

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 12 January 2026 at 10.00 a.m.
HTC Council Chamber
MINUTES

1. Present

Jeff Phillips (JP), John Bristow (JB), Paul Gloess (PGs), Ian Barrison (IB), Martyn Reed (MR), Ron Taylor (RT), and Bob Fletcher (RF).

2. In Attendance

Roger Butterworth (RB).

3. Apologies for absence

These were received from Alan Bunting (AB) and John Lowe (JL).

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 17 November 2025, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

- (a) It has been decided that the Society will purchase its own SumUp machine for card transfers and not to try to use the Harpenden History Society's machine.

6. Treasurer's Report

- (a) JB was welcomed as the new prospective Treasurer by JP. JP proposed that JB be appointed as the new Treasurer and to become a Society trustee. This was unanimously approved by the committee.
- (b) JB reported that he is now a full power signatory (including internet banking) on all the Nat West accounts so he can make payments and transfer monies between accounts.
- (c) JB reported that HD has applied to HMRC to change the authorised official to JB so he can make Gift Claims.
- (d) The 2026 budget, previously circulated by JB, was approved by the committee.
- (e) JB reported that the 2025 accounts are being finalised and a meeting with the new Independent Examiner is being planned.
- (f) Transaction Control – JB stated that all requests for payment must be accompanied by the voucher(s) from the supplier, and indicating if the payment is to go direct to the Supplier or be a re-imbusement to the budget holder. Additionally, individual items of expenditure exceeding £750 must be approved by trustees as a body and minuted, as previously agreed by the committee.
- (g) JB reported that the Society's bank accounts operate on one signature and recommended that consideration should be given to increasing this to two signatures for transactions over £250.
- (h) The committee agreed to send a letter of thanks to Harry Downie for his excellent work as the Society's Treasurer during the past 10 or so years. **Action RF to draft.**

7. Secretary's Items.

- (i) RF reported that the current number of attendees for the next public meeting on the 22nd January is currently approaching 100. A reminder email will be sent out in the next few days, and information will be posted on social media.

8. Chairman's Items.

- (a) JP reported that over the last couple of days, he had circulated to the committee an article on the prospective developments around Redbourn, and another on the redesignation of grey belt land and its potential impact on our District. Both of these issues do not bode well for our community, not least in terms of the greed of developers and the as yet lack of any pronouncements on infrastructure build by either HCC or HMG. It was agreed that these issues will be raised at the public meeting on the 22nd of January public meeting.
- (b) JP reported that he had had a useful meeting with Eliot Howard-Jones, the CEO of Herts Community Trust. He is quite concerned that the re-organisation of the NHS structure for our area is taking longer and consuming so much management time that the development of strategy and the roll out of innovation is painfully slow. This is also of concern in determining the best use for the S106 funding arising from new housing under the Local Plan etc., and the growing needs of our community. There is still a lot going on locally, and the Society will continue to get closer to the Harpenden Primary Care Network developments through the connection with Dr Bethan Rees, the clinical lead, focusing on the potential use for the S106 funds. No progress is currently being made on a Harpenden Neighbourhood Health Centre by the PCN due to other higher priority issues and it was also stated that a Neighborhood Health Centre probably needs a population of 250K for it to be viable.
- (c) JP reported that it was his understanding that agreement on the S106 contributions in respect of the 550-unit development at Cooters End has been reached but has not been publicised. It was also stated that the first S106 payment is made only after the first home is occupied, so cannot be used for building any required infrastructure in advance of the building work .
- (d) It was agreed that JP will contact Carl Chivers (HTC) to arrange a meeting to discuss the town council's approach to the planned local government reorganization. **Action JP**

