

**STREATLEY ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY
NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Held in the Belleme Room, Goring Village Hall at 19.30 on Wednesday 26th April 2017

1. Attendance

7 members of the Streatley Allotments Society (SAS) committee conducted the meeting which was attended by a further 17 tenants. Apologies for absence were received from Bob Pugh, Alan Strong, Gill McGahan and Heather Dunthorne. Nick Barnes (committee member) represented Streatley Parish Council (SPC).

2. Confirmation of Notes of previous AGM held on 27th April 2016

The notes of the previous AGM were circulated to tenants 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 tenants prior to the meeting. Key points identified during the meeting were:

- Number of plots decreased from 41 to 40 following merger of two plots;
- 8 plots handed back during the year, 5 were re-let during March 2017. There is a short waiting list;
- There are 37 plot holders, 19 from Streatley and 18 from Goring;
- The common areas maintenance contractor continued designated work, also appointed to carry out annual maintenance trimming hedges;
- A push button tap has been purchased and is awaiting installation;
- Rental payment made on time to SPC;
- Vermin (rat) control contractor continues to visit site every 2 months;
- The committee continues to need feedback, comment and refresh with new faces and ideas.

4. Site Manager's Report

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

- Working parties have been reduced to care of the western hedgeline and maintaining woodchip access route which will need to continue, some enthusiasm was expressed for holding working parties on a regular basis and concentrating activities on additions to the site facilities;
- Thanks to Tom Hibbert for trimming hedge at entrance to site and to Ivan Scott for mowing main access route and other areas;
- Spreading chippings will continue to be needed on a regular basis;
- The gate locks have been 'de-coked' and tenants asked not to lubricate them, also members reminded about the importance of shutting immediately on entry and exit and locking the gate;
- Alders have been planted in the playing field boundary gap in order to prevent footballs being kicked into the site and youths climbing the fence to retrieve them. Damage to the fence is probably contributing to rabbits still getting into the site.

5. Treasurer's Report

A report from the Treasurer was circulated to tenants prior to the meeting. The report and associated statement of accounts identified a modest increase in reserves to approximately £1,300 (excluding

refundable deposits) during the year. Thanks were expressed to Ian King for examining the SAS accounts. The site rental payable by SAS to SPC and in turn by SPC to Thames Water (TW) is subject to indexation (RPI) every 5 years and the first of these is due in 2017. An increase in excess of 10% is expected. The TSB branch in Goring is closing in June, tenants are urged to pay plot fees by direct transfer into SAS's bank account as a journey into Reading will be necessary to credit cheques and cash to our account thereafter.

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 tenants.

The date for this year's Streatley Parish Assembly is Thursday 18th May and it will take place between 6:30 and 8:00 p.m. 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. Seedlings to be placed on the table adjacent to Plot 3. The Food Festival is to be held on Saturday 9th September and we plan to partake once again.

7. Matters to be decided

The Chair advised the meeting that the matters to be discussed in this part of the meeting were covered in SAS's Constitution and that the committee required the endorsement or otherwise of its proposals at the meeting before proceeding. Papers covering the proposed budget and fee levels for 2017/2018 were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

7.1 Budget for 2017/2018

Key points from the proposed budget were as follows:

- Site rental payment to SPC increased from £300 to £350;
- Insurances and payments to contractors to remain as 2016/17;
- Meetings and social expenditure to remain as 2016/17; and
- Installation of tap, purchase of notice boards and hire of skip included.

The total expenditure planned is approximately £2,400. A suggestion was made that members be encouraged to remove all their rubbish from the site before deciding to incur the expense of hiring a skip. There were no objections to this proposal and hence it is accepted and will be applied. Other than this the proposed budget was endorsed without objection by the meeting.

7.2 Plot Fees

It was proposed to increase the plot fees payable by £1 to cover the increased site rental payable to SPC, giving annual fees payable of £40 for smaller (<50m²) plots and £55 for larger (>50m²) plots. This would provide a total income of £1,825. The shortfall between planned expenditure, if incurred, and total income would be funded from reserves. The proposed fee levels were endorsed without objection by the meeting.

7.3 Deposit Bond

The level of deposit bond for all new plot holders will remain at £50. This was endorsed without objection by the meeting.

8. Committee Membership

Tom Worthington has resigned from the committee. He was thanked by the Chair for his work as Site Manager over the past five years. Peter Barefield has agreed to take over this role. Karen Morton, Harry Beresford and Linda Palmer have offered their services to join the committee with Karen job-sharing the Social Secretary role. Updated details of roles and responsibilities will be circulated to plot holders shortly.

9. AOB

9.1 Fee Basis

How current fee levels has been arrived at was explained. Disquiet was expressed by one plot holder about the apparent arbitrary nature of the two fee levels and the fairness of this approach. Committee explained that certain costs were incurred for the benefit of all and are not related to plot size and that the simple fee structure reduced bureaucracy and administration. Committee undertook to consider alternatives, relating costs where applicable to plot size.

9.2 Hedges

The Chair gave a detailed account of the agreement of specifications for hedge reduction with the Church Warden and TW. Following pricing by three contractors (£1,300 to £5,500) committee decided to leave churchyard hedge for time being. Approaches were made to TW and SPC for assistance with finding funding. A negative response was received from TW and an initial sounding of GGN has not been encouraging. Further sources of possible funding have been identified and will be pursued. SPC advised the meeting that it would not provide any direct funding but would assist SAS / make approaches on behalf of SAS to other potential sources and approach TW on this basis. Committee considers that cost of annual maintenance of hedges, once reduced in height and width, could probably be met within current fee levels

9.3 Composting Toilet

Following a request, from a tenant, committee has commenced looking at potential for installing a composting toilet on the site. A show of hands at the meeting indicated limited potential usage. Initial costs appear to be high and maintenance/cleaning arrangements would need volunteers. Suggested visit to Braziers Park to be followed up.

9.4 Sanctions for poor plot husbandry

Concern has been raised regarding lack of care on some plots. The Chair explained how this issue is being dealt with by the committee by gradual escalation until the point of non-renewal was reached. Alternative approaches (assistance, downsizing, cover up) are offered in the first instance. It was felt not being able to evict a tenant within a year was too long, however under the Allotments Act 1950 it is not possible to expel/exclude an allotment tenant in less than a year. The committee was thanked for its prompt action when things were drawn to its attention. In order to try and avoid problems arising in the first place it was agreed measures that assisted communication between tenants would be of benefit, potential uses of the SAS web page are to be considered.

9.5 Locking-in

Steps need to be put in place to avoid anyone being 'locked in' to the site. Various suggestions, most involving tags/tokens, were made for further consideration.