

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 Bristow (JB), John Lowe (JL) and Bob Fletcher (RF).

2. In Attendance

Roger Butterworth (RB) and Peter Syme (PS).

3. Apologies for absence

These were received from Ron Taylor (RT), Katherine Tate (KT) and Martyn Reed (MR).

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 18 May 2026, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

(a) None.

6. Treasurer's Report

(a) Managements Accounts 2026 up to June 2026

Key points to note are:

- I. Subscription renewals exceeded budget by £0.64k in the six months because the expected minor attrition has not materialised. As before, I have 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. This should be the pattern enjoyed in the remainder of 2026 unless major unexpected attrition occurs. Renewals now being secured are at the full rate of £15 so we may do slightly better by the year end
- II. Next Gift Aid claim will be submitted once PG and JB have reconciled cash receipts between the cash book to the membership database – scheduled for July.
- III. Interest on the 95 day account is now down to 2.5%
- IV. The cost of the quarterly newsletter has fallen from £630 to £480 wef the June edition as the paper 'grade' has been reduced and this saving will perpetuate in the rest of the year culminating in an overall saving of £448 for the full year.
- V. The major spend of £456 on the new display banners has been deferred to July but was budgeted in May. This is the major (but temporary) cause of the saving in expenditure compared to budget at the end of June
- VI. As there are less awards this year, the cost of the Harpenden plaques has reduced from £775 to £563 in the full year re-forecast.
- VII. The Advertising and Promotion budget should have included £195 for the Highland Games but did not – now paid

VIII. Office costs are over budget as we have continued to benefit from Gaggle Mail but this renewal was not budgeted. The worse variance on this category is primarily time related.

IX. The Society's insurance policy has been renewed without any significant changes in the cover provided and premiums in line with budget

(b) Overall, the results reveal a £2457 surplus for the year to date and £1042 better than budget but 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 my current review for the full year, subject to any further variations in marketing costs, have reduced the budgeted £406 deficit to a surplus of £998.

7. Secretary's Items

RF reported that the Society's 2025 financial results had been sent to the Charity Commission.

8. Chairman's Items.

(a) JP reported that the 11 June AGM had gone well and was completed in 8 minutes. Chris Marsden was appointed as the Society's new President. Chris doesn't intend to attend Society meetings but will receive copies of papers and agenda items etc. as he is happy to help in any way he can, so please consider him to be available to us all.

(b) The reaction to the 11 June public meeting has been very positive, and the attendance of so many non-members and a younger cohort is testimony to a subject that had wider appeal. JP thanked KT for creating the evening. So, the question we must ask is what other areas should we be looking at to broaden our audience appeal? Katharine has already started work on an approach to younger members of the community with the HS Youth Collective concept, which we need to discuss further.

(c) The Highways Agency are reported by PS to have objected to the Crest Nicholson Batford project on grounds of inadequate traffic analysis. JP stated that he believes the Society should push for a review of the wholly inadequate traffic analysis done by Herts Highways in respect of the CALA Homes project on the Luton Road.

(d) Regarding the Local Plan and its current status. JP reported that he believed that SADC has responded to the Inspectors' requests for minor amendments etc. and are still expecting a green light in the coming months, leading to formal adoption in 2027. This is just before unitary authorities are brought in for Hertfordshire, and SADC ceases to exist. The successor authority will then have to start work on a revised Plan that meets the Government's higher housing targets with a target date for completion of 2029!

(e) It is believed that the Government still intends to announce the unitary structure for Hertfordshire before the summer recess, so we'll know what overall organization we have to cope with shortly, however it's unlikely that there will be many details regarding the scope of the changes and the financial arrangements released at this time. Therefore, we continue to face uncertainty in what local government is being asked to manage, and how it really organises itself in detail to meet that requirement.

(f) Topics for meetings going forward include a September special session on the climate threat we face, which Katharine is organizing and hopefully, Victoria Collins will be there to support, as Daisy Cooper did for a similar evening recently at St. Albans Abbey (to an audience of over 300).

(g) Regarding public meetings, in November, Dr Bethan Rees has agreed to give a talk about how the latest NHS structural organization is working through the primary care network, and JP is trying to get Elliot Howard-Jones, Chief Executive of Herts Community NHS Trust, to join in that presentation. JP

will be reminding Paul de Kort of his agreement to give a third update in January on the Local Plan and in particular, the practical issue that it now creates.

