



Houghton Regis Town Council

Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

Date of Approval:	Town Council 20 th May 2015
Date of Review:	18 th May 2016; 24 th May 2017 (amendments to HRNPSG approved 9 th October 2017); 3 rd July 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Meetings of Houghton Regis Town Council are to be conducted in accordance with the approved Standing Orders of Houghton Regis Town Council.
- 1.2 Legislation requires certain statutory functions of Houghton Regis Town Council to be discharged by the council itself. Houghton Regis Town Council cannot delegate responsibility to a committee or sub-committee for:
 1. levying or issuing a precept,
 2. borrowing money,
 3. approving the council's annual accounts,
 4. considering an auditor's report made in the public interest,
 5. confirming (by resolution) that it has the statutory criteria to exercise the power of general competence or
 6. adopting or revising the council's code of conduct.

2. Committee Overview Houghton Regis Town Council		
Department	Areas of Responsibility	Democratic Management
Corporate Services	Policy review & development Financial management Personnel matters Democratic management Health & safety matters	Corporate Services Committee Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Sub-Committee Personnel Sub-Committee
Environment & Leisure Services	Facilities management Leisure services Recreation management Cemetery & churchyard management	Environment & Leisure Committee
Community Services	Community services Youth services Communications Events Mayoral services Community grants Community safety	Community Services Committee Events Working Group Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group Combating Crime Working Group
Planning	Planning applications Planning policy Strategic development	Planning Committee Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Town	Town Centre Town development	Town Partnership Committee Town Centre Projects Task & Finish Group New Cemetery Working Group New Office Provisions Working Group Complaints Sub Committee Complaints Appeals Sub Committee

3. Functions & Terms of Reference

Town Council

Functions

At the Annual meeting to conduct business in accordance with Standing Orders as follows:

- a. The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the council shall be the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council.
- b. Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Vice-Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
 - i. In an election year, delivery by the Chairman of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chairman of the Council of his acceptance of office form unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date;
 - ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council;
 - iii. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;
 - iv. Review of the terms of reference for committees;
 - v. Appointment of members to existing committees;
 - vi. Appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing order 6
 - vii. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
 - viii. In an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the Council becoming eligible to exercise the general power of competence in the future;
 - ix. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

At other meetings of the Council:

- To annually review the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Health & Safety Policy, Equality & Diversity Policy, Banking Arrangements/Investment Policy, and the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference
- Before the end of January to determine the Council's overall budget for the forthcoming financial year and to set the precept accordingly.

- To receive auditors' reports and other comments and make recommendations to Corporate Services as to any policy matters arising from them.
 - To receive reports from committees and recommendations made therein.
 - To receive the Town Mayors announcements.
 - To consider and approve any short or long-term borrowing requirements including interest rates and borrowing period;
 - To approve a 4-year rolling programme of policy review
 - To receive conclusions drawn at any meeting of the Complaints and Complaints Appeals Sub-Committees.
- Terms of Reference
- The Town Council consists of all councillors.
 - The quorum shall be one third of all councilors (five)
 - In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.
 - In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council may direct.
 - If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm.
 - In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council directs.

Corporate Services Committee

Functions

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
- Review of arrangements, including any charters, with other local authorities and review of contributions made to expenditure incurred by other local authorities.
- Review of the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.
- To manage and maintain the Council Offices including office equipment and furniture.
- Reviewing the Council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)
- and to take action to comply.
- To receive information relating to the number of Freedom of Information requests received by the Clerk
- Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule

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- 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
 - To receive bank and cash reconciliation statements.
 - To receive and annual report (based on the previous financial year) on loans taken out, repayments made and outstanding liability
 - Review and confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.
 - To recommend to Council the writing off of irrecoverable amounts.
 - To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30th November each year.
 - To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
 - To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
 - To set the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Committee.
 - Monitor and review risk management issues
 - To exercise overall responsibility for staffing issues, excluding the appointment of the Town Clerk, who shall be appointed by the Town Council
 - To determine staff conditions of service including salary scales, working hours, employee assessments and evaluations etc
 - To determine all matters relating to staff including staffing resources and structures
 - To consider, determine and approve staff and Member training requirements
 - To receive information relating to the number of freedom of information requests received by the Town Clerk.

