

# S.H.A.G.S Committee Meeting – February 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 - held in Ted Allen Room

## Minutes

**In Attendance:** Mike Cobby (MC) Chair; Jane Keech (JK) Secretary; Alex Davies (AD); Fraser Gordon (FG); Stephan Barnard (SB); Rachel Andrew (RA); Mike Lawford (ML); Steve Case (SC); Roger White (RW); Rosemary Poyser (RP); Linda Gahagan (LG)

**Apologies:** Carole Pamphlett, Rod Cooley, Marcia Dorey; Roger Dorey; Harriet Dorey, Hazel Upton, Syd Marvell, Keith Davison, Geoff Bateman, Peter Loveland, Helen Loveland, Rich Waight

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

**Actions** – MC will liaise with Police about HR (Missing produce and broken padlock).

MC is waiting to hear back from HTC about standpipes.

### Finance:

No financial report available as Carole is unwell. MC gave an update on Carole's health. Carole is currently not well enough to continue as treasurer. We urgently need someone to take over the role.

A discussion took place about the difficulties we now have accessing accounts. The shop account is currently with Barclays Bank and the society account is with HSBC. Without access to accounts, it will not be possible to check who has paid when it is time for renewals. There are also some outstanding invoices.

RW has a contact from HSBC and will make some enquiries.

MC will liaise with Carole's sons and will collect society paperwork and computer. Any paperwork to do with insurance needs to be kept for 30 years.

### Site Matters

Reports were circulated prior to the meeting.

HTC have notified us that they need to cut down a large cherry tree at PH and initial work will commence on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

There are 3 vacant plots at OR. RC needs help to cover plots – particularly as he has been unwell.

MC will try to arrange some HTC Ranger time.

RC is happy to purchase some weed control matting and pass invoice on to the society.

We are in urgent need of more site reps as we currently have reps who are unwell or plan to give up their role.

ML suggested emailing plot holders on the relevant sites to ask if anyone is willing/able to become a rep.

MC will draft email about site reps and treasure role.

### Lettings

Lettings summary circulated prior to meeting.

A discussion took place about non-let plots that are maintained by named people e.g. the hazel coppice, the Percy Bradbury plot and some orchard plots. It was agreed that we will not make any changes to the database to reflect this.

It is coming up to the time for renewals.

**Collection day will be on 17<sup>th</sup> March** – this is for plot holders who wish to pay cash for plots or for associate membership.

Plot holders who have neglected plots may not be invited to renew. Relevant plot holders have already been identified and notified about what work needs to be undertaken on their plot to enable them to renew. If a plot holder is not going to be invited to renew, they will need to be notified to enable them to collect anything belonging to them.

Grove School still has a plot. The Headteacher is involved. We have also been approached by Mencap who would like to take on a plot.

### **Machinery**

We now have a new supplier. New batteries will be delivered soon, and two machines will be collected for servicing. Generally, there are not many problems with our machines.

We will keep Tim in reserve.

At the end of the meeting, RW demonstrated how to use the new strimmer.

### **Communications**

Report circulated prior to meeting.

### **Shop**

We have recently had a large delivery and the shop is now well stocked. Potatoes are selling well, and onion sets will be delivered soon.

### **A.O.B.**

**Tree pruning** – The session went very well. 21 people attended. The cost for the 2 hour session was £60. £42.00 towards the cost was raised in donations.

No date yet for removal of stone bank at OR due to weather conditions.

CL flower meadow has been cut.

**Stephan will check water meter at CL.**

**Date of next meeting**

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**7.30 in the TAR**

## February 2024

### Chairman's Report

(Mike Cobley)

The recent improvement in the weather has brought Spring early and there are daffodils out in full flower since the end of January. The soil is beginning to dry out and even some of the big weeds like dandelions & dock out quite easily.

From the alteration to our neglected plots procedure we have had a few good follow up calls, work started or plans in place for the Spring season. A few non replies now need a final decision as to whether the ploholders will be invited to renew.

Trying to expend our surplus maintenance budget is well up to date, with outstanding works to be completed just the removal of the unsafe stone embankment at Oakley Road, waiting for the grass verge to dry out enough to take the weight of the grab lorry. The last remaining original chainlink fencing at PH has been renewed and a new fence has been erected at CF facing the Co-oP car park.

We also are looking for new site reps for CF with some urgency as Keith has had to give up his plot because of his recurring back problem and also looking after his wife who has been unwell over many previous weeks. Peter & Helen also are not seeking re-election at this year's AGM, so Sibley needs new recruits. Marcia at HR has also been in hospital, Roger is slowly getting better but cannot do any heavy work so Harriet is leading the campaign to regain the best site award next September. Additional help there would be appreciated.

Rachel organised the Pruning seminar on 6<sup>th</sup> January with 20+ attending. The next seminar will be pruning soft fruits.

### Treasurer's Report

(Carole Pamphlett)

No report as Carole is unwell.

### Sites:

#### **Aldwickbury (AB)**

(Roger White /Hazel Upton/Richard Mottram)

No report this time.

#### **Churchfield (CH)**

(Keith Davison)

- The conditions on site are poor and due to the record rainfall this last couple of months, little work has been carried out by ploholders. Potatoes purchased from the Society Shop, will no doubt accelerate works on site by ploholders, planting their potatoes as is customary around 17<sup>th</sup> March, St Paddies Day.
- In January, the dilapidated fence bounding the site adjoining the Co-op Car Park has been removed and replaced with new fencing by a contractor. The run of fencing installed is approximately 30 metres long, consisting of 11 sections each supported by concrete posts and the standard of installation is very good.