9. **Membership Secretary's Items**

Membership Headlines

We have 446 memberships covering 667 names This excludes:

- 1 'Donation membership' where someone continues to pay us and we have no clue where they are after they moved.
- 1 membership who has paid for 2026, but who has died so is no longer active member. Note that these are kept in the database for financial reporting purposes.
- 3 new memberships since last committee meeting (2 from recent public meeting), 1 leaver (died)

10. **Newsletter Editor's Items**

- (a) Summer Newsletter The new look in the lighter paper worked well and was well received by the delivery team. My deliveries in the High Street and Southdown liked the inclusion of some new subject matter when I showed the new pages.
- (b) Autumn Newsletter This will be scheduled for an early September publication so we need to think about content which should be produced by mid August. The current suggested content:
- Page on FOODSMILES from KT
 - Page on Awards presentations
 - Review of Public Meeting & AGM from Alan B
 - Page on Rothamsted update
 - Page on Ron's Summer Retail Round Up
 - Page Update on Youth employment
 - Half page on presentations to Harry and Alan

11. **Social Media**

- (a) The social media hit rate has been consistent throughout the period with most success coming from a post on the improvements to St Albans Hospital which achieved 4,368 views (Facebook only), 13 interactions and 3 new followers.
- (b) Facebook followers are now at 515, up 12 since the last meeting. Instagram followers are at 38.
- (c) Instagram
- MR has now created an Instagram account for the Society and is posting most new content simultaneously across all three platforms.
 - The main advantage of Instagram is its user demographic, which is generally younger (typically aged 20–45) than those on Facebook and Nextdoor. It is hoped that this will help the Society to engage with a younger audience and broaden awareness of the Society's activities.
- (d) Meta Advertising
- Facebook and Instagram are both owned by Meta. During the period MR trialled Meta's advertising functionality, known as "Boost".
 - The first campaign was targeted at people who:

- are aged 21 or over
 - live within seven miles of Harpenden town centre
 - were not already followers of our social media channels
- III. According to Meta's reporting, the advertisement was viewed approximately 1,300 times, with 69 users clicking through to our website. During the same period bookings to our public meeting increased by 14, twice what might be expected.
- IV. The most important measure of success is obviously attendance at our public meeting. A straw poll survey conducted by PG suggested that around 20% of non-members attending the 11 June public meeting first heard about the event through social media. If this estimate is correct, the cost of attracting those 7 attendees through social media advertising was approximately £4 per attendee. PG also reported that two new members joined following the public meeting. If those memberships resulted from social media activity, the advertising expenditure has effectively been recovered.
- V. Whilst it is difficult to attribute outcomes with complete certainty, the evidence suggests that the social media campaigns contributed meaningfully to ticket sales and attendance.

12. **Awards 2025**

The presentations to winners will take place from mid July - mid August. All have been emailed to announce their success

AWARDS 2025:

- 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.

13. **History Society**

- (a) RB reported that the current exhibition – Inter-war Development – commenced in May. The population of Harpenden doubled over this period, as did the housing stock.
- (b) The evening talk on 24 June turned out to be an exceedingly hot day and coincided with the England football kick off at 9pm. Accordingly attendance was at a low of 60 – lowest for about 24 months. The meeting began with our AGM which lasted 3½ minutes.
- (c) Trustees are discussing the History' Society's vision and mission, before finalising strategy and a business plan for the future. Having made achievements over the last 2 years – including almost doubling the number of members – working at a sprint, it is appropriate to take time out to plan what we want to achieve and how to use our resources over coming years. One subject under discussion is whether to return to the EMC auditorium as our venue for talks – the museum is there so it is our "home," though costly.

14. **Wellbeing and Youth**

- (a) Public Meeting – From Soil to Supper

KT was pleased with the outcome, speakers and audience. A few people have subsequently said they plan to sign up so it is hoped we will get further engagement in the coming months.

(b) Food Futuring

Since the last meeting, KT has attended the third *Food Futuring* session (22nd June, St Albans), a Hertfordshire-wide initiative bringing together stakeholders to shape a healthier, fairer and more resilient local food system.

There is likely to be a fourth session planned in September and KT may be involved in leading some school curriculum work around food education in Hertfordshire. This is something we could promote locally as likely to be funded so free to schools.

(c) National Emergency Briefing

Martyn Love and Dave Butler have both watched the *National Emergency Briefing* film. There is a general feeling it could be quite divisive within the community as it drives a level of fear around climate, national security...many feel it's not backed up by credible data and feels quite one sided. KT is not keen to pursue this from a society angle.

(d) Harpenden Society Youth Collective (HSYC)

Aim: The HSYC has been developed in response to a desire to strengthen engagement with young people across the town and to provide The Harpenden Society with a more direct understanding of young people's priorities, concerns and ideas. The Society is keen to create meaningful opportunities for students to contribute to the future of Harpenden while developing valuable leadership and community engagement skills.

