

# **S.H.A.G.S Committee Meeting – 10<sup>th</sup> May 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); Rosemary Poyser (RP); Rachel Andrew (RA); Steve Case (SC); Roger White (RW)

**Apologies:** Fraser Gordon; Geoff Bateman, Hazel Upton, Keith Davison, Maria Dorey, Harriet Dorey, Peter Loveland, Helen Loveland

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

### **Finance:**

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

The council grant is due soon.

Shed for Top Street Way has been paid for.

£45 outstanding rent (2 plot holders – one from Harpenden Rise and one from Churchfield)

FG to get stock take figures to CP by Friday.

### **Site Matters**

Prior to the meeting, reports were circulated.

Discussion about wood chippings at OR. Not easy for chipper to access site.

### **Application for beehives**

After discussion and careful consideration, the application for beehives on plot CF19 was not approved. It was felt that the hives would be too close to other plot holders and members of the public. There were some beehives at CL site, but several people were stung, particularly when the bees were aggravated by the sound of machinery – mowers, strimmers etc. Contractors use power tools to cut the perimeter hedges – this would only be approximately 1 meter away from the hives.

### **Contractors/ paid help on plots**

After a discussion about previous issues with paid help on plots, and implications with insurance, it was agreed that no paid help will be allowed on plots until further notice to allow further discussions to take place.

Plot holders will be notified and updated if the situation changes.

## **Lettings**

Information circulated prior to meeting.

We currently have 8/9 available plots across the sites.

## **Machinery**

Report circulated prior to meeting.

3 new battery mowers and 2 strimmers have been purchased. Batteries are interchangeable.

Ongoing issues with mowers being misused – particularly the battery mulching mower.

## **Communications**

Report sent prior to meeting.

RC has sent out details of the photo competition.

Facebook – RA is regularly updating Facebook page with photos and is happy for plot holders to send photos to her.

## **Shop**

Shop takings have been good.

A discussion took place about updating our current Sum-up machine to one with a sim card to avoid people having to use their own mobile phone to get Wi-Fi. The sim card would be approximately £79.

MC will discuss with FG/SC at the shop on Sunday morning.

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

Suggested date for AGM – Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**Date of next meeting:**  
**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023**  
**7.30pm in the Ted Allen room**

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

**Chairman's Report**

**(Mike Cobley)**

CHAIRMAN:

Our previous discussions about ploholders using contractors on site still needs to be resolved, but we must make sure any actions by non ploholders is not going to invalidate our insurance cover. If we speak to our insurers and they turn round and expect an increased premium then the ploholders who don't pay for help will be subsidising, out of their subscriptions, the ploholders who pay for work to be done. HTC felt that employing contractors defeated the object of having an allotment.

We await the local election results to see if there will be any changes with the Allotment Liaison Committee before our next scheduled meeting and the annual inspection dates can be agreed.

**Treasurer's Report**

**(Carole Pamphlett)**

Very little income this month as we have collected most of this years rent renewals. I'm only two outstanding now for just 45.00. but we are due to receive this year grant for HTC soon.

But I've managed to spend a considerable amount of money this month. Mike Lawford has now erected his new shed at TSW and I have paid him £973.61 which also includes £165.00 for some recycled wood panels to keep a TSW neighbour happy after they complained to the council. Mike Lawford had help from the council rangers to erect the wood panels. I've obviously paid a few other of our running costs. I've had to reimburse the shop for petrol, as some site reps still claim from the shop, but please remember it's much easier to claim directly from me, saves me a lot of work. I also had to reimburse the shop for £16.00 for manure which someone paid into SHAGS in error. I have a few Castle Water bills to pay but the biggest bill to pay soon is our yearly rates we pay to St. Albans totalling £1,571.85, although we get a discount for being a 'not for profit organisation' it's still higher than last year which was £948.11. The SHAGS bank balance with HSBC stands at £26,556.85.

The shop bank balance with Barclays stands at £18,343.17, but this changes weekly.

At our last meeting we talked about our insurance cover, happily Alex was able to talk to them and sort it out, I think he will include it in his report. I'm making very slow progress on our Year End accounts, mainly as it takes me 4 times as long to do anything with my back problems.

**Sites:**

**Aldwickbury (AB)**

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

**Churchfield (CH)**

**(Keith Davison)**

## **Cross Lane (CL)**

**(Stephan Barnard / Rosie Poyser)**

Push strimmer has no cutting cord.

One of the strimmers has a do not use sign on it.

We have three plots available so need more plot holders. We will put a notice on the gate to say plots available and contact details.

Some plot holders have not attended their plots yet so we will keep an eye on these and hope they are not giving up their plots.

## **Harpenden Rise (HR)**

**(Marcia & Roger Dorey)**

Plots are beginning to sharpen up now as people work on them. It's still too early to plant out tomatoes etc but baby legumes and brassicas are in evidence on several plots as well as earthed up potatoes and alliums. We have several very untidy plots and I'm doing my best to get their tenants working! The grass has been cut and Mike has come and collected the mulching mower as our faithful old mower was kindly returned nicely repaired...thank you team.

