

S.H.A.G.S Committee Meeting – 13th December 2023 held in Ted Allen Room

Minutes

In Attendance: Mike Cobby (MC) Chair; Carole Pamphlett (CP) Treasurer; Jane Keech (JK) Secretary; Alex Davies (AD); Rod Cooley (RC); Stephan Barnard (SB); Rachel Andrew (RA); Mike Lawford (ML); Steve Case (SC); Peter Loveland (PL); Helen Loveland (HL); Roger White (RW); Hazel Upton (HU); Keith Davison (KD); Rosemary Poyser (RP); Harriet Dorey (HD); Geoff Bateman (GB); Linda Gahagan (LG)

Apologies: Fraser Gordon; Marcia Dorey; Roger Dorey; Richard Mottram, Syd Marvell, Rich Waight

Review of minutes from the last meeting – minutes were approved.

Actions – all actions from the previous meeting have been completed.

JK asked if reports could get to her by the deadline to avoid having to add documents and distribute in time for the meeting.

Finance:

Financial report circulated prior to meeting. Overall, we have a healthy bank balance. There are a few bills still to be paid.

CP would like to be notified of any proposed projects for next year as we will have our grant money from the council.

HU reported that the shed at Aldwickbury may need repairs to floor and roof but it should be ok for another year or so.

MC gave feedback about the difficulties with Barclays Bank.

As most of the money from the society is held in an account with HSBC, it was agreed that we will open a second account with them for the shop.

MC showed everyone the plaque that has been bought for Roger G. It will be added to the special bench.

HU asked for an update on the gateway to Aldwickbury. This matter was recently discussed at the HTC meeting, and it was agreed that the rangers will do some work on the entrance (a new gate would cost nearly £2,000)

Site Matters

Reports were circulated prior to the meeting.

RC now has three vacant plots at Oakley Road. The society will get prices for weed control matting so that the plots can be covered until they are let.

SC/RA will get price for silage sheets.

The fence at Churchfield will be replaced by the council.

Neglected Plots – we are looking for a minimum of 50%.

MC has sent emails to 10 plot holders on PH site.

Some site reps have had discussion with plot holders but have not had to do anything formally.

One plot has been given up at HR.

HD reported that there have been issues at HR – produce appears to have gone missing and padlocks have been broken. A discussion took place about having a padlock with keys or a key safe but it was felt that overall, a more substantial padlock was needed.

MC will liase with local police

MC will get quote from council to replace some standpipes and to repair a leaking tap at HR.

Lettings

Lettings summary circulated prior to meeting.

3 plots have been given up in the past month. There are currently 6 vacant plots.

There was a case where an email had not got to the relevant person regarding a potential new plot holder.

RC will put a note on the website to say that any queries regarding lettings should be sent to the Allotlet email address.

Machinery

Tim will no longer be supplying Steiger mowers as he felt that the quality was not as it had been in the past. Some repairs have needed to be undertaken by the manufacturers.

Tim has some old stock that he will be selling.

We will be able to buy additional batteries online.

There seems to be an intermittent fault with one machine. Battery may have been dropped or stored somewhere too cold?

A decision will be made in the New Year to see if we continue to purchase Steiger machines or try another make.

Communications

Report circulated prior to meeting.

Website has been updated.

Table of Officers has been updated – RC has been notified of a couple of changes.

It was agreed by the committee that the new wording for paid help on plots will be added to rules. This will be added with immediate effect and will be ratified at the next AGM.

Shop

Stock take has been completed.

We have a new person to be added to the rota of volunteers.

The shop is now closed for a few weeks.

A.O.B.

Tree pruning –

Possible dates for tree pruning – 6th or 13th January 2024

We hope to use a plot to use at PH that has a variety of trees.

AD will confirm with plot holder.

Due to the time of year, some varieties of trees may not be able to be pruned.

The person coming to do the pruning demonstration will be employed by the society and will therefore be covered by the society's insurance.

Site reps will be able to go to observe the pruning – along with a list of plot holders who have been in contact with RA.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 10th January 2024

**Summary of SHAGS Committee Reports for
December 2023**

Chairman's Report

(Mike Cobley)

Last month we were invited to attend the second of our twice yearly meetings with HTC Allotment Working Party, under the new Chairman Cllr. Patrick Brosnan, along with the members of East Harpenden Allotment society. Our budget for 2024 has been approved - £3,390. From our maintenance budget works have been approved for the levelling and part removal of the stone embankment at OR as soon as the condition of the grass verge is suitable for access by the grab lorry. CF is due to have the fence along the rear of the CoOp carpark replaced - £3,250. The ancient chain link fence at PH, running behind the Dark Lane houses is to be renewed. The HTC Rangers team has been increased to 5 and they have taken over the hedge cutting contract formerly run by J O Connor. HTC is only prepared to carry out work on large trees on site for H&S reasons, so our overgrown fruit trees will have to be worked on ourselves.

