

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 15 January 2024 at 10.00 a.m.
HTC Council Chamber
MINUTES

1. Present

Jeff Phillips (JP), Harry Downie (HD), Alan Bunting (AB), Ron Taylor (RT), 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 Martyn Reed (MR).

4. Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 13 November 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 £35K of Society funds into it.

(c) It was agreed that another committee member should have access to the Society's bank accounts in case the Treasurer is ill or otherwise unavailable. **Action HD to arrange this.**

7. Secretary's Items.

(a) The following potential public meeting were discussed:

I. Local Plan – The public meeting on the Local Plan on the 31st of January is now almost fully booked.

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

III. 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.

(b) RF reported that Trustees Indemnity Insurance has now been obtained.

(c) It was agreed that the Society should modernise its structure by becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO). RF reported that a draft constitution has been produced and that this would be reviewed with RB and an updated version produced for review by the committee. The target date for the conversion is now April 2025 as more work is still to be done and the Charity Commission response times are very slow.

8. Chairman's Items.

(a) The Chairman reported that the meeting with Carl Cheevers finally went ahead, and there are two issues worthy of reporting.

I. The Town Council will be discussing the creation of a transport forum at their January meeting, and third-party members will be invited to join (including the Society) in February. The cornerstone of this initiative is the Stephen Joseph report that the Society commissioned.

II. There is an initiative to expand the market trading concept in the town centre, adding to the Farmers' Market and the fish/fruit and veg arrangements. In pursuit of this, Emilio's has now been given an extension to the licence until the end of January, after which they will be offered a licence to trade on the basis of the original contract, which is to operate on a daily basis, leaving the concourse at the end of that trading day.

(b) It was agreed that JP would send a letter to SADC (Chris White) asking whether the planning process had improved or gone worse after the re-organisation. JL will send JP a briefing note for him to base his letter on. **Action JP & JL.**

(c) Mike Peters, the CEO of Jarvis, has requested a meeting to talk about the Society's view on the Local Plan. He recognises that the Society is not a determining group in this but is an influencer. JP has agreed to meet with Mike Peters on a Chatham House rules basis to see where it goes. The position the Society takes will be a reiteration of our submission to the Plan Consultation exercise that took place in September 2023.

9. **Membership Secretary's Items**

The Membership Secretary's report had been circulated by PGs prior to the meeting. We have 485 memberships covering 752 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**

The Winter newsletter is now being produced. The final version will be produced after the 31st January public meeting. Printing will be in early February.

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.

(b) MR will be organising an online meeting in the near future to discuss the new branding proposition.

13. **Awards**

RT reported that 14 nominations have been received for the 2023 awards.

14. **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.**

15. **Transport Working Group**

The Transport report had been circulated by KW prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the Society should add its signature to a letter to HCC requesting a more robust response to the current airport planning enquiry.

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

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

(b) IB reported that CQC/ Ofsted Area SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities) Inspection for Hertfordshire-Report released in December 2023 identifies "widespread and / or systemic failings" across the local area partnership led by Hertfordshire County Council and the NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB). It is the lowest rating possible.

17. Built Environment Working Group

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

- (a) **28 Station Road – Ref No. 5/2023/1507** - Application for an ATM was refused due to its location adjacent to entrance of residential flat.
- (b) **7 Piggottshill Lane – Ref No. 5/2023/1992** – An application to use the former Blind/Shutter shop as a Nail Bar has been approved.
- (c) **St Andrews Lodge, Southdown Rd – Ref No. 5/2023/2400** – An application has been submitted to position 14 solar panels on the front roof slope facing the common. This is a very distinctive and visible building. Consideration needs to be made to balance environmental benefits with potential visual detracting.
- (d) **Rothamsted Park – Ref No. 5/2023/1540** – The District Council have granted Town Council conditional approval to install a new skate park. The principal condition relates to submission of a Construction Method Statement dealing with such items as vehicle access, lorry wheel cleaning, protection for public. No trees within or outside the site area are to be damaged, removed and protection is required to those most at risk.
- (e) **22-24 Grove Road – 5/2023/1559** – Still awaiting decision on application for 75 bed care home, although in meantime information is being submitted – latest 15/12/23 in relation to noise test. Interesting that such detailed information is being submitted when objections to the size and design of proposed building have not been addressed.
- (f) **Cross Lane Fields – 5/2023/0317** – submitted in March 2023 is still Pending. Latest consultation response received on 28/6/23 from Spatial Planning Dept which recommended refusal on grounds that the development does not make sufficient use of land and should be at higher density!!!!
- (g) **Harpenden Public Halls, Southdown Rd.** – No further news since the council decided to pull the application following their decision to sell the site.
- (h) **6 High Street –5/2023/0254** – Refused primarily due to second floor extension which would be considered harmful to the Conservation Area. An appeal has now been lodged by the applicants.
- (i) **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, but due to lack of response they recommended that the application should not be granted approval prior to 30/1/2024.
- (j) **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. The department dealing with Ecology advised they had no objection, but Environment Agency advised that site is in vulnerable ground water area over a principal aquifer and further information relating to water consumption/drainage is required.

18. Economic Activity Working Group

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

- (a) RT reported that The Christmas Carnival was another huge success attracting thousands of people into the Town, many of them from out of town.
- (b) The hospitality units were packed out as were stores selling Xmas merchandise. Other stores remained quiet. Follow on business to Christmas Eve was mainly Ok. The Jan Sales in a few instances were started early, continuing till end Jan. Threads have closed till Jan 22 for a facelift. G&P Hairdressers closed pre Xmas, although a new hairdresser from Hertford will be opening soon in the old Map Stores. The change of status for Emilio's on the Concourse from end Jan will see him depart.

19. **AOB**

None.

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

Dates of the next Public Meetings: 31 Jan2024, 17 Oct (Health).

The meeting closed at 11.55.