

Houghton Regis Town Council



Annual Report

2016/17

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1. Foreword

The year 2016/17 was an immensely busy year for Houghton Regis and the Town Council.

As the Council settled into its second year of office work was well underway in delivering on its Objectives within the Vision, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision. More detail on this is included later in this report.

The Town Mayor hosted many fundraising events including a Shepherd's Pie and Quiz Night, Coffee and Donut Morning and a Charity Indian Dinner.

The Mayor represented the Council at some 172 events, a mixture of town events, such as the Pancake Race, May Fair, Carnival, Houghton Rocks Music Festival, Pride of Houghton Awards and the Celebration of Christmas, along with visits to local voluntary and community groups, schools and care homes, and events further afield including civic services, charity meals and presentations.

The Mayor's chosen charities were:

- All Saints Parish Church;
- Local Scouting groups
- Signposts

With support from fellow councillors, council staff and the community a total of £4,150 was distributed between these charities.

2. Overview

2.1 The Year 2016 / 17

Towards the end of 2016/17, after a year or so of construction, the town began to see the benefits of newly completed A5-M1 Link and the Woodside Connection.

As we leave 2016/17 construction / development work continues on the following:

- The ongoing construction of a highways depot and for a waste park off the Thorn Turn;
- The development of the 2 housing developments off Bedford Road;
- Progressing the restoration project in Houghton Hall Park funded through a Heritage Lottery Grant;

In addition further background work has also been continuing by key partners and developers on:

- The housing and mixed use developments known as HRN1 and HRN2;
- The redevelopment of the former co-op site, Red House Court and the Red House now known as the Houghton Regis Central, an Independent Living Scheme

The town has also seen the emerging potential development on the Kingsland site.

The Town Council was and continues to be active partners in all these projects.

Within the Council work has continued at a fast pace and specific detail is provided in Section 2.2 on significant pieces of new work for the Council.

2.2 Houghton Regis Town Council & Committees

The Town Council has 4 committees (plus Full Council and Town Partnership) and 5 sub-committees, which met over 50 times during the year. All these meetings were open to the public and there was a slot on each agenda where members of the public could raise questions or make comments on items on the agenda. Information on meetings and the agendas can be found on the notice board outside the Council Offices and on the website, www.houghtonregis.org.uk

Town Council

The Town Council has continued to receive reports at each of its meetings from the Town Mayor on the events undertaken and from local voluntary organisations via reports from the Town Council representatives on them. These reports enable the Town Council to stay informed of the activities in the town and therefore be in a position to offer assistance and support as required.

The Town Partnership Committee has continued to provide an active and open forum for matters of significance to Houghton Regis to be raised and debated.

The accounts, annual return and internal auditor's report for 2016/17 were agreed, the annual report published and a review of various policy documents undertaken.

Specific projects that were undertaken during 2016/17 include:

- Councillor training and briefings;
- Enhanced community engagement through Council attendance at events;
- Purchase and management of a 3rd redeployable CCTV camera for siting within the parish to help deter crime and anti social behaviour;
- Setting the budget for 2017/18 to fund new and enhanced projects whilst keeping the Band D equivalent the same as in 2016/17;
- Detailed consideration of the CBC Market Town Regeneration Fund project, although it was ultimately decided not to proceed;
- Enhancement of civic and ceremonial affairs through the purchase of Mayoral Robes and the Mayoral Inauguration event. In addition the Council investigated the Lord of the Manor title and a Coat of Arms but decided not to proceed at this time but to reconsider in 12 months.

Committees

The Town Council had 4 main committees in 2016/17 to carry out the work of the Council; namely Corporate Services Committee, Environment & Leisure Committee, Community Services Committee and Planning Committee.

Corporate Services Committee

Of particular note the following areas of work were completed:

- Consideration on the investment of Council funds;
- Review of a number of strategic policies of Houghton Regis Town Council;
- Consideration of insurance providers and approval of insurance cover;
- Review of Subscriptions;
- Review of inventory of land and buildings ;
- Ongoing budget monitoring and consideration of the budget for the following Council year;
- Internal and external audit;
- Full structural survey of main office buildings;
- Review of charges;
- Introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme;
- Ongoing review of Town Councils 2020 Vision;
- Bedford Square Service Level Agreement;
- Review of contracts.

