

**THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Monday 11 November 2024 at 10.00 a.m.**  
**HTC Council Chamber**  
**MINUTES**

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1. **Present**

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

2. **In Attendance**

Roger Butterworth (RB).

3. **Apologies for absence**

These were received from Harry Downie (HD) and Alan Bunting (AB).

4. **Past Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting on 16 September 2024, 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. There were no questions raised regarding this report.

7. **Secretary's Items.**

(a) Public Meetings: JP confirmed that Paul de Kort had agreed to speak at a meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 to give an update on the state of the Local Plan. A discussion took place about whether the Society should also invite an opposition councillor to this meeting to comment on the Local Plan, but it was decided that the format of this meeting was not a "hustings" format but simply the councillor in charge of the Local Plan giving a status report. It was decided that the Society has to engage with councillors from whichever party is in power to get progress updates on the activities they are engaged in.

I. The Society needs to brief Paul de Kort on the issues the Society would like covered in the meeting. **Action JP,RT**

II. JP to contact Paul de Kort to enquire who is the HCC infrastructure person to invite to this or a future meeting. **Action JP**

(b) Other possible meetings included inviting the CEO of the Community Health Trust to talk about keeping people out of hospital, maybe linking it with the work being done by the PCN, inviting a local farmer (Ian Piggot?) to talk about the constraints of farming in the greenbelt and possibly inviting our MP, Victoria Collins, to give a one year update on what she has achieved. Again, it was discussed whether or not it was appropriate for our MP to be the main speaker at a Society public meeting without any opposition figures being also invited but again it was decided that it was appropriate for the Society to host such a meeting as it had done when the constituency had a conservative MP.

(c) A comment was made that there was a perception that the Society was favouring one political party, and it was accepted that this may be a perception held by some members and other residents but it was strenuously denied that this was actually the case (the Society's strong objections to the current Harpenden parking proposals was cited as an example of the Society's unbiased approach). A debate

took place about how this perception could be overcome and it was agreed to continue with this debate and to be conscious of this issue in all Society communications.

#### 8. **Chairman's Items.**

- (a) The Chairman's report had been circulated to all committee members prior to the meeting.
- (b) The Chairman reported that on the town centre parking issue, matters have moved on following the close of the first stage of the consultation exercise. It was agreed that the updated proposals were not significantly different from the original proposals and there were still major issues outstanding. KW will be producing a response to the updated parking proposals.
- (c) It was agreed that the Society's awards should include an ad-hoc award for exceptional civic service. It was agreed that Derek French would be an ideal candidate for such an award for his tireless work in achieving a Bank Hub for Harpenden.
- (d) It was agreed that a small group will be formed to plan a rolling one-year programme of public meetings. Members of the group will include JP, RT and RF.
- (e) It was agreed that the Society will organise a members meeting (with refreshments) in the Spring of 2025 so that the Committee can engage with members and obtain a view on the issues that members think the Society should be addressing.

#### 9. **Membership Secretary's Items**

- (a) The Membership Secretary's report had been circulated by PGs prior to the meeting.
- (b) We have 497 (was 495) memberships covering 761 names plus 24 Organisations listed that receive our complimentary newsletters (16 Schools, Town Council, Library, Herts Archives, 3 Local papers, Lea Springs & St Albans Civic Society).

#### 10. **Newsletter Editor's Items**

In AB's absence RT that he was planning on a New Year's edition to be published in late January.

#### 11. **Publicity**

The publicity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting.

#### 12. **Social Media**

- (a) The Social Media report had been circulated by MR prior to the meeting. Regular postings are being made to the Facebook and Nextdoor sites.
- (b) MR reported that, working with Steve Collins of the Photographic Society and RT, the Society was re-launching the Photography competition as currently the number of entries was very low.

#### 13. **Awards**

- (a) AWARDS 2023. The final presentation for the new all-weather pitch and ground development in Rothamsted Park on Tuesday Oct 8 concluded the Awards presentations for 2023.
- (b) AWARDS 2024. The Society will be launching this campaign in the next edition of the Newsletter together with press releases across all local media.

#### 14. **History Society**

- (a) The History Society report had been circulated by RB prior to the meeting. Items included.

