

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 18 May 2026 at 10.00 a.m.
HTC Council Chamber
MINUTES

1. Present

Jeff Phillips (JP), Paul Gloess (PGs), Ian Barrison (IB), John Lowe (JL), Katherine Tate (KT) and Bob Fletcher (RF).

2. In Attendance

Chris Marsden (CM), Roger Butterworth (RB) and Peter Syme (PS)

3. Apologies for absence

These were received from Ron Taylor (RT), John Bristow (JB), Alan Bostock (AB) and Martyn Reed (MR).

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2026, previously circulated, were approved (with one minor correction) as a true record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

(a) None.

6. Treasurer's Report

(a) Financial Accounts 2025

- I. The accounts circulated for the January trustee meeting have not varied since then and have now been signed following independent examination (without amendment) by Staceys Accountants and are therefore ready for circulation, together with the completed Trustees Annual Report, to members ahead of the June AGM.
- II. Staceys Accountants have expressed their willingness to continue to act as the Society's independent examiner for the 2026 financial year

(b) Managements Accounts 2026

- I. Management accounts for the four months to end April were circulated prior to the committee meeting, together with a revised monthly cash flow for the remainder of the year
- II. Key points to note are:
 - Subscription renewals exceeded budget by £0.6k in the four months because the expected minor attrition has not materialised. The Treasurer reported that he had left the rest of the year in line with the renewals posted in 2025 again with no attrition but with no assumptions on membership growth. Renewals now being invited are at the full rate of £15 so we may do slightly better by the year end.
 - The majority of Gift Aid has been claimed and received, and the full year forecast reflects the 2025 % recovery
 - Interest on the 95-day account is now down to 2.5% but is now not expected to fall further as a result of the financial impacts of the Iran War
 - The Society's insurance policy has been renewed without any significant changes in the cover provided and premiums in line with budget

- III. Overall, the results reveal a £3125 surplus for the year to date and £1140 better than budget, much of this is down to the front-end loading of subscription receipts plus the timing of marketing and public meeting expenditure costs. The financial results of the current review for the full year, subject to any variations caused by the review of marketing costs, have reduced the budgeted £406 deficit to a small surplus of £250.

7. Secretary's Items

RF reported that the Society will hold its AGM on the 11th June, immediately preceding the public meeting being held on this date. The notice informing members of the date of the AGM will be sent out by email on the 19th or 20th of May.

8. Chairman's Items.

- (a) The Chairman reported that he had a productive meeting with our MP, Victoria Collins, on issues she is focussing on re the Local Plan. Both she and Daisy Cooper are pushing the Dept of the Environment, SADC and HCC to pressurise Thames Water to make substantial reductions in the sewage overflow into the Lea and the Ver. Further to this, they are both lobbying for upgrades to the sewage treatment capacity ahead of any substantial house-building under the Local Plan as a precondition to planning approval. There are some signs of progress, in that Kier are now involved in a construction project at the Piggotshill sewage site, so there is a need to find out what that project is aimed to achieve and by when.
- (b) In addition, our MP is also pressing for defined improvements to traffic management on both the Luton Road and the Lower Luton Road, given that there are going to be an additional 1300+ homes build by CALA and Crest Nicholson/Miller on the two relevant sites.
- (c) The view from SADC is that the Local Plan, as currently lodged with Government, has generated minor corrections from the Inspectors, and remains on a trajectory that gets it accepted by early next year, for adoption later in 2027.
- (d) In respect of the north Batford development, JL has submitted the Society's objections to the outline planning application by Crest, and JL, PS and the Chairman have an online meeting arranged with Crest's consultants on the 20th. The Society has specifically objected to Crest proposing traffic access plans which do not include the Miller development, and as such, are completely inadequate. As a result, the Society is asking for planning to be refused until Crest and Miller come up with a credible traffic plan for the whole north Batford development.
- (e) MR has reported on his dialogue with Paul de Kort on the parking issue, not just the one-hour request, but also the improvements needed to provide a single app payment system and to enhance mobile signal coverage in the town centre. The Chairman stated that it is realized that these issues are likely to run and run, given the complexities involved.
- (f) The Chairman reported that following Alison Steer's request to stand down as our President, Chris Marsden has very kindly agreed to be her replacement, which will be formalised at our AGM on 11th June. Chris Marsden is a former chair of the Society and is currently chair of Harpenden Helping Hand. He is also well known in the community, and the Chairman stated that he looked forward to his help and involvement in expanding the Society's activities, and status within our community.