We agreed last month that Site Reps would inspect their sites with a view to speeding up the neglected plot procedure during December. With this in mind the suggestion is that when you have your list, you should email the plot holder, listing the items that require attention from the list sent out previously, but with the added wording that "if works have not been carried out or agreed with your site rep you may not get invited to renew your tenancy" Remember that the 50% cultivation clause is our best weapon.

There was a large turnout at Roger Glanville's funeral on 15th November and several committee members were present amongst his family and many friends. A memorial brass plaque has been fitted to our bench.

I would like to thank all the committee members for their hard work and continued support during 2023 and wish you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

This should go along with the other SR reports please

PIGGOTTSHILL:

Geoff has carried out a thorough inspection of plots requiring further action and there are 12 emails to go out this week.

Outstanding repairs for overwinter period include:

- replacement concrete post and gravel boards to one manure pen
- two leaking taps to replace
- four standpipes need new supports with a concrete spur and timber post (HTC maintenance?)

Our battery mower has developed an electronic fault again so hopefully this can be fixed as part of the winter maintenance by HGM.

Treasurer's Report

(Carole Pamphlett)

Our current bank balance stands at £23,832.13 but if you deduct the monies bought forward from last year which was £21,314.38 that leaves us with a surplus for this year of £2,517.75. I have a few more bills to pay before the end of the year, but very little value.

My next big job will be the Year End accounts both for SHAGS and the shop, I would like to finish these before we start the renewals process.

I have put in our grant application to HTC to the value of £3,390.00, so would site reps please start to think about projects they would like next year for their sites. TS have a new shed this year and AB had a new manure pen and finish off their wildlife pond. I will be asking in the New Year.

Sites:

Aldwickbury (AB)

(Roger White /Hazel Upton/Richard Mottram)

Churchfield (CH)

(Keith Davison)

- Winter has almost set in and so there has been little work carried out by ploholders on site. The majority of these works has been some planting, tidying up and preparing their plots for next year's cultivation.
- The new ploholder of CF12, has applied to erect a shed on his plot. Even before his application has been approved, he has advised the Society that he has ordered a wrongly sized shed. The Societies rules do not permit a shed to be erected that exceeds the stated dimensions, which are 1.8 m (6ft) long, by 1.2m (4ft) wide, by 2.3m (7ft 6in) high. I have visited site to speak to this ploholder to explain the rules, but so far I have not been able to see him on his plot.

Cross Lane (CL)

(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)

Petrol strimmers

The two petrol strimmers are not in working order and have been removed from the container and kept in Stephan's shed. This is to avoid plot holders expecting these to be back and working. We do not think the majority of our plot holders are up for correct handling of machines that require two stroke petrol oil mix. If we are able to repair the strimmers, then our intention is to bring them to the site only when we have a working party doing a site tidy up. For plot holders the push along petrol strimmer is invaluable.

Neglected plots

We only have one occupied plot that is close to being considered neglected but the plot holders have made good efforts to remedy this and I am positive next year it will be in good condition.

We have one plot that is vacant and neglected. Plot holders do actively prevent the worst weeds and so what is left is very nature friendly.

Tyres

We have a small number of tyres on the site. This has been overlooked but we will push to ensure that these are removed from the site.

The site has been very quiet as it has been very wet.

Harpenden Rise (HR)

(Marcia & Roger Dorey)

A new gate padlock has been needed and we have changed the number code and the Society have been informed of the new number. Within a week or so the new padlock was broken and one of the number rings found on the ground. We are still using that padlock, but we need a new padlock urgently of a better standard as that one was broken far too easily. The previous one had cost me about £10 and was also hacked into almost immediately. You could see the knife marks on it.

We could do with an easier to use mower as Roger can't run it close to the edge as that involves lifting and holding it up as you mow. We cannot do that any more. Plottolders have been so kind and helpful over the summer in helping to keep the grass cut and we are both well on the mend now and hope to take over again next spring. I believe the mower we have now is an interim lent one but may be wrong.

