

**THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Thursday 20th April 2017 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, Keith Sharp, Peter Underhill

3. **Minutes of the AGM of the 21st April 2016**

The minutes of the April 2016 AGM were approved with no matters arising.

4. **Chairman's Annual Report**

The Chairman stated that he hoped that members had read the Society's Annual Report which outlined the work of the Society over the last 6 years. He stated that he did not plan to repeat what was in the report but he planned to make a few closing remarks and to then offer members the chance to ask questions or make comments as appropriate.

The Chairman said that his final remarks were entitled: **Anywhere or Somewhere?**

"There has been quite a bit of comment recently about David Goodhart's recent book, 'Road to Somewhere', in which he distinguishes between what he calls somewhere people and anywhere people. In other words people who see their lives based on a place and local community and those who live wherever is convenient for them at the time but could actually live anywhere and move easily from place to place. Anywhere people's community is largely what is called 'virtual' these days, often with friends and contacts all over the world. Goodhart does admit that there are a lot of 'in-betweeners' and people who move from one category to the other but it is the basic distinction that got me thinking as it may have implications for a civic society like ours.

You see, I was undoubtedly an anywhere person. As a schoolteacher I went from London to Leeds and then to St Albans following promotion opportunities. Then as a London commuter with a job that took me all over the world, I saw my home as a place where I slept, where my kids went to school and I spent most weekends. I got to know some immediate neighbours and a few local people (mainly friends my wife made at the school gate or on the colts football field) but I never really identified with Harpenden as such. It could have been anywhere convenient for London.

That remained the case more or less until I retired from full time work. Then gradually I became more of a somewhere person, which of course was reinforced in spades when I was asked to become chairman of the Harpenden Society. I have learned a lot about community over my 6 year stint as chairman and am proud of what we collectively have achieved over that time as you can see from my written report. However there is still much to do and I would like to share with you what I see as the main challenge for the Society going forward.

An early insight I gained was that although the Society relied on a subscribing membership for both its revenue and its credibility as a voice of Harpenden, its job was to serve the interests of Harpenden and its people as a whole not just the interests of its members. The members

were in effect 'friends of Harpenden', subscribing to activities that would benefit the town as a whole, not members of a club expecting direct services in return. In the distinction made by David Goodhart, most of the Society's members are strong somewhere people who care passionately about the quality of that somewhere. However, a large number of Harpenden residents, perhaps a majority, are closer to the anywhere category.

The challenge for the Society, on which I feel so far we have only scratched the surface, is how to encourage the anywhere people to move towards valuing the somewhere and feeling that they belong to the Harpenden community and share an interest in its future development. I have no ready answers although I think one approach is through furthering our relationship with the many clubs and societies, which the anywhere people do value, if only temporarily. I know this is an approach favoured by our new chairman, Phil Waters, and I wish him and all his team the best of luck in meeting this challenge.

Finally I would like to thank you all, our faithful somewhere people, members of the Harpenden Society, for all your support over my time in office. It's been a pleasure and a privilege. Thank you."

**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 2016'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 Ron Taylor and seconded by Donald Robertson. Acceptance of the Treasurer's report was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

The re-appointment of the Independent Examiner was proposed by Harry Downie 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 current Chairman, Chris Marsden, was retiring after 6 years in post and Philip Waters was standing as the new Chairman.

The election of the new Chairman was approved by the meeting.

**Officers**

The President stated that the secretary, Bob Fletcher, and the treasurer, Harry Downie, had expressed a willingness to continue for a further year.

Secretary	Bob Fletcher
Treasurer	Harry Downie

The election of the Officers was approved by the meeting.

## **Committee members**

The President stated that the following committee members had expressed a willingness to continue for a further year.

Penny Ayres, Michael Waddilove, Pauline Waddilove, John Davis, Vicky Evans, Alan Jackson, Tim Riley, Ron Taylor, John Harris, Janet Smith, John Lowe and Alan Bunting..

Additionally, three new members were standing for election: Paul Gardiner, Alan Falconer and Geoff Newman.

The election of the Committee Members was approved by the meeting.

## **7. Society Awards**

Committee member Penny Ayres announced the results of the 2016 Society Awards.

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 2016 there was a lot of interest from many people resulting in nine nominations, all interesting in their own ways. After much thought and discussion, the Committee decided to make the following awards:

- Firstly, the **Harpenden Society Plaque** for 2016 was awarded to the recently completed Stonehurst Court in the Southdown area of Harpenden. It was considered that this apartment block improves the appearance of the area, that it is architecturally interesting with a turret feature, a brickwork feature and the different roof levels all adding to its appeal. It also provides much needed housing which could be more affordable than some of the properties available in Harpenden. Mr Martin Brown accepted the plaque on behalf of the builders, Shanly Homes from the Society's new Chairman, Phil Waters.
- A **Letter of Commendation** was awarded to The Town Council for the beautiful Christmas lights and the Christmas tree which made Harpenden look so delightful during the 2016/17 Christmas period and gave so much pleasure to so many people. The Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs Nicola Linacre, accepted the award on behalf of the Town Council from the Society's Chairman, Phil Waters.
- A **Letter of Commendation** was awarded to the Oddfellows Arms public house on Leyton Green for the restoration of the whole frontage and of the garden. Mrs Nicola Hackett accepted the award on behalf of the Oddfellows Arms.
- A **Letter of Commendation** was awarded to The British Legion Club for the sympathetic refurbishment of the historic building of Bennets and its garden.

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**

A "Without Whom" award was presented by the President to Chris Marsden for his sterling efforts over the past 6 years as Chairman of The Harpenden Society. The President thanked Chris for his efforts in re-invigorating the Society and helping it to achieve its objectives.

9. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business

10. **Date of the next AGM**

19<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

11. **Close**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the formal part of the meeting at 8.25 p.m.