

# THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 21st April 2016 at 8.00 p.m.

Park Hall, Harpenden

## MINUTES

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### 1. **President's Address**

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

### 2. **Apologies for absence**

Members: Jill Hill, Mike Hodge, Peter Underhill, Rae & David Newbury-Ecob.

Committee Members: John Harris.

### 3. **Minutes of the AGM of the 22nd April 2015**

The minutes of the 2015 AGM were approved with no matters arising.

### 4. **Chairman's Annual Report**

The Chairman, Chris Marsden, welcomed everyone to the AGM and stated that the AGM is always an opportunity to look back and look forwards although tonight he wished to concentrate on looking forward.

The Chairman stated that much of the past year had been dominated with the Society's responses to the Strategic Local Plan. He stated that the Society had done its best to provide public opportunities to debate the issues and to make representations according to what the Society felt to be in the best interests of the people of the Harpenden.

The Chairman stated that he wanted to talk optimistically about the future.

He stated that the people of Harpenden are very lucky to live in such a lovely place. The Harpenden Society, now entering its 87<sup>th</sup> year, continues to do all it can to promote what makes Harpenden a delightful place to live. The Society does this by

- using its convening power to bring people together to champion causes, like the redevelopment of the Red House and promoting volunteering
- holding public meetings on issues of concern, like school places, public transport, planning and so on.
- pressing our political representatives on issues of concern and, hopefully, act as an effective ginger group (although the Society is strictly non-party political)
- acting directly on issues, such as providing volunteers to keep the library open on Wednesday afternoons, establishing the Volunteer for Harpenden website, encouraging collective action to keep our High Street thriving and providing information and advice on community safety issues.

Looking forward there are three potentially very exciting developments which the Society will be doing its best to help bring about.

The first is the redevelopment of the old Red House site. There are important meetings still to come and we await the Secretary of State's approval but we have every reason to believe that within the next three years we will have a modern health and wellbeing centre on the site.

The Chairman stated that although there are many people who have worked hard to bring us to this stage, we can confidently say that we wouldn't be where we are today without the tireless efforts of a few key members of the Society.

The second development is the creation of much better family facilities in Rothamsted Park. Several years ago the Society came up with plan for a cafe and community facility in the Park, designed by our architect committee member, Tim Riley. It created a lot of interest at the time but for a number of practical reasons it couldn't go ahead. Since then the Society has continued to press for refreshment and toilet facilities in the Park, combined with the re-location and refurbishment of the children's play area. The Society was delighted when Pegasus Life came up with a plan for the redevelopment of the James Marshal Building, which included the kind of facilities the Society had been arguing for. This is why the Society supported the plan and why we are pleased that it has finally gained planning permission.

Our concern now is to press those with interests in the Park to work together to take a holistic approach to this development and redesign the whole area taking in a new children's play area and the sports facilities.

The third development is probably longer term, but also now seems to be being talked about in places where it matters. This is the redevelopment, perhaps even complete rebuilding, of the Public Halls. Harpenden deserves a state of the art theatre and an arts hub. Most other towns of our size have much better arts facilities than ours. The Society will continue to champion this cause and hopefully this will happen before too long.

The Chairman finished by clarifying his own position. He stated that it has been an honour to lead the Society's work over the last five year. The job is a responsible one, it requires energy, commitment and imagination regarding the potential of a civic society like ours. The Chairman stated that he had committed to one more year but will definitely be standing down next April, at the latest. The Society is busy looking for the right person to become the new chairman, probably someone who has just retired and has the time to do the job.

The Chairman concluded by thanking all members for their continued support.

#### 5. **Treasurer's Report:**

The Treasurer's Report, copies of which had been provided throughout the hall, was presented by the Treasurer. The Treasurer reported that 2015's income and expenditure were roughly in balance and confirmed that the Society's finances are in sound shape.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Helen Clothier and seconded by Eric Midwinter. Acceptance of the Treasurer's report was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

The re-appointment of the Independent Examiner was proposed by Eric Midwinter and seconded by Penny Ayres and unanimously agreed by the meeting. The Chairman thanked David Jones for his work as the Independent Examiner.

#### 6. **Election of Officers & Committee Members**

The President thanked all the officers and committee members for their hard work during the past year.

The President referred to the nominations for the Officers and Committee members listed in the agenda, copies of which had been provided throughout the hall, and stated that nominees were all willing to stand as stated.

#### **Chairman**

The President stated that the Chairman had expressed a willingness to continue for a further year.

The election of the Chairman was approved by the meeting.



Penny Ayres thanked the Awards Committee (John Davis, Mike Waddilove, and John Lowe) 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. **“Without Whom” Awards**

“Without Whom” awards were presented by the President to retiring committee member, Eric Midwinter, for his sterling efforts over the past 5 years as editor of The Harpenden Society News and leader of both the Education and Leisure and the Health & Social Welfare working groups and to Bob Fletcher, for his work over the past years as Society Secretary. The Chairman thanked them both for their efforts in helping the Society achieve its objectives.

9. **Strategic Local Plan**

Answering a question from the floor, Chris Marsden, stated that the statement in the 2015 Annual Report saying that “a development on the Rothamsted Research site would be more appropriate as it is near the shops and station” was copied from an initial draft of the Society’s response to the Strategic Local Plan and this statement had not been included in the final submitted response. He apologised for this statement being erroneously included in the Annual Report and he confirmed that it did not reflect the Society’s policy.

10. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business

11. **Date of the next AGM**

20<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

12. **Close**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the formal part of the meeting at 8.30 p.m.