Our manure is being delivered now. There will be about 8 loads altogether, each load mainly supplying four plots, although some people take a half or a whole load. Annoyingly there is a worry that some manure has been illegally removed as all this week's order has mostly been removed now but one plottolder had told me they would not be free to do it until tomorrow. I am waiting for a reply to an email I've sent them to see if they started earlier after all. I have been very strict with my management this year as some disappeared last year too.

We have a problem with a standpipe which was leaking when the water was turned off. A plottolder has asked his plumber if he would be willing to look at it and identify and do the necessary repairs. The plumber has some free time and would be willing. He has asked me for permission to go ahead. I told him I

would need to get permission first and therefore ask the meeting what they would like me to do? The plumber may not still be free in which case someone else would need to be used.

Our newest plotholder has proved very difficult this year as she has not really done any cultivation and has allowed her plot to become choked with weeds. She has been the subject of other reports to committee. She has now formally been asked to vacate her plot by the time the new season starts. The other plotholder who had a badly cultivated plot has made an effort this year and I am hopeful that her improvement will continue next year. I will give her as much non-physical help and support as I can.

Oakley Road (OR)

(Rod Cooley)

- The site water was turned off in November and the meter reading was sent to Carole on 6th November 2023. There have been no more leaks from the water supply to the site.
- **Can I please ask when the stone bank will be removed from the rear of plot 11?** There are no objections to this being removed, provided adjacent plots are not disturbed.
- Most of the heap of wood from the pruned buddleia on plot 11 has been taken to the recycling centre.
- Plots 11, 3 and 4 have no tenant and would be best to be covered. An email was sent to one plot holder that has not been replied to yet. This person might give their plot up.

Piggottshill (PH)

**(Fraser Gordon/Mike Cobley/Geoff Bateman/
Syd Marvell/Rich Waight/Rachel Andrew/Steve Case)**

See report from Mike Cobley – part of chairman's report

Sibley Ave (SA)

(Peter & Helen Loveland)

Most plots at Sibley Avenue site have been shut down for the winter so the site looks very tidy. However, very little work has been done on plots 3a and 3b. The tenants have been sent a "tidy up" email with a deadline of 31 January 2024.

Top Street Way (TW)

(Mike Lawford)

A quiet time on site with nothing of note to report. The manure pile continues to shrink with people taking the remaining allocations, but apart from that it has been a case of rain stop play most of the time. My review of plots has not identified any serious neglect, just a few that I'll want to work with in the new year to ensure they are well placed for the next growing season."

Letting's Secretary Report

(Alex Davis)

Lettings

Another quiet month. 3 plots let this month – 1 each at Aldwickbury, Top Street Way and Piggottshill. The Piggottshill plot was a little problematic. Rather than going into all the details I can summarise the overall lesson, as that anything about taking on, or giving up a plot, need to be sent to the Lettings Secretary

(allotlet@gmail.com) otherwise the lettings can't be handled in accordance with the society standard process (and people can miss out on a plot they that may want!) .
There have been several discussions on plots that might be given up, or taken on, but these will be confirmed closer to renewal.

Overall, we have 6 plots available across the 8 sites.

Just a gentle reminder to site reps; please copy Jane and I in on any neglected plot notifications, so that we are aware of any plots in 'special measures' ahead of the renewal letters being sent out in February 2024.

There are some let plots that are looking a bit overgrown.

Machinery Manager's report

(Roger White)

Shop

(Steve Case)

It's been a quiet month in terms of shop takings things of note though:-

The order I put in for overwintering broad beans was very much a success we've only one pack left

This year's sales of garlic have been strong not many left and still time to get them planted when the shop reopens on Jan 21st

Sunday 10th December the shop stock take was done with the assistance of coffee and mince pies for the volunteers thanks to all that took part

Last but very much not least we have a new volunteer for running the till so welcome onboard Brendan Nugent the help is very much appreciated!

Communications and Webmaster

(Rod Cooley)

- The Christmas newsletter was sent to all members and put onto the society website.
- Emails have been sent to plot holders on different sites.
- The website table of officers and site reps needs to be updated in line with poor Roger Glanville's passing. There might be other changes required so it would be good to review the whole table so the current table is being sent out for comments / builds.
- The paid contractor wording needs to be added to the society rules and a suggested amended set of rules has been distributed for comments / builds.
- Roger Glanville will be added to the website "absent friends" section when information is available.

Social media – Facebook

(Rachel Andrews)

Next meeting – TBA