Outline is expected to include:

- A welcome and launch event.
- One meeting per term.
- One youth-led campaign or public event each year.
- A funded social and recognition event each summer.

15. Crime & Policing

AB circulated a draft report to committee members for comment on the Use of Facial Recognition before the meeting.

16. Transport Working Group

(a) Sustainable transport

- I. There have been no meetings of the HTC Sustainable Transport as the meeting scheduled for 20th May 2026 was postponed until September.
- II. Following a serious incident on the A1081, and the junction with Ambrose Lane, I am working with the St Albans Cycle Campaign to both get the pot holes fixed and to propose a repair criteria more appropriate to cycling.

(b) Parking

- I. No progress on the offer of one hour free parking to a limited number of spaces.
- II. Our position remains
 - 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.
- III. No progress on the adoption of new facility which allows apps, other than Pay-By-Phone, to be used to pay for parking.

(c) Airport

LADACAN's appeal was heard in May and rejected. Their appeal against that appeal is, in my view, unlikely to be successful.

(d) Rail

I have been in communication with John Smith (society member) about the approach to the East Carpark. John had already met with Network Rail and they confirmed there is an issue but are not intending to take action. I now intend contacting Hertfordshire Highways to see what pressure that can apply to alleviate the pressures for cars, cyclists and pedestrian in and around the Station Road / Carlton Road intersection.

17. Health & Social Welfare Working Group

(a) Changes in Neighbourhood Health

The aim is to deliver better alternatives to hospital care with more community-based options, such as urgent community response or virtual wards, that may safely reduce avoidable hospital attendances and admissions. It is not clear how Consultants, based in hospitals, will be able to be in two places at once.

(b) Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

- I. These are being established to bring professionals from primary, community, secondary and social care, alongside wider local authority services, to deliver coordinated, proactive care within a defined local area. As set out in the Neighbourhood health framework, there will be no single national definition of an INT. Instead, their composition and focus will vary according to local population needs and service capacity, with local systems determining the most appropriate model.
- II. Already, the first wave of neighbourhood health models is being rolled out in 43 pilot areas with the lowest life expectancies and the longest waits to test a wide range of delivery approaches based on local capacity and population health. Many of these 'new' neighbourhood systems are using existing buildings and teams.
- III. The Neighbourhood health framework asks ICBs to start to plan for a new neighbourhood approach to planned care over the 2026–27 financial year. The framework does not mandate what this approach should look like but highlights the need to improve the interface between primary and secondary care. It proposes that:
 - GPs will be put in control when it's unclear whether a patient needs specialist care
 - GPs and specialists will work more closely together, expanding advice via single points of access, so that by March 2027 one in four referrals is redirected back to GPs rather than a patient being added to the waiting list.
 - It is not clear what type of referrals will be deemed suitable to be assessed in primary care.
 - More specialist follow-ups will be delivered by professionals in the community to reduce secondary care follow-up appointments by at least 10% by March 2027.

- Again ,it is not clear how this will work. There was an attempt to run Consultant clinics in GP premises during the GP fund holding era. This was found to be inefficient and a poor use of resources

(c) Preparing estates for neighbourhood planned care

- I. Delivering planned specialist care safely in neighbourhood settings depends not only on workforce and digital capability but also on having the right clinical estate infrastructure. Many community estates may not have sufficient consultation rooms, diagnostics capacity and space for MDT working, which limits the scope of care that can realistically be shifted out of hospitals.
- II. This challenge is particularly key for specialties with high diagnostic or imaging requirements. In rheumatology for example, many of their complex patients require timely access to laboratory testing, ultrasound, PET-CT and MRI – equipment that is typically located in a hospital.
- III. It is unclear to what extent NHCs will be able to accommodate the diagnostic and clinical facilities required for more complex specialist activity, meaning that some elements of planned care will still need to remain in hospital settings.
- IV. However, with appropriately equipped estates, other aspects of specialist care – such as follow-up reviews and joint case discussions – could be delivered safely and effectively in community environments. In addition, the acceleration of climate change means that NHCs must be built to withstand the severe weather events that will become more frequent and intense.

18. 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)

Nothing further has been posted on the planning file since the last report. The Application is still pending.

(b) Land to north of Wheathampstead Road – (5/2022/2748) (Wheathampstead Land Ltd & Hertfordshire Land Ltd – both registered in Channel Islands)

Section 106 agreement signed. The application only related to access but the Agreement is comprehensive and includes a 35% provision for Affordable Housing, and financial obligations including £28K for Tithe Barn Community Centre, £220K for local transport schemes and £66K for the NHS.