#### 15. **Transport Working Group**

- (a) Luton Airport
  - I. Following the additional submissions made to the SoS for Transport ("SoS") which was reported at the September meeting, a further request was sent to Interested Parties for any "further comments".

- II. The Society took the opportunity to make another submission, reiterating our noise and funding concerns and supporting other Interested Parties concerns re: potential overcrowding on the road and rail network.
  - III. Nothing further has been posted to the Planning Inspectorate website so it is thought it can be safely assumed that the next post will be the decision, which is expected on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.
- (b) Airspace change!
- I. At long last, the Civil Aviation Authority is trying to get to grips with updating the UK's airspace. It's not a new concept, various iterations have been tried before but they have all failed, in part because the responsibility for originating airspace design proposals has been delegated to individual airports.
  - II. The "new" approach proposes "creating a single guiding mind responsible for future airspace design – a UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) – to deliver this much-needed modernisation at scale and at pace, as envisaged by the CAA's Airspace Modernisation Strategy published in January 2023."
  - III. The consultation then goes on to say: "Our proposal is to set up the UKADS in two phases: In the first phase, the initial operating model for the UKADS function (UKADS1) would be established as soon as possible and tasked to NATS (En Route) plc (NERL) through a change to its air traffic services licence. The scope of UKADS1 would initially be to take forward (sponsor [i.e. airport e.g. Luton Airport]) ACPs [short for "Airspace Change Proposal"] to modernise the complex airspace around London. Subject to UKADS1's capability and capacity, the DfT and CAA may expand this scope in the future.
  - IV. UKADS1 would take on all aspects of each ACP, except for the safety case, implementation and (depending on the circumstances) managing aspects of stakeholder engagement, where the airport, air navigation service provider or other proposer of the change may take the lead on consulting with their stakeholders, supported by the ADS."
  - V. What's new and different? Not a lot in terms of how airspace change proposals will be assessed as they will still be governed by CAP1616 (which was first published in December 2017) but, depending on how the new body is constituted, it ought to prevent the existing problem of all London airports promoting their own proposals, without an overarching plan, leading to proposals going nowhere (i.e. the current position) or potentially suboptimal outcomes occurring if anything ever gets decided!
  - VI. Andrew Lambourne's comment when the proposals were launched was that, whilst it might lead to better design, it'll probably allow capacity to grow faster!
  - VII. The consultation document will be read and, if there's an opportunity to feedback our members concerns (i.e. overflight at low altitudes and no respite) a response will be submitted.
- (c) Parking in Harpenden
- I. The Society has continued to battle away on this and an editorial in the St Albans Times reinforced our long held position.
  - II. SADC have since responded to say that they've considered the feedback and are proposing to make five revisions to the proposals:
    - Restrictions to start from 9am rather than 8.30am in Harpenden to ensure there is minimal impact on the morning school runs there.
    - The two 20-minute free parking sessions to be replaced with one 30-minute free session.
    - Charging periods to be made available in blocks of 30 minutes rather than one-hour long sessions to reduce the potential cost of brief stops. It means the charge for a one-hour stay,

including the free period, would be £1.25 while the maximum two-hour cost would be £3.75, including the free period.

- No changes to be introduced at bays in York Road, St Albans, until a wider review of parking in the area takes place.
  - Five limited waiting bays in Leyton Green, Harpenden, to be converted into resident parking bays for the benefit of local households.
- III. A response to the updated proposals will be submitted.
- Starting at 9am, rather than 8.30am – little impact as a CEO has never been seen at that time
  - Reducing number of free periods to 1 but increasing the length of visit by 10 minutes – presumably linked to the first revision as the Society can't see any logic in limiting the number of times someone comes into town – the vast majority will only visit once for a “quick shop” but if they come twice, three times what's the problem?
  - Charging periods – seems to recognise that two hours on street parking is more valuable than car parks as the two-hour charge is higher than in a car park – that makes sense (but the language explaining the proposal doesn't)
  - No change in St Albans whilst a “wider review” takes place – isn't that what the Society asked for in Harpenden.
  - Five limited waiting bays to become residents' bays – need to know what is behind this (and why it's been included in a consultation about parking charges – surely the need to provide adequate parking for residents is independent of charges to visitors)
- (d) Transport in Harpenden: the Society has emailed Carl Cheevers for an update on this

