

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 22th July 2013 at 7.30 p.m. in The Harpenden House Hotel
MINUTES

Present: Chris Marsden (CM), Barbara Ouston (BOu), Eric Midwinter (EM), Ron Taylor (RTa), Richard Thomas (RTh), Mike Waddilove (MW),) Donald Robertson (DR), John Davis (JD), Steve Gledhill (SG), Penny Alcock(PA), Tim Riley (TR) and Bob Fletcher (RF).

1. Apologies for absence were received from Anthony Steele (AS), Arnold Allen (AA), Victoria Evans (VE), Ann James (AJa), Alan Jackson (AJ),
2. Minutes of the meeting on 20th May 2013, previously circulated, were approved as a true record apart from Don Robertson saying that he was absent at the meeting and had sent his apologies..
3. Matters arising not on the Agenda:
 - a) JD reported that he had not contacted John Bagshaw regarding the commercial terms under which the new ground maintenance contract would be let as he believed that SADC's procurement team would be capable of negotiating acceptable terms.
 - b) RTh reported that the tenant for Ambrose Woods did not want to meet with the Society. However, RTh reported that for the time being the tenant seems to have ceased her activities in the wood that were in breach of the various protections and the public's rights but it is too soon to say if this will be permanent. The Tenant has been sent a letter from SADC reminding her of the tree preservation order that applies to the woods.
 - c) RTh reported that he had found a possible candidate for the vacant auditor position (David Jones). He is currently considering the offer. If he accepts the Society will appoint him pro tem and he will stand for formal election at the next AGM.
 - d) JD suggested that the Society requests a stall near to the other local Harpenden charity groups, such as the Round Table, for the next Discovery Day.
4. **Treasurer's Report**
 - a) AA was not present but had reported that the accounts were in good order.
5. **Secretary Items**
 - a) The Secretary's report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
 - b) Speakers for Public Meetings – the subject of green belt/congestion/over development was agreed for the December meeting with a talk on the new library for the October meeting. Post meeting note – these talks were swapped around.
6. **Chairman's Items**
 - a) **Green Belt** - The Chairman reported that after talking to Chris Briggs , Spatial Planning Manager in the Planning & Building Control Department at St Albans District Council (who had expressed concern that the recent Chairman's email to members had reported his comments at a recent meeting as if they were his own words rather than a paraphrase of what our representative heard), the Chairman would update his comments about the green belt issue in the next member's email. He also reported that he was grateful to Chris for giving him the time to talk through with him the current situation as it concerns Harpenden. The Chairman also stated that he believed that the overall message of his last member's email was accurate and that the concerns many members have expressed in their responses were fully justified.
 - b) **Library** - The Chairman reported that discussion is on-going with Taryn Pearson, Head of the Library service, and County Councillor, Terry Heritage. Various options are being proposed. If an agreement

is reached that the Society organises the provision of volunteers to enable the full library premises to be open all six trading days, Monday to Saturday, it will present the Society with a major challenge. We will need substantially more than the 13 names which have so far been put forward and a volunteer organiser who will ensure that our allocation is fully staffed at all times as agreed.

- c) **Concourse opposite the library** - The Mayor has agreed that this will be on the agenda of the next Town Council meeting.
- d) **Shared space in Lower High Street and Thompsons Close** - Not much progress yet. One of the problems is that even producing a few new signs costs ridiculous amounts of money and when made public attracts understandable criticism – it's almost a 'catch 22' situation. We remain hopeful long term however.
- e) **Red House** - Everyone seems encouraged that something positive will eventually emerge from our patient process of bringing all interested parties together. Further meetings are planned and more and more significant players are showing interest and getting involved. HTC are also consider a Right to Buy approach if negotiations on the continued use of the Red House site for local healthcare services fails. EM reported that Gerry Moir has now been replaced by Mark Carman, a former doctor who is an expert on the NHS estates policy. EM met with him recently and was encouraged by his approach to the matter.
- f) **Cafe in the park** - Again progress is slow but still positive. Discussions are now taking place about the potential development of the whole site west of the swimming pool. Meanwhile the Scouts, the Colts and others have expressed interest in the development of a combined new facility. Encouraged by the President of Harpenden Round table, the Chairman is intending to call a meeting in September of all such groups and the Harpenden Trust to explore their mutual interest in such a development.
- g) **Public Halls** – TR presented his initial work on the feasibility of replacing the public halls by a combined retail/residential/updated hall building. The cost of this could be in the region of £5M and the initial work seems to indicate that including residential and retail outlets on the site does not reduce the expenditure significantly enough to make this a sensible option.

7. **Membership Secretary's Items**

- a) BOu reported that membership was stable and renewals were trickling in.

8. **Newsletter Editor's Items**

- a) The Newsletter Editor's report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- b) EM reported that the next newsletter would be available in the 3rd week in August.

9. **Publicity Officer's Items**

- a) RTa reported that the membership drive project is now in place and information on this will be included in the next Newsletter.
- b) Work is also progressing on the 2013 School's Art Competition. It was proposed that consideration should be given to holding a presentation ceremony for teachers, parents and children preceding the next AGM.

10. **Press Officer's Items**

- a) The Press Officer reported that he had issued a press release about the presentation of the plaque for the 2012 Society Award to Jarvis.
- b) A submission is also being prepared for possible inclusion in the next Forum magazine.

11. Working Group Reports

- a) **Public Order:** The Public Order report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- b) **Environment:** The Environment report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting. JD reported that there was now a litter bin on the High St side of the Carlton Road bridge.
- c) **Transport:** The Transport report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting. DR reported that there was a real time information display in Harpenden High St. but this is for buses travelling southwards only.
- d) **Education & Leisure.** The E&L report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- e) **Health & Welfare.** The Health & Welfare report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- f) **Built Environment.** It was reported that RTh had agreed to lead this group in a temporary capacity. TR offered to join the group and this was accepted.

12. Any Other Business

- a) It was agreed that a donation of £150 should be made to Harpenden Rugby Football Club as a contribution to the modernisation of the club's changing area.
- b) It was agreed that the Society's annual contributions to Harpenden charities shall not exceed 10% of the Society's annual income.
- c) A discussion took place on the subject of a cars being long term parked in Harpenden when their owners were taking flights from Luton airport. Although this was obviously undesirable and irritating it was decided that no action should currently be taken to try to prevent this as it was not possible to see a solution where the consequences would not be worse than the problem.
- d) SG proposed that the Society should submit an objection to the planning application for the Three Horseshoes pub to be converted into a residential dwelling. This proposal was agreed by the committee. SG was requested by CM to write the words and pass to RF for submission to St Albans District Council Planning and Building Control.

13. Dates of the next meetings:

- a) Committee meeting dates: 23rd Sept 2013, 9th Dec 2013, 27th Jan 2014, 24th March 2014.
- b) Public 'speaker' meetings at Park Hall (apart from AGM) are scheduled for: 26th Sept 2013, 24th October 2013, 12th Dec 2013, 30th Jan 2014, 27th Feb 2014, 27th March 2014(AGM)

14. The meeting closed at 9.22 p.m.