Terms of Reference

- The Corporate Services Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Corporate Services Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

Environment & Leisure Committee

Functions

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.

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- To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
 - To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30th November each year.
 - To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
 - To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
 - To set the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Committee and to control the collection of revenues thereof.
 - Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule
 - Annually review its inventory of land and assets including buildings.
 - To provide and maintain all recreation grounds and pavilions, open spaces and play areas in the control of the Council.
 - To manage and maintain sports provision including football pitches, the bowls green and cricket table.
 - To manage and maintain the Houghton Regis Town Cemetery and All Saints Churchyard.
 - To provide and maintain seats, noticeboards, litterbins and dog waste bins.
 - To purchase and maintain such vehicles and equipment as may be required to carry out the Council's duties in connection with the facilities under the control of the Committee.
 - To monitor all matters relating to leases and bye-laws in connection with the facilities under the control of the Committee.

Terms of Reference

- The Environment & Leisure Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Environment Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

Community Services Committee

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30th November each year.
- To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
- To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for

which no provision has been made in the approved budget.

- To set the level of charges for facilities in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
- Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule
- To encourage and regulate activities and events at Council properties, venues and locations.
- To advise Environment & Leisure Committee of events using land / buildings
- To award financial grants to local organisations within an overall budget approved by the Town Council
- To review the grant application process as necessary
- To oversee and manage the promotion of the Town and the Council, including the council's newsletter and website, Christmas lights, Pride of Houghton, events
- Consider community service provision provided by outside organisations
- To provide community support to enhance community service provision
- To liaise with other organisations on community issues

Terms of Reference

- The Community Services Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Community Services Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

Planning Committee

Functions

- To consider any matters referred to it by the Council or other Committees.
- To respond on behalf of the Council to initiatives from other organisations relating to matters under the Committee's jurisdiction.
- To exercise management of health and safety issues in respect of all the services of this Committee.
- To assemble and submit to the Town Council estimates of income and expenditure for each financial year in respect of all the services of this Committee no later than 30th November each year.
- To monitor periodically the income and expenditure of the Committee.
- To consider and determine any new contracts and any renewals of existing contracts under the jurisdiction of this committee.
- To consider and determine any proposed expenditure or reduction in income for which no provision has been made in the approved budget.
- Reviewing policies of the Council as required by the Policy Document Review Schedule

- To consider all planning related applications within the Parish and to make representations to the appropriate authority on behalf of the Town Council.
- To consider matters surrounding the growth proposals, including strategic development proposals and documents from local authorities and other agencies and bodies.
- To oversee the development and introduction of a Neighbourhood Plan for Houghton Regis.

Delegated Powers To Officers – Planning

- Delegated applications include all applications received for consultation purposes including all planning applications, advertisement and signs.
- All delegated decisions, which are recommended for approval, will be provided in writing, to Members of the Planning Committee.
- A list of proposed delegated decisions (relating to new or proposed listed buildings, conservation areas, tree preservation orders, building preservation orders, highways, byways, bridleways and footpaths) will be circulated to all Councillors. If a Councillor wishes an application to be decided by the Committee, a written request must be made to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.
- No applications will be delegated that fall into the following categories:
 - a) To which a written objection from a member of the public has been received by the Town Council
 - b) Any application for more than five dwellings (including flats, apartments and maisonettes)
 - c) Any application for retail or employment space
- The Town Clerk or their nominated officer, must be fully aware of the location and possible planning considerations of an application.

