



Houghton Regis Town Council

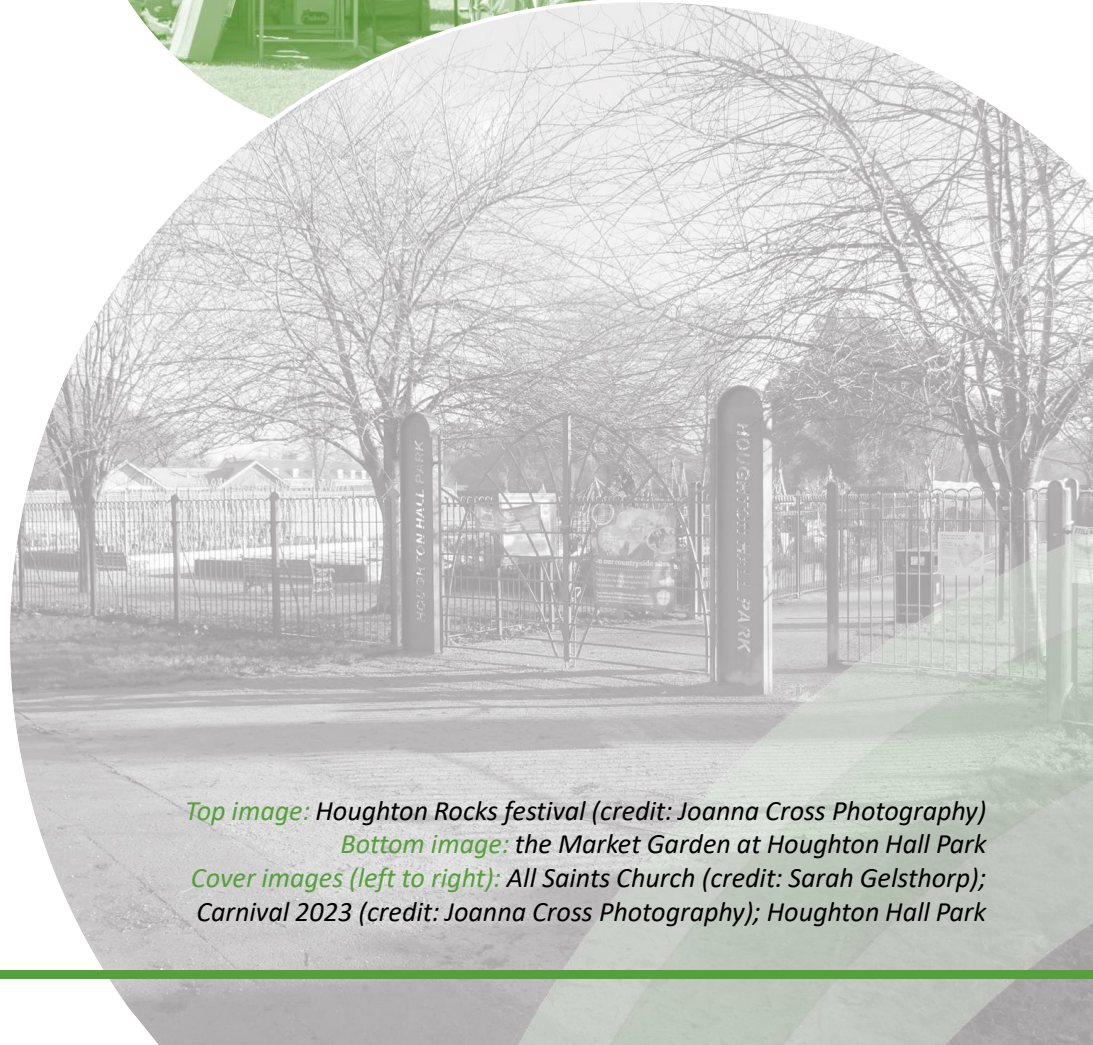


Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028

Our commitments for the next four years

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Top image: Houghton Rocks festival (credit: Joanna Cross Photography)

Bottom image: the Market Garden at Houghton Hall Park

*Cover images (left to right): All Saints Church (credit: Sarah Gelsthorp);
Carnival 2023 (credit: Joanna Cross Photography); Houghton Hall Park*

