

**HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Environment & Leisure Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on**  
**5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: A Slough Chairman  
E Cooper  
E Costello  
Y Farrell  
M Herber Substitution  
W Henderson  
T McMahan

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

Public: 3

Apologies: Councillors: P Burgess

**12466 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Burgess (Cllr Herber substituted).

**12467 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Concerns were raised over the decimation of hedgerows along Windsor Drive during maintenance work carried out. It was queried why so much vegetation was being removed and were informed by the workman that the work being carried out was on the instruction of their management team. Concerns were that this had been completed without any consideration to the wildlife occupying the hedgerows.

**12468 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**12469 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

Members were invited to elect a Vice-Chair for Environment and Leisure Committee for 2023/2024.

Nomination: Cllr McMahan Nominated by: Cllr Herber  
Seconded by: Cllr McMahan

Nomination: Cllr Costello Nominated by: Cllr Cooper  
Seconded by: Cllr Farrell

A recoded vote was requested.

Members in favour of Cllr McMahan: Cllr Herber and Cllr McMahan

Members in favour of Cllr Costello: Cllr Cooper, Cllr Farrell, Cllr Henderson and Cllr Costello

Accordingly, Cllr Costello was duly appointed as Vice-Chair of the Environment and Leisure Committee for the municipal year of 2023/2024.

#### **12470 MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**Resolved: To confirm the minutes of the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

#### **12471 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.j.iv. 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.

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

Members received this report for information.

#### **12472 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING WORKING GROUPS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN**

Allotments Working Group 17<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023

#### **12473 ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT 2023/24**

In accordance with the committee functions a review of the income and expenditure of the committee should be undertaken periodically. However, at the time of compiling this report, financial year 2022/2023 had not been closed down.

Members received, for information, the budget report for Environment & Leisure Committee alongside the Budget Explanation.

Of note the following projects were anticipated during 2023/24:

- Removal of gas supply at Tithe Farm pavilion (no longer required)
- Development of all-weather sports facility at Tithe farm including 3G pitch, new pavilion and refurbished and extended car park.
- Remodelling of Parkside Pavilion – this was a complex potential project. Consultation work needed to be undertaken within the community to determine options, investigations needed to take place to determine scope of works feasible. The budget available only covers this feasibility work.

- Replacement of litter and dog bins with dual purpose bins.
- Installation of exercise equipment at Parkside recreation ground

The placement of the exercise equipment at Parkside was queried, it was advised that feasibility of placement would be looked at.

Queries were raised regarding several amounts allocated to amenities and water and whether the predicted figures were accurate given the fluctuation in costs.

Maintenance budget allocation was queried in relation to Parkside Pavilion as the allocation was less than the previous year. It was advised that the budgeted amount for the previous year was to incorporate a significant repair required.

Members were advised that costs for the Tithe Farm Pavilion would be picked up by Beds FA with the Town Council providing grass mowing, at a cost, to Beds FA. The Town Council would pick up the cost of the refurbishment of the old Pavilion.

Members were advised that when the budget was set, it was an estimate of costings based on 6 months and not at year end.

Members were advised in previous years an income had been received from Central Bedfordshire Council for grass cutting, and had been included in the budget for 23/24, however, Central Bedfordshire Council had made the decision not to continue with the uptake of this service.

Concerns were raised regarding Houghton Hall Park and it's long term financial viability. Members were advised that this was a joint venture and any financial impact would be shared between Central Bedfordshire Council at 80% and Houghton Regis Town Council at 20% of any additional financial impact.

It was highlighted to members that some items showing a deficit were offset by income which was shown in a separate area of the report.

*Members received this report for information.*

#### **12474 MACHINERY RENEWALS PROGRAMME**

Members received the anticipated machinery renewals programme for 2023/24.

Concerns were raised over the continued use of vehicles which used fossil fuel.

**Resolved: To support the Machinery Renewals Programme for 2023/24.**

#### **12475 ROAD RUNNERS CRICKET CLUB**

Members were requested to consider options for a long-term agreement for facility use by Road Runners Cricket Club.

Members were advised that this group had been using Orchard Close for many years and had proven reliable.

To amend the draft licence to state that the fee to be increased by Environment and Leisure Committee in the autumn each year.

**Resolved: To approve the draft Licence subject to negotiations with the Road Runners Cricket Club.**

**12476 FOOTBALL FOUNDATION'S GRASS PITCH MAINTENANCE SCHEME**

Members were advised of the Football Foundation's Pitch Power Scheme, the results of the pitch power assessment for Parkside and Moore Crescent recreation grounds to enable members to consider next steps.

Members were advised the assessment had been completed and some improvements had been recommended, the application of grant funding was encouraged by the FA. Members queried match funding and were advised of years one and two would require 100%, years three and four 60%.

It was suggested Houghton Regis Town Council staff could be trained to maintain the grounds.

**Resolved: To support the application to the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund for the pitches at Moore Crescent and Parkside recreation grounds.**

**12477 WINDSOR DRIVE OPEN SPACE – GRASS CUTTING REGIME**

Members were advised at the Annual Parish Meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023, a comment / question was made by the Friends of Windsor Drive Group which requested that consideration be given to enhancing the flora and fauna on the open space at Windsor Drive by adjusting the mowing regime.

The comment / question was as follows:

“Over the last couple of years the open space has been mowed within an inch of its life, i.e. way too short. This has meant it's pretty much turned to dust in the heat of Summer.

Great to see it was left later in May before mowing, however, we have had a lot of feedback from our members and residents supporting the No Mow May campaign and in addition, asking for a patch of land to be left natural or made into a wildflower patch.

We are currently working with CPRE Bedfordshire and have looked at the recommendations from Plantlife (the org which initiated No Mo May) and they recommend cutting sections of the field at different frequencies, to allow short-growing flowers to flourish alongside longer ones. Mowing twice a year will maintain a meadow. Mowing once every 4-6 weeks will maintain a shorter, re-flowering lawn where flowers like Bugle, Self-heal, Red Clover and Lady's Bedstraw can thrive.

We understand that CBC own the land and HRTC only lease it, however, would HRTC support our request for the above and work with us and volunteers to maximise the use of Windsor Drive Open Space and help the Climate at the same time?"

Members were advised under the Tenancy at Will between CBC and HRTC for the maintenance of this land, HRTC does have the authority to change its cutting regime as it saw fit. It was suggested that the Head of Environmental & Community Services / Grounds Manager contact the Friends of Windsor Drive group to discuss options going forward.

**Resolved: To support an alternative grass cutting regime which encourages diversity of flora and fauna on Windsor Drive open space.**

#### **12478 TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE**

To update members on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.

Members were advised if grant money was received from YIF, it would enable less money to be drawn from the loan.

*Members received this report for information.*

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.06pm**

**Dated this 18<sup>th</sup> day of September 2023.**

**Chairman**