9. Membership Secretary's Items

- (a) Membership Headlines

- I. As a result of the 'data cleanse activity' we have 444 (down 40) memberships, covering 664 (down 56) names.
- II. 5 new memberships.
- III. 45 leavers (39 from the data cleanse & 6 others died, moved or resigned).

(b) Newsletter deliverers appeal

- I. The email appeal for volunteer deliverers generated 12 responses, so we now have all our rounds covered and we have a reserve list of volunteers. We also have a new distributor, Alan Falconer, to take over Alan Bunting's 'B' rounds. Sue Shaw who does the deliver to the distributors from Ron's bulk delivery has also covered distribution for these 'B' rounds as well for the last two newsletters.
- II. Full details for each round's deliverer are now on the membership database, so there is a centralised accessible set of information 'just in case' something untoward should happen to any individual.

(c) Rebuild of membership database

This is now completed & meets the Treasurer's requirements for subscriptions and Gift Aid reporting.

(d) Membership data cleanse

- I. Personalised 'final letters' to 52 members have been sent out on Apr 2nd with details of last payment received etc. and inviting them to continue membership.
- II. 11 members responded to continue membership & have paid the 'new' £15 rate which was an increase for some of them, 2 promises to pay, 8 responses from relatives to advise that our member had died and 3 responses were received to say members resigning due to old age / ill health.
- III. No responses were received from 28 so they have now been removed.
- IV. The database is therefore somewhat tidier, and we can stop delivering newsletters to non-existent members.

10. Newsletter Editor's Items

- (a) Summer Newsletter - This is now with the printer and will be produced on a much lighter paper. The delivery team leader had requested this as previous editions were rather heavy when carried in bulk on deliveries to homes. Delivery to members' homes to commence on the 25th May.
- (b) Autumn Newsletter - RT attended the Mayor Making ceremony on Monday night (11th May) at which Cllr Kirsti Wenn was appointed. RT spoke to Kirsti asking whether she would like to be interviewed and be featured in the next edition. She agreed and Alan Bunting has accepted the role of interviewer at a date in August yet to be set.

11. Publicity

For the public Meeting on June 11th A4 Posters are on display in the Library, Godfreys, Thompsons Close Cafe, OUI, Serena Hart, Milehams, Cafe Aroma, Southdown Hardware & HTC (for use on Town Notice Boards).

Editorial Coverage is in the St Albans Times, Harpendia and Facebook Harpenden Shopping. Katharine Tate will share information about the meeting with her contacts including the FoodSmiles group.

12. Social Media

- (a) MR reported that our Facebook followers are now 503, up 24 since the last meeting.

(b) As always, it would be good to have more web content from trustees

13. Awards

AWARDS 2025 - The following have been nominated:

- Derek French by Jeff Phillips for a Letter of Commendation
- Sue Hobley by Alan Bunting for a Letter of Commendation
- Mike Hodge by Richard Goss for a Letter of Commendation
- Redclyffe Place Apartments for the 55+ age groups by Richard Goss of Hamptons for the Plaque
- Artichoke Bake by Ron Taylor for a Certificate of Merit.

These will be featured in the Annual Report and announced at the AGM. Then individual winners will be notified of their success. Plaque and certificates to be created with presentations to be actioned for July.

14. History Society

RB reported that the new Mayor is visiting the museum to see the new exhibition on inter-war development on 20th May and giving the introductory speech at the evening meeting on 26th May, when the History Society AGM will be held.