Terms of Reference

- The Planning Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Planning Committee shall consist of seven Councillors. The quorum shall be half of its members (four).
- To appoint sub-committees or working groups as necessary including setting out membership and terms of reference.

Houghton Regis Town Partnership

This is a joint Houghton Regis Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council committee. See Appendix A, attached, for relevant Committee Functions & Terms of Reference.

Complaints Sub-Committee (reporting to Town Council)

Functions

To act as the Complaints Committee in accordance with the Council's approved Complaints Procedure, including:

- To consider and make recommendations on any complaints received which fall under the approved Complaints Policy;
- To report its deliberations to Town Council;

Terms of Reference

- The Sub Committee shall comprise 3 councillors;
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Town Council who have not been named within the complaint.
- The quorum shall be three members.

Complaints Appeals Sub-Committee (reporting to Town Council)

Functions

- To consider and make recommendations on any appeals which relate to complaints received which fall under the approved Complaints Policy;
- To report its deliberations to Town Council;

Terms of Reference

- The Sub Committee shall comprise 3 councillors;
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Town Council who were not members of the original Complaints Sub-Committee and have not been named within the complaint.
- The quorum shall be three members.

Personnel Sub-Committee (Reporting to Corporate Services Committee)

Functions

- Overview of staffing structure and staffing budget, ensuring that it is commensurate with objectives of the Council.
- Review staff sickness absence.
- Receive reports and review of Employee Assistance Programme
- Review staff training
- Identify and agree training needs for the Town Clerk and Members
- Ensure Council employees are working in a safe environment
- Review Job Description and Contract of Town Clerk annually or when there is a significant change
- Receive notification of the Town Clerk's annual leave and matters relating to overtime working and sickness.

- Succession plan for key staff who may wish to retire.
- Recruitment and/or termination of contract for the Town Clerk and other senior members of staff.
- Act as interview panel for the posts of Town Clerk and other senior members of staff (final approval for the appointment of the Clerk rests with Council as per Standing Orders).
- Appoint one member of the Committee as the Clerks Appointed Person, preferably the Chair, to act as contact for day to day matters, support, handle leave requests, absence from work and to feed matters to Committee where any decisions/action is needed and to undertake the Clerks appraisal.
- Report any outcomes of employee complaints received.

Terms of Reference

- The Personnel Sub-Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Personnel Sub-Committee shall consist of 4 Councillors.
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Town Council
- The quorum shall be three members.

Disciplinary, Grievance & Appeals Sub-Committee Group (reporting to Corporate Services)

Due to the sensitive nature of the matters raised under this Sub-Committee, these meetings are not open to the public.

Functions:

- Delegated powers to hear and action, as appropriate, employee disciplinary, grievance and appeal matters

Terms of Reference:

- The Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Sub-Committee shall consist of 3 Councillors.
- Membership of the Sub Committee shall be drawn from Town Council.
- The quorum shall be three members.

Proposed New Cemetery Working Group (reporting to Town Council)

Functions

- To consider and determine matters surrounding the development of a new cemetery for Houghton Regis, including but not restricted to:
 - Environmental matters
 - Policy matters
 - Visual impact matters

- Design matters
- Public consultation matters
- Future operation and management of the cemetery
- To report to the Town Council on the outcome of its deliberations.

Terms of Reference

- The Proposed New Cemetery Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Proposed New Cemetery Working Group shall consist of 6 members. The quorum shall be half of its members (three).

Events Working Group (reporting to Community Services Committee)

Functions

- To set an annual programme of events and to request suitable funding from the Community Services Committee no later than October in each financial year
- To consider all aspects relating to planning and hosting of council events, including health and safety requirements
- To monitor and review each council event.
- Delegated authority is given to the Town Clerk and the Civic & Events Officer to take decisions on the arrangements for council events.
- To report to the Community Services Committee on the outcome of its deliberations.

Terms of Reference

- The Events Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Events Working Group shall consist of *up to* seven Councillors. As the Working Group has no delegated authority to take decisions there is no quorum of members required.

Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group (reporting to Community Services Committee)

Functions

- To consider the nominations put forward from members of the public in relation to the Pride of Houghton Award scheme and determine the award winners.

Terms of Reference

- The Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group shall consist of 3 councillors. The quorum shall be three members.
- The Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group shall not comprise of any co-opted members or members of the Events Working Group.

Combating Crime Working Group (reporting to Community Services Committee)

Functions

- To monitor the Council's Service Level Agreement with Bedfordshire Police for the provision of additional policing within the parish of Houghton Regis known as Operation Hanna
- To receive bi-monthly written reports and monthly verbal reports from Bedfordshire Police on the work completed under Operation Hanna
- To consider the forthcoming months actions by Bedfordshire Police under Operation Hanna
- To monitor the Council's Service Level Agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council for the management of the re-deployable CCTV cameras
- To manage the formulation and implementation of the Council's Community Safety Strategy
- To manage action under the Council's enviro crime project
- To report its decisions to Community Services Committee

Terms of Reference

- The Combating Crime Working Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Combating Crime Working Group shall consist of five councillors. The quorum shall be half its members (three).

Town Centre Projects Working Group (reporting to Town Partnership Committee)

Functions

Objective 1 of the Town Council's Plan, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision is:

To develop a stronger local economy which promotes local businesses.

The Town Centre Projects Task & Finish Group will consider and determine matters relating to:

- 1b To promote the retail offer (Shop Local)
- 1c To encourage town centre footfall (Town Centre events / activities)

The Town Centre Projects Task & Finish Group will consider and make recommendations on matters relating to:

- 1d To work with partners to facilitate a town centre market
 - 1j To work with partners to secure a new public realm feature in the town centre
- To report to the Town Partnership on the outcome of its deliberations.

Terms of Reference

- The Town Centre Task & Finish Group shall function and operate in accordance with the Town Council's approved Standing Orders.
- The Town Centre Task & Finish Group shall consist of 5 members. The quorum shall be half of its members (3).

Office Provisions Sub Committee (reporting to Town Council)

Functions

1. Reflecting on the growth agenda to give consideration to;
 - a) the suitability of the current office provision
 - b) the requirements of future office provision
2. To give consideration to future office provision including options for retaining or developing the current site, options for renting / leasing, purchasing or developing;
3. To commission specialist services such as may be deemed necessary in progressing options for future office provision;

Terms of Reference

1. The New Office Sub Committee shall function and operate in accordance with the Council's approved Standing Orders;
2. The New Office Sub Committee shall consist of five councillors, the quorum of which shall be 3.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (reporting to Planning Committee)

The Steering Group comprises Members of Houghton Regis Town Council, a Member of Central Bedfordshire Council and representatives from the Community.

See Appendix B, attached, for relevant Committee Functions & Terms of Reference.

APPENDIX A

Houghton Regis Town Partnership Committee

Terms of reference:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To serve as a partnership committee that sets the broad direction for all those involved in initiatives impacting on the town (e.g. the town centre's customers, employees, residents, visitors, traders, property owners, service providers and developers), and to co-ordinate their activities so as to realise our aspirations for the town and the town centre.
- 1.2 To inform and advise the relevant committees of the local authorities on all aspects of their responsibilities for the town centre and its environs.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 Work towards improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural vitality of Houghton Regis.
- 2.2 Encourage appropriate town centre and town development, for approval by the Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).
- 2.3 Recognise and deliver the context of the Local Development Framework and related planning processes including:
 - informing and advising the relevant committees of the local authorities on all aspects of their responsibilities for the town centre and its environs;
 - consulting, co-ordinating and communicating the infrastructure needs of Houghton Regis to the relevant local authorities; and
 - working in partnership with relevant bodies to achieve the delivery of new infrastructure.
- 2.4 Co-ordinate the activities of the various town centre service providers and those responsible for meeting the needs of the town centre including:
 - identifying appropriate funding opportunities for the furtherance of town initiatives; and
 - undertaking and co-ordinating marketing and promotional work for the town centre.
- 2.5 Establish task and finish groups to progress/deliver specific proposals in town development strategies where applicable.
- 2.6 Encourage the regeneration of deprived areas of Houghton Regis through effective neighbourhood improvement strategies.