## 16. Health & Social Welfare Working Group

- (a) The Society hosted a successful meeting on October 17th, with an excellent presentation on Mental Health Support for young people, by Dr Alison Cowan. A short resume of the talk and relevant slides can be found on the Society's webpage.
- (b) Herts & West Essex ICB News:
- I. This is one of 11 ICB's nationally with a deficit > £100 million.
  - II. Elective Surgical hub opening next March at St Albans City Hospital. This should increase dedicated operating capacity with two new operating theatres. This includes buying in a robotic surgery hub, which will be used for around 200 hip and knee replacements/year.
  - III. New initiative on providing better services to Veterans, has led to the accreditation of 54 GP practices with 'veteran-friendly' services, able to provide support for more than 20,000 veterans.
  - IV. There are serious problem in long waits for paediatric audiology,( hearing ), therapies, ADHD and autism assessments.
  - V. Herts and West Essex diagnostic waits are the worst in England. Community Paediatric Waits, >65 weeks – 2,989 patients, >78 weeks- 2,288 patients, >104 weeks- 988 patients.
- (c) Local Hospital News:
- I. L&D continues with site reconfiguration - new emergency department progressing.
  - II. West Herts is in the Department of Health New Hospital Programme Review- backlog maintenance becoming increasingly expensive on the Watford site. Despite all this uncertainty, the Trust is performing very well against National Waiting List targets.

- III. Preliminary work has started on developing a plan for a new health campus in Hemel Hempstead town centre.
- IV. East and North are commissioning a new vascular surgical theatre suite-but have capacity and logistical issues on the site, with staff and visitor parking under significant pressure.
- V. There is still no concrete plan for the future of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

#### 17. **Built Environment Working Group**

- (a) In comparison to previous months there are now only about 4 – 5 applications per week for mostly residential extension/rebuilds compared to some 20 before.
- (b) Set out below is a review of the larger applications/proposals under consideration: -
  - I. 6 & 7 Batford Mill, Lower Luton Rd – (5/2024/0408) – to create a mixed-use scheme of flats, houses, retail and leisure facilities. Although the existing buildings have been demolished, the application was withdrawn on 10th October.
  - II. Solum, Harpenden Station East Car Park - (5/2024/0796) – Scoping application. The District Council confirmed on the 5th July that the proposed redevelopment does not require an Environmental Statement to be prepared. A meeting was held with representatives of Solum on 11th September to review the position. The scheme now envisages 120 new flats but with only 24 spaces. Solum anticipated submitting an application this month.
  - III. Cross Lane- (5/2023/0317): The Planning Officer has recommended refusal of the application. The decision of the Planning Committee has not yet been recorded on the file but it is understood they have endorsed recommendation. Main reasons for recommendation where 1, Inappropriate access for development of that size, 2 Contravenes Green Belt policy and 3 Would be harmful to the Common - which has national importance status.
  - IV. Land to north west of Harpenden – (5/2023/0327). Still pending – but a huge number of objections have been submitted, including from this Society. The GBA document is 69 pages!!
  - V. Land to north of Wheathampstead Road – (5/2022/2748). Still Pending. Last entry on file was 4th Nov.
  - VI. Sauncey View Lodge, Common Lane – (5/2023/2611). Still pending. Last entry on file was 21st Oct.
  - VII. Harpenden Public Halls. It is understood that the Council have sold the Hall to a local church, who do not plan to undertake any significant external alteration.
  - VIII. NE Harpenden. Crest Nicholson are holding a public consultation to show their proposals for the site on 13th Nov at the All-Saints Church, Batford

#### 18. **Economic Activity Working Group**

A new menswear chain (MYSTR) has opened in the now closed PURPLE store. The new Travel Agency (TRAVELBAG) and Travel Four Seasons are both trading from High St locations. Manor Pharmacy will be moving into the HSBC location downstairs with the upstairs planned to be two apartments.

#### 19. **AOB**

None

**Dates of the next committee meetings:** 13 Jan 25, 3 March 25, 12 May 25, 7 July 25, 15 Sept 25, 10 Nov 25.

**Dates of the next Public Meetings:** 21 Jan 2025 (Local Plan).

The meeting closed at 11.35.