15. Wellbeing and Youth

(a) Food Futuring

- I. Since the last meeting, KT attended the second *Food Futuring* session (20th April, St Albans), a Hertfordshire-wide initiative bringing together stakeholders to shape a healthier, fairer and more resilient local food system.
- II. The session enabled KT to build direct relationships with key local figures, including Andrei Lussmann and Mike Caddy (FoodSmiles), both of whom have now agreed to speak/be involved at our forthcoming AGM event: **“From Soil to Supper: Challenge, Passion and Restaurant Reality.”**
- III. KT has actively promoted this event through local networks, community groups and partner organisations to increase awareness and engagement. The wider Food Futuring network provides the Society with access to a strong pool of potential future collaborators, including Local farmers and growers, Restaurants and retailers, Nutritionists and academics, community groups and charities, Council officers and sustainability campaigners. This creates a valuable platform for future Harpenden Society events and partnerships around food.

(b) National Emergency Briefing

- I. KT reported that she had been approached by local residents about the possibility of Harpenden hosting a screening of the *National Emergency Briefing* film. The film presents a clear, evidence-based assessment of the risks posed by climate and nature breakdown, with particular focus on impacts to public health, food systems, national security and the economy.
- II. The recent screening at St Albans Cathedral attracted more than 300 attendees and generated substantial follow-up interest in local action and community engagement initiatives. Public feedback focused particularly on community resilience, local food systems and practical local responses, demonstrating a clear appetite for informed discussion on these issues. The event also attracted civic and political engagement, helping to position the discussion as constructive, solutions-focused and locally relevant.

- III. A Harpenden screening could provide the Society with an opportunity to host a well-attended public discussion event on an issue of growing national and local significance. If supported, we could also invite Victoria Collins to participate in a follow-on discussion to broaden community engagement and visibility. **Action: JP to contact Victoria Collins to ask if she would be prepared to be involved.**

(c) Proposed Harpenden Society Youth Collective (HSYC)

KT reported that she had developed a proposal for a Harpenden Society Youth Collective to strengthen engagement with young people across the town and provide the Society with a more direct understanding of youth priorities, concerns and ideas. The proposal would initially bring together Year 12 students from Harpenden secondary schools and establish a structured annual programme consisting of:

- One welcome/launch event
- One meeting per term
- One youth-led campaign or public event annually
- One funded social and recognition event each summer

The concept is designed to create meaningful long-term engagement rather than one-off consultation. An example initiative could include a Harpenden Summer Sports Day, planned and delivered by students in partnership with local sports clubs, fitness trainers and community organisations. This would provide visible community benefit while also increasing youth participation and ownership.

KT proposed that we move this proposal into a delivery phase, working with MR to begin engagement with the four secondary schools and launch recruitment for a September welcome event.

The next stage is to secure support to progress planning and formal outreach before the end of the summer term. **Action: KT & MR to progress.**

16. Crime & Policing

- (a) AB's report stated that he had taken on the Harpenden Society crime and policing portfolio in March 2026.
- (b) On 25 March, AB met with Sgt Mark Essam of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) to discuss both the successes and current challenges facing policing in Harpenden, and how closer communication between the police and the Harpenden Society may be beneficial. The potential value of sharing relevant community intelligence was discussed, with AB's role acting as a link between the NPT and the Society's membership. Sgt Essam was very supportive of developing this working relationship. A number of areas were discussed, and it is intended that regular meetings will take place going forward.
- (c) On 9 April, AB attended the Police and Crime Commissioner's Accountability and Performance Meeting. During the session, Jonathan Ash-Edwards, the Police and Crime Commissioner, questioned Chief Constable Andy Prophet on a range of issues currently affecting policing across Hertfordshire.
- (d) Facial Recognition
- I. One topic currently generating considerable public interest is the use of live facial recognition technology and the balance between its operational benefits and concerns relating to privacy and civil liberties.
 - II. On 17 April, AB met with Chief Inspector Chris Rutter at Hatfield Police Station. CI Rutter holds the digital policing portfolio, including responsibility for live facial recognition. The capabilities of this technology, the safeguards surrounding its use, and the operational outcomes experienced

by Hertfordshire Constabulary to date were discussed. The results presented were encouraging and informative.

