



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL **Annual Report** 2025–2026

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Contents

FOREWORD	3
HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL	4
About Houghton Regis Town Council	4
Who makes up the Town Council	4
Council Services	5
Our Committees	6
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	7
Income Summary 2025/26	7
Expenditure Summary 2025/26	7
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2025/26	8
Corporate Services Committee	8
Environment & Leisure Committee	9
Community Services Committee	9
Planning	10
Staffing	10
Neighbourhood Plan Implementation	11
Community Safety Sub-Committee	11
Community Engagement Sub-Committee	11
LOOKING AHEAD	12
Summary	12
Budget 2026/27	13
CLOSING SUMMARY	13



FOREWORD

TOWN MAYOR AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

This year has been one of meaningful progress, strong community pride, and continued development for Houghton Regis. As our town grows and evolves, the Town Council has remained firmly focused on delivering high-quality services, supporting residents of all ages, and ensuring that Houghton Regis continues to be a welcoming, vibrant, and resilient place to live.

Throughout the year, we have delivered a full and varied programme of community events, bringing people together and celebrating the spirit of our town. We have continued to invest in our parks, open spaces, and community facilities, recognising the importance of these spaces for health, wellbeing, and social connection. Alongside this, we have supported local organisations and community groups, helping them to thrive and play their vital role in local life.

We have also strengthened our governance and financial planning to ensure the Council remains transparent, accountable, and well-positioned for the future. These efforts help us to make informed decisions, maximise value for money, and respond effectively to the changing needs of our community.

We extend our sincere thanks to our residents, volunteers, partners, and our dedicated staff team. Your continued commitment, support, and pride in Houghton Regis are what make our community so special, and we look forward to building on this progress together in the year ahead.



Councillor Michelle Herber

Town Mayor and Chairman of the Council 2025/26



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL



About Houghton Regis Town Council

Houghton Regis Town Council is the parish council for the town of Houghton Regis and serves as the most local level of government for residents. Its role is to represent the community, deliver local services, and help shape the future of the town.

The Council's work centres around three main areas:

- **Delivering services to meet local needs** – including the management and maintenance of parks, open spaces, community facilities, and the organisation of local events and initiatives
- **Representing the local community** – acting as a voice for residents, listening to concerns, and ensuring local views are reflected in decision-making
- **Striving to improve quality of life in Houghton Regis** – supporting projects and partnerships that enhance wellbeing, safety, and the overall environment of the town

In addition, the Town Council plays an important role as a consultee and lobbying body. It works closely with Central Bedfordshire Council and other strategic partners, contributing to planning decisions and wider developments. Through this, the Council actively puts forward the wishes, priorities, and needs of the local community, helping to ensure that Houghton Regis continues to grow in a way that benefits its residents.

Who makes up the Town Council

The Town Council is made up of **14 elected Councillors** representing three parish wards across Houghton Regis. (**Houghton Hall, Tithe Farm and Parkside**) Councillors meet regularly at Full Council and committee meetings to discuss local issues, make decisions, and guide the work and direction of the Council. Together, they are responsible for ensuring that the Council delivers effective services, uses public funds responsibly, and responds to the needs and priorities of the community.

As a democratically elected body, the Council is accountable to the people it represents – that’s **you, the local community**. Councillors are here to **listen, act on your concerns**, and **work on your behalf** to make a positive difference in the town.

Finding out what we do is easy and we encourage residents to stay informed and get involved. You can **explore our website** and **social media** channels for updates, read our residents’ newsletter for regular news and information, speak directly with your local councillors, or **attend a council meeting** to see how decisions are made.

