

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 9 March 2026 at 10.00 a.m.
HTC Council Chamber
MINUTES

1. Present

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

2. In Attendance

Roger Butterworth (RB), Alan Bostock (AB), Peter Syme (PS)

3. Apologies for absence

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

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 12 January 2026, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.

5. Matters Arising from Minutes

- (a) RF reported that he and RT will be buying a small gift for Harry Downie and Alan Bunting in recognition of their long service on the committee and the plan would be to present this gift to them at the start of the next committee meeting together with a letter of thanks.
- (b) JP reported that the meeting with Carl Chivers (HTC) to discuss the town council's approach to the planned local government reorganisation had taken place. Carl is willing to give a talk about the impact of this reorganisation on HTC but would prefer to give this talk after the government's decision on the new Hertfordshire structure has taken place.

6. Treasurer's Report

(a) Financial Accounts 2025

- I. JB reported that the accounts that were circulated for the January trustee meeting have not varied since then.
- II. JB is in the process of finalising the file for the Stacey's independent examination scheduled for 19th March. It is anticipated that these will be 'signed off' without amendment and be ready for the AGM in April.
- III. JB reported that, with Paul's assistance, subscription receipts and Gift Aid claim receipts for 2025 had been reconciled to accounting records and the membership database. He further reported that a full validation of members' Gift Aid declarations had now been achieved.

(b) Trustees Annual Report 2025

- I. The operational narrative has been drafted for approval and includes a Finance Review that JB has prepared to reflect 2025 performance and to comment on the immediate financial future.
- II. JB recommended that steps should be taken, during 2026, to regularise the subscriptions being paid, by a number of members, at rates well below the current £15 rate. This was approved by the committee.
- III. JB also recommended that Trustees should try and identify projects to utilise the considerable funds held by the Society which are well in excess of the reserves policy. This was noted by the Committee.

- IV. The Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements as presented were approved by the committee subject being approved by the Independent Examiner.

(c) Managements Accounts 2026

- I. JB reported that he had circulated the Management accounts for the two months to end February, together with a revised monthly cash flow for the remainder of the year
- II. JB reported that interest on the 95 day account is now down to 2.75% and will fall further in April to 2.25%. When time allows, JB will research a more lucrative 'home' for the Society's excess funds.
- III. Overall, the results reveal a £442 better variance for the year to date. Key budget holders have been asked to confirm/vary the forward projections, and the results of this review are included in the revised cash flow forecasts. The financial results of the review have reduced the budgeted £406 deficit to a small surplus of £99.

(d) Transaction Control

JB reminded budget holders 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-imbursement to the budget holder. Additionally, individual items of expenditure exceeding £750 must be approved by trustees as a body and minuted.

(e) Administrative issues.

JB reported that he is now a full power signatory (including internet banking) on all the Nat West accounts so can make payments and transfer monies between accounts.

7. Secretary's Items.

- (a) RF reported that the Society has held its AGM in April or May and it would be the intention that the AGM will be held at the start of any public meeting that the Society holds in this period.

8. Chairman's Items.

- (a) JP welcomed Alan Bostock and Peter Syme to the meeting.
- (b) JP reported that following on from our public meeting on the progress on the Local Plan (no money for infrastructure, as expected!), he had had a meeting with Carl Cheevers, as a catching up session. HTC's approach to the question of unitary authority was discussed. HTC are keen to see a two-authority outcome, but regardless of the final outcome, it will give them the ability to acquire more local assets (with agreed funding). In particular, HTC would be looking to acquire some assets that SADC currently hold in the town, and to take on responsibility for parking (which would be part of the unitary authority enabling legislation).
- (c) On the Local Plan, HTC are already lobbying with local developers and planners and are seeking significantly more in S.106 contributions (which he recognises as a stretch!). However, HTC are pushing to have the S.106 projects identified and defined in scope to ensure that the contributions are binding.
- (d) Of particular interest to the Society is HTC's intention to police the planning permissions granted re developer compliance, a task we all know SADC are not very good at!
- (e) The conclusion of our meeting was that Carl is more than happy to speak at a public meeting but would prefer the timing to be after the Government's announcement of the structure for Hertfordshire. Whilst that is timetabled for the end of the Parliamentary year and the summer recess, this is not certain.
- (f) On the issue of parking, there has been a modest concession in terms of granting a free first hour, covering 16% of existing on street bays in the town centre. JP believes that we must not give up on our

stance supporting the free first hour, but we need to decide how best to pursue the issue, without risking being accused of being “moaning minnies”.