1. Organisational Description

- Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) is comprised of 14 councillors representing 3 wards. Town Councillors are elected every 4 years with the next elections due in May 2027. The Town Council is served by a Town Clerk, the senior officer of the Town Council, and approximately 25 other full and part time staff.
- Day-to-day management of the services delivered by the Town Council is the responsibility of the Town Clerk who works closely with Town Councillors to deliver the decisions made at the various committees. The work of the Town Council is funded through a precept on Council Taxpayers within the Houghton Regis area and from income raised through lettings, agency work, sponsorship, and hires.
- The Town Council is chaired by the Town Mayor who, together with a Deputy Mayor, is elected each year at the Annual Town Council meeting (held in May). Both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have busy diaries visiting local community groups and organisations and representing Houghton Regis at events.
- A budget for the forthcoming financial year (starting in April) is set in January when projects are identified. These projects are likely to include refurbishment/ replacement of assets such as play equipment, improvements to Town Council facilities and possible development of new initiatives for the benefit of local people.
- The Town Council works closely with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), and other local partners, to ensure residents receive high quality services and facilities.



An image from the Houghton Rocks festival at Parkside Recreation Ground in 2023



Before a ceremony for the annual 'Pride of Houghton' awards

1. Organisational Description

- Houghton Regis Town Council has responsibility for and involvement with:
 - Outside services: recreation grounds, sports pitches, play areas including multi-use games areas and skate park, open space, cemetery, allotments, pavilions, noticeboards, seats, litterbins, dog waste bins.
 - Community services: youth services, community services, community events, Mayor and Deputy Mayor events and visits, fair and circus visits, information for residents (Town Crier newsletter, website, social media), town centre public toilets, community safety initiatives, community grants scheme.
 - Planning services: the town council is an active consultee on all planning applications submitted within the parish of Houghton Regis.
- The Town Council prides itself as being the first tier of local government for the parish of Houghton Regis and as such, being accessible and responsive to residents. At the time of the adoption of this Plan, the cost per elector to run the council is £81.95 per elector (2023 – 2024).
- The work that the council undertakes is aimed at protecting and improving the quality of life of its residents; we strive to address the issues under our control and to influence the matters outside of our control that are important to residents.



Groundbreaking event for new facilities at Tithe Farm Recreational Ground



Performers from John Lawsons Circus with Councilors and residents at an event on the Green

2. Our Vision

“ Houghton Regis: a growing town with a rich history and a strong sense of community ”

- The vision statement is intended to provide a short description of the town and parish for consistency in naming and branding over the Plan period. It should be a fair representation of the current context and a positive and aspirational message to work towards over the next four years (otherwise known as, ‘the Plan period’).
- The adopted statement incorporates three main themes that are central to the objectives of the Plan;
 - **Growth:** over the next ten years, Houghton Regis will be one of the fastest growing towns in the UK as we welcome approximately 1,000 new residents to the parish each year.
 - **History and heritage:** Saelig Hochtone, Houstone, Howghton, Kynges Houghton, Houghton Regis - there has been settlement activity within the parish since (at least) Roman and Saxon times and our heritage assets include Grade I and II listed buildings, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, a SSSI nature reserve and 42 acres of Green Flag awarded parkland.
 - **Community:** despite being one of the largest towns in the county, Houghton Regis retains many of the positive attributes of a village - a local character, a strong identity and a close sense of community.



*A plan of the High Street and The Green in 1800
(© Houghton Regis Heritage Society)*



*VE Day celebrations at The Green in 1945
(© Houghton Regis Heritage Society)*

3. Our Mission

“ We will endeavour to unify all areas of the parish as one community and foster civic pride in our town; improve local services and facilities; enhance the quality of life of our residents and; improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council as the key local service provider. ”

- The mission statement underpins the Corporate Plan. It develops the three main themes of the Vision Statement (growth, heritage and community) into clear targets - or ‘pillars’ - for the Plan period. For ease of reference, these are:
 - To unify all areas of the parish as one community and foster civic pride in our town.
 - To improve local services and facilities.
 - To enhance the quality of life of our residents.
- A fourth pillar has been added to ensure that the Town Council continues to provide an effective service for our residents, visitors and businesses.



