

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL
Environment & Leisure Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
13th June 2022 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman
P Burgess
E Cooper
Y Farrell
T McMahon
R Morgan
S Thorne

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Tony Luff Head of Grounds Operations
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 4

Also present: Councillors: J Carroll
S Goodchild

12065 APOLOGIES

None.

12066 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public requested that Houghton Regis Town Council mark out a football pitch on Windsor Drive recreation area.

It was highlighted that the need for a marked pitch would need to be quantified to justify the work involved.

A member of the public queried whether all Council members had submitted their Declarations of Interest to Central Bedfordshire Council as some were not showing on the website.

It was advised that it seemed that currently some submissions had taken some time to be processed.

12067 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

12068 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members were invited to elect a Vice-Chair for Environment and Leisure Committee for 2022/2023.

Nomination: Cllr McMahon Nominated by: Cllr Burgess
Seconded by: No seconder



Members queried the monetary support given to the Houghton Hall Park project, it was advised that as the lottery funding was coming to an end, it was predicted that Houghton Regis Town Council's contribution would remain comparable to the current financial support given.

Members were advised the benches for Parkside Recreation Ground were due to be delivered later this month and would be fitted soon after, along with the placement of new litter bins.

12073 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Members received the income and expenditure report, highlighting significant variances, for Environment & Leisure Committee to date.

12074 MACHINERY RENEWALS PROGRAMME

Members received the anticipated machinery renewals programme for 2022/23.

Members queried the 'hold' on the vehicle and strimmer, it was advised that the priorities and needs of the grounds maintenance had changed and the funding had been redirected, with members agreement, to accommodate.

It was reiterated that consideration be given to the purchase of sustainable vehicles.

It was highlighted to members that electric vehicles were currently cost prohibitive.

Resolved: To support the Machinery Renewals Programme for 2022/23.

12075 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE

Members were updated on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

Members were advised of a significant increase in funding which had enabled reconsideration of the use and layout of the pavilion to incorporate storage facilities.

Members highlighted that this alteration could alter the rateable cost and requested that this be investigated.

Clarification was requested on the long term impact of having a 'Good Lease' on the site as it had been disappointing that it could not be registered to the Town Council.

It was advised that this would be looked into and a full response would be circulated.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the inclusion of works to the existing pavilion to convert its use into an internal and external grounds store area;**
- 2. To note the project funding information and specifically the impact this has on the reduced borrowing requirement from the PWLB.**

12076 DIGNITY GARDEN



Members considered the creation of a garden for residents to remember loved ones lost due to covid.

Members were advised that this idea had been presented to the Community Services Committee in February, discussion had been held around the location of the area. Members were advised that several locations had been considered and had been highlighted in the report.

Members agreed the Old Section of Houghton Regis Cemetery would provide the most fitting space for the garden. Members emphasised the importance of continuing this project respectfully and with care as the project was to be progressed in the Old Section of Houghton Regis Cemetery.

Resolved: To approve the creation of a garden in recognition of the impact of covid in the Old Section of Houghton Regis Cemetery.

12077 FAIR VISITS

To provide members with information in relation to Fair Visits to the town.

Members discussed the parking impact around the town centre during the duration of Fair visits. Members were advised that the Fair employ security staff, however when attempts had been made to move cars on, it had been met with abuse from residents.

It was acknowledged that a holistic, collaborative approach was needed to tackle the parking issue during the Fair visit. It was requested that support be sought from CBC Enforcement Officers during peak times during the Fair's stay.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.17pm

Dated this 26th day of September 2022

Chairman



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council

meeting held on

20th June 2022 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: P Burgess
J Carroll
E Cooper
C Copleston
Y Farrell
S Goodchild
D Jones
M S Kennedy
T McMahon
A Slough
C Slough
S Thorne
K Wattingham

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 10

Apologies: Councillors: R Morgan

12078 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Morgan.

12079 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Agenda item 14; A member of the public asked whether the council would consider speaking with the younger members of the community regarding climate change and implementable strategies.

Agenda item 19; Friends of Windsor Drive Community Open Space requested an official stance from the Town Council on the proposed development of Windsor Drive. It was requested that the recommendations set out in the agenda were supported by councillors endorsing the status of Windsor Drive Community Open Space as the green community space as it is at the present time.

12080 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Carroll advised members that he was a supporter of the Friends of Windsor Drive group.

12081 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2022.

A clerical error was highlighted on the minutes, with an amendment requested under the Chair of Community Services Committee to read: *On being put to the vote Cllr Wattingham was elected as Chair of Community Services Committee.*

Resolved: To approve the minutes as amended of the meeting held on 18th May 2022 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

12082 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MINUTES



To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	28 th February 2022
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	14 th February and 14 th March 2022
Planning Committee	16 th May 2022
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

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

Office Provisions Sub Committee	None to present
Proposed New Cemetery Working Group	None to present

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

12083 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members received a verbal report on events that had been attended by the Town Mayor.

