

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 17 November 2025 at 10.00 a.m.
3 Longcroft Avenue
MINUTES

1. Present

Jeff Phillips (JP), Harry Downie (HD), Paul Gloess (PGs), Ian Barrison (IB), Martyn Reed (MR), John Lowe (JL), Ron Taylor (RT), and Bob Fletcher (RF).

2. In Attendance

Katherine Tate (KT) and Roger Butterworth (RB).

3. Apologies for absence

These were received from Alan Bunting (AB).

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 8 September 2025, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

JP reported that he was no longer progressing a meeting with Cllr. Stuart Roberts to talk about transport concerns as this issue will be covered in the 22nd January public meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report

- (a) HD reported that the current forecast expenditure indicated that the Society would be in surplus for this financial year.
- (b) HD asked all committee members to submit their budget estimates for 2026.

7. Secretary's Items.

- (c) RF reported that the next public meeting on the 22nd January will be held at the Methodist Church. It was agreed that as an experiment the Society will ask for a £5 voluntary donation from non-members. **Action: RF to talk to John Bristow about possibly using the History Society card payment equipment.**

8. Chairman's Items.

- (a) JP reported that the last public meeting only had around 60 attendees, plus fellow trustees, which was disappointing given that the speaker was our MP, Victoria Collins. It may be the case that KWS is too remote for our membership (and the seating is not ideal), so we'll see what happens with our move to the High Street Methodist Church for the January meeting.
- (b) On the Local Plan, JP reported that he had only managed to sit through three afternoon sessions of the stage two Planning Inspectors' public meeting on the Local Plan, and his sense was that despite the complaining from the developers, Chris Briggs and his colleagues stood up well to the inspectors' challenges.
- (c) JP reported that Paul de Kort will be giving an update at the January public meeting on the progress of the Plan, his third to date, and he will be joined by Paul Zukowskyj, who is the Executive Member for Environment, Transport and Growth, and chairs the Highways Committee. Given Paul Z's attendance, it is hoped that the meeting will be well attended, given the infrastructure pressures that the town already suffers, and which will be further impacted by the building of c.1,500 housing units over the next few years.

- (d) JP made a proposal that the Society should ask the Herts Police and Crime Commissioner, Jonathan Ash-Edwards, to give a presentation in April. It was agreed that this would be better if we could include a speaker on online scams which is a current hot topic. **Action RT and JP to progress.**
- (e) JP also reported that he would like to invite Dr Bethan Rees to give an update on the PCN situation, perhaps in October 26, to give more time for Wes Streeting's new policy objectives for the NHS to be implemented.
- (f) An article by Carl Cheevers regarding the unitary authority debate was included in the latest Forum magazine.
- (g) A discussion took place about the sports pavilion in the park. It now appears as if both sports pavilions will be taken down and not replaced by a single pavilion which was the original plan. Several parking places will be created on the space previously occupied by the pavilions. It was agreed that a photo of the new parking spaces and an explanation of what has happened will be included in a future newsletter.

9. **Membership Secretary's Items**

- (a) PG reported that a large exercise underway chasing up non-payers, and checking membership data, plus a complete rebuild of the Membership Database is underway to take account of observations by John Bristow (incoming Treasurer) to make clear linkages between membership and bank account data and to smooth the External Examiner's work. The aim is to have the new version in readiness for end 2025
- (b) The number of non-payers has been reduced from 104 to 67 with further chase up letters delivered with latest newsletters. We have **484** (was 496) memberships, covering 721 (was 755) names. The names reduction is partly due to memberships where one partner has died.
- (c) The Society has 3 new memberships, which results in a net of 12 leavers (total 16 lost resigned, died, moved & not paid, incl. 1 'joined in error' !), but offset by reinstatements of 2 'donation' memberships & net 2 who were previously marked as leavers but have paid until end 2025 and will be deleted 31-Jan-26)
- (d) **Chase up activity and membership data check** - Initially 151 emails were sent out to chase up payments and address checks for those suspected of having moved. These were followed up with a second email chase for those not answering and finally letters delivered with the Autumn newsletters for all non-respondents and those without known email addresses. The Idea was to encourage those who pay by cheque or cash to move to annual SO or Direct Debit. There was some pushback by people who wanted to continue to pay by cheque so we have allowed this as we don't want to exclude those who don't bank on-line, especially as we have campaigned for the Banking Hub.
- (e) This has resulted in 32 paying, 16 deletions, 3 more to be deleted 31-Jan-26 as they have died but paid for this year and 11 local address changes. This still leaves 74 answers awaited from the latest letters – probably about half of those will need a posted letter to tease out those who are 'gone away' and should be removed.

10. **Newsletter Editor's Items**

RT reported that printing of the Autumn newsletter has been completed and it has been delivered to the teams for home distribution to members. There has been apposite response about the articles featuring the Xmas shopping opportunities in Harpenden but it was agreed that this approach should only be taken with the Autumn edition of the newsletter as it makes the Society's newsletter too similar to other commercial newsletters issued to Harpenden residents.

11. **Publicity**

Arts Competition with Harpenden's United Nations division.

The Launch brochure was issued to head teachers/ heads of Art at: KWS, SJL, St George's, Roundwood Park and The Kings School. in mid-September. All have expressed a keen interest and were asked to confirm participation by Sept 30. Only St George's and the King's School are participating, the others were too busy with existing work and the new intake to take part.