## **Oakley Road report 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (Rod Cooley)**

- Most plots are being worked now. Email requests were sent to some plot holders asking them to start working on their plots. Those plot holders have now responded. A problem has been the continual bad weather.
- General Site news requests have been sent asking those who have not done so to cut their grass edges. I have cut the edges on plots where the plot holder is struggling to manage their plot.
- I have cut the grass paths but I have been greatly assisted by Guy Graham who has since cut a substantial amount of the grass paths on site!
- I am gradually removing the old buddleia cuttings on plot 11 but it would help if the cuttings, especially the large diameter branches, could be chipped. Guy Graham has offered to help remove some of the cuttings. Some plot holders have requested the chippings for paths but it is not clear if this would be possible.

## **Piggottshill (PH)**

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

Five neglected plots are on our watch list and the first stage of the neglected plot procedure has started, with an email sent out asking that the weeds and forests of dandelions are strimmed, plots weed killed and covered as a minimum if no immediate cultivation is planned. Now into May it will be hard work getting these plots into shape this summer. We have one vacant plot PH57 which needs clearing to make it more appealing to a new plotholder.

Next job is to get a work party together to repaint the woodwork of the shop. We were donated a can of black wood preservative to try and this should be an improvement on our previous attempt when the shop looked as though it had been 'tangoed' !

Our machinery is still suffering some abuse, with the rotovator now out of service after the rotors were damaged and our recently returned Stiga battery mower has developed another fault. Machines are being put away with no effort to clean them down, despite an email recently sent out to all plotholders.

The saga of the damaged gatepost continues, but the invoice and claim has been submitted to the insurance company and we await payment. It has only taken 11 months so far.

**Sibley Ave (SA)**

**(Peter & Helen Loveland)**

The Sibley Avenue site is showing evidence of cultivation and planting on all plots. One plot holder is having back trouble so is proceeding more slowly than he would wish - but progress is being made. Paths and headlands are being mowed and reports are that the Striga mulching mower is performing well. Some of the trees on the 'orchard' plot have considerable amounts of blossom and we hope that the resulting fruit will enable to assess the viability of the trees later in the year.

**Top Street Way (TW)**

**(Mike Lawford)**

The shed kit arrived in a couple of suspiciously small flat packs. But all doubts that indeed it was the size intended were dispatched over the ensuing three-day construction period and we now have a brand-new shed in which currently are stored our collection of mowers.



Good work is continuing by those more mechanically minded resurrecting the more temperamental grass-cutting machinery especially with their use greatly increasing at this time of year. Thought is also turning to how the benefit of new battery-operated machines should simplify this ongoing maintenance overhead / cost – albeit with the issue of best providing powered up batteries on-site when we start getting these new machines.

Lots of work is going on across the plots as we gear up for spring growth, with a great deal of digging and planting underway. However, there are a few plots that haven't shown any sign of activity that may warrant some formal intervention as part of the upcoming inspection process.

We have embraced "No Mow May", by leaving the sides of the grass entrance drive and some larger on-site patches uncut for now. However once into June we will be instigating "Super Strimmer Summer" to bring the site back into good order!

**Letting's Secretary Report**  
**Renewals**

**(Alex Davis)**

This is now complete.

### **Lettings**

There is a steady trickle of interest. We have the equivalent of 9 standard sized plots available across all sites.

Plots at Churchfield and Piggottshill have been re-let in the past month.

### **Actions**

Question about who is covered by our public liability insurance. Carole has passed on the policy details. I have reviewed the policy details but am none the wiser. I hope to give a further update at our next meeting, once I have been able to speak to our broker.

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

**(Roger White)**

#### **Battery powered machines**

The small Stiga battery machine on PH has been repaired under warranty and returned to site. There was a report of the same fault reoccurring, but this appears to have been a false alarm and at the last check the mower was working correctly.

Orders have been placed for 3 more small mowers (with battery and charger) and 2 battery strimmers. The strimmers are ready for collection from Herts Garden Machinery and will be brought to site along with some additional parts for failed petrol machines which are on order. The 3 mowers will be located on SA, CL and TSW, the strimmers on CF and PH from where they can be collected to use on other sites if needed.

The following machines have been reported as needing attention and are on the list to be checked:

PH wheeled strimmer - part ordered from HGM

PH cultivator – parts ordered from HGM

AB Mountfield mower – spare part available from scrapped machine,

PH Hayter mower – blade needs sharpening/replacing

SA Stiga mower – drive needs adjustment.

### **Shop**

**(Steve Case)**

### **Communications and Webmaster report 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (Rod Cooley)**

- Jane Keech and I have started off the 2023 photo competition and updated the competition rules. A rule has been added stating that if a query on a submitted file is not answered within three days the organisers may remove the file from the competition. This is in response to a problem last year where judging was delayed for over a week after a query was not answered, despite many attempts to contact the person who submitted it.

- An email about the 2023 photo competition has been sent to all plot holders and the email contents plus the updated rules put on the society website.
- Various emails have been sent to members covering a range of topics.
- The website has been updated to reflect current status.
- I am waiting for information about the Facebook page to add it to the website.
- As soon as any more shop news is received it will be put on the website.

**Social media – Facebook**

**(Rachel Andrews)**