

## S.H.A.G.S Committee Meeting – March 13<sup>th</sup> 2024 - held in Ted Allen Room

### Minutes

**In Attendance:** Mike Coble (MC) Chair; Jane Keech (JK) Secretary; Stephan Barnard (SB); Rachel Andrew (RA); Mike Lawford (ML); Steve Case (SC); Roger White (RW); Linda Gahagan (LG); Geoff Bateman (GB); Vincent Poupard (VP); Rich Waight (RW); Peter Loveland (PL)

**Apologies:** Marcia Dorey; Roger Dorey; Harriet Dorey, Helen Loveland, Alex Davies, Keith Davison, Fraser Gordon, Rosemary Poyser

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

**Actions** – Just one outstanding action.

MC to draft email to try to recruit some additional site reps.

### Finance:

We are very pleased that we now have a new treasurer – Vincent Poupard.

Vincent has looked through HSBC bank statements. There was a query about some rent payments – there may be some confusion because there is a 10% discount for plot holders over the age of 65.

All financial information can now be accessed, and bills can be paid. Roger White is now a signatory.

Money can also be paid in at a Post Office.

Vincent has arranged to meet with Steve C on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> to get a better understanding of how the shop runs. Vincent also needs access to accounts.

A discussion took place about possible accounts. Mike C will inform bank/building society that we will have some new/additional trustees. We now operate closely with HTC Trustees.

It was suggested that we use just one bank or building society. Further discussions will take place and a decision can be made at the next meeting.

The majority of plot holders have paid their rent. Payments can also be made on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March in the TAR.

(Jane K, Mike C and Keith D)

Action - After this date, Alex D will be able to make a list of any outstanding payments and will know how many plots are available on each site.

### Site Matters

Additional site reps are needed at some sites (OR, SA and CF).

Action – Mike Coble to draft email to be sent.

Every site should have a person who is nominated for machinery tasks. Roger W would be happy to meet with them – he needs contact details.

Rod has had some difficulties at OR and feels it would be useful to take out any confrontation element of the site rep role. It seems to be more of a problem with some plot holders at OR site. Rod distributed photos of a plot that has been given up and the plot holder has left a huge amount of rubbish behind.

Peter L suggested that a site reps meeting is arranged for December time when there is less activity on plots. As this is some time away, it was agreed that site reps will support Rod with the difficulties at OR.

Stephan has offered to help Rod clear rubbish.

It was agreed that, when necessary, we need to be stricter about the rules of the society.

Site reps need to be thinking ahead about any projects for their sites and / or if any additional machinery is required.

Water bills are paid to Castle Water, but they do not do repairs. If repairs are necessary, Affinity Water need to be contacted.

**Action - Stephan will liaise with Affinity regarding an issue at CL – there is a small trickle, and the stop cock doesn't turn off completely.**

### **Lettings**

Data and report circulated prior to meeting.

### **Machinery**

All sites, with the exception of TW have had machines serviced.

CL have 2 machines that are no longer useable. Stephan will decide whether a battery of petrol mower would be most suitable.

HR are using the spare Honda machine from PH site.

We need to see how robust the batteries are as there was a problem with one of them – it is thought that the battery got too cold in the shed and it no longer works.

### **Communications**

Report circulated prior to meeting.

Website is up to date (absent friends, updated list of contacts and The Plot so Far)

### **Shop**

Potatoes are selling well. Steve C will order more Broad Beans and Onion Sets.

(Red onions should be delivered soon)

**Action - Steve will draft an email with a general shop update. This will be sent to Rod for circulation. It will include a reminder that we still have potatoes, and they can be planted late for autumn harvest.**

A discussion took place about getting a price for internet access. It would mainly be needed to operate the sum up machine (rather than using someone's mobile phone)

**Action - It was agreed that Steve would look the next model up to the Sum Up machine we currently have – a model that doesn't require additional internet access.** This had been agreed at a previous meeting.

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

Mike has ordered a plaque for Carole.

HTC grant has been approved and money will be received by the end of April.

We currently have no volunteers for the shop on Easter Sunday.