12. Social Media

- (a) MR reported that it would be good to have more web content from trustees. Members, and prospective members, will only value the Society if they know about the good work that we do.
- (b) Facebook followers are now at 402, up 9 since the last meeting and 112 more than the 290 when MR started.

13. Awards

The 2025 Awards were launched in the Autumn Newsletter with a general introduction. Full details and press releases to be announced in mid-January.

14. History Society

The History Society report had been circulated to trustees by RB prior to the meeting.

15. Transport Working Group

- (a) The HTC Sustainable Transport meeting that was postponed from 30th January took place on 1st October which Jeff attended in my absence. The next meeting is on the 3 December
- (b) MR reported that he was a guest at the LADACAN AGM on 7th October 2025. A report has been circulated to trustees, a news item has been issued and featured on social media.
- (c) Four social media campaigns, plus the newsletter piece on Luton Airport, have been issued publicizing the judicial review instigated by LADACAN.
- (d) MR and JP were invited guess the Harpenden Trust AGM on 14th October 2025. A report was circulated to trustees, a news item was issued and featured in social media.

16. Health & Social Welfare Working Group

IB reported that:

- (a) Neighborhood Health Centre

This was featured on the front page of the HS Newsletter -awaiting public/political responses - important to work with the Harpenden Primary Care Network.

- (b) Noise Pollution and Health

A recent review in the British Medical Journal has been published. This concludes that noise pollution affects over 100 million people in Europe and is estimated to contribute to around 12000 premature deaths and the loss of over one million healthy life years annually. Long term exposure to environmental noise is associated with a wide range of adverse health outcomes, including sleep disturbance and cardiovascular disease.

- (c) Mistaken Diabetes Diagnoses

Pathology laboratory inaccuracies-over diagnoses have led to recalls for patients at West Herts and L&D Hospitals- patients have been contacted directly.

- (d) The New Hospital Programme - Watford Hospital still waiting for funding

- I. The Chief Programme Officer for the New Hospital Programme, Morag Stuart, has left her role to become the Chief Commercial Officer at HS2. starting her new position in January 2026.
- II. The NHP is looking at Private Finance for small schemes, e.g. car parks, energy banks.

III. NHS Capital Investment likely to be a significant issue in the forthcoming Budget.

(e) The Hemel Health Campus

This is progressing rapidly. The Public Engagement: on the health campus proposals and new model of care took place during June to August 2025. The Strategic Outline Case took place in October 25.

(f) A Dacorum Neighbourhood £10M transformation fund has been established with MacMillan Cancer Support, non-profit enterprise Social Finance ,and West Herts Acute NHS Trust. This partnership is the first of its kind in the UK. Dacorum and Hertsmere have been selected as part of the first wave of the National Neighbourhood Implementation Programme.

(g) Harpenden will need the support of the new East of England ICB if we are to have a Neighborhood Health Centre

(h) Luton Community Diagnostics Centre

Based at the University of Bedfordshire site in Luton, with an anticipated opening in early 2026. This new facility will provide a range of modern diagnostic services, including endoscopy, CT scanning, and bone density scanning (DEXA), to help patients receive earlier diagnoses and reduce the need for hospital visits. Public engagement sessions are being held to gather feedback on the project, with more information available from Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

(i) East and North Herts Trust is one of only three Trusts in England achieving all the Cancer diagnosis and treatment targets- featured on BBC News 11/11/25.

17. **Built Environment Working Group**

(a) JL reported that a few of the “black poles” had been removed but most were remaining. It appears that HTC did not submit a planning application for these poles as they were considered to be temporary but it now appears that they will be permanent. **Action. JL to email HTC asking about this situation and to enquire if a planning application is to be submitted.**

(b) The low number of applications for residential extensions etc continues. Some other applications worth noting are: -

I. Sir John Lawes School – ref 5/2025/1978

Additional teaching block and enlargement of car park.

II. 52-54 High Street – re 5/2025/1792

Advertising application on shop front for Harpenden Building Society.

III. Rothamsted Manor – ref 5/2025/1069

Application for consent to use part of ground floor as a café.

(c) Review of larger mor significant applications: -

I. Land to NW of Harpenden – ref 5/2023/0327

No additional information has been posted. Extension of time has been given to finalise Section 106 agreement.

II. Land to north of Wheathampstead Rd – ref 5/2022/2748

No new information posted. Awaiting finalisation of Section 106 agreement.

III. Land to NE of Harpenden – ref 5/2024/1602

No additional information has been posted since Nov 2024. EIA required.

IV. Land to south of Greenacres, Lower Luton Rd

No additional information posted since confirmation that EIA is not required.

18. Economic Activity Working Group

- (a) The Business Forum launch on September 15 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-February.
- (b) Harpenden Building Society have confirmed they will be moving into the old Wine Rack shop in mid/late January.
- (c) Parking Charges - Stage 3 of our campaign was due for response on Nov 14. As of the 13th November only 8 businesses had responded. The outstanding 32 businesses will be chased up with a personal visit.

19. Unitary Authority

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

20. AOB

None

Dates of the next committee meetings: 12 Jan 26, 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 11.45