

**THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Monday 26th March 2012 at 7.30 p.m. in St John's Church Hall**  
**MINUTES**

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**Present:** Victoria Evans (VE), Ian Fulton (IF), Rosemary Horne (RH), Keith Jennings (KJ), Chris Marsden (CM), Eric Midwinter (EM), Keith Nash (KN), Barbara Ouston (BO), Anthony Steele (AS), Ron Taylor (RTa), Penny Ayres(PA), Richard Thomas (RTh), Alan Jackson (AJ), Bob Fletcher (RF).

1. Apologies for absence: Arnold Allen(AA), Steve Gledhill (SG), Chris Grey (CG).
2. Minutes of the meeting on 13th February 2012, previously circulated, were approved as a true record after the change of "Council Tax" to "Town Council Precept" in paragraph 11.
3. Matters arising not on the Agenda: there were none notified.
4. **Treasurer's Report:** Arnold Allen was absent but had circulated the accounts for 2011 prior to the meeting. No questions about the accounts were raised. A comment was raised about the Society's policy regarding its reserves. CM proposed that he add a section to his formal annual report saying that the Society's policy was to reduce the reserves over the next year or two to a level of about one year's income.
5. **Membership Secretary's Report:**
  - a) BO reported that members whose membership had lapsed had been contacted and about 50% had re-joined.
  - b) BO requested help with the distribution lists (needs computer skills) and banking aspects of her role. *Volunteers needed. BO agreed to provide specific details of the requirements of the job and Committee members were asked to consider who might help.*
  - c) BO reported that she would be holding a party this year for the Newsletter distributors, thereafter this would be held every 2 years or so. This has subsequently been arranged for Sunday 27th May.
6. **Newsletter**
  - a) EM reported that he was waiting for the AGM before finalising input for the next issue. However, he had plenty of content in preparation.
7. **Awards Committee**
  - a) RH proposed that the owners of the clocks outside M&Co. in the High St and in Southdown were awarded Certificates of Merit and that Patrick Fisher be awarded a Letter of Commendation for his fence in Greenway. This was approved.
8. **AGM Rehearsal**
  - a) Forms have now been completed for all those wishing to stand for election and re-election at the AGM.
  - b) As there were no contested positions it was agreed that the President would propose the election of Officers and Committee Members en bloc at the AGM.
9. **Secretary Elect's Items**
  - a) It was agreed that the Society should be represented at the ANTAS meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> April, however RF cannot make that date, *AS to ask Mike Waddilove if he can attend, otherwise CM may be able to attend.*

- b) It was agreed that the Society should renew its public liability insurance for 2012 with Allianz (via the broker AON). Agreed that for next year the Society should ask AON to obtain some comparative quotes.

## 10. Chairman's Report

- a) **Pulse Group.** CM reported he had met with the Pulse group. Several ideas to make Harpenden more unique were discussed:
- i) Need for properties with short term leases (2 months or so) for artists
  - ii) Need for a cultural centre (mini South Bank).
  - iii) Proposal for a competition to raise the profile of the Society – possibly a children’s colouring competition with a prize giving during the Jubilee celebrations. *It was agreed that this was a good idea and VE & EM were asked to progress this.*
  - iv) The children’s play area in Rothamsted Park needs improving with new equipment, and toilets and a coffee shop similar to the one in Verulamium Park. *RTa to take this proposal forward in his Rothamsted Park Management Committee meetings.*
  - v) An issue was raised about the plan for street lights to be switched off from 24.00hrs. This is expected to cause issues with particularly single women walking home after an evening out. 01.00 hrs would be more sensible. *Agreed that CM should raise this with Bernard Lloyd but because of the expense of any changes once the switch off has been implemented there were not high hopes of success.*
- b) **Wish List:** An updated Wish List was produced by CM after his meeting with the Pulse Group. This was distributed at the meeting. It has been suggested that the Wish List be put onto the Society’s web site. A 2-3 line description of each topic needs to be produced before this can happen. *The table below shows which group is responsible for producing the description.*

| Topic  | Group responsible for 2-3 line summary |
|--|--|
| The transformation of Thompsons Close as part of making the High Street much more fun as a place to shop | Economic Activity                      |
| More retail-friendly parking times   | Economic Activity                      |
| More pedestrian and pushchair friendly ‘lower’ High Street.  | Economic Activity                      |
| Refurbishment of the Public Halls  | Education & Leisure                    |
| The redevelopment of the Memorial Hospital (The Red House) as a ‘wellness centre’                        | Health & Welfare                       |
| The creation of new housing, retail and business development in the Batford Industrial Estate            | Economic Activity                      |
| Redevelopment of the area behind the library for community use (e.g. as a cultural centre).              | Education & Leisure                    |
| Creation of a Harpenden Schools Forum  | Education & Leisure                    |
| New, imaginative provision for teenager activities   | Education & Leisure                    |
| Improved play facilities in Rothamsted Park and accompanying café.                                       | Education & Leisure                    |
| Better footpath lighting   | Built Environment                      |
| Better litter clearance & more dog poo bins  | Environmental Issues                   |

