

S.H.A.G.S Committee Meeting – 14th June 2023 held in Ted Allen Room

Minutes

In Attendance: Mike Cobley (MC) Chair; Carole Pamphlett (CP) Treasurer; Jane Keech (JK) Secretary; Rod Cooley (RC); Alex Davies (AD); Linda Gahagan (LG); Stephan Barnard (SB); Rachel Andrew (RA); Steve Case (SC); Peter Loveland (PL)

Apologies: Fraser Gordon; Geoff Bateman; Hazel Upton; Keith Davison; Marcia Dorey; Harriet Dorey; Helen Loveland; Roger Glanville; Syd Marvell

Review of minutes from the last meeting – minutes were approved- just one minor amendment. Hazel's manure pen is at Alwickbury – not Harpenden Rise.

Finance:

Prior to the meeting, CP circulated the latest financial report.

The shop has been paying S.H.A.G.S the sum of £500 per year for running costs. As no rent is paid, it was agreed that the shop will now pay £1,000 per year.

CP still has some invoices to pay but there is a limit of £1,300 when paying online.

Churchfield still needs a charger and batteries.

Site Matters

Prior to the meeting, reports were circulated.

Alex has done a great job strimming at Oakley Road.

Another discussion took place about contractors on site. It was agreed that following the discussion, AD will put together a proposal. The proposal will be circulated to the committee for feedback so that something can be agreed on as soon as possible. MC will run everything past HTC. Until such time, plot holders are still not permitted to have paid contactors on site.

PL reported that there have been some changes since he submitted his report, and the mower is no longer working.

MC will take spare mower and take the other one to Tim to be repaired (RW has been away)

Lettings

Information circulated prior to meeting.

Machinery

No report as RW has been away.

Communications

Report sent prior to meeting.

The website is up to date.

RA will give her details to RC.

Facebook – RA continues to regularly update the Facebook page with photos and currently has information on 'What can you grow now?'

Shop

Delivery of Growbags this week. 3 pallets to be unloaded.

CP has some cash to pay in to the bank. HSBC has closed and Barclays is closing. Cash can be paid in at the Post Office.

It was agreed that site reps can take any left-over potatoes to distribute to plot holders. They could be particularly useful for newcomers as the potatoes should still grow.

FG has provided stock take figures.

A.O.B.

AGM – Wednesday 9th August 2023. Details will be discussed at the next committee meeting. There are only a couple of rule changes. The information about contractors on site is not a rule change.

HTC inspection will take place mid-July

Awards – Roger will help Linda with the judging. Site reps to provide list of possible winners by the end of June.

Health and Safety Inspection needs to be undertaken. CP will send information.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 12th July 2023

7.30pm in the Ted Allen room

Summary of SHAGS Committee Reports for June 2023

Chairman's Report

(Mike Cobley)

The challenge about determining plot holders using paid help and SHAGS public liability insurance has ruffled a few feathers and the person who started the debacle has now intimated that we are discriminating against elderly and disabled. The note sent out to members was to inform them that they are not covered by our insurance, and we were implementing the ban temporarily until further guidance from HTC was available. So far I have met up with two 'contractors' and explained the current situation, but one plot holder insisted she was not paying him ... which she is, but the gardener has his own PL insurance with at least £2m cover. A second contractor is also fully insured. He has already submitted a copy of his insurance. As for the discrimination aspect of our ban it is strange that the customers currently being 'helped' are able bodied and some are younger members.

HTC annual inspections are likely to be mid July. David Heritage is still leading the Allotment working party, but he is struggling with his hip awaiting replacement surgery.

No further information regarding Irene Boogerman's funeral date. It is planned for an open cremation and her ashes will be spread in Antwerp harbour. She was 69. Her niece who is arranging things is self-isolating having recently had a kidney transplant. They hope to have a memorial gathering later in the summer. I have arranged for a brass plaque to go on the bench, next to Ralph's REUNITED - IRENE BOOGERMAN - 1954 - 2023

We need to be firmer with our neglected plots and instigate the agreed procedure in the worst cases. A reminder that our H & S inspection should be undertaken about this time. Carole will be sending out the appropriate forms for completion and return.