View towards All Saint Church from Bedford Square



Woodland Walk, Houghton Hall Park

4. Action Plan

1

Town and community

To unify all areas of the parish as one community and foster civic pride in our town

2

Local services and facilities

To provide a broad range of high quality services and facilities for our residents, visitors and businesses

3

Quality of Life

To enhance the quality of life of our residents

4

Management and operations

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council as the key local service provider

- These pillars are the basis for the Action Plan that is presented in the following section.
- To guide delivery, a series of objectives are identified under each pillar, together with different ways that these might be achieved during the Plan period.
- As objectives span interrelated social, economic, spatial and environmental considerations, there are many different mechanisms that might be initiated to bring about delivery and some possible examples are also included in the Action Plan.

1 Town and Community

We aim to ...	So, this is what we plan to do ...	And this is how it might be achieved ...
<p>Unify all areas of the parish as one community and foster civic pride in our town.</p>	<p>Improve integration between existing and new communities.</p>	<p>Continue to provide Welcome Packs to new residents; review cycle and pedestrian links; strengthen local centres and recreation grounds in existing areas that are close to the expansion area; work with CBC and developers to soften the edges between new and existing areas.</p>
	<p>Support the sense of arrival and identity.</p>	<p>‘Welcome to Houghton Regis’ signage at important gateways into the parish; consistency in branding (colours, fonts, logos and text) to present a consistent message.</p>
	<p>Create a stronger, more robust and engaging town centre offer.</p>	<p>Continue to work with stakeholders to expand and diversify the retail and hospitality offers, create additional employment space and improve public transport connectivity; strengthen (at least) two action areas from the Town Centre Action Plan; seasonal installations, fairs and events; review the possibility of providing town centre wardens at peak shopping times; promotion of outdoor hospitality areas/ alfresco dining; new mapping (digital and physical) of local facilities; review signage between key attractions; activate the cricket pavilion; continue to promote a ‘Shop Local’ campaign; develop a tourism offer.</p>
	<p>Develop an annual programme of community events across the Parish.</p>	<p>Community action days; programme of parish-wide, regular and seasonal events, for instance, local produce/ flower show, urban farm, Houghton Rocks, historical tours, silent disco, messy play, uniform swap, park runs/ walks.</p>

1

Town and Community

We aim to ...	So, this is what we plan to do ...	And this is how it might be achieved ...
Unify all areas of the parish as one community and foster civic pride in our town.	Improve the visual appearance of the town centre.	Develop a town centre wide planting strategy; review the possibility of a 'Britain in Bloom' entry; new planters along the High Street; engagement with national institutions (RHS, English Heritage, etc.) for themed events at Houghton Hall Park; engagement with stakeholders to improve the High Street and Tithe Farm Road elevations of the shopping centre, review options for mitigating the impact of bin stores around the centre; refresh street furniture; relocate the weapons bin; strengthen key views; tourism/ heritage banners along the High Street.
	Protection and promotion of cultural and heritage assets.	Continue to preserve the town centre conservation area; assemble an itinerary of key heritage assets; improve access to and awareness of historical sites; new mapping, signage and noticeboards; engagement to provide open days and guided tours of protected areas and listed buildings; walking tours and trails, blue plaque schemes.
	Strengthen Houghton Regis's landscape character and agricultural heritage.	Strengthen the Chiltern Way, PROWs and bridleways; new planting; rewilding and habitat creation in informal open spaces; enhance the market garden and the River Lea route; review participation in the RHS, 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme; engagement with stakeholders to improve access to the Marl Lakes and Houghton Regis Quarry SSSI, review further opportunities for Green Flag awards.

