

STREATLEY ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held in the Bellême Room, Goring Village Hall at 19:30 on Wednesday 27th April 2016

1. Attendance

5 members of the Streatley Allotments Society (SAS) committee conducted the meeting which was attended by a further 16 members and partners. Apologies for absence were received from Bob & Jacky Pugh and Sally Wicks. Nick Barnes (committee member) represented Streatley Parish Council (SPC).

2. Confirmation of Notes of previous AGM held on 20th April 2015

The notes of the previous AGM were circulated to members prior to the meeting and the meeting adopted them as a true record of the previous AGM.

3. Chair and Membership Secretary's Report

A report from the Chair and Membership Secretary was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Key points identified during the meeting were:

- number of plots increased from 39 to 41 by subdivision as some larger plots vacated;
- some change of tenants which with two exceptions has been seamless;
- 4 plots vacated at end of year have all been re-let and current waiting list of 2;
- membership has risen from 38 to 40 as the larger plots have been subdivided;
- initial site infrastructure completed in September;
- rental payment made on time to SPC;
- common areas maintenance contractor started work in June;
- vermin (rat) control contractor mobilised in June, initial visits every 1-2 weeks, now reduced to every 2 months;
- SAS remains solvent;
- SAS now in a position to move forward with social and community initiatives already started whilst maintaining what we already have in place; and
- the committee needs to receive feedback, comment and refreshing with new faces and ideas.

Looking forward a budget allowance has been made for installation of a water tap at one of the troughs and a suggestion has been made for the provision of picnic benches at the 'turning area' adjacent to the commemorative tree. The meeting offered further suggestions to be considered including a shed and grass mower for common usage.

4. Site Manager's Report

A report from the Site Manager was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Key points covered during the meeting were:

- work successfully completed by working parties during the year;
- scope of working parties is reducing in future and will be largely confined to weeding of western hedgeline with occasional other projects as necessary;
- success of vermin control and routine maintenance contractors and intention to continue with current arrangements whilst seeking ways to reduce direct costs of vermin control by co-operation with Thames Water;

- successful establishment of thriving western hedgeline and thanks to Tom Hibbert for initial maintenance trimming; and
- need for vigilance with respect to rabbit ingress, scope of problem has not yet been established but we need to be aware.

During the meeting discussion was held on the need to take action to prevent further damage to the fences between the recreation ground and the Allotment Site and at the northwest corner of the Allotment Site. The damage is being caused by youths (mainly boys) climbing into and out of the Allotment Site to retrieve balls that have over flown the 'goal area' fencing within the recreation ground. SPC has advised that it plans to plant semi-mature trees to close the gaps in the hedgeline behind the 'goal area'. It was considered however that the level of damage being incurred would require action before SPC's plans would become effective. Several measures were discussed and SPC undertook to further consider the problem and potential solutions.

Discussion also took place with respect to any planned action for the hedgeline between the Allotment Site and the Thames Water STW. The meeting was advised that action similar to that taken at the western hedgeline was not being contemplated. Contact is being sought with Thames Water to persuade them to 'side up' the branches that overhang some of the plots adjacent to their hedgerows.

Bob Pugh was thanked for making and installing covers to the water troughs and Ivan Scott was thanked for his mowing of the main access route to the site. The positive response of all of the plot holders approached by the committee to address concerns about their stewardship of their plots was commended.

5. Treasurer's Report

A report from the Treasurer was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The report and associated statement of accounts identified a modest increase in reserves during the year and that the 'contingency fund' was now thought to be adequate. Plot holders were reminded that materials taken from the stock surplus to that required for the initial infrastructure works should be paid for. Following costs and effort incurred in recycling abandoned plots the committee is proposing to increase the deposit to £50 for all new tenants. Thanks were expressed to Ian King for examining the SAS accounts.

6. Social Secretary's Report

The Social Secretary described activities undertaken by SAS during the year including participation in the Streatley Village Assembly, the Food Festival and the annual allotment supper. Karen Morton was thanked for her efforts in organising the allotment supper. The date for this year's supper is to be confirmed once a further 'doodle poll' has been conducted with plot holders.

The date for this year's village assembly is Thursday 19th May and it will take place between 6:30 and 8:00pm in the Morrell Rooms. We plan to once more provide rhubarb from the allotments and would also like to provide excess seedlings and the like to offer in exchange for a donation to our Sue Ryder tin.