Rachel will contact Emily G to get some possible dates for guidance on how to prune fruit bushes.

Jane k has drafted some non- renewal letters, but they have not yet been sent as there have been some developments e.g. one plot has been given up and one has been divided.

Action - Mike C will liaise with Alex D to see if any letters do need to be sent.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

7.30 in the TAR

**Summary of SHAGS Committee Reports for  
March 2024**

**Chairman's Report**

**(Mike Cobley)**

The inevitable news that our dear friend Carole died on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February has left a big gap in the Trustees of SHAGS.

Vincent Poupard has stepped up to take over the Treasurer role in the immediate future and is now looking through 2022 and 2023 figures to ascertain how the Society finances are run and whether there are better ways of recording and running our accounting system. Alex has been a great help, getting logged in to our a/c with HSBC just in time for the influx of rent renewals for 2024. There still remains the ongoing problem with Barclays and the shop a/c. At present we can't even close the a/c as the mandate requires two signatures, so in the short term it is proposed to put Steve Case as a signatory, then we can decide finally whether we keep that a/c open or transfer to a second (Shop) a/c with HSBC. Our savings a/c with Harpenden Building Society is being reviewed, firstly to update the Trustees position to follow up with seeking a better return. The current interest up to 2023 was only 0.1% - on £51,700 we earned £51.70 !

Our next meeting with HTC Allotments Working Party is due on 25<sup>th</sup> March when we will hear whether our Grant for 2024 will be approved.

Another of Carole's jobs was to put out the site reps budget forms for the forthcoming year with improvement schemes, equipment purchase and repair schedules.

For the March meeting we need to appoint new Trustees with immediate effect

JANE KEECH Secretary  
ALEX DAVIS Vice Chairman  
ROGER WHITE Vice Chairman

Carole left instructions about her funeral arrangements and I do hope that we will be able to mark her many years' dedication to the Society with the Carole Pamphlett award and a barbecue in the summer and the chance to spread her ashes where she enjoyed her life in Harpenden.

R.I.P.

Mike Cobley

## Treasurer's Report

### **Paymaster Update from Alex**

As I now have access to the HSBC account, I can now make payments. Any Committee members or plot holders who have expenses should send them directly to me ([allotlet@gmail.com](mailto:allotlet@gmail.com)) along with any supporting documentation. I will also need their bank details to make the payment.

The bank account looks healthy following the renewal payments. As of 8<sup>th</sup> March, the balance of the account is £28,609.

I am trying to pick up who our main suppliers are, and if there are any urgent payments required. Please let me know if you know of anything that needs paying.

Electricity from EON (for the PH site) is now on a Direct Debit. They bill monthly.

Castle Water seem a bit problematic. We have separate accounts for each site. I have the account numbers and can see regular bills, but there seems no facility to handle as one overall account (i.e we have some accounts in credit, some in debit and no obvious way of transferring between them) Castle Water don't seem to understand that we don't use any water in the winter and continue to bill us monthly.

We also have affiliation status with the RHS. This entitles us to one free visit to an RHS garden for up to 55 SHAGS members. I think Jim used to organise this. If anyone else wants to pick up this and organise, please contact me for details.

We also have a card that entitles 2 society members at a time to 50% off RHS entry fees. Let me know if this is of interest to any of your plot holders. I don't currently have the card but assume a new one for 2024 will be issued, now we have paid our affiliation fee.

Mike is trying to get access to the Shop Barclays account. We now have only 1 signatory for this account. I was told that we need 2 signatories to close the account!

I am afraid I won't be at the meeting on Wednesday, but please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or feedback.

Alex

### Sites:

**Aldwickbury (AB)**

**(Roger White /Hazel Upton/Richard Mottram)**

**Churchfield (CH)**

**(Keith Davison)**

**Cross Lane (CL)**

**(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)**

We had a tap leak that was reported by a plot holder. I corrected it and plan to replace several defective taps.

The site has been very quiet due to exceptionally wet weather. This weekend we start to see plot holders returning their plots.

