

St Thomas Allotment Association





approved MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEETING 4 2020/21 : Fri. Feb. 5th 2021

(zoom online meeting by invitation)

7:00pm @ online

1. **Attendance:**  **A] Present** [*quorum pres.*] : **Executive/Officers:** **Alison Walker** (Chair & *pro-tem* lead for G&H Trading Shed & Site Mngr/Rep vacancies) | **David Solman** (Sec. & *pro-tem* lead for the Treasurer vacancy) | **Angela R.** (Vice-chair & Local Allotment Manager, Regent St.) | **Local Allotment Managers:** **Richard Brownbridge** (Clapperbrook) | **Charles Knill** (Trading Manger) | **John Butler** (Local Allotment Manager, Cowick La.) | **Rob Shields** (Local Allotment Manager, Rackfields) | **Bill Turner** (Local Allotment Manager, Ashwood Rd.) | **Rob Harding** (Local Allotment Manager, Ide Lane) | **Sue Therrian** (Local Allotment Manager, Pinces)  **B]** Apologies: *Heidi Miller (Local Allotment Manager, Guys&Hylton) | Ruth O'Neale (Web & Data Manager) | Tim Snell (Local Allotment Manager, Newman Rd.).*

2. MAIN ITEM 1 of 3: Insurance Discussion

John B. had written to the Secretary to request that the committee explore this topic. The Secretary had therefore pre-circulated the committee with a paper setting out his understanding of the association's current insurance position, in so far as he recalled the details. To this was appended the insured volunteers list, highlighting areas for updating by Site Reps supervising the Let&Check volunteers, and the Chair & Trading Manager supervising the Trading Shed volunteers. A copy of the 2015-2020 contract between the Council and two signatories for the Association for level 1 administrative functions was also pre-circulated by the Secretary.

John B. asked the committee to explore the issue of people who want to carry-out work to maintain the common areas, perhaps using mechanical tools at times. He considered this to be a development the association should support, e.g. by acquiring insurance cover for volunteers to do this. He volunteered to contact the association's insurers to explore the cost.

In discussion, it was clear that it is currently the Council's responsibility to authorise, carry out and insure, maintenance of common areas on the allotment sites and use of mechanical equipment (as the association has no level 2 agreement in place). In further discussion, it was noted that, whilst the association can not at the present time instruct and insure volunteers to do level 2 work, it might be possible in the near future to have an agreement with the council so that certain works to the common areas and use of mechanical tools could be authorised as part of our remit. Rob H. volunteered to explore this with the council. He would also make inquiries as to whether the council might insure anyone carrying out such additional work.

The Secretary noted that there is currently no information base available to the committee, from which he or they could ascertain how widespread is the issue of people sometimes carrying-out work at their own discretion and at their own risk, to maintain the common areas; perhaps using mechanical tools. The experience of each allotment site was therefore discussed, in so far as known by their Site Reps. - and some preliminary information exchanged. The general mood

of the meeting was that time should be set aside to allow for further discussion once we had put together more details about the topic.

Resolved/Agreed (i) that this topic be given more time at the next meeting.

Action (i) The secretary to circulate all committee members with a request to help compile a brief table or report setting out examples where plot-holders may be going beyond the association's remit/insurance by opting, at their own risk, to maintain the common areas and/or using mechanical tools.

Action (ii): Rob H. to have a preliminary discussion with Dan H-S to explore how the council might go about authorising the association to carry out works to common areas (i.e. some level 2 works, involving mechanical tools); and whether the Council might insure this or meet the associations insurance costs.

Action (iii): John B and/or the Secretary to ask the association's insurers for a preliminary indication of cost for insuring the association's volunteers if we enter into an agreement with the council to carry out maintenance of common areas which would involve use of mechanical equipment.

3. MAIN ITEM 2 of 3: Membership Discussion

John B. had written to the Secretary to request that the committee explore this topic. The Secretary had therefore pre-circulated the committee with a paper setting out the association's current membership approach. To this was appended the current listings of Opt-in 'members' and and Enrolled Members by allotment site. All committee members now had the printed leaflets to encourage Enrolled Memberships and these contained Opt-in slips for those who preferred only this lower level of membership. Invitations had also been included in the newsletter and by site poster.

