

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 13 May 2024 at 10.00 a.m.
HTC Council Chamber
MINUTES

1. Present

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

2. Apologies for absence

These were received from Ian Barrison (IB) and Roger Butterworth (RB).

3. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 11 March 2024, previously circulated, were approved with a minor amendment as a true record.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes

None.

5. 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.

(b) RF reported that he now had full access to the Society's bank accounts and could initiate payments if required.

6. Secretary's Items.

(a) The future public meeting are as follows:

I. Local Plan – JP reported that he had a tentative agreement from SADC that a representative would give an update to the state of the Local Plan in early 2025, probably in January.

II. Dr Alison Cowan, a local GP with a special interest in Children and Young Person's mental health, has agreed to speak at a public meeting in October. Dr Cowan is the lead in the Harpenden PCN for this area of practice.

III. It was agreed that the Society will hold an election hustling.

(b) A discussion was held about the current plan to convert the Society to a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO). It is believed that if this goes ahead the new CIO version of the Society may have to change its bank account. If this were necessary, then all the standing orders held by members would have to be updated. It was thought that a large number of standing orders would not be updated meaning that we could lose this income which would have a significant impact on the Society's finances. It was also thought that changing the Society to become a CIO was not essential although it would improve the Trustees protection. The Gift Aid declarations may also need updating if the Society's Charity registration number changes. HD reported that he had enquired about this matter at the St Albans branch of Nat West but was informed that it was a headquarters decision.

Action RF to try to find out if a new bank account would be mandated by the Nat West Bank

7. Chairman's Items.

(a) The Chairman's report had been circulated to all committee members prior to the meeting.

(b) One issue which was discussed was that JP reported that a member wrote to the Society complaining of the re-roofing of a semi in the Arden Grove conservation area completed using inappropriate tiles and asking for help. JL pursued this with SADC, but they rejected the argument. The conclusion seems

to be from this, and other examples, that enforcement has a very low priority (or is perhaps almost non-existent) in an overworked planning department.

- (c) JP reported that he had had a brief conversation with Cllr Gill Haynes re the Commercial and Business Forum, but she said they were not yet ready to proceed. However, it is an approved activity, and the Society will be contacted in due course.
- (d) JP was also asked to enquire if there were any retail experts at the University of Hertfordshire who could produce a report on Harpenden's retail situation similar to the recent Transport Report that was commissioned. **Action JP**

8. **Membership Secretary's Items**

- (a) The Membership Secretary's report had been circulated by PGs prior to the meeting.
- (b) The Society has 494 (was 486) memberships. We have attracted 8 new members after our stalls at the Seniors Fair and the History Society Museum opening event.

9. **Newsletter Editor's Items**

- (a) AB reported that the Spring newsletter will be 8 pages rather than 12.
- (b) AB also reported that as he will be 87 in July the Society should be looking ahead to find a person to help with the newsletter and to eventually take over. It was reported that an email had been sent to the Harpenden Trust to enquire if they had a volunteer who would be interested in becoming involved with the Society's newsletter. A similar email has been sent to the Society members. It was also discussed if the Advertiser editor may have a contact who would be interested. **Action RT to contact Matt Adams of the advertiser.**

10. **Publicity**

The publicity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting. The new logo is now approved and will be used in future newsletters etc.

11. **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) It was agreed that MR would produce draft strategy statements for the overall Society and for the Transport campaign. Once approved, these will be used on the updated website which is targeted for release by the end of May. **Action MR to produce draft strategy statements by the end of May.**
- (c) MR reported that the photographic competition was progressing and will run from June until November.

12. **Awards**

RT reported that the Awards for 2023 had now been finalised and that presentations would be organised in the near future.

13. **Transport Working Group**

- (a) The Transport report had been circulated by KW prior to the meeting.
- (b) It was reported that the HTC Transport Forum met on 30th April, which KW and MR attended. The view is that this is a valuable initiative, and the Society should continue to play a major part in it going forward.

14. **Health & Social Welfare Working Group**

- (a) The Health & Social Welfare report had been circulated by IB prior to the meeting.

15. Built Environment Working Group

The Built Environment full report has been circulated by JL prior to the meeting. There continues to be about 5 to 8 applications per week for residential alterations/extensions. Items of interest are:

- I. **Cross Lane Fields – 5/2023/0317** – submitted in March 2023 and is still Pending. The latest response was added to the planning file in April 2024 in which the Council asserted that the application does not require an Environmental Statement to be submitted. There is also a conflict with some of the policies that may influence the outcome. On the one hand there is a requirement that schemes should be built to a minimum density to make economic use of the land, but the Design and Conservation policy supports a lower density scheme in such semi-rural locations to soften the impact on the surrounding area. This application has attracted a huge number of objections so hopefully it will be called in by a Councillor to avoid being decided under Delegated Officer powers.
- II. **6 High Street –5/2023/0254** –The outcome of the appeal is still awaited.
- III. **North West Harpenden (L & G Proposals) 5/2023/0327** – Still under consideration. The latest attachment to Planning file is from National Highways who requested further information in April 2023. This has not yet been provided by Council. As such National Highways have recommended that the application is not determined prior to 28th June 2024. If the Council is minded to determine earlier, they must consult with the Sec of State for Transport beforehand.
- IV. **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.
- V. **22-24 Grove Road – 5/2023/1559** – The Council have approved the application for a 75-bed care home subject to a lengthy list of conditional matters, some of which have already been approved relative to the former residential scheme. However, the important Construction Management Plan has just been Refused.
- VI. **Harpenden Public Halls, Southdown Rd.** – A number of proposals were made to the Council by the Closing Date for the Informal Tender. The Council are currently evaluating the offers.
- VII. **Saucey Lodge, Common Lane – Ref No. 5/2023/2611** – The scheme for 23 units is still under consideration. A few objections have been made. Bidwell's, who appear to be advising the developers, are arguing that the narrow lane is adequate for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- VIII. **1 High Street – Former HSBC Bank** - The vacant premises now have a SOLD notice displayed. No planning application has yet been submitted.

16. Economic Activity Working Group

The Economic Activity report had been circulated by RT prior to the meeting. RT reported that the Cold Harbour Lane industrial area now seems to be thriving, but the Southdown Industrial Estate looks very "tired" and is in need of renovation. It was discussed that once the Coal Board Pension Fund has progressed with the new development on part of the estate this may improve the attractiveness of the site to other businesses.

17. AOB

None.

Dates of the next committee meetings: 8 July, 16 Sept, 11 Nov

Dates of the next Public Meetings: 17 Oct (Health).

The meeting closed at 12.00.