9. Membership Secretary's Items

- (a) PG reported that the chase up of non-payers in January will probably reduce member numbers by up to 60, but will simplify administration and distribution of newsletters etc., and probably reduce numbers of newsletters required.
- (b) The rebuild of the Membership Database is nearing completion.
- (c) The Society has 485 memberships, covering 723 names. This excludes 4 'Donation memberships' where people continue to pay us and we do not know where they are after they have moved, and 6 memberships which have paid for 2025, but who have died so are no longer members.
- (d) There are 3 new memberships and 4 leavers (2 resigned, 2 died)
- (e) An initial 151 emails were sent to chase up for payments and address checks for those suspected of having moved followed up with a second email chase for those not answering and finally letters were delivered with the Autumn newsletters for all non-respondents and those without known email addresses.
- (f) In January, PG will use the updated payments received data to identify non-payers. PG will then post letters to those members with outstanding subs (with return address on envelope) giving them notice that we'll cease their membership unless they pay. It is expected that about 60 letters will be sent.
- (g) The new Members Database is being rebuilt to make the annual 'external examiner' job as straightforward as possible. The 2025 numbers will be produced from the new version. A mechanism to auto generate Gift Aid data for HMRC claims is now in place. JB plans a full review of Gift Aid which will enable the mechanism to produce accurate data.

10. Newsletter Editor's Items

- (a) RT reported that copies of the Autumn Newsletter that he distributed by hand to High Street businesses were well received. However, the request that members submit their views on future newsletter content and future subjects for public meetings drew zero feedback.
- (b) The Winter Newsletter - delivery to Members homes planned to commence Feb 16. Copy date: Jan 23. The content so far - report on Public Meeting Jan 22, airport toxic emissions, St Albans Charity, retail Round Up, Awards Launch, Unitary Authority news..

11. Publicity

Arts Competition with Harpenden's United Nations division.

Only St George's and the King's School are now participating, the others were too busy with existing work and the new intake to take part. Entries to be judged and prizes awarded in early Spring.

12. Social Media

- (a) MR reported that the social media hit rate was up on the last period with most success coming from a post related to the consultation process to change flight paths which achieved 13,086 views on Facebook alone, 115 likes and 13 new followers
- (b) Facebook followers are now at 432, up 18 since the last meeting.

13. Awards

Following the half page announcement in the Autumn Newsletter RT will devise the revised creative concept in line with the introduction of Awards to individuals -like Derek French for his work on launching a Bank Hub for the Town. Full details will be published in the Winter Newsletter and on our web site, press release and online promotion.

14. History Society

The History Society report had been circulated to trustees by RB prior to the meeting. RB distributed printed copies of the History Society's programme for 2026.

15. Transport Working Group

- (a) The third HTC Sustainable Transport meeting took place on 3rd December, and a report was circulated to trustees on 4th December. A further meeting is scheduled for 25th February 2026.
- (b) A discussion took place on LADACAN's appeal about the expansion of Luton Airport and its request for funds to support this appeal. It was agreed that the Society should not contribute directly to this appeal as it was thought that a charity should not fund another charity.
- (c) It was agreed that the Society should try to get more aligned with the other resident groups which are campaigning about the airport expansion.

16. Health & Social Welfare Working Group

IB reported that:

- (a) Introducing the Central East ICB
 - I. Three Integrated Care Boards (Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Hertfordshire & West Essex) are working towards forming the new Central East ICB in April 2026.
 - II. NHS England requires ICBs to cut running costs by 50% by end of 2025/26. Staff consultation on new structures runs until mid-January; appointments expected by March 2026. Robin Porter has been appointed Chair of all three ICBs; single leadership team now in place.

- (b) Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust: Awarded for FOLLOW initiative supporting children's communication skills.
- (c) New eye care support across the region - The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has rolled out Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) in hospitals across Hertfordshire and West Essex. These specialists help patients with sight loss access emotional support, practical help and advice in navigating services. This is the first time that this support has covered the full integrated care area.
- (d) A community healthcare support initiative involving Macmillan Cancer Support and West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has been launched to strengthen cancer and community services in the area.
- (e) The Hemel Town Centre Neighbourhood Health Centre has been delayed. There has been a setback with the plan to close Hemel Hospital and replace it with a Market Square Hub. The bid for £135m public money for the closure/Hub has been held up as regional NHS bosses say more time is needed for consideration, Dacorum Council and the West Herts Trust had hoped to get the bid rubberstamped in a crucial 28 November regional meeting. A merger and shake-up of regional NHS jobs is being officially blamed for the slowdown. Regional bosses are said to be supportive of the overall approach taken by Dacorum and the Trust but regional leadership changes mean that they need to 'explore funding opportunities in the new year, and to determine how the SOC will be considered within the interim arrangements for ICB governance that are expected to be in place until April 2026.' There is no new date for the decision as the arguments for and against the closure appear to be opening up again.
- (f) Dacorum Borough Council consider that the vacated Hemel Hospital site could accommodate up to 600 flats.
- (g) Lister Hospital entrance redevelopment contract awarded - East & North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust has awarded a contract to improve and modernise the main entrance at Lister Hospital in Stevenage, aiming to enhance access and patient experience with new retail and waiting facilities.
- (h) Luton and Dunstable Community Diagnostic Centre - construction contract has been awarded, and work should start on the University of Bedfordshire site in the spring.
- (i) West Hertfordshire was crowned NHS Trust of the Year by the Health Service Journal awards. The Trust, which runs Watford General Hospital, Hemel Hempstead Hospital and St Albans City Hospital, also claimed the Performance Recovery Award in a memorable night for the Trust.
- (j) The HSJ awards are widely regarded as the most prestigious in the healthcare sector - with the Trust of the Year seen as the ultimate honour. Judges praised the Trust's "remarkable performance turnaround in multiple areas". West Herts chief executive Matthew Coats, said winning the double, was recognition for the incredible hard work, dedication and passion of teams across the Trust.

