

# SOUTH HARPENDEN ALLOTMENT & GARDENS SOCIETY

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2019

AT THE TED ALLEN ROOM, ALLOTMENT CENTRE, DARK LANE, HARPENDEN

**PRESENT** - Committee members: Mike Cobley (MC), Carole Pamphlett (CP), Roger Glanville (RMG), Peter Hicks (PH), Chris Overton (CO), Jane Keech (JK), Jim Machin (JM), Rod Cooley (RC), Roger Gillett (RG), Chris Wilson (CW), Fraser Gordon (FG), John Myres (JMy), Keith Davison (KD), Geoff Bateman (GB), Tom Chichester-Miles (TCM).

**SOCIETY MEMBERS:** Albert Callaewert (AC), Paul Gardiner (PG), Michael Hughes (MH), Peter Loveland (PL), Helen Loveland (HL), Gordon Patterson (GP), Ian Woodford-Smith (IWS).

**H.T.C.:** No-one from HTC was available to attend.

**APOLOGIES:** Alan Stevenson, Linda Gahagan, Irene Boogerman, Dominic Houlihan, Hazel Upton, Jenny Stevenson, Marcia Dorey, Roger White.

**CHAIR:** Mike Cobley

The Chair welcomed all those attending and asked if there were any matters under AOB that members wished to raise in which case the Chair was happy to deal with them at the beginning of the meeting.

No matters were raised.

### 1. Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting

2018 AGM Minutes were presented to the meeting and agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Rod Cooley, seconded by John Myres. **Approved.**

### 2. Matters arising from Minutes

None

### 3. Proposed amendments to the Society Rules

PH told the meeting that at a previous committee meeting, it was established that the Society doesn't need to have an elected President nor could the committee think of anyone that they felt should be nominated as a President. Therefore it was proposed to remove the word President from Rule 11a that includes President in the list of Officers of the Society.

At the 2018 AGM the Society elected a Publicity Officer but failed to include that title in the list of Officers. It was proposed the Publicity Officer be added to the list of Officers of the Society.

MC said that he had received opinion from some members that we should retain the position of President. RC asked what the role of the President should be. MC replied that historically the Society had benefitted from the influence of previous Presidents with their connections to Harpenden Town Council, which isn't as relevant currently as the Society has a very good relationship with the Council.

A question was asked about whether East Harpenden Gardening Club had a President.

**Action Point – Mike Cobley to ascertain if EHGC has a President and report back.**

After some discussion on the relative strengths of some of our previous Presidents, it was decided that we should leave the title of President on the list of Officers with it left as Vacant.

**The proposal to remove President was rejected, but the addition of Publicity Officer was approved.**

## **4. Trustees Reports**

### **4.1 Chairman's report – Mike Cobley**

The Chair thanked the members of the Committee individually and all the Site Reps for their assistance over the year. Overall the Society is in a sound financial position and is almost fully-let. We have a very good working relationship with the new Town Clerk and his team at HTC.

This year we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> year as a Society so there are plans to commemorate that milestone. We are also looking into have more of a social media presence if we can find a volunteer with skills in that area.

### **4.2 Secretary's report – Peter Hicks**

The Secretary told the meeting that since being co-opted onto the committee in September the Society had held a Committee meeting every month. There has been an increase in applications for plot structures with five sheds and two polytunnels having been approved for tenants over the past year.

There are significant number of re-elections to the Committee with five Officers and nine Site Reps being up for renewal, as well as five vacancies across the committee.

### **4.3 Treasurer's report – Carole Pamphlett**

The Treasurer confirmed the Committee had accepted the Accounts and they had been independently reviewed by a competent person, thereby saving the Society the fee of an outside auditor. She then went on to summarise some of the detail in the schedules both for the Society and the Shop, adding that the Meeting was the occasion when the membership would agree and approve the Year-end Accounts for which members had been supplied with advance copies.

