

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 26th March 2014 at 7.15 p.m
Fowden Hall, Rothamsted Conference Centre
MINUTES

1. President's Address

The President, Alison Steer, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

Councillor Teresa Heritage, Members: David Newbury-Ecob, Rosemary Horne, Committee Members: Caroline Fleming.

3. Minutes of the AGM of the 11th April 2013.

The minutes of the 2013 AGM were approved with no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman, Chris Marsden, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

The Chairman stated that the Harpenden Society is a Civic society with no formal power and therefore has a strategy of influencing others and often letting them claim the credit. Therefore, it can be difficult to assess where we've made a difference.

However, we are proud of two major achievements:

- Library volunteers (big thanks to Liz Trounce, the member who organises the volunteers);
- The Red House. The Society-led Red House Forum has moved a long-standing but dormant issue into a headline - making an action plan. We did that – (big thanks to Eric Midwinter and his Health & Welfare Working Group). But now it is up to those with real power and YOU!

Other things we have done directly:

- Harpenden Primary School Arts & Crafts competition. I would like to thank committee members Ron Taylor and Eric Midwinter for organising this;
- Society Awards for improvement to Harpenden's environment. I would like to thank committee member Penny Ayres and her team of judges.

The following are developments we are working on through others:

- Bringing together High Street businesses to encourage its future sustainability. Thanks to committee member Ron Taylor for his tireless work in this area;
- New secondary school – working with the Harpenden Parents Group to back this proposal and getting behind its successful establishment;
- Transport issues: raising residents' concerns with the relevant bodies;
- Law and order issues: liaising with the police and alerting members to best safety practices, etc.;
- Long term hopes: a new Cafe in Park, replacing the Public Halls.

We are also trying to protect Harpenden from unwelcome developments (again working through others):

- Harpenden House Hotel campaign
- Luton Airport
- Green Belt review and threat to our surrounding fields from the new District Strategic Plan

The Society subscriptions have been raised as proposed by members at the last AGM but to fund the Society to do all that we feel we need to do we need more. Further donations, legacies, etc. are always welcome. Please expect a fundraising campaign in the future.

We would welcome members being actively involved in our working groups. Let me introduce our WG leaders:

- Alan Jackson – Public Order
- John Davis - Environment
- Donald Robertson – Transport
- Eric Midwinter – Health & Welfare and Education & Leisure
- Ron Taylor – Local Economy
- Planning - vacancy in the absence of Richard Thomas who has had to resign through ill health.

The Chairman thanked Bob Fletcher, the Society's secretary; Arnold Allen, the Society's Treasurer, for guiding us through our financial difficulties over the last 3 years and Harry Downie for taking on the Treasurer's task in the future; Steve Gledhill for his excellent work in getting our stories into the local press (we're delighted to welcome Caroline Fleming as our new press officer); Barbara Ouston for her many years of work as membership secretary and newsletter distribution organiser (we are working hard to find suitable successors to do these jobs.)

The Chairman concluded by thanking all members for their continued support for the work of the Society.

During the Chairman's report a comment from the floor was made by Councillor Julian Daly. The Chairman invited Councillor Daly onto the stage. Councillor Day gave a brief overview of the progress on the development of the District's Strategic Plan. A challenge was made by a Society member in the audience (Joanne Wicks) to Councillor Daly to the effect that St Albans District Council's belief that it must make provision in its 'Strategic Local Plan' for the building of as many as 436 houses per annum over each of 20 years is fundamentally wrong in law.

Councillor Daly agreed to attend a meeting, to be arranged by the Society in June, to discuss the contents of the Plan

5. Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer's Report, copies of which had been provided throughout the hall, was presented by the Treasurer. The Society's reserves currently exceed £7,800. The Treasurer reported that this year the two major expenditure items were the printing and distribution of the quarterly newsletter and the room hire for meetings. Subscription income for the year had increased slightly over 2012.

The Treasurer confirmed that the Society's finances are in sound shape.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by John Davis and seconded by Ron Taylor. Acceptance of the Treasurer's report was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

constructed of black boarding and we think its barn-like appearance fits in well with the rural surroundings.

8. School's Competition

Eric Midwinter reported that the award ceremony for the Harpenden Society Primary Schools Competition had been held in Fowden Hall immediately prior to the AGM.

Over one hundred children, parents and teachers attended the event. The winners were presented in true 'Oscar' style with certificates for 3rd, 2nd and 1st places, plus a number of commendations and Special Awards for truly outstanding work.

Hosting the event were committee members Ron Taylor and Eric Midwinter who created the concept (Hail Harpendonia), then liaised with the Primary Schools from the launch in November to the judging on March 19th. All the nominated works were on display around the conference centre for all to see.

33 Awards were announced on the afternoon with another 800+ certificates to be given out to all the school children who submitted work. In most cases the work was from individual children, however there were several entries from the combined work of two to four children and in three cases complete classes.

All ten schools who participated have been awarded £40 WHS gift vouchers and goody bags with art items. This thanks to the joint sponsorship of the Society and Harpenden's WHSmith via their manager Allan Roberts.

Greatly encouraged, The Society plans to repeat the exercise each year.

9. The Free Prize Draw

Two paintings by local artists were donated for the prized draw that concluded the event.

Painting 1. By Andrew Wilson, the owner of A & K Wilson Galley in Station Approach - 'Spirit of March '58'.

Painting 2. By Haydn Dickenson, an accomplished local artist and musician – "Blue Horizon".

Ron Taylor drew the winners and presented the paintings.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business

11. Dates of the next AGM

Currently set for Thursday 26th March 2015.

12. The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the formal part of the meeting at 9.00 p.m.