The Committee had a wide-ranging discussion about membership. John B. highlighted the need to better communicate membership arrangements to plot-holders. These were sometimes not well-understood and it therefore needed doing a sensitive manner that best helped all plot-holders come to a decision about whether to join.

This was followed by a discussion about the issue of the relationship of membership to the use and function of trading sheds. Alison W. expressed the view that the trading sheds should aim to serve all plot-holders without going back to the old requirement that purchasers must bring membership identification. The Secretary noted that the whole area of how the association's portfolio of activities can best be compliant with financial rules and regulations in relation to membership, needed to be looked into in detail. Some of this was covered in the paper he had pre-circulated and there was much food for thought.

Given the limitations of time and the need for the committee to thoroughly understand this subject, it was generally agreed that time should be set aside to allow for further discussion and ideas.

Resolved/Agreed (ii) that this topic be given more time at the next meeting.

4. MAIN ITEM 3 of 3: Grounds Maintenance Discussion

The committee had already (*under main item 1: insurance*) noted that the association is not responsible for grounds maintenance at the allotment sites. However, the association has a responsibility to let the council know about possible infringements to the allotment rules and therefore takes a keen interest in a wide range of matters affecting the allotment sites.

In discussion, it became clear that when liaising with the council, the association's Site Reps frequently draw attention to unresolved, or difficult-to-resolve, issues arising from behavioural problems and/or the condition of the grounds.

Various examples of current grounds problems at the allotments were discussed; including eroded support to the edge of one of the main drive surfaces at Guys&Hylton allotments, supply by the Council of gravel-like material (but which seems to need compactors) to help make-good potholes in some of the allotment roads at G&H; people not keeping their dogs on leads in accordance with allotment rules; and the need for more hedge planting where dead elms had been removed at Ide Lane allotments. There was also some positive news: Alison W. welcomed amendments the Council had recently introduced into the allotment rules to better protect bird-nesting after this issue had been raised with them last year.

Given the limitations of time and the need for the committee to better share knowledge and experience of grounds maintenance matters, it was generally agreed that time should be set aside to allow for further exchanges and discussion.

Resolved/Agreed (iii) that this topic be given more time at the next meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes.

Resolved/agreed (iv) Draft Minutes from Cttee. Mtg. 3 Sept 13th 2020 were agreed; draft minutes from subsequent online meetings were also agreed.

Action (iv): Secretary to arrange sign-off in discussion with the Chair (for agreement to a practicable way of doing this)

Action (v) Secretary to prepare and circulate a short 'Decisions Monitor' to capture any minuted items where further/ongoing work is required.

6. Expenditure Proposals

Alison introduced and expressed support for the application from Rob S. and two other named tenants for funding for a new tools-store/mini-trading shed at Rackfields allotment. Rob S. answered questions about the proposal which had been fully set out on a 'Form for prior approval of any Events, Projects or Purchase Proposals' and pre-circulated to all committee members.

Resolved/Agreed (v) Financial approval was granted for the tool-store/mini-trading shed project (c.£400-£500). Rob S. to begin by identifying a suitable site.

Alison asked for approval of funding for tree works at the Community Poly-tunnel plot.

Resolved/Agreed (vi) Expenditure approval was granted for the tree works project at the Community Poly-tunnel (c.£150). Alison W. to progress.

Action (vi): Secretary to arrange sign-off with the Chair (one copy of the approved expenditure form to go to the applicant(s) and one to be filed on the book-keeping).

7. **AoB**


Alison W. gave apologies form Heidi M. who was having wifi problems but had messaged to ask whether the fruit press belonged to the association. Committee members agreed to look into this. John B. had asked the former Secretary for a copy of her 'code of conduct' and she had explained that it might be amongst the papers passed on when she left. Alison W. hoped the association's new Opt-in 'membership' list which enables newsletters and updates to be circulated and directly to plot-holders, would 're-set' relations between individuals on the allotments; that encouraging more community involvement/participation would help bring people together.

8. **DoNM & Events**

Resolved/Agreed (vii) For 2021, the Committee will look to put in place a photographic competition or similar, rather than an Annual Show (due to ongoing covid-19 restrictions and uncertainties); ideas for this alternative are to be developed and brought forward by all committee members.

Action (vii): Secretary to arrange a further committee meeting (a further Zoom Mtg.) at the end of Feb or early March.

David Solman, Secretary @ staacommitee@yahoo.com

Cttee. signed: 

Dated: 3/3/2021