The potential for establishing seed swap arrangements between plot holders and creation of a blog/Facebook style forum are to be investigated. Plot holders are to be asked to allow or deny disclosure of their contact details (email/telephone) to other plot holders.

7. Matters to be decided

The Chair advised the meeting that the matters to be discussed in this part of the meeting were important and that the SAS committee required the endorsement or otherwise of its proposals at the meeting before proceeding to take action.

7.1 Budget for 2016/17

A paper setting out 'budget suggestions' for 2016/17 indicated that if the contracts for both vermin control and maintenance of the common areas are maintained as during the past year (as recommended by the committee) and provision is included for installation of a water tap then membership and plot fees would need to be maintained at the 2015/16 levels. There were no objections to this proposal and hence it is accepted and will be applied.

7.2 Deposit Bond

The committee's proposal to increase the level of deposit bond to £50 for all new plot holders was discussed. The committee confirmed that the constitution (and the proposed new constitution) provide for the committee to exercise discretion where such a level of bond (and annual fee levels) may cause financial hardship and deter potential plot holders. There were no objections to this proposal and hence it is accepted and will be applied.

8. Committee Membership

During the last year two committee members have resigned, Kathy Patching and Tanya Brown were thanked for their contributions. Jacky Pugh (plots 11 and 15S) and Peter Barefield (plot 28) have offered their services to fill these vacant seats on the committee and in the absence of any other interested parties their appointment to the committee was confirmed. Details of roles and responsibilities will be circulated to plot holders shortly.

The Chair stressed the need for representation on the committee to come from a wider cross-section of the demographic of all members in order that the society may develop in a manner reflective of the interests and concerns of all members.

9. AOB

No items for discussion under AOB had been notified prior to the meeting. After the EGM (see separate notes below) which was held within the AGM the Chair thanked attendees and commented that whilst the society and allotments were in good shape there was a need for all to be vigilant to keep it that way. In particular members should actively discourage the deposition of rubbish, misuse of water troughs and general neglect as and when they observed it occurring.

STREATLEY ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

NOTES FROM AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Held in the Bellême Room, Goring Village Hall at 19:30 on Wednesday 27th April 2016

1. Introduction

Prior to the meeting a paper had been circulated setting out the reason for the EGM being called together with the documentation proposed to replace the existing Model Constitution, Tenancy Agreement and Plot Holders' Guide. The paper also described the key changes proposed to the documents and stated "If adopted the revised documentation will become effective immediately and all existing plot holders will be required to enter into the revised form of Tenancy Agreement".

2. Discussion

Colin Coughlan (plot 27) had advised comments on the revised documentation, most being typos and generally acceptable minor changes. Two of the matters raised by Colin were discussed:

- It was agreed that in common areas dogs should be kept on leads (rather than 'kept under control'); and
- After discussion on the wording regarding the keeping of 'livestock' and 'chickens/hens' and whether or not rabbit keeping could be barred from allotments legally it was agreed that the references to 'livestock' in the documents should be replaced by references to 'hens' and if appropriate (i.e. cannot be legally barred) 'rabbits'.

Tim Chatterton queried the current situation with respect to organic/non-organic plots. The committee advised that whilst many of the plots had initially been allocated to applicants that had specified an 'organic' plot the original segregation to create organic and non-organic areas of the site had been immediately compromised when these allocations were not taken up and the now available plots were allocated to persons that had not specified such a preference. Whilst subsequent tenants had been informed of the organic/non-organic status of each plot no monitoring of practices used on organic plots has taken place. To try and get a picture of the current level of 'organic practice' Tim agreed to draft a short series of questions to be sent to plot holders to try and establish if each plot has been, and is intended to be, managed in a manner consistent with good 'organic practice'. Tim similarly undertook to provide a short section on 'good organic practice' for inclusion in the revised Plot Holders' Guide.

3. Motion and Adoption

Subject to the inclusion and revisions discussed above the meeting was asked to sanction the adoption of the revised Constitution, Tenancy Agreement and Plot Holders' Guide as circulated to members and plot holders on 17th April 2016. This motion was unopposed and hence the revised documentation is adopted.