**Harpenden Rise (HR)**

**(Marcia & Roger Dorey)**

The February hedge cutting has taken place. It has been led by a team of our plot holders who do it every year. All the ploholders have been asked to help clear up the debris. The last of the manure has also been dealt with and all the plots who wanted it have got it. We have 1 plot available for a newcomer and I've asked Alec to deal with this for us. Mum will be sorry to hear of Carole's passing, and I pass on her sympathies to the society and her family.

## Oakley Road (OR)

(Rod Cooley)

- Plot holders are now starting to work their plots.
- The 100 square metre black plastic sheet for covering plot 11 has been received and it is in the Oakley Road tool shed.
- More rubbish needs to be removed from plot 11 before it can be covered: an old hose pipe, tools, bricks, and just a few pieces now from the buddleia that was cut down on plot 10. It then needs to be trimmed down.
- EXCELLENT NEWS - Plot 4 has been taken on
- Unless someone has not renewed, there are now only two plots at OR without a tenant: Plot 3 and plot 11.
- With the help of others, I have been clearing a **huge amount of rubbish from plot 3**.
- The rubbish comprised: wood, a very large swimming pool/ jacuzzi pump with its mains lead, a toilet seat, a large, broken, glass goldfish bowl, more broken glass, a bag full of rubbish, a council green bin full of landscaping sheeting, a large slab of Marble, and a black Council bin which is full of water, a large broken black plastic cupboard and two children's scooters. The children's scooters were kindly taken to the charity shop by the recycling centre.
- When the previous tenant said that they would remove their material they only took a small amount of it. Can we use this as an example of what not to do for new tenants?



Plot 3 OR Rubbish

Castle  
Water  
status 4<sup>th</sup>  
March  
2024 (Rod  
Cooley)

- Castle Water were contacted regarding Carole Pamphlett. They removed Carole's email and have now got Alex Davis's contact details. Castle Water said that they can only have one main contact for the society, although I used to be copied on emails sent by Castle Water to Carole Pamphlett.
- Advice from Castle water about the stopcock problem at Cross lane was sent to Stephan Barnard. The advice was to contact Affinity Water, which Stephan said that he will do.

## Piggottshill (PH)

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

Geoff has been a workhorse over the past 2/3 weeks clearing brambles along the Dark Lane fence line and one of our neglected plots but we desperately need some dry days to be able to burn off the piles of material from around the site. The grass has continued to grow throughout the Winter months, but the headland pathways have suffered with soggy ground and the passage of many wellies ! Temporarily we are without our No 1 volunteer grass cutter, Albert, who slipped on the ice and broke his pelvis whilst on holiday in Italy. We wish him a speedy recovery.

The headland path along the Sherwoods Rise boundary requires further attention this month. At a recent meeting with the HTC Rangers, who now maintain the hedges for the Council, they will be using their flail machine so the access needs to be maintained at all times. The big cherry tree on plot 56 was taken down, following the recent tree survey, where the main trunk was found to have split lengthways and had decayed internally to a point where it was deemed dangerous. There is a pine tree behind the TAR, originally someone's discarded Christmas tree, which has now grown too tall, so we have asked for this to be reinspected with a view to having it removed.

**Sibley Ave (SA)**

**(Peter & Helen Loveland)**

The site looks generally tidy, with signs of weeding, digging etc on some plots. Daffodils and other bulbs are making a cheerful appearance. Some overwinter onions, garlic and broad beans are doing well. Plot 3A is still of concern, despite emails and telephone discussion. Copies, reports etc have been forwarded to the Club Secretary and Lettings Secretary. It is a tricky situation as we have no waiting list but the plot already presents a challenge as it is almost completely overgrown. If there are no takers, we might try and get a few people together to plant it with potatoes - at least something productive could come out of it. We plan to turn the water on about the end of the month.

**Top Street Way (TW)**

**(Mike Lawford)**

The grass is starting to grow again, and I've managed to get my usual ten plot-holder-volunteers to join me again on the main grass area mowing rota. Roger has delivered a second battery for the electric mower so hopefully that will now mean we will always have a charged battery installed, while the other is being recharged by me at home. The petrol mowers refused my attempts to start them, but John Jones has since been able to get them going. Hopefully Roger's team will be able to give them a proper service in the next week, which will be very much appreciated.