Table 1 Society’s Wish List

- c) **Diamond Jubilee.** CM proposed a contribution of 50% (likely to be £1,250) to the Diamond Jubilee “obelisks” rather than the maximum of £1,500 which was approved in the last committee meeting, on account of the reduction in estimated cost to £2,500. This will be matched by the Town Council.
- d) **Luton Airport.** The letter from the Town Council to GL Hearn regarding the Future Luton Optimisation Consultation was circulated. CM reported that he is meeting with Peter Lilly on Friday 30th March to discuss the Society’s letter about the airport expansion. *KN and RTh proposed that CM could consider using the following points:*
  - i) The only short term solution to increased traffic capacity in the South East is to increase capacity at Luton, therefore there could be very strong political pressure to do this which must be resisted.
  - ii) Luton has the highest percentage of users of all UK airports travelling to the airport by car rather than by public transport (~65% by car) therefore increased flights means increased road traffic.
  - iii) The message should be to not allow anything that will significantly worsen the noise and road congestion in Harpenden.
- e) **Harpenden business social responsibility survey.** CM’s report on this has now found its way via Cranfield University to the No 10 Policy Unit. There is a possibility that Harpenden could be used as part of a pilot for the proposed ‘Trading for Good’ initiative for SMEs.
- f) **Transport Portfolio.** CM reported that Donald Robinson is working on this issue for the Society and reporting directly to CM. He does not want to join the committee at this stage. DR is preparing a draft response to Hertfordshire’s draft Rural transport strategy. KN and EM volunteered to meet with RD and CM to finalise this in late April.

#### 11. Ron Taylor’s Actions

- a) **Display stands.** Agreed that the “cheap & cheerful” stands shown on RTa’s report to the meeting should be the ones used. Rta and CM will now approach the three supermarkets and possibly other businesses to request permission to display the newsletter near their entrances.
- b) **Directory of Voluntary Services:** RTa reported that there is a register of voluntary services on the Town Council’s web site. The Society can link to this from its own web site or the Town Council has agreed that we could have a copy of the information for the Society’s web site. *Rta agreed to progress this.*
- c) **Publicity Materials:** RTa is progressing the production of illustrations with a local company, expected cost approx. £500-600. *A proposal will be put to the next committee meeting.*
- d) **Rothamsted Park Users Group:** RTa’s report supplied as input to this meeting covered this in detail. Plans are being considered to install an arch over the entrance and other developments using Verulamium Park as an example.

#### 12. Steve Gledhill’s actions

- a) A number of articles concerning the Society have been included in the press.
- b) SG and CM met recently with the Editor of the Herts Advertiser. Good meeting. He stated that he was happy to receive news articles from the Society.

#### 13. Working Group Reports

- a) **Public Order:** AJ reported that a Neighbourhood Watch meeting with Herts Police had been recently cancelled. Stated that this was indicative of the resource constraints that the police are

now under. *AJ was urged by CM to continue to press for a meeting with Neighbourhood Watch representatives when possible.*

- b) **Environment:** JD not present, airport issues have been dealt with elsewhere.
- c) **Transport:** See Chairman's Report.
- d) **Education & Leisure:** CM, EM and RTh had a useful meeting with Councillors Heritage and Lloyd following the successful "school places" Society meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> February. EM reported that the next stage was to hold workshop style meetings with key players to try to move things forward rather than another full scale public meeting. This was agreed. CM then stated that this should become part of the Society's future strategy in other aspects of its work as well, using its convening influence to bring together key local actors to move things forward. This was agreed.
- e) **Health & Welfare:** The Harpenden Memorial Hospital issue continues to hold the group's chief attention. Courteous responses have now been received from the District Council in regard of the Society's 'Red House' proposal. Follow-up meetings are being planned to raise further the profile of this issue
- f) **Built Environment:** AS reported that Michael Waddilove has agreed to take over the leadership of this group from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.
- g) **Economic Activity:** See CG's report. It was agreed that the Society would not have a stand at this year's Highland Gathering.

#### 14. Town Council Report

- a) KN reported that the Council were forecasting a £110K surplus.
- b) The annual Town Meeting is being held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April at Park Hall. *CM agreed to attend.*

#### 15. Any Other Business:

- a) IF, who is resigning at the March AGM after 20 years as President of the Society, stated that he was pleased to see the society was thriving and wished the Society well for the future.
- b) Prompted by CM at the end of the meeting, RTh explained that he had approached Alison Steer to sound her out as a possible future president of the Society. AS had indicated her willingness to do the job. There was general agreement that AS was a strong candidate. *This would be an agenda item for the next meeting by which time other proposals, if any, should be made.*

#### 16. Dates of the next meetings:

- a) The committee meetings for 2012 – 2013 are: 29 March (AGM), May 28, July 30, October 1, December 3, January 28, March 25, March 28 (AGM).
- b) Public 'speaker' meetings at Park Hall are scheduled for 27 Sep, 25 Oct, 6 Dec, 24 Jan, 21 Feb. *Working group leaders were requested to bid for one of these dates and arrange for a speaker and/or panel on an issue of interest to their group.*
- c) The annual outing/party will be held at Batford Springs at 6pm on Thursday 28 June.

17. The meeting closed at 9.50 p.m.