resolved: To review and approve the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting and Review Policy, which outlines the Council's approach to internal audit, risk management, and compliance with statutory requirements.**

**13593 YEAR END ACCOUNTS**

Members received a report providing a brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members were invited to raise any queries relating to the process.

**13594 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/2026:  
ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2025/2026**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 3.5, Members were advised that the internal auditor, IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd, completed an interim internal audit on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and the year-end internal audit on 30<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

A copy of the Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 was provided.

**Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations reports.**

### **13595 DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2025/2026**

Members were requested to approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

Local government electors in the local council's area and the wider public had statutory rights in respect of a council's annual accounting statements and external audit under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. These rights were summarised as follows:

*The rights conferred by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 may only be exercised within a single period of 30 working days. The local council must inform the public of the exact 30 working day period during which the above public rights may be exercised. This period must include the first 10 working days in July for Category 2 authorities (smaller authorities). A smaller authority is defined as one whose gross annual income or expenditure does not exceed £6.5 million.*

Members were advised of the following

1. Date of announcement: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2026
2. Date of commencement: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026
3. End date: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2026

**Resolved: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 as follows:**

- 1. Date of announcement: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2026**
- 2. Date of commencement: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026**
- 3. End date: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

### **13596 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/2026 SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 3.4, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 was provided for consideration, approval and signature.

Slight reconfiguration of accounts for the previous year regarding loan repayments.

**Resolved: To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.**

**13597 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/2026  
SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 3.4, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 was provided for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

Members were requested to note that the column headed Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 had been headed ‘Restated’ to correct the reporting of loan repayments in 2024/25.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 subject to external audit;**
  - 2. To approve and sign the unaudited Financial Statements**

**13598 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2026/27**

Members were provided with a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2026/27 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

**13599 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

At its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026, the Corporate Services Committee agreed (Minute No. 13566) to recommend that Town Council adopt the newly developed Treasury Management Strategy.

The Strategy had been prepared by the Investment Working Group in conjunction with the Council’s appointed independent investment adviser, Arlingclose and the Corporate Services Committee.

A copy of the Strategy had been provided to the Council’s Internal Auditor, who had raised no comments.

Owing to an administrative error, the second recommendation on the report had been omitted. Members agreed to take both recommendations forward.

Proposed by: Cllr McMahon

Seconded by: Cllr Billington

Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations

Members were advised that the minimum investment rating, as included in the strategy, would need to be reflected in the Risk Management Strategy & Schedule.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To adopt the Town Council's Treasury Management Strategy.**
  - 2. To support the continuation of the Investment Working Group for a period beyond the original 12 month period.**

**13600 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND SCHEDULE**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.2, the council was responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

**Resolved: To approve the HRTC Risk Management Strategy & Schedule.**

**13601 PROJECT H VENUE NAME**

As requested by Council, a consultation exercise had been undertaken on the following name options:

1. The Arc
2. HR Link One
3. HR Hive
4. HR Connect
5. 'Other'

At the meeting of the Community Venue Task & Finish Group held on 1<sup>st</sup> June Members were informed that 98 people had responded to the consultation. Option 3 'HR Hive' had received the most nominations, and Members duly agreed to recommend this venue name to Town Council.

**Resolved: To consider and support the suggestion from the Community Venue Task & Finish Group to rename Project H, once it becomes an operational venue, HR Hive.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.34pm**

**Dated this 27<sup>th</sup> day of July 2026**

**Chairman**