

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the STREATLEY ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the meeting held via Zoom on 28th April 2022

In attendance: The serving committee: Karen Morton (Chair) Imogen Smart (Treasurer) Diana Wheatley (Membership Secretary) Linda Palmer (Committee Secretary) Jane Howard

Plot Holders: John and Cyndy Ashton, Peter Barefield, Richard Beasley, Tim Chatterton, Heather Dunmore, George Lovering, Kathy Patching and Rory Bewlay, Jacky and Bob Pugh, Nigel Wheatley, Sally Wicks

Apologies received from Joan Holt, Jack Hepplewhite, Cllr Michael Robertson.

- 1) The Chair thanked everyone for attending and hoped that we could meet in person next year. She advised that our new Streatley Parish Council representative is Michael Robertson who was unfortunately unable to attend tonight.

The minutes of the AGM held on April 27th 2021 were agreed as an accurate record. These will now be posted on the SPC web site.

- 2) Membership: Diana spoke to her report which had been circulated in advance. 2 plots have been reallocated this year and 2 new ones created on site. We have since received 2 new applications leaving a long waiting list. Unfortunately, Goring Parish Council has responded negatively to approaches for additional provision.

John Aston asked what was happening about the small plot no 37 which has had trees planted on it and no longer seems to be being used for educational purposes with local children as had been the original plan.

The Committee will need to look into the history and discuss with the neighbouring plot holder.

- 3) Social Secretary: In her absence Joan's report was referred to by the Chair. There have been 3 very successful working parties in the past year resulting in good maintenance of the communal paths. The annual allotment supper had not taken place due to the pandemic. The allotment site will be open as part of the Festival Open Gardens Day on the 10th June, when we also hope to have a plant stall for raising funds.

- 4) Finance: Imogen had circulated several reports prior to this meeting. She advised that the Committee was recommending no increase in fees despite the expectation of increased expenditure in the coming year specifically on hedge work, and on general maintenance of the now 10 year old site . The Society holds enough funds in reserve for anticipated expenditure.

The Accounts have been audited and agreed.

The meeting accepted the Budget and Fees Paper . Proposed by Tom Worthington, seconded by John Ashton.

- 5) Chair's Report combined with Site Management

Karen expressed gratitude to all those who maintain the common areas, both on a regular basis and by attendance at working parties. She also thanked Committee Members and reminded all that we are volunteers and other plot holders will need to share the management responsibility for the site at some stage. Over the past year we have had no one person responsible for site management. It has been helpful for all Committee Members to carry out site inspections in pairs over the year, but the Society needs an Officer to oversee the management of the site as a whole. This can be a shared role with ongoing support from other Committee members.

Regarding the shortage of plots, the response from Goring Parish Council has been very unhelpful. Bernard Clucas has offered to share his extensive knowledge of Local Government regulations and duty to make provision if enough interest is shown. The Committee will organise a workshop for anyone interested.

The current Committee members have all agreed to continue to serve for a further year (though 2 will retire next year) Imogen will retire after this AGM. She has worked diligently on behalf of the Society for the past 3 years and her contribution will be greatly missed, particularly by her Committee colleagues. A surprise presentation was made to Imogen during the meeting, thanks to a doorstep delivery.

- 6) Nominations for Committee: There have been no nominations for the Committee apart from Richard Beasley who has offered to take over as Treasurer.

- 7) Discussion of hedge management

Imogen led this discussion. The western hedge was planted in 2014 hence is now 8 years old. The Committee has been considering options as it proved impossible to get a quote or any contractor to commit to trimming the hedge until very recently. There is now a choice of having the hedge cut in the autumn, or having it layered. The Heart of Streatley Charity had asked SAS to consider layering. Advice has been sought from Colin Leekey, professional hedge layer who could do the work himself or run a workshop with volunteers to achieve the layering at a cost of £750. Imogen listed the advantages of layered hedges especially for the wild life. There is also a likelihood of the work being eligible for grant funding.

Nigel, who had recently participated in one of the workshops, expressed concern that neighbours would be unhappy as the hedge height would initially be considerably reduced. He added that layering should extend the life of the hedge.

Heather also felt that Streatley neighbours would object and was herself concerned that having a plot adjacent to the hedge she might become more visible to passers by walking their dogs. Heather also queried whether more wild life would actually be attracted to the hedge as so many dogs are walked along the side of the hedge.

Tom W then spoke quite passionately against the idea of layering the hedge at the present time. Tom had been one of the people planting the hedge and talked of his many years of experience of hedge laying in other settings. Tom acknowledged the many advantages of layering but felt most do not apply to the allotment site. In answer to questions from Imogen Tom advised that it might be appropriate to reconsider the possibility in 3 or 4 year's time with the option of layering when the hedge is 15 years old.

Action agreed: The Committee will consider the matter further in consultation with Tom, Imogen and anyone else required.

- 8) Any Other Business: John Ashton had raised the issue of the need for a process by which plot holders could raise concerns or complaints about any neighbouring plots that are not well managed. John suggested the committee could then issue an improvement notice explaining what needs to be done. A second notice would be issued if necessary. He recommended that the Constitution be amended to allow the Committee to take action such as not renewing a tenancy if poor maintenance is an ongoing issue. Imogen reminded all that any changes to the Constitution would need to take account of plot holders experiencing personal difficulties. George advised that other Associations have a regulation that require plots to be in an acceptable condition at a specific point in the year or the tenancy will not be renewed. Action agreed: the Committee will draft a proposal to deal with this issue , and will present it to the membership for approval.

Jane reminded everyone of the scarecrow competition. She hopes as many people as possible will take part and display scarecrows on their plots in time for the Open Gardens on June 10th.

Imogen offered to write an article for the Goring Gap News to celebrate the 10th anniversary of SAS.

John Ashton proposed a vote of thanks to the committee, especially to retiring treasurer Imogen .

- 9) At the end of the meeting Karen showed photographs she has taken of the flowers and some wildlife spotted on the north eastern corner of the site.