Cllr Farrell advised members that she had attended:

Headway Jubilee Event
 Bidwell West Event
 All Saints Church Jubilee Service
 Friends of Windsor Drive Jubilee Event
 Hub Café Jubilee Party
 Houghton Regis Primary School Jubilee Fayre
 Memorial Hall 65th Party
 All Saints Church
 Luton Borough Council Mayoral Investiture
 Harpenden Civic Service
 And was looking forward to this Saturday's afternoon Tea with Prosecco and jazz music.

Members were advised the deputy mayor had attended:

Lord Lieutenant Thanksgiving Service
 Mayor of Dunstable Jubilee Coffee Morning

12084 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

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

Cllr Goodchild advised members that she had been unable to attend the meeting at CHEWS due to a diary conflict.

Cllr Goodchild advised members that she had not yet attended a meeting of SORTED.

Cllr Thorne advised members that Dial-a-Ride were to hold their AGM next week and Citizens Advice were to hold their AGM in September.

gmc

Cllr Jones advised members that he had attended a meeting of BATPC where new premises had been agreed subject to finalising the tenancy agreement.

Members were also advised that NALC and LGA had been working on a new Code of Conduct, NALC had subsequently withdrawn their version, the LGA version had been presented to Corporate Services Committee for preliminary consideration.

12085 YEAR END ACCOUNTS

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

Members received this report for information.

12086 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2021/2022 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2021/2022

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members were presented with the completed Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2022.

Members were advised that the internal auditor completed the year end internal audit on 10th May 2022.

Members highlighted the new Auditor had been more thorough some improvements to be implemented had been highlighted.

Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/2022 and to approve the actions detailed in the annotated Observations report as attached.

12087 DATES FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS FOR 2021/2022

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 31st March 2022.

Members were advised of the following:

1. Date of announcement: 24th June 2022
2. Date of commencement: 27th June 2022
3. End date: 5th August 2022

Members were advised that an issue of the date of announcement coinciding with the date of commencement had arisen, observed by the new Auditor, it had also been recommended that the dates be recommended to Town Council for approval.

Resolved: To approve the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights in relation to the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2022 as follows:

1. Date of announcement: 24th June 2022
2. Date of commencement: 27th June 2022
3. End date: 5th August 2022

12088 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2021/2022 SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

CP15

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2022 was attached for consideration, approval and signature.

Members highlighted the unfortunate nature of having to state ‘no’ on row M of the Annual Internal Audit Report, as it was believed the opportunity to inspect the accounts had been offered correctly.

Resolved: To approve and sign Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2022.

**12089 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2021/2022
SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022 was received for consideration, approval and signature subject to external audit.

Resolved: To approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2022 subject to external audit.

12090 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENTS 2022/23

Members received a schedule of earmarked reserves for 2022/23 with predicted movements to and from reserves during the course of the financial year.

Members received this report for information as ear marked reserve movements were to be confirmed at year end.

Members acknowledged the expediency of receiving a mid-year report on the status of Earmarked reserves.

Members highlighted an income of £1,197,400 and expenditure of £1,102,933 amounting to a surplus of £94,467 with a net transfer of £36,000 to EMR.

A motion was proposed by Cllr Jones, seconded by: Cllr Kennedy to read:

To Move £50,000 from General Reserves to EMR Reserves for play area refurbishment.

Members voted on the proposed motion, which was carried.

Resolved: To move £50,000 from General Reserves to EMR Reserves for Play Area Refurbishment.

12091 POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT WINDSOR DRIVE

To seek Councils position on possible future development on land at Windsor Drive.

YJF

A recorded vote was requested on officer recommendation 2 which read: *To oppose any future development on Windsor Drive unless very special circumstances are shown in accordance with draft Neighbourhood Plan Policy 12.*

Proposed by: M Kennedy seconded by: C Slough

Members in favour Cllrs: S Goodchild, T McMahon, Y Farrell, S Thorne, D Jones, E Cooper

Members against Cllrs: A Slough, C Slough, M Kennedy, T McMahon, P Burgess, C Copleston, J Carroll.

The recommendation was not carried.

A new motion was proposed to read: Houghton Regis Town Council supports the national planning policy framework and its commitment to brownfield sites rather than greenfield sites in particular in the case of Windsor Drive.

Proposed by: M Kennedy seconded by: C Slough

A recorded vote was requested:

Members in favour Cllrs: P Burgess, T McMahon, J Carroll, M Kennedy, C Slough, A Slough, C Copleston

The amended recommendation 2 was carried and accordingly became the substantive motion.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To continue to offer support to the Friends of Windsor Drive Group in terms of engaging in democratic processes;**
 - 2. Houghton Regis Town Council supports the national planning policy framework and its commitment to brownfield sites rather than greenfield sites in particular in the case of Windsor Drive.**

12092 CLIMATE CHANGE

Members were invited to consider steps to help to address climate change.