PIGGOTTSHILL:

We have several neglected plots now under supervision which may require the neglected plot procedure to be instigated. Five emails went out to the worst offenders early in May, with some improvement on 2 plots. The recent warm weather has made the grass grow rapidly and the neglected plots stand out even more noticeably.

One of our neighbours has had a new fence erected and put in a gate onto the site. HTC are making an enquiry and will make contact with the homeowner.

Our DR strimmer has developed a fault and has gone back to HGM. It is now 9 years old and spares are hard to obtain. The US manufacturer is restricting sales to UK and Europe and concentrating on home sales. Our battery mower is very popular, but is being abused, left uncleaned and batteries not plugged in to recharge, just left on the shelf. The missing deflector plate (twice) has been located and refitted. The new battery strimmer has been used a couple of times with good reports from plot holders.

More hedge 'whips' have been planted along the new fence line and some of the original hedge plants have regrown from old roots, but it is taking a lot of watering in the current hot weather.

Treasurer's Report

(Carole Pamphlett)

Some good news this month, we have at long last received the £ 816.00 from the insurance company for the damage to the gate post at PH. We paid for the repair work in April, but it has taken Mike best part of a year to sort this out, so my thanks to him. We also received this year's grant from HTC for ££3,320.00. But as always, I have also managed to spend a lot of money this month, we paid ££1,580.00 for Hazel's manure pen at HR, this was part improvement bid this year. We also paid this year's council tax to SAC for £ 1,571.85 as I said last month this is higher than last year. I have also paid Castle Water £1,478.32, but there will be further bills later in the year, also paid other smaller bills. So, our surplus for this year is £4,675.90 and the total in in out HSBC account is £25,990.28, so we are still in a very healthy financial position.

For first time in years, we have had to terminate someone for non-payment of this year's renewal rent. Alex has spent a long time on this, it was the very last o/s renewal but was only £15.00 at Churchfield, they still have the right to appeal, so it could be another month before we can re-let the plot.

So always I continue to monitor the shop. As most of you know we traditionally make a donation to SHAGS as the shop do not have any overheads, i.e., rent, electricity, but this has not changed in years, so we have decided to increase it to £1,000.00 for this year and I will make the payment soon.

Sites:

Aldwickbury (AB)

(Roger White /Hazel Upton/Richard Mottram)

Churchfield (CH)

(Keith Davison)

- The majority of plot holders have been working hard, getting their plots in to fine condition, some with a good selection of vegetables and with fruit produce to come.
- We are still waiting delivery of a strimmer. I have been advised that we have been allocated a new battery powered strimmer, but this is inoperative as it is missing a battery and charger. This site has had no working strimmer for 15 months now. Therefore, we would be grateful if we could take delivery of a working strimmer as soon as possible.
- The plot holders of Plot CF31B have been issued with a termination letter from our Lettings Secretary as they have not renewed their rental and have not tended their plot at all this year. They have not responded to emails and phone calls from our Lettings Secretary or myself. They have until 8th July to comply with the letter. One of our other plot holders has put in a request to take on this plot, this would mean that the Churchfield site will continue to have no vacant plots.
- None of the outstanding trimming to perimeter hedging, bushes and trees, have been carried out by HTC's contractors since last August. Some of these hedges and perimeter vegetation are now in need of severe cutting back, in some areas preventing access to the rear of some plots.

Cross Lane (CL)

(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)

Harpenden Rise (HR)

(Marcia & Roger Dorey)

A couple of plots are still weedy and untidy with nothing much growing. One of these is the plot which Mike commented on in the early spring as needing immediate improvement. At the beginning of June, we sent the plot-holder a list of the items she is expected to improve by mid-June and we have spoken to her in person. We will inspect her plot in mid-June and if there is still no improvement, she will have to be warned with an official letter in line with your termination procedure. The other bad plot is a newcomer this season and we hope to be able to guide her to improvement. At this present time because of the heat a great many of us are working our plots from 6am to about 9am daily. Most plots are doing well and now producing such things as beans and strawberries. Our mower has stopped working again with the same drive fault that was supposed to have been repaired in the early Spring and so we are unable to cut the grass at present.