3. Membership

- 3.1 The core membership to comprise:
 - 4 Central Bedfordshire Council appointed Councillors; and
 - 4 Houghton Regis Town Council appointed Councillors.
- 3.2 Representatives of the local community, local interest groups etc will be invited to attend its meetings as non-voting members where applicable.
- 3.3 CBC Councillors should be from wards within Houghton Regis.
- 3.4 All Councillors should have the interests of the town as a priority, not their own wards.

4. Chairman

- 4.1 The Chairman (CBC Councillor) and Vice-Chairman (HRTC Councillor) shall be elected from and by the partnership committee's core membership.
- 4.2 The elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman will hold the post for a period of one year, after which they can stand for re-election

5. Secretariat

- 5.1 Houghton Regis Town Council administers the Partnership committee, which is governed by the Town Council's Standing Orders. A copy of the Standing Orders can be viewed at Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) offices at Council Offices, Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Beds. LU5 5EY Tel: 01582 708540. They are also available online at <http://www.houghtonregis.org.uk/infopage.asp?infoid=1182>

6. Decision-making arrangements

- 6.1 The partnership committee will make decisions at its meetings. Decisions will be made by consensus whenever possible. However, if no consensus can be reached, a majority vote, based on one vote per core member, will carry the decision, with the Chair having the casting vote if the vote is equal.
- 6.2 The partnership committee will delegate operational decision-making to smaller working groups as necessary and appropriate.

7. Frequency of meetings

- 7.1 The partnership committee will meet a minimum of four times a year.

8. Quorum

- 8.1 In order for the partnership committee to operate, a quorum of 50% of the membership of the committee must be present (4).

APPENDIX B**Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE		
1.	Background	
1.1	Houghton Regis Town Council has resolved to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and has determined that it will cover the Parish of Houghton Regis.	
1.2	The Town Council, while retaining full responsibility for the Plan, recognizes that the content of the Plan must be driven by the community and the need to draw on skills and expertise from outside the Council.	
1.3	A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will lead the project to successful completion.	
2.	Name	
2.1	The name of the group will be Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. (HRNPSG)	
3.	Purpose	
3.1	The main purpose of the Group is to oversee the preparation of the Plan in order that it will be progressed to Independent Examination and a successful community referendum and ultimate adoption.	
3.2	The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of Houghton Regis. The Group will maximize support for the approach taken in the NP by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process.	
3.3	Liaise with, and direct the work of, consultants and specialists engaged to further the Plan as appropriate.	
3.4	Consider the options and develop policies to inform the future development and use of land in the neighbourhood area.	
3.5	Be aware of the development areas identified in the Local Plan, including establishing further development areas if they are required.	
3.6	Ensure the NP is supported by effective on-going programmes of communication and consultation with the community, CBC, businesses, adjoining parishes, developers and other key parties.	
3.7	Identify sources of funding.	
3.8	Liaise with statutory, and other, relevant authorities and organizations to ensure the Plan is as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.	
3.9	Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many groups and organizations in the community as possible.	
3.10	Determine the types of consultation and information gathering to be used.	
3.11	Be responsible for the analysis arising from consultations and the production	