(c) Land to the NE of Harpenden – Ref: - 5/2026/0051 – Crest Nicholson

Crest Nicholson have submitted Outline application for site. The Society has submitted Objection on grounds that a composite application of the four parcels of land should be made to achieve a better understanding of traffic implications and provide better site access. The Society has also cited the lack of any proposals to improve the infrastructure, drainage and reduce flood risks. The Town Council has also submitted its response which echoes many of the points raised and calls for clarification before the application is determined. National Highways have also asked for more data regarding the traffic implications, but to date Herts CC has not responded.

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

No change since last month.

(e) 26 Roundwood Park Harpenden – Ref No: - 5/2026/0947

This is an application to demolish a very characterful large house and replace with 3 smaller dwellings. The house is not locally listed or in a Conservation Area. Nevertheless, the Society was approached by a neighbour seeking our support to prevent the development as the existing house is considered an important landmark building which adds considerably to the character of the road. Whilst in principle we agree with these sentiments we consider there are limited grounds for objecting – other than to suggest that only 2 houses are built. We have lodged an Objection on this basis. The Town Council have also objected, citing that the loss of a prominent character property would be contrary to the Local Neighbourhood Plan. This will be a good test despite other consents to allow demolition within Conservation Area.

19. Economic Activity Working Group

- (a) The third Business Forum by Harpenden Town Council on June 24 was well organised but there were only 9 attendees.
- The meeting opened with an update on: The creation of a Guide ‘Visiting Harpenden for Business’
 - E Cargo Bikes Survey - not much interest
 - Business Mentoring - volunteers from both mentors and mentees being included in a database.
 - All 3 are still WIP
- I. The town’s Mayor announced her charities for 2026/27 - Herts Young Homeless and Youth Talk. AND building a better future for young people in Harpenden The conversation also included job seeking so RT referred her and the small audience to the editorial coverage in the Society’s Summer Newsletter about this subject and suggested that the Business Forum align this into their activities in the next 12 months.
- II. The forthcoming Universal Studios project was featured in a slide and discussed as a positive opportunity for Harpenden with jobs, services and even expansion of the hotels + places to stay. This will be an ongoing project
- III. The two NW and NE Harpenden developments were also previewed for info, not detailed analysis.
- IV. Finally a very interesting talk on CRYPTO by Andy Buchanan. Whilst this was of interest it is a subject full of risks. It is unregulated and used by the criminal fraternity. Not something to be endorsed by HTC or recommended by the Society.
- (b) High Street Changes
- I. Molasses House gallery is relocating to London in July
- II. BJ Copestick Jewellers has now closed
- III. The Bank Hub was officially opened on June 26.
- IV. The Concourse. Work has been completed on the new seating module with a centre display of flowers.
- V. Southdown Industrial Estate - Still no announcements The large area on the left side as you enter the estate has now been completely flattened. It is believed 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.
- VI. The District and Modern store in Vaughan Rd has closed -Permanently.

- VII. The Morrisons store adjacent to Crew Clothing is due to close July 19 - This will leave two big empty units almost together on the High Street as the Copestick Jewellers has now closed.

20. AOB

- (a) MR reported on his campaign on behalf of the Society to prevent unlicensed, and in some cases potentially fraudulent, "charity" collectors from soliciting donations in Harpenden; typically outside supermarkets such as Sainsbury's and Waitrose. Following an exchange of emails with council officers, they have confirmed that the two organisations reported were not licensed and will be investigated further. MR has engaged with Cllr Aaron Roberts and made a number of proposals for the council;
- I. Reduce ambiguity by the council licensing only registered charities
 - II. Publish a register showing the identity of licensed collectors and the dates on which collections are authorised.
 - III. Recommend that licensed collectors to carry a copy of their Council authorisation.
 - IV. Implement effective monitoring and enforcement procedures when unlicensed collectors are identified.
- (b) Cllr Jacobs has now shared the Council officer's response with me, and I am delighted to report that they appear to have either adopted, or made significant progress towards, all of these proposals:
- I. Licensing only registered charities
 - II. Publishing a calendar on their website so that the public can verify whether a collection is authorized – agreed to progress and in development
 - III. Encouraging street collectors to carry a copy of their licence. Whilst not perfect, this becomes less important if the public can easily check the Council's website.

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

Dates of the next Public Meetings: Future of Healthcare in Harpenden -26th November.

The meeting closed at 11.20am