Environment & Leisure

2016-2017 has been a busy time for the committee with many major decisions being made.

Of particular note the following areas of work were completed:

- A decision was made to preserve the Lebanese cedar tree with the addition of a secure fence around the perimeter.
- Knee rails and bollards installed on the Village Green to improve security.
- Agreed plans for new cemetery layout in order to extend the life of the cemetery.
- Work to the bowling Churchyard wall is in final stages. Final coping stones are currently being manufactured in order for completion.
- A new swing has been installed on Parkside recreational ground.

The Committee has also completed its annual obligations, as follows.

- Agreed the budget for 2017/18.
- Monitored income and expenditure throughout the financial year.
- Agreed hire charges for 2017/18.
- Approved machinery renewals programme for 2017/18.
- Approved funfair and circus dates for 2017.
- Sanctioned repairs to pavilions and installed energy efficient lighting.

In addition, projects were started in 2016 which are still ongoing.

- Agreed to install a height barrier on Moore Crescent with work beginning in summer 2017. Investigation into additional parking is ongoing.
- Options for fencing to increase security of Parkside pavilion are being investigated.

- Appropriate procedures are being investigated and costs awaited for the possible installation of lighting at the skate park.

Community Services Committee

Of particular note the following areas of work were completed:

- Received updates from
 - Events Working Group
 - Pride Of Houghton Working Group
 - Combating Crime Working Group
- Ongoing budget monitoring and consideration of the budget for the following Council year
- Received regular reports from the CBC Youth Services provider, Groundwork
- Determined a number of grant applications including
 - Networking at Dunstable £250
 - Full House Theatre £500
 - Recycled Teenagers £412.50
 - Meaningful Education £1200
 - Jewels Art £500
 - Parkside 50+ Club £424.50
 - Fun Space £424.50
- Has continued the grants, a total of £18,251, for key partners including Citizens Advice, Voluntary & Community Action, Keech Hospice and South Beds Dial A Ride.
- Contracted out Youth Service projects to Groundwork including Youth Pop Up Cafes & Social Inclusion Projects and reviewed the establishment of these projects
- Agreed the contents for the Town Guide & Town Crier
- Considered ideas around a Community Transport Project and agreed to monitor demand and use of existing service providers to assess need
- Agreed a cleaning contract for the Town Centre Toilets with MCS
- Purchased a 3rd redeployable CCTV camera
- Appointed a Community Development Officer
- Agreed the budget for 2017/18
- Agreed to extend the Operation Hana contract for high visibility policing
- Reviewed the Council's Grant scheme
- Considered the long term management and promotion of the Bedford Square Community Centre and entered into a Service Level Agreement with CBC for this
- Agreed an Easter and Summer youth holiday club
- Begun considering the possible purchase of a speedwatch camera
- Not to proceed with a Village Agent scheme on the basis that alternative and emerging organisations provide advice, support and signposting to local residents.
- Have considered the siting of the Christmas Tree

Planning Committee

During the 2016-17 financial year, a total of 87 planning applications were considered. Of these, 77 were not objected to. Of these, some of the responses submitted, though not objected to in principle, had additional comments for the planners at Central Bedfordshire

Council to consider. The remaining 10 applications were objected to on a variety of planning grounds.

In addition, the Committee also considered and made comments/ suggestions on the following topics:

- Appointment of Neighbourhood Plan Consultant;
- A5(T) M1 Link permanent Traffic Regulation Orders;
- Central Bedfordshire Local Plan ‘Call for Sites’ publication;
- Establishment of a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group;
- Central Bedfordshire Local Plan Technical Site Assessment Criteria;
- Highway improvement scheme Bedford Road;
- Speed restriction Bedford Road;
- Bridleway and Footpath Diversion Order;
- Provision of additional parking spaces Sundon Road;
- Tree works on trees with Tree Preservation Orders and in the conservation area.

2.3 The Year 2016 / 17 and Beyond

During autumn 2015 councillors worked hard on shaping and developing a Town Council Plan for delivery over their term of office. The following 5 Objectives were set out:

1. A stronger local economy which promotes local businesses;
2. Face the challenges & maximise the opportunities of growth;
3. A safer town with a reduced fear of crime;
4. A more active, engaged & inclusive community;
5. A strong, efficient & proactive Town Council.