- III. It is AB's intention to prepare a short article for the Harpenden Society which aims to provide a balanced overview of live facial recognition technology, helping to explain its use within law enforcement and address some of the understandable questions and concerns that members of the public may have.
- (e) AB has also identified that there may be opportunities to explore whether certain digital investigative capabilities could further support the work of the Harpenden NPT. Following an initial discussion with DS Glen Turrell-Oldacre, the Manager of the Digital Forensic Unit, a further meeting is planned.
- (f) AB reported that if there are any particular areas of policing in Harpenden where members feel greater understanding or clarification would be helpful, he would be very pleased to raise these with the relevant officers where possible.
- (g) AB has agreed to work with Neighbourhood Watch and to take on the role of Ward Coordinator for Harpenden South & East. This complements my existing involvement with the Harpenden Trust and should help strengthen local community engagement.
- (h) The issue of shoplifting in the town was raised and it was mentioned that any information about how this issue is being approached would be interesting to our members.

17. Transport Working Group

(a) Sustainable transport

- I. There have been no meetings of the HTC Sustainable Transport in the period but a further meeting is scheduled for 20th May 2026.
- II. MR stated that he is a member of St Albans Cycling Campaign and has attended both their monthly meetings and AGM, which was also attended by Cllrs Paul De Kort and Paul Zukowskyj, and other district councillors from St Albans. The Society benefits from their knowledge of how transport infrastructure is managed by HCC, MR can ensure they understand the issues in Harpenden and it gives me ideas of solutions that have worked elsewhere.

(b) Parking

MR has again been in written communication with Paul De Kort re parking charges and provided clarification, and suggestions, to progress our three remaining issues;

- Extending the free parking period from 30 minutes to 60 minutes
- Reviewing the availability of parking meters and improving signage
- Reviewing mobile phone coverage in the town and encouraging operators to address reception gaps.

Following press coverage of a new facility whereby motorists can utilise alternative parking apps to pay for parking, rather than just the Pay-By-Phone facility adopted by SADC, MR wrote to Paul De Kort asking whether this could be offered to the residents of Harpenden. Paul was familiar with the facility, and understand the benefits, but reported that financial negotiations are ongoing. MR suspects that the cost of the data sharing facility is not currently compatible with the 30 minutes free parking facility.

(c) Airport

- I. The next step for LADACAN is as a 2-day "rolled-up hearing" at the Court of Appeal scheduled for the third week of May.

- II. Luton Airport Operations is holding a public consultation meeting on Monday 18th May. MR stated that he had attended previously but will be away for this occasion. The one2one discussion is useful to understand their operational issues and aspirations.

18. Health & Social Welfare Working Group

(a) New Community Diagnostic Centre on The University of Bedfordshire site

IB reported that patients in our area are set to benefit from a Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) located within the University of Bedfordshire, following the approval of £25m funding.

Construction work will to create a CDC to house modern healthcare facilities for endoscopy, CT scanning and bone density scanning (DEXA). Patients will be seen by clinically trained staff that they currently see, or would have been seen by on the main Luton and Dunstable University Hospital site. Urgent endoscopy services and inpatient CT scanning for adults, as well as paediatrics will remain on the main hospital site.

The CDC will enable earlier diagnosis, improve long-term condition management, and strengthen care coordination, ultimately improving patient outcomes and helping to improve access to vital healthcare services.

(b) New Scanners opening at St Albans City Hospital in Early Summer

These will include CT and MRI scanners. These new facilities should improve access and reduce waiting times.

(c) Mount Vernon Hospital

It has been agreed that all the services provided at Mount Vernon will move to new buildings on the Watford Hospital site, sometime in the 2030's.

(d) Hemel Hempstead Neighbourhood Health Centre delayed(again)

Closure of the Hemel Hospital site must now go through a formal planning process.

The £135 million potential cost of the Hospital/Council new building in Hemel town centre is three times the sum allocated for NHC's across England.

All of this slows down improved access to diagnostic and community NHS services in Hemel, which will eventually take the pressure off Watford Hospital.

(e) S106 Agreements and New Housing Developments

IB reported that new houses do not automatically mean new GP surgeries, as the developer infrastructure payments go via the District Council to the Integrated Care Board, (now Central East), who decide how and where the money is spent. Generally, expansion of existing surgeries, is more likely than the construction of new surgeries.

The Central East Integrated Care Board (ICB) cluster is formed through the merger of three existing ICBs.