	and distribution of the final reports.
3.12	Conform to national policies and with EU and Human Rights legislation.
3.13	Report back regularly to the Town Council on progress, significant issues and budgetary implications.
3.14	Present key documents and the draft NP for consultation with the Town Council, local residents, CBC, businesses, the Independent Examiner, and assist in arrangements for the Referendum.
3.15	Present recommendations for the implementation of The Plan.
4. Membership and Conduct	
4.1	The HRNPSG will be formed from current Town Councillors, CBC Councillors for the town and local members of the community. The Group will be comprised of up to 12 members, the composition of which to be 5 Town Councillors, (appointed by the full Town Council), 1 CBC Councillor and 6 representatives from the local community. The Town Clerk, or Senior Manager, will be present in an <i>ex-officio</i> , non-voting capacity at all meetings. The Group will only be quorate when 50% of its members are present.
4.2	The HRNPSG may co-opt additional support to carry out specific task for as short or long a period as necessary.
4.3	Membership is voluntary.
4.4	All members of the HRNPSG must abide by the Code of Conduct of Houghton Regis Town Council and in doing so must submit a register of interests.
4.5	All members of the HRNPSG must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to the decisions or recommendations made by it. This may include membership of an organization, ownership or interest in land or business or any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the HRNPSG.
4.6	A person will cease to be a member of the HRNPSG upon notification to the Chairman in writing of their wish to resign.
5. Meetings	
5.1	The HRNPSG will elect a Chairman, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer from its membership to remain in these positions until the project is complete. If these positions should become vacant, the Group will elect an alternative.
5.2	In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the HRNPSG will elect a Chairman from its members present at the meeting, for that meeting.
5.3	The HRNPSG will arrange its own meeting schedule and will meet as required.
5.4	At least 7 days clear notice of meetings will be sent to members via email.
5.5	The Secretary will keep a record of meetings and circulate the Minutes to HRNPSG members and the Town Council (via the Planning Committee Clerk) no more than 14 days after each meeting.
5.6	Decisions made by HRNPSG will be by consensus at Group meetings. Where a vote is required, each member will have one vote. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chairman will have one casting vote.

6.	Working Groups	
6.1	HRNPSG may establish working groups for dealing with specific issues, made up of Members of the Steering Group and volunteers from the community, to aid them in any NP related work.	
6.2	Each working group will have a lead person from the HRNPSG.	
7.	Affiliations, Interests and Contributions.	
7.1	The HRNPSG will not itself be affiliated to any particular political party. It is recognized that Councillors and community members may have such affiliations, which will be declared where relevant.	
7.2	The Localism Act and Houghton Regis Town Council's Code of Conduct will apply to all members of the HRNPSG. All members of the HRNPSG must declare any pecuniary interest that may be perceived as being relevant to a decision of the HRNPSG. This may include membership of an organization, ownership of land or a business, or any other matter that may be considered to be relevant. Such declarations must be recorded and publically available.	
7.3	Having declared an interest, that member will not take part in a discussion or vote on the related issue. In event of disagreement, the Chairman's decision will be binding. Organizations and businesses may assist in the production of the NP and may contribute to the cost of producing it. Details of any donations or assistance must be made publicly available and must not influence the recommendations of The Plan.	
8.	Finance	
8.1	Funding, including grants, will be applied for and held by the Town Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan development work.	
8.2	HRNPSG will notify the Town Council (via the Planning Committee) of any planned expenditure before it is incurred	
9.	Conduct	
9.1	It is expected that all HRNPSG members will abide by the principles and practice of the Town Council Code of Conduct, including the declaration of interests.	
9.2	Whilst members as individuals will be accountable to their parent organizations, the HRNPSG as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that The Plan reflects their collective expectations.	
9.3	HRNPSG will achieve this through applying the following principles:	
	i	Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
	ii	Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion and belief; and
	iii	Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

10	Changes to the Terms of Reference	
	10.1	This document may be amended with the support of at least two-thirds of the current membership at a HRNPSG meeting and with the approval of the Town Council.
11	Dissolution of the HRNPSG	
	11.1	The HRNPSG will continue to operate until the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.
	11.2	Upon dissolution of the HRNPSG, any remaining resources will be passed to the Town Council.