The manure pile has been fully cleared and we will be having our bi-annual site bonfire on that area on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March. Communications giving notice to our neighbours of the upcoming fire will be issued through the respective WhatsApp groups next week.

I've also turned the water on again at the mains.

I've tidied up the very far end of the site where Plot 28 once was. It stopped being cultivated several years ago as neighbouring garden trees have grown to shadow the area too much for worthwhile cultivation. Since then, it has become quite overgrown, but this has now been cut down, ground levelled, and the area covered. Alternative uses for this space are now being considered.





### **Letting's Secretary Report**

**(Alex Davis)**

#### **Lettings & Renewals**

Renewal emails and letters were sent out on the weekend of 24/25<sup>th</sup> February. As of 8<sup>th</sup> March around 200 plot holders have paid and there are around 130 still to pay. 18 Associates have already renewed. The number of available plots has increased (now 9), as is typical at this time of year. We still have a few on waiting lists and so I expect there to be the usual turnover of plots ahead of the main growing season. I now have access to the HSBC bank account and can therefore monitor the renewal payments as they come in.

I will look to send out a general email reminding all plot holders to pay their renewals in the middle of March, and then follow up with direct emails to those still outstanding closer to the end of the month. I will send a list of all outstanding plot holders to site reps after the 17<sup>th</sup> weekend. All gentle encouragement to get people to pay is always appreciated.

We are proposing Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March for 'payments day' in the Ted Allen Room. I am afraid I am away that weekend, so volunteers are required to take the payments and update the lists (including updating contact details).

Harpenden Mencap have taken the Churchfield plot and are now recruiting volunteers to assist their efforts.

Following our discussion at the last meeting, I have reverted the stats to include the orchard and memorial plots.

### **Machinery Manager's report**

**(Roger White)**

Basic servicing and cleaning of the wheeled machinery has been completed on all sites apart from TSW which will hopefully be done by next weekend. The new batteries for CL, OR and PH will be ready for collection at the meeting (the TSW spare battery has been delivered to the site). Small battery mowers are being made ready for use on PH and for AB.

CL has two mowers which are beyond repair (AL-KO and Mountfield) so currently this site has a large brushcutter, a wheeled strimmer and a small battery mower. I recommend an additional machine is therefore purchased for this site. This could be a large petrol mower, for example the Weibang Virtue 50 SVP Variable Speed Lawnmower which was purchased for PH in 2022 or a large battery Stiga machine. Both machines cost between £500 and £600.

It will be useful for this year to have a list of the main machine users on each site. This will help in managing ongoing maintenance and in monitoring how often the machines are used. It is clear from the servicing over the winter that some machines have been used very little if at all in 2023 so identifying these earlier will help in deciding how maintenance and machine replacement is carried out in future.

**Please will all site reps send me a list and contact details of the main machine users on their sites.**

## **Shop**

**(Steve Case)**

Sales have been taking off our first delivery of onion sets almost completely sold out in 1 week so I ordered more. By then pre packaged sets were out of stock so I ordered 10 Kg of loose Sturon onions and 5Kg of Red Baron the Sturon have arrived and are selling well the Red Baron are still with the supplier as this year's supply need heat treating to avoid bolting

We've restocked the supply of seeds and looking at this Sunday sales we're going to have to order more urgently

Potatoes are going well this year thanks Peter we've sold out of some varieties and sales are strong on others

One bit of bad news; this Sunday I opened the awning to make the dry area people could stand bigger as more people are going to the shop. As I got it nearly open the fitting which the hook that open it goes on snapped off. I've had a look and the way it fits is the 'eyelet' which the hook attaches to is secured to the spindle that drives the gears to open or close it is secured by a pin through the shaft so I'll try to drive the pin out and see if we can replace the part

## **Communications and Webmaster**

**(Rod Cooley)**

- The Plot So Far edited by Geoff Bates, was put on the society website and members have been informed where to find it on the website.
- The shop news has been further updated and information sent to all members.
- Carole Pamphlett and Roger Glanville will be added to the website "absent friends" section when information is available.