Attached at Appendix A is the Town Council Plan, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision, which sets out some of the background to these objectives and the outcomes the Council is working towards in trying to achieve them.

During 2016/17 the Council has worked to deliver on the objectives and outcomes as set out.

3. Summary of Accounts**INCOME 2016 – 2017**

	£
Precept	811,050
Agency Services	10,311
Capital Receipts, Grants and Loan Proceeds	-
Interest and Investment Income	35,784
Leisure and Recreation inc. Pavilions	17,758
Cemetery & Churchyard	22,616
Christmas Lights Contribution	3,315
Miscellaneous	572
Community Development	11,882
Sale of Assets	<u>3,521</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>916,809</u>

EXPENDITURE 2016 – 2017

	£
Establishment/General Administration	467,017
Agency Costs	5,632
Election Expenses	6,895
S.137 Expenditure	-
Capital Expenditure inc Capital Grants	51,657
Loan Interest and Capital Repayments	37,961
Operational Expenditure:	
Leisure and Recreation inc. Pavilions	123,847
Cemetery & Churchyard	40,975
Highways - Footpaths and Lighting	935
Planning and Development	1,894
Highways – Footpaths and Lighting	1,053
Democratic Representation and Management	9,948
Town Security	35,634
Public Toilets	18,475
Community Development	58,833
Grants Under Specific Powers	27,329
Community Services	<u>1,993</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>891,425</u>

4. Your Councils

4.1 Houghton Regis Town Council

Contact Details

Address: Houghton Regis Town Council Telephone: 01582 708540
Peel Street Fax: 01582 861102
Houghton Regis email: info@houghtonregis.org.uk
Beds LU5 5EY web: www.houghtonregis.org.uk

Officers:

Clare Evans	(Town Clerk)
Stuart Oliver	(Deputy Town Clerk)
Debbie Marsh	(Corporate Services Manager)
Sonia Stennett	(Accounts & Cemetery Officer)
Sarah Gelsthorp	(Civic & Events Officer)
Tara Earnshaw	(Community Development Officer)
Chantel England	(Administration and Promotions Officer)
Robyn Godfrey	(Office Apprentice)
Ray Kempson	(Grounds Foreman)
Robert Kempson	(Deputy Grounds Foreman)
Eveli Seru	(Groundsman)
Ben McGarrigle	(Groundsman)
Will Smith	(Groundsman)
Andy Godly	(Groundsman)
Chris Elston	(Grounds Apprentice)

Current Houghton Regis Town Councillors

Below, listed by Ward, are your current Town Councillors:

Houghton Hall Ward	Public
Cllr Laura Ellaway	01582 537105
Cllr Robin Hines	01582 759026
Cllr Susan Thorne	07847 702 499
Cllr Chris Slough	01582 751 881
Cllr Ken Wattingham	01582 705830
Cllr Tim Welch	01582 861090
Parkside Ward	
Cllr Jimmy Carroll	01582 868006
Cllr Don Dixon-Wilkinson	01582 529554
Cllr Joanna Hillyard	07748 440 901
Cllr Martin Kennedy	01582 702274
Tithe Farm Ward	
Cllr David Abbott	01582 894060

CLlr Tracey McMahon	07948 532 662
CLlr Tony Swain	01582 522952
CLlr Richard Scott	

Areas of Responsibility

Contact the Town Council offices on 01582 708540 to discuss any of the following.

- Consultation documents from other Councils and Public Bodies, Government Offices, etc.
- Cemeteries
- Fairs and circuses on Town Council land
- Sports and football bookings
- Grants to organizations
- Mayor secretariat
- Mayoral events
- Civic events
- Parks
- Pavilion & Community Centre hire
- Planning – commenting on planning applications
- Projects – specialized play equipment, community safety and development
- Children’s play
- War memorial
- Youth provision

Central Bedfordshire Council

Contact Details

Address: Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
Beds SG17 5TQ

Telephone: 0300 300 8000

Current Central Bedfordshire Councillors for Houghton Regis

Central Bedfordshire Councillors	
CLlr John Kane	0300 300 8000
CLlr Mrs S Goodchild	0300 300 8525
CLlr Tony Swain	0300 300 8000
CLlr Antonia Ryan	0300 300 8535