TOWN COUNCIL VALUE: *We are committed to being open, transparent, and accessible to all.*

Council Services



The Town Council provide the following services:

Democratic Representation & Management	Recreation Grounds & Facilities	Community Events	Community Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors • Town Mayor • Deputy Town Mayor • Town Mayor’s Christmas Cards and gift • Statutory Consultee for Planning Applications • Civic & Mayoral Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Green • Moore Crescent Recreation Ground • Tithe Farm Recreation Ground • Parkside Recreation Ground • Houghton Hall Park • Sports Facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football • Cricket • Bowls • Open Spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windsor Drive • Dog Kennel Down & Former Railway Line • Thorn Park Countryside Site • Burial Grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houghton Regis Cemetery • All Saints Churchyard • Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • X (formerly Twitter) • Instagram 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easter Egg Hunt • Carnival • Pride of Houghton Awards • Houghton Rocks • Fireworks • Santa’s Grotto • Christmas Lights Switch On • Fair Visits • Circus Visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Grants Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Partner Scheme • Project Grants • Later Living Group • Town Centre Public Toilets • HR Youth Council • Young Persons Pop Up Café • Youth Outreach Work • Communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • X (formerly Twitter) • Instagram • YouTube • Town Crier Newsletter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotments & Street Furniture • Terra Croft Allotments • Noticeboards • Seats & Litter Bins • Dog Bins 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Facebook • X (formerly Twitter) • Instagram • YouTube • Town Crier Newsletter 	

Our Committees

Department	Areas of Responsibility	Democratic Management
<p>Corporate Services</p>	<p>Policy review & development Financial management Democratic management Health & safety matters</p>	<p>Corporate Services Committee Investment Working Group</p>
<p>Environment & Leisure Services</p>	<p>Facilities management Leisure services Recreation management Cemetery & churchyard management Allotments</p>	<p>Environment & Leisure Committee</p>
<p>Community Services</p>	<p>Community services Youth services Communications Events Mayoral services Community grants Community safety</p>	<p>Community Services Committee Community Engagement Sub-Committee Community Safety Sub-Committee Pride of Houghton Awards Working Group</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<p>Planning applications Planning policy Strategic development Highways consultations</p>	<p>Planning Committee Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Sub-Committee</p>
<p>Staffing</p>	<p>Non legislative policy review and development Personnel matters</p>	<p>Staffing Committee Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Sub-Committee</p>
<p>Town</p>	<p>Town Centre Town development</p>	<p>Town Council Town Partnership Committee Town Centre Community Venue Task and Finish Group Complaints Sub-Committee Complaints Appeals Sub-Committee</p>

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Income Summary 2025/26

Income Source	Income Value
• Precept	£1,660,722
• External Grants & Donations inc. HHP	£208,374
• S106 income ¹	£3,154,957
• Fees & Charges	£15,097
• Interest and dividends	£160,898
• Events, Sponsorship, Venue Hire & Lettings	£31,699

Expenditure Summary 2025/26

Expenditure Summary	Expenditure Value
• Corporate management	£22,398
• Democratic representation	£11,314
• Central services	£60,516
• Corporate Services Staff costs	£334,669
• Parks and open spaces	£3,363,822
• Houghton Regis Cemetery & Allotments	£5,017
• Outside services inc. play areas & street furniture	£135,499
• Environment & leisure staff costs	£371,124
• Environment & leisure capital costs	£196,977
• Community services & communications	£90,293
• Events	£64,185
• Community grants	£28,898
• Community safety	£47,076
• Civic services	£9,479
• Community service staff costs	£287,528
• Community services capital costs	£12,343
• Growth area planning	£850

¹ S106 in 2025/26 was over £3m, this is unprecedented and is not anticipated in subsequent years. The funding is ring fenced for the maintenance of Thorn Park (grounds and facilities).

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2025/26

Corporate Services Committee

- Secured a **£3.09m Section 106 commuted sum** and established an Investment Working Group to develop a long-term Treasury Management Strategy ensuring strong stewardship of public funds.
- Actively promoted and engaged with the **Central Bedfordshire Council Community Governance Review**, ensuring the council's position and community interests were clearly represented.
- Initiated a major project to develop a **new town centre community space (Project H)**, aimed at improving council openness and transparency, supporting local partners and stakeholders, and providing high-quality community facilities.
- Delivered significant **website improvements**, including new sign-up options for page-update notifications, clearer on-page updates, an accessibility statement, and a dedicated consultation link to strengthen public engagement.
- Developed a **three-year financial plan** to support long-term financial resilience and strategic planning.
- Strengthened governance through updated policies and procedures aligned with legislation, invested in HR software, and put in place plans for professional investment support.
- Reviewed major contracts, service level agreements and external memberships to ensure value for money.