- (g) JB further reported that our MP has raised the issue of inadequate local infrastructure incorporated in the Government’s housebuilding agenda. JP will be meeting her shortly, and intends to discuss how best we can support that position locally.
- (h) On the issue of public meetings, it was agreed that KT would try to arrange for Andre Lussman to give a talk on the “difficulties of running a hospitality venue in Harpenden”, bearing in mind the preponderance of such venue in the town and the current cost of living situation.
- (i) IB reported that he had reserved Bethan Rees to give talk on the PCN on Nov 25/26.

9. Membership Secretary's Items

- (a) We have 484 memberships, covering 720 names. This excludes 4 ‘donation memberships’ where people continue to pay us and we have no clue where they are after they moved, and 1 membership which has paid for 2026, but who have moved so are no longer members.
- (b) 4 new memberships 5 leavers (all moved away)
- (c) Chase up activity and membership data check update- this has been delayed from Jan until March, PG will use the updated payments received info and identify non-payers. He 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. PG expects to send about 60 letters.

10. Newsletter Editor's Items

- (a) RT reported that the feedback on the Winter Newsletter had been very positive.
- (b) The Spring Newsletter is scheduled to be delivered to members in mid-May. The last date for submitting copy is mid-April

11. Publicity

Arts Competition with Harpenden’s United Nations Association.

RT reported that there had been excellent involvement with St George’s and the King’s School. 57 entries of high quality viewed at St George’s by Suheil Shahryar (UN Chair), Barrie Woolston (Owner Molasses House Gallery) and RT. The prize presentations are taking place on March 12 at St George’s and The King’s School on March 13. Gift vouchers from Harpenden Books are being presented to all winners (total value £310). A £10 Voucher will be presented to 50 non-winners (funded by UNA). A press release will be issued during the week commencing March 16, showing winning entries/.

12. Social Media

- (a) MR reported that the social media hit rate was significantly up this period with most success coming from a post on transport chaos which achieved 22,100 views (combined Facebook and Next Door), 64 interactions and 27 new followers.
- (b) As always, it would be good to have more web content from trustees. The post on governance (two councils into one) and our new cancer centre both achieved twice as much contact as, for example, the newsletter post. Members, and prospective members, will only value the Society if they know about the good work that we do.

13. Awards

A full page editorial appeared in the Winter Newsletter. A press release was issued on the 2nd March which has generated coverage so far in the St Albans Times and Harpendia.

14. History Society

- (a) Sadly, John Wassell, aged 76, a long-standing trustee of the History Society, passed away suddenly a couple of weeks ago. John had been newsletter editor for many years, as well as researching a number of articles, and, until very recently, membership secretary. John loved Harpenden's history and will be missed.
- (b) A national Blue Plaque was unveiled on the 9th March to recognise the home in Harpenden of Judy Fryd, founder of Mencap, in Westfield Avenue.
- (c) Cllr Kirsti Wenn, Deputy Mayor, visited the museum on 11 February, giving rise to extensive publicity in the Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times.
- (d) 190 attended the January talk on the Nickey Line and 130 attended the February talk on links between Luton Hoo and Harpenden

15. Transport Working Group

- (a) Sustainable transport

The fourth HTC Sustainable Transport meeting took place on 25th February and a report was circulated to trustees on 28th February. A further meeting is scheduled for 20th May 2026. MR is encouraged that the council are happy to work so closely with the Society and maybe this could be extended into other areas, like parking!

- (b) Parking

MR has been in written communication with Paul De Kort re parking charged and the minimal benefit, and added confusion that will be created, by giving an extra half hour to just 40 spaces. The Society have repeated our requests.

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

I have an action to respond to Paul's most recent email.

- (c) Airport

Much to MR's surprise LADACAN has been granted a 2-day "rolled-up hearing" at the Court of Appeal, where the application to appeal the High Court dismissal of their case against Luton Airport expansion, and the grounds of our appeal itself, will be considered. The hearing will be in the third week of May and the cost for LADACAN ranges from £7k to £10k, dependent on outcome.

16. Health & Social Welfare Working Group

- (a) IB reported that the NHS has announced the rollout of 20 advanced DEXA bone scanners across England including one for West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals. These will improve osteoporosis diagnosis, expand capacity and reduce waits, which will directly benefit many older patients locally.
- (b) Neighbourhood Health Centre- delays. Based on reports as of February 2026, the introduction of new Single Neighbourhood Provider (SNP) and Multiple Neighbourhood Provider (MNP) contracts has been delayed, with the earliest implementation now expected in April 2027-28.
- (c) **Transition and Organisational Change-New Integrated Care Board** - Work is progressing to establish **Central East ICB** from 1 April 2026, alongside a structural reconfiguration to meet the required £19 per head spend for the population as set by NHSE. This will inevitably involve numerous redundancies.

