

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 11 March 2024 at 10.00 a.m.
HTC Council Chamber
MINUTES

1. Present

Jeff Phillips (JP), Martyn Reed (MR), Harry Downie (HD), Alan Bunting (AB), Ron Taylor (RT), Ian Barrison (IB), and Bob Fletcher (RF).

2. In attendance

Roger Butterworth (RB),

3. Apologies for absence

These were received from John Lowe (JL), Paul Gloess (PGs) and Karl Wingfield (KW).

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 15 January 2024, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

None.

6. Treasurer's Report

(a) The Treasurer's Report for January -February 2024 had been circulated by HD prior to the meeting. There were no questions raised regarding this report.

(b) The Financial Report for the 2023 year, previously circulated to committee members, was formally approved.

(c) The payment of £2,250 to the University of Hertfordshire for their traffic report was formally approved by the committee.

(d) It was agreed that in future all proposed single item expenditure above £750 will be formally approved by the committee. Additionally, it will be agreed which of the Society's accounts the payment will come from. It was agreed that the Civic Development Fund is for non-regular expenditure in pursuit of the Society's objectives whereas the Accumulated Fund is for the regular annual expenditure such as the newsletter and public meetings.

(e) It was agreed that in the future when the Annual Accounts are presented for approval by the committee it will be agreed how much of the Accumulated Fund will be transferred into the Civic Development Fund, if any.

(f) It was agreed that the Secretary will become an alternative signatory for the Society's National Westminster Bank Account. **Action RF & HD.**

7. Secretary's Items.

(a) The following potential public meeting were discussed:

I. Local Plan – The public meeting on the Local Plan on the 31st of January was well attended. It was agreed that another meeting on this topic should be targeted for January 2025.

II. Dr Alison Cowan, a local GP with a special interest in Children and Young Person's mental health, has agreed to speak at a public meeting in October. Dr Cowan is the lead in the Harpenden PCN for this area of practice.

III. It was agreed that the Society will hold an election husting. The Harpenden branch of the UNA has approached the Society to discuss cooperation. This will be explored with the UNA. IB stated

that he felt the hustings should be held exclusively by the Society as he felt that we should not “dilute our brand”. **Post Meeting Note – it has been established that the UNA cannot jointly fund a large hustings so our approach will be to offer them a stand in the foyer of the Society’s event.**

- (b) RF reported that Trustees Indemnity Insurance has now been obtained and will be continued when the insurance comes up for renewal.
- (c) It was agreed that the AGM should take place on the 16th May if possible. **Action: RT is to organise the speakers, RF to check that the President is available.**
- (d) It was agreed that work to convert the Society to a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO) will continue. The target date for the conversion is April 2025 as more work is still to be done and the Charity Commission response times are very slow. **Post Meeting Note – HD to check with the National Westminster Bank that we can keep the same bank account when we convert to becoming a CIO.**
- (e) It was agreed that the Society should continue with its subscription to the Wildlife Trust even though the subscription has been increased from £40p.a. to £100p.a.

8. **Chairman’s Items.**

- (a) The Chairman’s report had been circulated to all committee members prior to the meeting.
- (b) It was agreed that the Society will put the response from SADC about the recent decision of the government that all major planning applications will go straight to the Planning Inspectorate on the Society’s website.
- (c) It was reported that currently a response to the email that JP had sent regarding the lack of clarity over the proposed Station Approach development had not been received.

9. **Membership Secretary's Items**

The Membership Secretary’s report had been circulated by PGs prior to the meeting.

10. **Newsletter Editor’s Items**

- (a) AB reported that there is currently a lack of input for the next newsletter. Several items were proposed including a report describing the current state of the proposed Luton Airport expansion proposals.
- (b) AB also reported that as he will be 87 in July the Society should be looking ahead to find a person to help with the newsletter and to eventually take over.

11. **Publicity**

The publicity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting.

12. **Social Media**

- (a) The Social Media report had been circulated by MR prior to the meeting.
- (b) MR reported that he posts information most weeks on Facebook and NextDoor.
- (c) It was agreed that £500 of prize money will be allocated to the Harpenden photograph competition which will be run in conjunction with the Harpenden Photographic Society. All photographs submitted will be available to the Society (with accreditation) for use on its website.

13. **Awards**

RT reported that only 2 members of the committee had made a nomination. RT will circulate the current nomination form so that committee members can submit their choices.

14. **Harpenden and District Local History Society**

RB reported that the new museum based in the Eric Morecambe Centre (EMC) will have its official opening on 20th April 2024. The Society will have a stand at this event.

15. **Transport Working Group**

The Transport report had been circulated by KW prior to the meeting.

16. **Health & Social Welfare Working Group**

- (a) The Health & Social Welfare report had been circulated by IB prior to the meeting.
- (b) It was reported that the Community First Responders (CFR) raised £1,400 in donations at the Society's meeting on the Local Plan. There are 3 CFR volunteers in Harpenden and 9 in St Albans.

17. **Built Environment Working Group**

- (a) It was reported that The Housing Minister has now ordered that any applications for "non-major" applications can be submitted direct to the Planning Inspectorate. However, a number of the schemes proposed for the town exceed the threshold of a non-major development and as such will still be dealt with a local level.
- (b) The Built Environment full report has been circulated by JL prior to the meeting. Items of interest were:-
 - I. **22-24 Grove Road – 5/2023/1559** – Still awaiting decision on application for 75 bed care home.
 - II. **Cross Lane Fields – 5/2023/0317** – submitted in March 2023 is still Pending.
 - III. **Harpenden Public Halls, Southdown Rd.** – The Council have now appointed Strutt & Parker to sell the site by informal tender. The closing date for offers is the 14th March.
 - IV. **6 High Street – 5/2023/0254** – Awaiting the decision of the planning appeal.
 - V. **North West Harpenden (L & G Proposals) 5/2023/0327** – Still under consideration.
 - VI. **Land to the north of Wheathampstead Road – 5/2022/2748** – The application for up to 40 houses is still under consideration.
 - VII. **Sauncey View Lodge, Common Lane – 5/2023/2611** - An application has been submitted to develop the large garden of a house with 32 dwellings including a block of flats for affordable housing. The site is in the Green Belt. The Society has lodged an Objection on the basis that in its present form the size of scheme is inappropriate for the Green Belt.
 - VIII. **12 Arden Grove Harpenden** – The Society was approached by the neighbours who have complained that the roof of 12 Arden Grove (an Arts & Craft semi-detached house) has been re-covered with modern concrete tiles contrary to the express planning condition that they should have matched the original clay tiles. Although the Enforcement Department have inspected, they do not consider there is a problem. The Society has written to the local councillors pointing out the absurdity of the review and is seeking ways to have the decision re-examined.
 - IX. **Harpenden East Station Car Park** – As reported at previous committee meetings, the Society has made representations to Solum about their proposed redevelopment of the car park. This triggered a response that their appointed consultants will re-examine possibility of creating a vehicular access from Aysgarth Close.

18. **Economic Activity Working Group**

The Economic Activity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting.

19. **AOB**

None.

Dates of the next committee meetings: 13 May, 8 July, 16 Sept, 11 Nov

Dates of the next Public Meetings: 17 Oct (Health).

The meeting closed at 12.05.