On the whole 2018 was a good financial year for the Society. Considering the weather was so hot during the summer our water bills didn't rise too much, and we made some savings in other areas. With the appointment of Chris Overton and Alan Stevenson as our new machinery managers, we hope to make bigger savings on our machinery costs next year. We purchased two lightweight rotavators and a new Hayter Spirit to be used as a backup mower. This year we produced a new publicity leaflet thanks to the efforts of Jane Keech

We have been working closely with Harpenden Town Council and making good progress on the new boundary management program. We now have an agreed plan and a set budget for the maintenance and repairs for all our eight sites, as opposed to the old ad-hoc basis. This is in addition to the yearly grant we receive from HTC. With the help of our plot holders and the hard work of our site reps we had another successful site inspection by HTC in July. We also thank HTC for the use of the Park Hall where we hold our successful Awards evening.

The Chair thanked CP for her work over the last year in managing the Society's finances so thoroughly and PH asked the meeting to approve the Accounts as presented.

Proposed: Peter Hicks Seconded: Mike Cobley **Approved.**

## **5 Officers' Reports:**

### **5.1 Database Mgr. / Letting Secretary's report – Jim Machin**

JM highlighted the comparison between 20108 and 2019 occupancy rates, this year occupancy has increased from 91% twelve months ago to 95% currently.

Although occupancy has increased we now have one fewer tenant than a year ago: this is explained by existing tenants renting additional plots when they became vacant.

The number of Associate Members reduced significantly, explained by the 2018 number being artificially inflated by previous members who had not renewed for 2018 being kept on the database.

The Chair thanked JM for his efforts.

## **5.2 Distribution Manager Report – Roger Gillett**

RG expressed his disappointment that the shop made a net loss as it is the first time in his twelve-year tenure that this has happened.

Sales were slightly down on the previous year although there was still a trading surplus this year. However, the value of stock held was lower than twelve months ago which is why the Cost of Sales was greater than the previous year, contributing to the net loss.

Already this year, new stock lines have been introduced and early sales are encouraging with gross takings year-to-date well ahead of the same time in 2018.

RG thanked all the volunteers who help run the shop every Sunday morning, without whom the shop would not be able to be run as successfully as it is.

A coffee machine has been introduced to the shop with coffee on sale to all members when the shop is open.

FG highlighted the success of the e-mails that are being sent to members alerting them of new stock, with pallets of mushroom compost being sold the same day that an e-mail was distributed informing member that compost was available. CW asked if the e-mails could include the price of stock as she felt a lot of members would presume that a small shop would be charging higher prices than larger commercial outlets, which isn't the case.

PL used his personal experience selling potatoes every spring to raise the issue that online renewals has reduced shop football as fewer members visit the site to renew and consequently don't take that opportunity to visit the shop. He reinforced the importance of a more proactive marketing presence to encourage members to visit the shop.

RC wondered if a regular shop promotion could be added to the regular monthly e-mail, others felt that a shop-specific e-mail is more beneficial. There was also some feeling that some recipients delete e-mails without reading them if they receive too many from the same source.

## **5.3 Machinery Manager's Report – Chris Overton/Alan Stevenson (co-opted)**

CO repeated the headlines from the end-of-year report, which identified that the Society's machinery had been lightly used in 2018 because of the dry weather in the summer.

Of the 43 machine on the sites, 29 machine were serviced, 3 did not require service as they were not used this season, 4 were new this season so therefore didn't require servicing and 7 require sending away for professional servicing, repairing or new parts.

Most machinery sheds are congested and would benefit from a general tidy-up to aid easy access to machines.

## **5.4 Communications Officer / Webmaster' Report – Rod Cooley**

RC thanked everyone who had contributed to keeping the website up-to-date, either by contributing items or error-checking.

The usual monthly e-mails have been sent out and, in addition to those, event-specific and site-specific e-mails have been sent out to membership.

A new tab called Absent Friends has been added to the website to commemorate past members who have passed on during the year.

RC had worked hard through the year to keep the website up-to-date and vibrant; adding items to the landing page to advertise special events, for example the AGM itself.