#### **Cross Lane (CL)**

(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)

Not much to report as its been very wet.

No official neglected plots but there are a few that we are keeping a keen eye on, and will expect good effort by the summer or we shall need to contact the plot holders.

We have an allotment watch sign that looks like the tie wraps holding it on were cut. May be just old age. I will re-attach.

New delivery of wood chip was most welcome.

We will need to replace some taps before the water is turned on in spring.

### **Harpenden Rise (HR)**

**(Marcia & Roger Dorey)**

All our plots that want manure have now received what they asked for. We will have our annual hedge cutting event later this month, with volunteers from our ploholders and run by some of our ploholders.

### **Oakley Road (OR)**

**(Rod Cooley)**

- I have been unwell for the last 6 weeks and unable to do much work on the site during this period.
- A large branch from the tree next to the shed came down in a storm and I cut it up and took it to the recycling centre.
- I have removed nearly all the buddleia that was cut down on plot 10 and a large amount of plant debris on plot 3a. This has all been taken to the recycling centre in car loads.
- The combination lock got stuck on the wooden gate by the shed so I have replaced it with a new combination lock. Carole will reimburse the cost of the lock.
- I have emailed the tenant of plot 14 as no work has taken place on this plot for several months.
- If this tenant does not renew it means that there will be a total of 4 plots at OR with no tenant: plots 3, 4, 11, and 14.
- Steve case has emailed details of a plastic covering but I have been too unwell to do anything about it.
- I cannot maintain a site with four unattended plots and need help.

### **Piggottshill (PH)**

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

The revised emails were sent out to 8 ploholders whose plots were causing some concern. One email was returned with 'undelivered' notification. 4 ploholders have taken action and/or confirmed a plan, another ploholder is terminally ill and no decision about the future is possible at present so we will arrange to strim the grass and keep the plot tidy in the interim. One ploholder would like to give up half of their plot. Two have not replied.

There will be a site clear up bonfire later this month if the weather keeps dry.

## **Sibley Ave (SA)**

**(Peter & Helen Loveland)**

The site is looking quite tidy as most plot holders have settled their plots well over winter and some preparation for Spring planting has started. Plots 3A and 3B were causing concern and 'tidy-up' emails (copied to appropriate Committee Members) had been sent to the tenants. We now have a plan in place for plot 3B, which another plot holder has offered to help with. We recommend that tenancy be allowed to continue. Nothing has been seen or heard with regard to plot 3A, which is now almost completely overgrown.

## **Top Street Way (TW)**

**(Mike Lawford)**

Mike didn't have anything to report this time.

## **Letting's Secretary Report**

**(Alex Davis)**

### **Lettings & Renewals**

A relatively quiet month, some enquiries, and a small number of lettings. The focus now is on trying to get everything in order for the renewal run at the end of February.

I still have the following plots down for not renewing due to their neglected state:

PH37 PH43 PH45 PH53A PH76 PH118 PH122 PH130 SA3A

I intend to send the renewal letters towards the end of February. Carole's ill health will make this more challenging. This timescale is dependent on having access to the HSBC bank account so we know who has paid (or not).

The sending out of the emails is usually spread over several days to limit the number that are classified as 'Junk'. A few letters are still hand delivered. The delivery of these is therefore weather and motivation dependant!

We need to decide on a date for members to come to the Ted Allen room – is 10<sup>th</sup> March a possibility? Harpenden Mencap are interested in taking a plot at the Churchfield site. They hold a regular meeting, on a Thursday evening, in the hall above the Co-op for adults with learning difficulties. They see an allotment as a good activity that could involve the whole group. While I welcomed the idea, I explained that the plot is likely to need more than a weekly visit to keep it under control and to flourish. They are therefore looking for some volunteers to manage the plot on a more regular basis.

Overall, we have 7 plots available across the 8 sites. 1 of the PH plots has just been given up and is in the process of being re-let; the one at Churchfield is under consideration by Mencap (as mentioned above)

I have taken the opportunity of the long winter evenings to revise the way the summary stats are produced from the database. While some of these changes are technical, the main difference is that I have taken out any plots that are not let to a specific member e.g. an orchard, hazel growing, in memorial etc. My view was it gives a more realistic view of what is the total number of plots that plot holders are using. I have maintained the old-style approach too, so can revert if anyone has any strong views.

## **Machinery Manager's report**

**(Roger White)**

Machinery servicing is still ongoing and hopefully should be completed on all sites by the end of February. An order has been placed for additional Stiga batteries and small battery powered Stiga mowers and these

are due for delivery on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. The AL-KO mowers from CF and CL are also being collected on the 16<sup>th</sup> Feb and estimates for the repair of these will be obtained in the next few days.

A battery strimmer will be available at the meeting for site reps to see how to disassemble the head and reload strimmer line.

### **Shop**

**(Steve Case)**

### **Communications and Webmaster**

**(Rod Cooley)**

- The shop news has been updated with the seed potato delivery information from Steve Case.
- Emails about found keys were sent to plot holders.
- The website table of officers and site reps has been updated.
- The paid contractor wording was added to the society rules.
- Roger Glanville will be added to the website “absent friends” section when information is available.

New issue of The Plot so Far is ready and will be sent to RC.

### **Social media – Facebook**

**(Rachel Andrews)**