

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 26th January 2015 at 7.30 p.m. at The Friends Meeting House
MINUTES

Present: Chris Marsden (CM), Ron Taylor (RT), Alan Jackson (AJ), John Davis (JD), Pauline Waddilove (PW), Donald Robertson (DR), Penny Ayres (PA), Eric Midwinter (EM), Mike Waddilove (MW), John Harris (JH), Harry Downie (HD), Susan Vinther(SV) and Bob Fletcher (RF).

1. Apologies for absence were received from Victoria Evans (VE), Tim Riley (TR), Helen Clothier (HC) and Anthony Steele (AS).
2. Minutes of the meeting on 8th December 2014, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.
3. Matters arising not on the Agenda:
 - a) None.
4. **Treasurer's Report**
 - a) HD had previously circulated the draft accounts for 2014. These showed that in 2014 the Society will have a surplus of just over £1,000. This rises to just over £2,800 if the fighting fund is included. The reserves will be just over £10,800 (including the fighting fund).
5. **Secretary's Items**
 - a) The Secretary reported that the dates for the 2015 committee meetings and public meetings have now been arranged and were listed in the agenda.
6. **Chairman's Items**
 - a) The Chairman reported that it still appears that the local district politicians and planning officers are refusing to acknowledge the flaws and errors, both practical and legal, in the District's Strategic Local Plan that imperils the sustainability of Harpenden.
 - b) The committee discussed possible actions including the proposal that the Chairman of The Society should stand as a candidate at the coming general election on a 'Responsible Housing Development' ticket. The argument put forward was that the town's civic society, with its role of defending and enhancing the social and environmental life of the town, could not lightly sit by when, in its view, the town was being subjected to possible maladministration fuelled by political expediency. The discussion was lively and pragmatic with the advantages and disadvantages of such a course of action being explored. However, a decision was eventually made that this was not the best course of action.
 - c) It was agreed that a high profile set of actions should be carried out during the election campaign to raise this significant issue with all candidates, which should include an invitation to a public meeting that would scrutinise their attitude to the Strategic Local Plan.
7. **Membership Secretary's Items**
 - a) SV proposed that the Society should consider daytime meetings as it was thought that some of the more elderly members may find it difficult to attend evening meetings. SV was actioned to investigate if the Society could hold "Drop-In" meetings, possibly at the St Nicholas Cornelias' coffee shop. **Action: SV to investigate daytime meetings.**
 - b) SV reported that she was still looking for an additional person to organise one of the three newsletter distributor rounds.
8. **Newsletter Editor's Items**
 - a) The Newsletter Editor's report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.

9. Publicity Officer's Items

- a) The Publicity Officer's report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- b) The 2015 Schools Competition has now being launched. RT reported that 8 schools were taking part, which is 3 schools less than 2014. It was suggested that the 2016 competition could be aimed at secondary schools with perhaps primary and secondary schools being targeted in alternate years from 2016 onwards
- c) A discussion was held on the provision of branded clothing that Society members could wear at public events. The provision of caps and Tee Shirts was approved. It was also suggested that it would be useful to have branded pens and balloons to hand out at events. **Action: RT to investigate.**
- d) RT reported that he had attended a planning meeting for the 2016 Food & Drink Festival in St Albans. The St Albans' businesses were very enthusiastic but more publicity was seen as a necessity.

10. Press Officer's Items

- a) No report, as the Society does not have a Press Officer in post. However, RT is currently taking on part of this role.

11. Working Group Reports

- a) **Public Order:** The Public Order report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting. AJ reported that the emergency services' response to the recent unfortunate fatal traffic incident in Harpenden town centre was impressive involving police officers from as far away as Cambridge. This may have been because it could have initially appeared to be terrorist related although this was not the case.
- b) **Environment:** The Environment report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting. JD reported that night flights from Luton Airport were up by 20%. Noise complaints had also increased with new people complaining for the first time. He also reported that complaints had been made to HTC about the state of the disused office building in the station approach road. AJ reported that he had attended the HTC Ecology Group meeting. The objectives of this group may be the subject of a future Society meeting.
- c) **Transport:** DR reported that the District Council had created a bus users forum and the first meeting had been held. The forum had been created as there was a feeling that Herts County Council were not handling the consultation process very successfully.
- d) **Education & Leisure.** The E&L report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- e) **Health & Social Welfare.** The Health & Social Welfare report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting.
- f) **Built Environment.** The Built Environment report had been circulated to committee members prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the Society should object to the new construction at 70 West Common. **Action: PW & MW.**
- g) **Economic Activity.** RT reported that the he had worked jointly with HTC and the Harpenden Retail Partnership on the production of marketing material for the Harpenden Christmas Shopping campaign. The overall campaign had been successful with several retailers using it to advantage. A number of retailers did not 'work' to support it and no Southdown retailers participated which was disappointing. RT had prepared an analysis of the whole campaign and was presenting this with Keith Lunn of the HRP to Town Clerk, John Bagshaw with the intent of raising increased funding for retail support in 2015.

12. Awards

- a) PA reported that she had received two nominations for the 2014 Society awards. She asked for a reminder to be included in the next Chairman's email and for committee members to also provide nominations. **Action: CM**

13. Any Other Business

- a) It was agreed that the Society should donate £200 to the Batford "Larks in the Parks" event.

14. Dates of the next meetings:

Committee Meeting dates: 23 March, 11 May, 20 July, 21 Sept, 7 Dec, 25 Jan 16, 21 Mar 16

Speakers meetings: 26th Feb, 22nd April (AGM), 24 Sept, 22 Oct, 10 Dec, 28 Jan 16, 25 Feb 16

15. The meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.