The Chair re-iterated that there is a lot of information on the website, and thanked RC for his efforts for maintaining the site through the year.

## 5.5 Newsletter Editors Report – Irene Boogerman

- No report available

## 6 Election of Officers and Committee for 2019/2020

- Refer to document, “Election of Members SHAGS AGM 22 May 2019”.

There were a number of elections and re-elections to be voted.

During the year Peter Hicks had been co-opted as Hon. Secretary and offered himself for election. Before that, however, he had to be elected as a Trustee replacing Roger Glanville.

The election of Peter Hicks as a Trustee was proposed and seconded by members and duly elected at this AGM by a unanimous vote.

The election of Peter Hicks as Honorary Secretary was proposed and seconded by members and duly elected at this AGM by a unanimous vote.

### **Positions up for election amongst the Trustees at this AGM were the Hon. Chairman and the Hon. Treasurer.**

- Mike Cobby to be re-elected as Honorary Chairman.  
Proposed by Roger Glanville, seconded by Keith Davison. Re-elected by a unanimous vote.
- Carole Pamphlett to be re-elected as Honorary Treasurer.  
Proposed by Fraser Gordon, seconded by Jim Machin. Re-elected by a unanimous vote.

### **Officers due for election/re-election at this AGM and willing to stand for election:**

- Irene Boogerman to be re-elected as Newsletter Editor.  
Proposed by Peter Hicks, seconded by Roger Glanville. Re-elected by a unanimous vote.
- Roger Gillett to be re-elected as Distribution Manager.  
Proposed by Fraser Gordon, seconded by Mike Cobby. Re-elected by a unanimous vote.
- Linda Gahagan to be re-elected as Awards Officer.  
Proposed by Chris Wilson, seconded by John Myres. Re-elected by a unanimous vote.
- Jane Keech to be elected as Publicity Officer  
Proposed by Peter Hicks, seconded by Fraser Gordon. Elected by a unanimous vote.  
Two new volunteers had offered their services as Site Reps:
  - Tom Chichester-Miles to be elected Site Rep at Aldwickbury replacing Mark Sanders.  
Proposed by Keith Davison, seconded by Fraser Gordon. Elected by a unanimous vote.
  - Geoff Bateman to be elected Site Rep at Piggotshill replacing Albert Callewaert.  
Proposed by Mike Cobby, seconded by Jim Machin. Elected by a unanimous vote.

The Site Reps due for re-election are:

Hazel Upton at Aldwickbury  
Keith Davison at Churchfield  
Jenny Stevenson at Cross Lane  
Dominic Houlihan at Cross Lane  
Marcia Dorey at Harpenden Rise  
Roger Dorey at Harpenden Rise  
Fraser Gordon at Piggotshill  
Chris Wilson at Sibley Avenue  
John Myres at Topstreet Way

All the proposed were re-elected by a unanimous vote.

**Posts remaining vacant at this AGM;**

Hon. President

Site Rep. – Oakley Rd.

Site Rep. - Piggotshill

**7. Questions from Members**

PH informed the meeting he had received no written questions from members and invited any further questions from those present.

RC pointed out that the Town Hall has four notice boards situated about the town and suggested contacting Heather Scott at HTC and asking if our publicity leaflet could be posted in each.

**8 Any Other Business**

JM said that he wasn't having a particularly good response for the Annual Outing. There are currently only 21 interested parties which is well short of the coach capacity. FG reported that he definitely had two other members interested. KD felt it was worth stressing to members how good Hyde Hall is as a place to visit. FG suggested sending an e-mail to members pushing the visit.

JM pointed out that a large amount of work had been undertaken at Piggotshill over the past year and that the person most responsible for its success was Mike Cobley. He proposed a vote of thanks for Mike's efforts which was carried unanimously.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.14.pm.

**The next AGM will provisionally be held on Wednesday 20 May 2020 at 8pm in the Ted Allen Room**