Environment & Leisure Committee

- Continued investment in the maintenance and enhancement of parks, recreation grounds, pavilions, play areas and open spaces, ensuring they remain safe, accessible and well maintained for residents of all ages.
- Delivered **town centre planters and hanging baskets**, contributing to improved visual appeal and seasonal colour across key public areas.
- Developed a **maintenance plan for key council assets**, supporting long-term sustainability and effective asset management.
- Received **Thorn Park** into council stewardship, ensuring its ongoing care and integration into the wider network of green spaces.
- Planted a new '**Tiny Forest**', enhancing biodiversity, environmental education opportunities and local climate resilience.
- Oversaw ongoing stewardship and management of **Houghton Hall Park**, supporting its role as a major recreational green space and community wellbeing asset, including partnership working with local user groups.
- Supported town-wide environmental initiatives, including displays and achieving multiple **Green Flag Awards**.
- Delivered planned works and routine maintenance across allotments, burial grounds and leisure facilities, supporting long-term asset sustainability.



Community Services Committee

- Continued delivery of a wide range of community services, including youth initiatives and support for residents through council-managed facilities.
- Worked with partners to **distribute the Household Support Fund**, ensuring assistance reached vulnerable residents.

- Delivered a **diverse programme of community events**, strengthening civic pride, community participation and local identity.
- Continued partnership working to support **community safety initiatives**, including Operation Hana (high-visibility policing), a bulk-waste subsidy scheme and deployment of redeployable CCTV.
- Progressed the **Project H Community & Youth Hub**, advancing plans and partner engagement for a major new town centre community asset.
- Provided **grants to local charitable and not-for-profit organisations**, supporting groups delivering community benefit.
- Commenced the roll-out of the new **‘Houghton Regis’ branding logo**, enhancing consistency and recognition across council communications and assets.
- Continued development of the council’s communications and online presence, improving awareness of services, events and opportunities for involvement.



Planning

- Considered **over 140 planning items** and provided detailed comments on more than 50 applications, including full permissions, reserved matters and council-led developments.
- Ensured planning decisions balanced **growth, design quality and heritage protection**.

Staffing

- Delivered multiple successful **recruitment** campaigns
- Reviewed **staffing structures** and developed a workforce forecast through to 2030.

- Maintained **oversight of staff** wellbeing, sickness absence and senior officer arrangements.

Neighbourhood Plan Implementation

- Invited residents to join the committee as **co-opted members**, strengthening community involvement.
- Introduced improved **monitoring** of Neighbourhood Plan use, including a bi-annual monitoring report.
- Developed a consistent **template for planning responses** to ensure Neighbourhood Plan policies are fully considered.



Community Safety Sub-Committee

- Maintained regular oversight of **local safety priorities** through scheduled meetings.
- Continued **partnership working** with Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Police and other agencies.
- **Supported initiatives** focused on crime prevention, antisocial behaviour reduction and community reassurance.
- Provided a **forum for residents** to raise concerns and ensured issues were escalated appropriately.



Community Engagement Sub-Committee

- Supported delivery of **major community events**, including the Pride of Houghton, celebrating local people, organisations and achievements.