Oakley Road report 2nd May 2023 (Rod Cooley)

- The plot holder for plots 3a 3b and 4 has decided to give up their plots.
- Sarah-Jane (plot 5) has helped me to clear and trim down plots 3a and 4.
- All items on plot 4 left by the previous tenant have been moved to the front of the plot. The previous tenant is coming back to the site on Saturday 10th June 2023 to remove items.

- Plot 3b has now been taken on and it is hoped that the strimmed plots 3a and 4 will look attractive to those seeking to rent a plot.
- Alex Davis has kindly cut up the buddleia branches and trunks on plot 11 and also strimmed a lot of the plot. This has been a great help.
- The above means that 2.5 plots are available at Oakley Road
- Footpath edges have been strimmed for those plot holders who are struggling to look after their plots.
- A plot holder has found a second nappy on their plot 10 and is asking if the fence bordering Grove Road can be raised. The current fence is holding back some of the rubble and preventing it from falling onto Grove Road.
- The headland in places needs to be strimmed and the owner of plot 13 has planted some plants in the headland behind that plot. Discussions will take place as the headland must be trimmed at least in most places. Plot 13 needs strimming in places as it is overgrown.
- A plot holder is asking that they want to pay for help on their plot. This person will not be able to maintain their three plots without additional help and the help required will probably become permanent.

Piggottshill (PH)

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

Other than it would be good to get the pump installed in the main pond I've got nothing significant to report (Rich Waight)

Sibley Ave (SA)

(Peter & Helen Loveland)

There are signs of cultivation to a greater or lesser degree on all plots. The new battery operated mower has arrived and seems to be working well. A plot holder who lives in Sibley Avenue has agreed to be responsible for charging the battery. The old, broken push mower has been disposed of. The unwanted cultivator has been taken out of the shed and is being stored securely pending on a decision on its future. A preliminary note has been sent to all plot holders to warn them of the annual inspection by HTC, and to urge everyone to try to ensure that at least 50% of their plot is cultivated.

Top Street Way (TW)

(Mike Lawford)

The site is looking really smart at the moment, a view reinforced when my formal inspection only led to a single neglected plot notice being issued. Even with three plots being taken over by new owners this season, we still have more prospective tenants forming a waiting list which is good.

We have now started trialling our new battery powered mower; lots of good feedback on its handling but timely recharging of the single battery is becoming quite an additional workload for me.

“No Mow May” has ended and the resultant undergrowth generated by that initiative has now been trimmed back. While some wanted to extend the time the areas were left uncut, I decided that any more unchecked growth would just eventually leave me with even more work to get it back under control.

Local plot holder, John Jones continues to do great Lazarus work with various failing machinery – mowers, trimmer and rotovator – to all our benefit at this time of peak usage. He and Roger are liaising closely.

Letting’s Secretary Report

(Alex Davis)

Lettings

There is a steady trickle of interest. We have the equivalent of 7 standard sized plots available across all sites. Plot(s) are available at Aldwickbury, Cross Lane, Oakley Road and Piggottshill.

It is likely that once the neglected plots letters are sent out we will have a few more vacant plot.

1 plot holder has not responded to renewal letters and emails and will be sent a termination letter.

Actions

Insurance documents. I followed up the questions from our last meeting with our insurers.

1. While casual helpers (e.g. friend or family of a plot holder) are covered by our insurance (for any third party claims) this cover does not extend to anyone contracted to work on a plot. They would be expected to have their own insurance cover.
2. If a plot holder incurs an injury, or causes injury, because of a malfunction in Society provided machinery, this is covered by our insurance.
Self-inflicted injuries aren’t!

Machinery Manager’s report

(Roger White)

Shop

(Steve Case)

Communications and Webmaster

(Rod Cooley)

- There are no Facebook contact details on the table of committee officers and site reps.
- The request for no paid help to be used was sent to all plot holders.
- The website has been updated to reflect current status.
- As soon as any more shop news is received it will be put on the website.

Social media – Facebook

(Rachel Andrews)