2

Local Services and Facilities

We aim to ...	So, this is what we plan to do ...	And this is how it might be achieved ...
Provide a broad range of high-quality services and facilities for our residents, visitors and businesses.	Work with partners to improve the quality and accessibility of the public realm in the town centre.	Improve wheelchair and mobility impaired access; enhance existing pedestrian and cycle links and seek to develop new ones; review the potential for bus stops in front of All Saints Church; new paving on the north side of the High Street to marry with the paving at All Saints View.
	Continue to work with key partners to address crime and anti-social behavior.	Maintain engagement with Bedfordshire Police, CBC, Groundwork and other stakeholders; extend the Public Realm / Town Ranger scheme; promote Neighbourhood Watch schemes; work with partners to activate the blank façades around the shopping precinct.
	Establish a town centre hub for the delivery of centrally based services, such as HRTC's offices, a youth centre and a tourist information/ heritage centre.	Identify potential sites for a community and services hub; contact stakeholders; determine space planning requirements; prepare a viable timeline for delivery; develop feasibility plans and costs.
	Maximise the value of HRTC assets.	Assemble an itinerary of the type, condition and use of assets; identify opportunities to improve the use and efficiency of assets; explore opportunities to remodel the HRTC office reception area.
	Maintain and enhance sporting provision both at existing and soon-to-be-adopted sites.	Review the use and function of different open spaces across the parish; receive and manage new play areas in Bidwell; review the potential to diversify play and recreation provision; install outdoor gym equipment at one or two sites within existing recreational grounds.

2

Local Services and Facilities

We aim to ...	So, this is what we plan to do ...	And this is how it might be achieved ...
Provide a broad range of high-quality services and facilities for our residents, visitors and businesses.	Stimulate local business development and employment and training opportunities.	Work with CBC and stakeholders to realise additional employment space in and around the town centre; improve signage to and at existing employment areas; establish a forum of local businesses and a platform for B2B networking; engage with local business owners to identify any skills gaps or constraints for growth; review opportunities to improve Houghton Regis's tourism offer; strengthen the nighttime economy; assist in promoting awareness to existing food and beverage outlets.
	Promote awareness of our town, its assets and opportunities for businesses and investment.	Develop a new, 'Visit Houghton Regis' website (or an extension to the existing HRTC site); work with partners to develop the nighttime economy and tourism offers; develop a branding programme for consistency; continue to work with local businesses and institutions to promote Houghton Regis regional and nationally; investigate the potential for 'town twinning'; identify any opportunities to harness the value of being the largest of the historic 'Regis' settlements.

3

Quality of Life

We aim to ...	So, this is what we plan to do ...	And this is how it might be achieved ...
Enhance the quality of life of our residents	Improve environmental quality and sustainability.	Promote and encourage cycling; strengthen existing cycle routes and encourage new routes; provide new cycle stands at key sites; promote walk/ cycle to school initiatives; deliver an air quality awareness campaign.
	Encourage a healthier lifestyle through healthy eating, smoking & vaping cessation and improved activity levels.	Monthly park runs and walks; second allotment site; develop the kitchen garden; healthy eating awareness; improve awareness of existing community and leisure facilities; work with partners to support school meals/ breakfast clubs; Houghton Regis 'Men in Sheds' initiative.
	Improve access to services and support through the provision of a network of Parish-wide community hubs.	Identify locations for SMART hubs across the parish; continue to support a range of community services for all residents; facilitate quarterly community conferences/ networking events.
	Improve existing and develop new opportunities for young people across the parish.	Youth outreach/ detached work; undertake engagement to identify needs and interests; increase awareness of training schemes and apprenticeships for local businesses; increase awareness of career and training opportunities for school-leavers.
	Continue to explore options for a new cemetery.	Complete Grendall Lane investigations; explore further options for sites; engage with relevant stakeholders.
	Continue to provide a Town Council Community Grant Scheme.	Through Cost-of-Living Support Grants to partner organisations.