LOOKING AHEAD

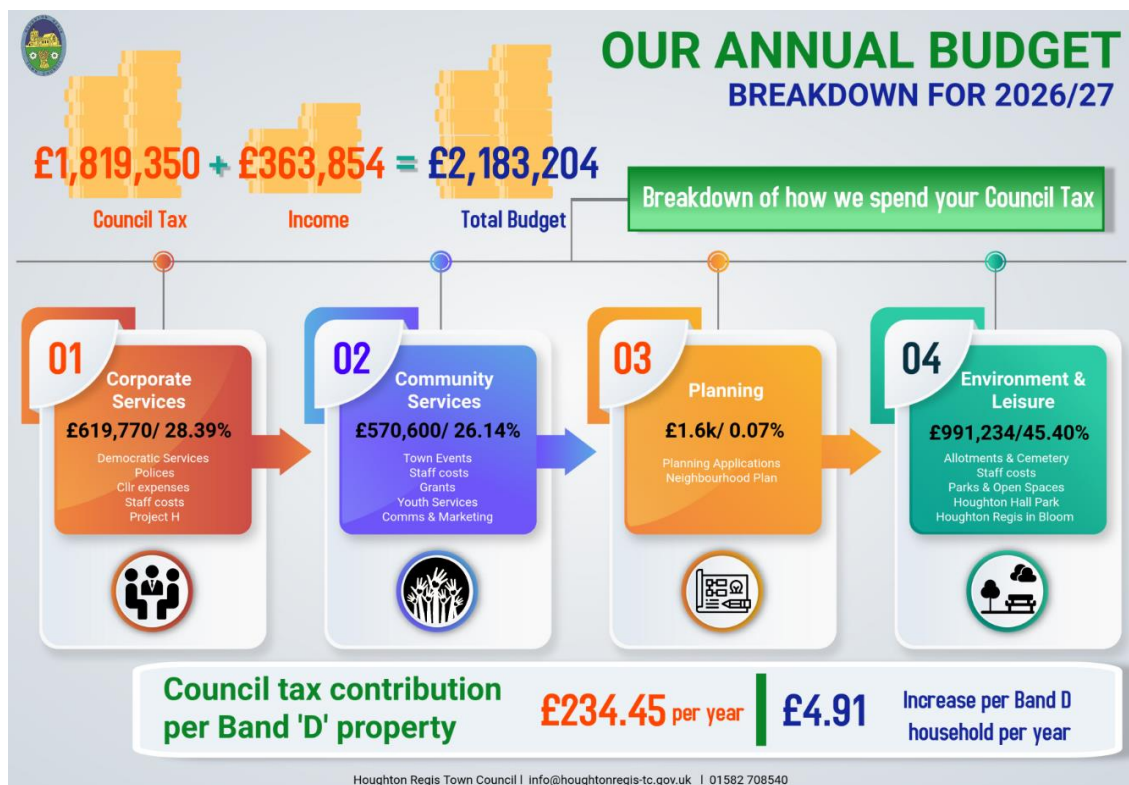
Summary

In 2026/27 we are looking forward to delivering on the following:

- **Strengthening our financial resilience** by acting on professional investment advice to ensure council funds remain secure, ethical, and deliver long-term community benefit.
- **Encouraging strong democratic participation** by promoting awareness and engagement ahead of the May 2027 local elections.
- **Launching Project H**, opening the doors to a new community asset that will expand opportunities for residents of all ages.
- **Enhancing the town's appearance** through expanded and improved floral displays across the town centre and key gateways.
- **Completing a full tree survey** to safeguard the health, safety, and long-term management of all Town Council-owned trees.
- **Taking on the management of Houghton Regis Quarry**, ensuring this important natural space is protected and accessible for the community.
- **Assuming responsibility for three estate-based play areas in Thorn**, enabling consistent maintenance and future improvements.
- **Delivering the pavilion enhancement project at Moore Crescent**, improving facilities for sports clubs, community groups, and local families.
- **Continuing to support local organisations** through grants and donations that strengthen community wellbeing, inclusion, and resilience.
- **Working with partners** to support initiatives that help residents feel safe and supported.



Budget 2026/27



CLOSING SUMMARY

Over the past year, the Council has continued to deliver meaningful improvements for residents, strengthen its governance, and invest in the long-term wellbeing of the town. Across all committees, significant progress has been made in enhancing community services, managing public assets responsibly, supporting local partnerships and ensuring that decision-making remains transparent and accountable.

As the Council looks ahead, it remains committed to building on this year’s achievements and responding proactively to the opportunities and challenges facing Houghton Regis. By working collaboratively with residents, partners and stakeholders, the Council will continue to shape a thriving, resilient and inclusive community, ensuring that the town’s growth is matched by high-quality services, strong local identity and a shared sense of civic pride.

**We look forward to continuing to serve and support our community
in the year ahead.**

HOW TO CONTACT THE COUNCIL

If you require further information, or to comment on our Annual Report, please contact us:

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