

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 22nd April 2015 at 8.00 p.m
Fowden Hall, Rothamsted Conference Centre
MINUTES

1. President's Address

The President, Alison Steer, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

Members: Janet Saxby, Committee Members: Helen Clothier, John Harris.

3. Minutes of the AGM of the 26th March 2014.

The minutes of the 2014 AGM were approved with no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman, Chris Marsden, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

The Chairman stated that the Harpenden Society is a Civic society with no formal power and therefore has a strategy of attempting to exert influence via others. Therefore, it can be difficult to assess where we've made a difference.

The Chairman referred members to the recently distributed Annual Report for a full record of the Society's achievements during 2014.

The Chairman did mention several achievements that the Society is particularly proud of:

- Library volunteers (big thanks to Liz Trounce, the member who organises the volunteers);
- The Red House. The Society-led Red House Forum has moved a long-standing but dormant issue into a headline - making an action plan. We did that – (big thanks to Eric Midwinter and his Health & Welfare Working Group). But now it is up to those with real power to work towards a satisfactory outcome.
- Harpenden Primary School Arts & Crafts competition. The Chairman thanked committee members Ron Taylor and Eric Midwinter for organising this;
- Society Awards for improvement to Harpenden's environment. The Chairman thanked committee member Penny Ayres and her team of judges for organising this.
- Bringing together High Street businesses to encourage its future sustainability. Thanks to committee member Ron Taylor for his tireless work in this area;
- The Chairman thanked the Society's new membership secretary, Susan Vinther, and the Society's Treasurer, Harry Downie, for re-organising the newsletter distribution, Eric Midwinter for his work as the newsletter editor and Bob Fletcher for his work as the Society's secretary.
- The Chairman reported that the Society had organised several public meeting during 2014 including meetings to discuss the Strategic Local Plan, School places and last evening an election candidate hustings meeting was held.

The Chairman concluded by thanking all members for their continued support for the work of the Society.

The aim of these awards is to recognise developments which have enhanced the local area of Harpenden and which are of architectural merit or of historic or other public interest or which contribute visually or socially to the locality.

For 2014 we had six nominations, all interesting in their own ways. After much thought and discussion, the Awards Committee decided to make the following awards:

Firstly, the prestigious **Harpenden Society Plaque** for 2014 is awarded to the apartments known as Lea Springs on the corner of Common Lane and the Lower Luton Road at Batford. This has been chosen because not only does it enhance the local environment it also provides 38 flats for older people, 16 of shared ownership and the remainder at affordable rents. Other facilities include a restaurant and a hairdresser open to the public.

The Awards Committee considered that no nomination was worthy of a Certificate of Merit. However, we have decided **that Letters of Commendation** should be, in no particular order, presented to:

- The new Scout Hall at Kinsbourne Green built for the 9th Harpenden Scout Group because not only does it enhance the neighbourhood, it also provides much needed new meeting rooms and a spacious hall – all available for public hire.
- The Old Post House which is on the corner of Arden Grove and Station Road. It is now a block of 9 luxury flats developed by Oakbridge Homes and retaining the original well preserved rich red brickwork. It also provides convenient town centre housing.
- The newly renovated house at 39 Crabtree Lane with its turret feature and its newly planted front garden which has nicely complemented the recently completed housing nearby which includes the Eliot Place development by Marchfield Homes.

The Society chairman will present the Awards to the recipients at a later date.

Penny Ayres thanked the Awards Committee (John Davis, Mike Waddilove, Anthony Steel and Sue Vinther) for their wise input and for their help in making the difficult decisions. Also, thanks go to all those members of the Harpenden Society and general public for their suggestions and nominations.

8. **Rothamsted developments**

Professor Dobermann, Director Rothamsted Research, gave an extremely interesting presentation on the new developments at Rothamsted including the new conference suite, a space for small/medium businesses and a large Innovation Hub. It was also mentioned that a new role for the Manor House was actively being explored.

9. **Volunteer for Harpenden**

Chris Marsden described a new initiative which is currently being driven by the Harpenden Society and The Harpenden Trust with support from County and Town councillors to create an organisation to facilitate the co-ordination of voluntary groups within and around Harpenden. A website has been created for organisations to describe their objectives and to advertise for volunteers and a public volunteers fair will be held in the autumn to enable voluntary organisations to advertise what they do. Volunteer for Harpenden will also have a stand at the Carnival Day in June.

10. **School's Competition**

Eric Midwinter reported that the award ceremony for the Harpenden Society Primary Schools Competition had been held in Fowden Hall immediately prior to the AGM.

Parents and teachers attended the event. The winners were presented in true 'Oscar' style with certificates for 3rd, 2nd and 1st places, plus a number of commendations and Special Awards for truly outstanding work.

Hosting the event were committee members Ron Taylor and Eric Midwinter who created the concept (Forward to the Future- Harpenden 2100), then liaised with the Primary Schools from the launch in November to the judging in March. All the nominated works were on display around the conference centre for all to see.

11. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business

12. **Date of the next AGM**

To be agreed.

13. **The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the formal part of the meeting at 9.30 p.m.**