- (d) **Community Paediatric Waits** - Extensive delays in Herts and West Essex , with 39% of patients waiting over 52 weeks, including neurodevelopmental pathways.

(e) **NHS bosses want big rise to 639 flats on Hemel Hospital site**

NHS bosses want to increase the number of flats planned for the Hemel Hospital site by over 40% to 639. The extra flats would help raise funds for the £135m 'neighbourhood health centre 'Hub on the Market Square. Current plans would already allow for 450 flats and a new hospital building on the 12-acre Hemel Hospital site. But now NHS bosses are pushing instead for complete demolition of the Hospital to accommodate the extra flats. Dacorum Council says the NHS bid to increase flat numbers is 'welcome', because it provides 'further flexibility on the number of homes that can be delivered in the plan period'.

17. Built Environment Working Group

The low number of applications for residential extensions etc continues. Set out below is a review of the larger existing applications/proposals under consideration: -

(a) **Land to north west of Harpenden – (5/2023/0327) – Carla Homes**

No change since last month.

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

No change since last month.

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

No change since last month.

(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. Objection received from KW School expressing concern that new houses will be close to the flood lights of sports field and sports hall.

(f) **9 (Lower) High Street – 5/2025/1583**

Change of use has been granted from Pub to restaurant use. Note - there are now over 60 establishments in the town centre where food/coffee/takeaways are available. This is a large percentage of the total number of premises.

(g) **Police Station Vaughan Road**

This is now for sale as offices, but perhaps could be converted to residential.

18. Economic Activity Working Group

- (a) The second **Business Forum** by Harpenden Town Council which was held on Feb 11 was well organised but with only 50 attendees. Discussions included:

- I. **Networking** - One of the challenges that came out of a previous Forum was the need for a list of local business networking groups all in one place. This has been added to the Business Support page on HTC website, and open to additions.
- II. **Town Centre Research** - Information on the Harpenden town centre research (Parking) recently commissioned can be found on HTC website. No mention was made on the impact of the charges and how HTC would respond to SADC. Carl Chivers claimed they had lots of learnings

which would be used to improve the Town Centre and encourage more visits by residents. No mention was made of negotiations with SADC on changes to the free time and parking costs.

- III. **Business Mentoring Programme** - HTC reviewed the new Business Mentoring programme alongside their partners The Harpenden Collective. Since launching they've already started matching mentees and mentors and are excited to see the results that come from this programme. More information can be found on website and applications for places can be made through The Harpenden Collective.
- IV. **Promotional Channels** - Forum magazine was highlighted to feature local businesses. Harpenden Town Council produces Forum magazine three times a year.
- V. **Events programme** - The new calendar of events planned for Harpenden this year was also highlighted as a variety of ways local businesses can get involved, including sponsorship options.

(b) Retail Update

- I. B J Copestick the Jewellers are closing down soon (retirement by the owner)
- II. Loveweds Jewellers have moved their business to a large site in central St Albans. Appointment only consultations will still take place in the closed Harpenden Premises.
- III. The Landlord of the block facing Leyton Green has developed 2 small retail units adjacent to the recently opened Nail Bar.
- IV. The Cross Keys are having substantial repairs to their footings requiring semi road closure of Bowers Parade. This will continue through to June. This barrier is having a detrimental effect to footfall to the stores in Bowers Parade.
- V. No details for the opening of the Bank Hub.
- VI. The Harpenden Building Society new premises look really good and are a positive addition to the High Street.

19. **AOB**

- (a) MR raised the issue of Community Interest Companies (CICs) collecting on the High Street. It was agreed that MR would write to SADC enquiring about the terms that CICs are allowed to collect and shouldn't they display a badge indicating that they are allowed to trade. **Action MR**
- (b) A discussion took place about whether the Society should produce a professionally printed leaflet distributed throughout Harpenden by Door to Door, or similar, to explain what we do and to increase membership. It was considered that this would be too expensive considering the possible pay back but an alternative proposal was put forward to write an article for the Town Council's Forum magazine or to possibly buy some advertising space in this magazine.
- (c) It was agreed that the Society should not comment upon the Rothamsted Manor lease proposal at least until full information has been published about the terms of the lease being offered.
- (d) Alan Bostock made a proposal that he should investigate how Herts Police were implanting, or planning to implement, their Facial Recognition system.

Dates of the next committee meetings: 18 May 26 (Note change), 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 12.15