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB
- Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) ICB
- Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB

The new ICB is responsible for commissioning health services for 3.5 million people. This very large administrative body is having to make significant redundancies to achieve government targets for reductions in headcount. It is likely that it will be sometime before Harpenden's specific requirements are given priority.

19. Built Environment Working Group

Set out below is a review of the larger existing applications/proposals under consideration: -

(a) Land to North West of Harpenden – (5/2023/0327) – Legal & General (Carla Homes)

The draft Sec 106 Agreement has now been lodged 21/4/26. The main points included: -

- 50% provision of Affordable Housing
- £525,000 for off-site sports facilities inc.- £138 for Harpenden Rugby Club, £138K for pavilion in Rothamsted Park, £46K for Hockey Club, £174K for pitches maintained by HTC and £82K towards delivery of new primary school.
- £230,000 Sustainable Transport Contribution for cost of introducing speed limit zone and/or measures to support sustainable travel routes. **NB – No specific mention of cycle routes.**
- All payments to be made according to a timetable that dovetails with phase release of new building. All payments are to be index linked.

The application is still pending.

(b) Land to north of Wheathampstead Road – (5/2022/2748)

Section 106 agreement signed.

(c) Land to the NE of Harpenden – Ref: - 5/2024/1602 – Crest Nicholson

Crest Nicholson have submitted Outline application for site. We have submitted Objection on grounds that a composite application of the 4 parcels of land should be made to achieve a better understanding of traffic implications and provide better site access. We also have cited the lack of any proposals to improve the infrastructure, drainage and reduce flood risks.

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

No change since last month.

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

Revised plans have been submitted. Still pending decision.

20. Economic Activity Working Group

- (a) The second Business Forum by Harpenden Town Council on Feb 11 was well organised but only 50 attendees most of whom RT didn't know. Visible actions from the various discussions have not materialised so far with the exception of two full pages of coverage for independent businesses in the May edition of Forum. The next meeting is June 17.
- (b) High Street Changes - Main Hair Gallery has closed, Molasses House gallery is relocating to London in July/August, The Perch -a Cocktail Bar in Station Rd has opened after prolonged licencing agreements were concluded, BJ Copestick Jewellers will be closing in July. The Pop-Up shop continues to attract businesses and Art displays. The Bakery Stop has replaced The Pudding Stop.
- (c) The Bank Hub. Work has finally started so we can expect a mid-summer opening.
- (d) The Concourse. Work has finally started so we can expect completion by end May.
- (e) Southdown Industrial Estate The large area on the left side as you enter the estate has now been completely flattened. It is understood that it will eventually be developed into a distribution centre for use via large vehicles. Planning permission has been granted for mixed use commercial buildings including a builders' merchant with a Trade Counter.

21. AOB

- (a) Charity Collectors - MR reported that as agreed at the last meeting he has been in discussion with SADC about the “charity” collectors that frequently sit outside Sainsbury’s and Waitrose supermarket. MR’s research showed that neither organisation was a registered charity and, having provided the council with times, dates, transcripts and photographs, they have confirmed that the collectors were not licenced and that they would now undertake their own investigations.

SADC policy does, in theory, allow Community Interest Companies (CIC) to apply for street collection licence and MR proposed that the Society works with our district councillors to have that revised. MR proposed that only registered charities can have a licence and that the council creates a mechanism for ensuring compliance. A news item for members has been drafted.

- (b) Nickey Line bins - KT raised the issue that the bins at the entry to the Nickey Line are accessible to foxes. Currently these are being cleaned up by a group of nearby ladies. JP stated that the Society could maybe provide better bins if SADC decides not to do this. Can the Society also thank the ladies for their efforts with a small token of gratitude (hamper maybe). **Action: KT to progress**
- (c) CM raised the issue of an AI training programme being promoted by Hugo Pickford-Wardle (founder of the AI Night School). A meeting with JP was proposed to see if the Society should be involved. **Action CM to facilitate.**

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

Dates of the next Public Meetings: 11th June AGM and public meeting - From Soil to Supper: Challenge, Passion and Restaurant Reality.

The meeting closed at 11.40am