17. Built Environment Working Group

- (a) The low number of applications for residential extensions etc continues. Set out below is a review of the larger existing applications/proposals under consideration: -
- (b) Land to northwest of Harpenden – (5/2023/0327) – Carla Homes
No additional information posted since Feb 2025 but according to Paul de Kort, the Section 106 Agreement was completed before Christmas although it has not yet been uploaded to the planning file.
- (c) Land to north of Wheathampstead Road – (5/2022/2748)
No additional information posted since Nov 2024, except that the Section 106 Agreement has been completed and has now been uploaded to the file.
- (d) Land to the NE of Harpenden – Ref: - 5/2024/1602 – Crest Nicholson

No additional information posted since Nov 2024

(e) Land to South of Greenacres, Lower Luton Rd – Ref No 5/2025/0362 – Miller Homes

Scoping application. Council have confirmed that an Environmental Statement is not required. The Highways Report by the applicant's consultants is full of overly optimistic conclusions about accessibility to facilities – perhaps not helped by fact the data is based on the 2011 Census. They predict 100 dwellings will only generate approx. 50 outward and inward car journeys each day and that site entrance is only 30 minutes walk from Station, so commuters will not need car. Batford apparently has a full range of facilities so no need for residents to travel to town centre.

(f) Land opposite 27-39 Common Lane Harpenden – Ref No: - 5/2025/0668

Revised plans have been submitted.

(g) Land to South of Hatching Green – (near to Rugby Club) – Ref No: - 5/2025/1299

The application for 3 dwellings in field fronting Redbourn Lane has been refused on Green Belt policy terms.

18. Economic Activity Working Group

(a) As reported in November, The Business Forum launch by Harpenden Town Council on 15th Sept 2025 was very successful with over 90 people present from a mix of activities. Sadly only 4 retailers were present. The follow up meeting will take place in mid Feb . RT will attend to learn more and report back.

(b) Stage 3 of our campaign was due for response on the 14th Nov 2025. As of today, only 10 businesses have responded. RT chased up the outstanding 30 businesses via email. However, the retailers were more concerned with the imminent Christmas Lights On and Xmas trading plus they were also responding to the HTC research project. Paul deKort (leader of SADC) has issued a rather negative statement about the validity of this research and MR has had correspondence from PdK. So, a difficult position all round.

19. Unitary Authority

(a) RB has distributed a paper to the trustees summarising the proposal that was put to SADC's Strategy & Resources Committee on the 20 November 2025.

(b) RB proposed that the Society supports the 2 unitary authority model and a proposal that gives parish councils maximum powers and authorities, subject to funding. This proposal was agreed as the 2 unitary model seems to be the only financially viable proposal and has the added attraction of fitting quite closely with the NHS organisation (Stevenage Hospital for East Herts, Watford for West Herts).

(c) JP will produce a draft Society statement based on RB's report.

20. AOB

None

Dates of the next committee meetings: 9 March 26, 11 May 26, 6 July 26, 14 Sept 26 9 Nov 26.

Dates of the next Public Meetings: 22 January 2026 – Local Plan Update and Infrastructure

The meeting closed at 11.55