Members highlighted concerns regarding the additional administrative pressure for staff if a Cost of Living Crisis was declared, the Town Centre project agreed and the work involved with Climate Change project was agreed as all three were large projects to undertake.

It was suggested to members that a public consultation process be carried out to gauge public support for a Green Task Force, and the findings be presented to the October Town Council meeting.

Members discussed the length of wait time on ordering electric vehicles, concerns were raised that delayed consideration could prove a delay to any positive action the Town Council may wish to take.



An amendment to the officer recommendation 3 was proposed to read:

To report back to Town Council on 3rd of October on community and youth engagement, staff and financial resources as necessary, and the committee functions and terms of reference necessary to support a green taskforce and to consider declaring a climate emergency at that time.

The officer recommendation read:

To report back on the level of community support and if sufficient to consider the staff and resource necessary:

The amendment was proposed by: Cllr A Slough, seconded by: Cllr McMahon

Members voted in favour of the amended recommendation 3, accordingly this became the substantive motion.

- Resolved:**
1. To take suitable steps to ensure the current work of the council follows a sustainable ethos. This could cover facilities and services, purchases, and working practices;
 2. To engage with the community to seek to assess the level of community support to set up a Green Task Force whose remit would include investigating the funding sources available to assist in the development and delivery of a Green Action Plan;
 3. To report back to Town Council on 3rd October on community and youth engagement, staff and financial resources as necessary, and the committee functions and terms of reference necessary to support a green taskforce and to consider declaring a climate emergency at that time.

12093 DUNSTABLE MARKET CHARTER

Members were provided information in regard to Dunstable Town Council's Market Charter and associated implications for Houghton Regis Town Council when holding events with stalls.

Members discussed the confusion over the existence of the Market Charter as it had been established pre the abolition of Dunstable Borough Council in 1972.

It was requested that a letter be sent to Central Bedfordshire Council Monitoring Officer requesting clarification as to what is defined by 'market' as it was considered that this would not apply to the stalls held at Houghton Regis Town Council events and request a copy of the Charter.

Questions were raised by members as to whether other towns were being charged under the Dunstable Market Charter.

12094 BEDFORD SQUARE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Members were requested to consider the current and future use of Bedford Square Community Centre.

Members discussed the benefits of the community centre, it supported Houghton Regis' Town Council vision, the Neighbourhood Plan and Central Bedfordshire Council's Constitution. It was highlighted that several points of the Equality Act had been breached by preventing Houghton Regis residents access to the Community Centre. Members agreed that unavailability of the Community Centre was a huge loss to the community.

Resolved: To contact the CBC Monitoring Officer for advice on how to take the following points forward:

1. BSCC has long been an underused asset within HRTC. It has however always held the scope to be a central and integral part of the towns community. For it to achieve this potential it required the proactive administrative and community support. HRTC would urge CBC to engage with its local communities to support community health and development;
2. The partial use of the centre by the college is a significant loss to a number of local groups who have struggled with the loss of an affordable and central facility. HRTC would urge CBC to take necessary steps to ensure that other local venues under its control are affordable and available for such groups;
3. HRTC would urge CBC to take a more proactive role in managing, promoting and supporting previous users of this centre to encourage their growth and development;
4. HRTC would urge CBC to review the booking process to ensure it is robust and clear;
5. HRTC would urge CBC to review existing venues in Houghton Regis to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to explore funding opportunities to improve their accessibility and overall offer.

12095 COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Members discussed at length how best to support the Houghton Regis community if a Cost of Living Crisis was declared, with support through Family Centres and Schools and the Locality Team suggested.

An amendment to the recommendations was proposed to read: To contact local support organisations to explore opportunities (including the local foodbank, local primary schools / school family workers, organisations supporting vulnerable adults, faith groups, Houghton Regis Children's Centre) to provide a monthly donation of up to £500 per month for a 12 month period to be taken from general reserves.

Proposed by: Cllr Kennedy, seconded by: Cllr Jones
Members voted in favour of the amended recommendation.

The Officer recommendations read:

1. To contact Andrew Selous MP to press for national help and support to those most in need
2. To contact local support organisations to explore opportunities (including the local foodbank, local primary schools / school family workers, organisations supporting vulnerable adults, faith groups, the Houghton Regis Locality team, Houghton Regis Children's Centre)
3. To look to provide a weekly donation to the local foodbank up to a value to be confirmed by Members.



Resolved: To contact local support organisations to explore opportunities (including the local foodbank, local primary schools / school family workers, organisations supporting vulnerable adults, faith groups, Houghton Regis Children's Centre) to provide a monthly donation of up to £500 per month for a 12 month period to be taken from general reserves.

12096 HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN

Members were requested to consider the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan.

Resolved:

1. To approve the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan
2. To refer the Plan to the Partnership Committee for consideration
3. To request that CBC review and update the 2008 Town Centre Masterplan

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.32pm

Dated this 3rd day of October 2022


Chairman