

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 13 November 2023 at 10.00 a.m.
Salvation Army Hall
MINUTES

1. **Present**

Jeff Phillips (JP), Martyn Reed (MR), Harry Downie (HD), Alan Bunting (AB), Ian Barrison (IB), John Lowe (JL), Paul Gloess (PGs), Karl Wingfield (KW).and Bob Fletcher (RF).

2. **In attendance**

Roger Butterworth (RB),

3. **Apologies for absence**

These were received from Ron Taylor (RT).

4. **Past Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting on 18 September 2023, previously circulated, were approved as a true record.

5. **Matters Arising from Minutes**

None.

6. **Treasurer's Report**

(a) The Treasurer's Report had been circulated by HD prior to the meeting.

(b) The Treasurer reported that he had now opened a 95-day notice savings account and transferred Society funds into it. It was agreed that approximately 1 year's worth of income should be left in the current account with the remainder put into the notice account.

7. **Secretary's Items.**

(a) The following potential public meeting were discussed:

I. Local Plan – **Action:** JP to progress the invitation to SADC to give a presentation on the current state of the Local Plan

II. Community Health Trust – **Action:** JP to try to arrange for May/June 2024

III. Changes to Luton Airport's flight paths – **Action:** KW to explore when such a public meeting could be held.

(b) A discussion took place about whether it was possible for the Society to arrange a public meeting involving local businesses to discuss the state of the high street. Also, a discussion took place about whether the Society could help with forming a new local business group **Action: JP to discuss this with RT and afterwards the Town Clerk.**

(c) It was agreed that the Society should have Trustees Indemnity Insurance. **Action: RF to arrange.**

(d) It was agreed that the Society should modernise its structure by becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO). **Action: RF to progress.**

8. **Chairman's Items.**

(a) The Chairman reported that he was arranging a meeting with the Town Clerk to discuss the formation of a town Transport Forum. Also, a meeting was to be arranged with a Society member who has expressed an interest in being a member of any Transport Forum that is formed. **Action: KW & JP to arrange meeting.**

(b) It was reported that SADC planning department was severely under-staffed resulting in significant delays in processing planning applications.

9. Harpenden and District Local History Society

RB reported that the new museum based in the Eric Morecambe Centre (EMC) will have its official opening on 20th April 2024. Volunteers are required to progress the planning for the opening day. The Society will send out an email asking for volunteers. **Action: RB to provide the wording for the email.**

10. Membership Secretary's Items

The Membership Secretary's report had been circulated by PGs prior to the meeting. The Society now has 485 memberships covering 753 names. Also, there are 24 organisations that receive a complimentary newsletter (16 Schools, Town Council, Library, Herts Archives, 3 Local papers, Lea Springs & St Albans Civic Society).

11. Newsletter Editor's Items

(a) The Autumn newsletter has now been issued, JP congratulated AB on the production of an excellent newsletter.

(b) AB reported that he is now working on the Winter issue with a mid-January date for final input.

12. Publicity

The publicity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting. There has been significant controversy over staff space car parking in Amenbury Lane Car Park. This was reported in the Herts Advertiser letter page (author JP) and a report was included in the St. Albans Times resulting from a Society press release.

13. Social Media

(a) The Social Media report had been circulated by MR prior to the meeting.

(b) MR has commissioned Julie Maginn (a contact of RT) to propose a new brand image for the society, including a new website layout. It is planned to have initial designs completed in the New Year for a launch at the AGM in April 2024.

14. Awards

(a) RT reported on the new format for the Annual Awards.

15. Working Group Reports

(a) Community Safety: JP reported that Paul Gardiner had resigned from the committee and thanked him for his sterling work with the Community Safety group during the past few years.

(b) Transport: The Transport report had been circulated by KW prior to the meeting.

(c) Health & Social Welfare: The Health & Social Welfare report had been circulated by IB prior to the meeting. IB reported that a new medical school will be opening at The University of Hertfordshire.

(d) Built Environment: The Built Environment full report has been circulated by JL prior to the meeting. Items of interest were:

I. **Land off Baulk Close – Ref 5/2023/1071** – An outline application for affordable dwellings on a 1 acre (0.44 ha) site between River Lea and footpath/cycle track. This has attracted many objections due to Green Belt and Environmental matters. The Town Council have also recommended Refusal.

II. **Southdown Industrial Estate – Ref 5/2023/1550** – The Coal Board Pension Fund continues to apply for conditional consent for their approved scheme. Their recent submission for approval of materials is under consideration.

III. **22-24 Grove Road – 5/2023/1559** - Interestingly whilst Jarvis is still awaiting the outcome of their revised application for a 75-bed care home, they are also continuing to apply for approval of conditional matters relating to the approved residential scheme. The latest conditional approval related to the Remediation Strategy.

IV. **Cross Lane Fields** – 5/2023/0317 – submitted in March 2023 is still Pending.

- V. **Harpenden Public Halls, Southdown Rd.** – No further news since the council decided to pull the application following their decision to sell the site.
 - VI. **6 High Street** –5/2023/0254 – Refused primarily due to second floor extension which would be considered harmful to the Conservation Area. **An application has now been lodged by the applicants.**
 - VII. **North West Harpenden (L & G Proposals) 5/2023/0327** – Still under consideration. The latest attachment to Planning file is from National Highways who recommended that approval should not be given until at least 30/11/23 pending traffic studies.
 - VIII. **Land to the north of Wheathampstead Road** – 5/2022/2748 – The application for up to 40 houses is still under consideration. A large number of Objection have been lodged. Still pending.
- (e) Economic Activity: The Economic Activity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting. RT reported that Magnus Interior Designs & Blinds in Southdown had now closed, the old Pan Auto site is now flattened awaiting development, Ashton Court in the Southdown Industrial Estate is now empty and up for Sale or Rent and the lower section of the estate remains completely empty which makes it harder to attract investment.

Also, AGA Kitchens, Good Sports, Map Stores and Wine Rack in the High Street have all now closed, so with the two Banks that makes six retail units since July. - A worrying trend. However, Wenzels Bakers have just opened in the old Coppers Boots and Shoes shop. HSBC has put their premises up at auction on Nov 2 at £1.3m guide price but this failed to sell. Barclays are rendering their premises back to bare bones, although their lease does not expire until 2026.

On the positive side it is rumoured that Specsavers will be taking the old Halifax BS unit although this may make life more difficult for the three existing opticians in the town.

16. AOB

None.

Dates of the next committee meetings: 15 Jan 2024, 11 March 2024, 13 May, 8 July, 16 Sept, 11 Nov

Dates of the next Public Meetings: None currently planned.

The meeting closed at 11.45.