4

Management and Operations

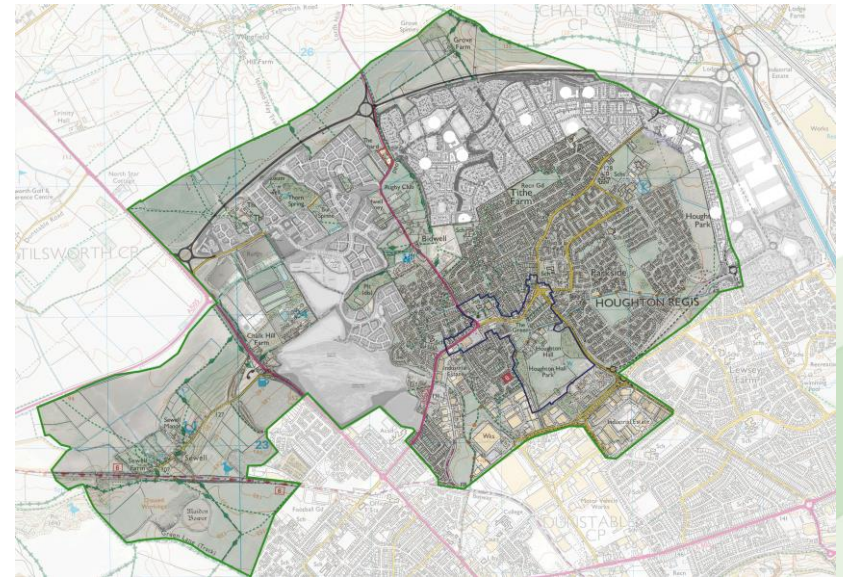
We aim to ...	So, this is what we plan to do ...	And this is how it might be achieved ...
<p>Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council as the key local service provider.</p>	<p>Develop a 5-year financial & staffing plan.</p>	<p>10-year planned maintenance programme for community assets; develop a supporting staffing plan; staff training and career development; organised 'study visits' to other towns; foster synergy with other town councils; succession planning; investigate options for a 'social value' budget.</p>
	<p>Identify external/ partnership funding sources for council projects.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor traditional funding streams; explore opportunities for additional revenue creation through operating/ leasing council assets; explore opportunities to attract additional investors to the town centre.</p>
	<p>Extend IT infrastructure and software to better support the council.</p>	<p>Improve IT cabling in the council's offices; review, update and optimise IT systems and software.</p>
	<p>Work with CBC and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for the adoption of additional community assets by the Town Council.</p>	<p>For instance, recreation grounds, community centre; town centre public realm and other formal and informal areas of public open space; explore the cost/ benefits/ opportunities for a freehold depot.</p>
	<p>Enhance the role of the council.</p>	<p>Local Council Award Scheme and 'Investors in People' accreditations; increase promotion of council services; encourage visitors to the council offices; review potential for a greater town centre presence; review the way that queries are raised and managed; community engagement;</p>
	<p>To actively consider and weight the impact of new and existing initiatives and services.</p>	<p>Environmental impact/ carbon-neutral; inclusivity; diversity; value for money/ cost of living.</p>

5. Next Steps

- Having formulated this Corporate Plan, the Town Council will work hard over the coming four years to deliver the vision and objectives that are outlined within it.
- Much of the work will be delivered in partnership with local organisations and stakeholders and of course, with our residents and businesses.
- We are looking forward to progressing these plans and seeing a stronger, unified and better served Houghton Regis in the future.
- If you have any comments on the components of Plan or suggestions for a programme or initiative that would help to realise a particular objective, please contact us through any of the ways that are listed on the following page.
- We are conveniently located in the town centre, on Peel Street, adjacent to car park and the library and welcome visitors to the office in person, whether this is regarding the Corporate Plan or another matter.



The Town Council funds a variety of community events throughout the year and the Town Crier circular

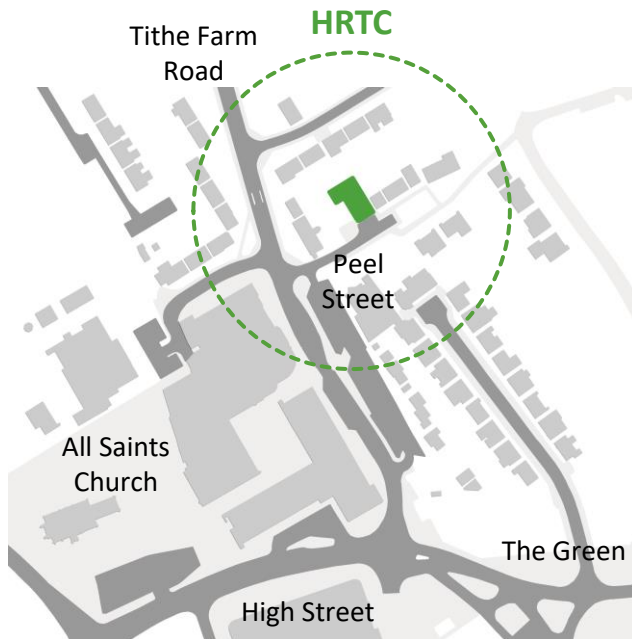


Parish boundary



Houghton Regis Town Council

Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028



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