

St Thomas Allotment Association

approved MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEETING 1 2021/22 : 11.00am, Sat. Nov 20th 2021

(Exeter Community Centre, by invitation)

1. PRELIMINARIES

- a) **Chair.** In the absence of a Chair or Vice-chair, the committee discussed a pro-tem arrangement: **(i) Agreed: that John B. Chair this mtg.; it was further agreed to give notice to absent committee members that those present today are minded to appoint him as the new Chair of this committee, and will put this recommendation before the next committee meeting.**
- b) **Attendance:** 🟢 **Present** [one less than a full quorum] : **Executive/Officers:** David Solman (Sec. & pro-tem lead for Treasurer vacancy) | Charles Knill (Trading Manger & pro-tem lead at G&H) | Jim Clark (Web&Data Manager) | **Local Allotment Managers:** Richard Brownbridge (Clapperbrook) | John Butler (Cowick La.) | Rob Shields (Rackfields). 🟡 **Apologies:** Bill Turner (Ashwood Rd.) | Claire Richards (Local Allotment Manager, Pinces). 🟠 **Absent:** Tim Snell (Local Allotment Mnger, Newman Rd.), Rob Harding (Local Allotment Manager, Ide La.). **(ii) Agreed: Since there is one fewer than a full quorum, the draft minutes will be circulated to all missing committee members and one further approval requested; this was provided on Sat 20 Nov. by Rob H.**
- c) **Previous minutes:** A proposal by Louise to prepare a proposal for community use of the space behind the Trading Shed at G&H was awaited; Peter had now found a volunteer role that suited him at G&H; work on organisational options remained, including polling questions and consideration of all the papers by the committee; progressing a membership scheme would be considered today. **(iii) Agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were read through, approved and duly signed for the meeting by the Secretary to pass to Jim C. for the website.**
- d) **Final Agenda.** **(iv) Agreed: that the draft agenda as circulated would be the basis of this meeting, together with one additional item (a proposal for expenditure at Rackfield allotments).**

2. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- a) **Resignations.** The Committee noted Ruth O'N's term on the committee had come to an end; and that Angela R. and Alison W. had also recently left the committee. **(2i) Agreed: The committee voted to express its sincere thanks and gratitude to Ruth, Angela and Alison for their hard work and dedication.**
- b) **Vacancies.** Committee vacancies were noted and discussed [i.e. (i) Local Allotment Manger/Rep 1 at G&H - vacant since Heidi left; (ii) Local Allotment Manger/Rep 2 at G&H - vacant since Alison W. left; (iii) Chair - vacant since Alison W. left; (iv) Vice-Chair - vacant since Angela R. left; (v) Treasurer - vacant since Fiona K. left; (vi) Publicity and Events Co-ordinator - longstanding vacancy; (v) Data & Web Mngr. - vacant since Ruth O'N left and provisionally handed over to Jim Clark]. Potential candidates and advertising opportunities were discussed.
- (2ii) Agreed: that the Secretary will circulate an advert for approval by committee members, for the vacancies of 'vice-Chair' and 'Publicity & Events Co-ordinator', and liaise with Jim C. regarding the drafting of a pictorial-style email for e-mail circulation.**
- (2iii) Agreed: Jim Clarke, who had introduced himself at the start of the meeting, was welcomed as the new co-opted Web&Data Manager; the Secretary to liaise with him over any outstanding hand-over questions.**
- (2iv) Agreed: To appoint Paul Collier as the new, co-opted, Treasurer; the Secretary complete necessary formalities.**
- (2v) Agreed: It was agreed that Richard B. would buy £50 vouchers from Bernaville Nursery and pass to the Secretary as thank-you's for the three committee members who had left.**

3. MANAGEMENT OF ASSOCIATION SERVICES AT GUYS & HYLTON

a) **Interim Arrangements.** Charles K. provided an update about recent interim arrangements put in place (with help from some other committee members and Ron Blakey from Cowick).

(3i) Agreed: That Charles K. would continue to oversee G&H in the absence of a G&H committee member and, as part of these duties, will bring forward names of any potentially interested plot-holders;

(3ii) Agreed: the Committee voted to record its appreciation to Charles K. for taking on oversight of G&H in addition to his role as Trading Manager, and welcomed the rapport he had established with plot-holders and others and the consequent involvement of new and former volunteers in rebuilding the team at G&H.

4 MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING WORK-STREAMS

a) **Incorporation.** The committee discussed its work in narrowing-down incorporated options to two alternatives (*Community Interest Company and Charitable Incorporated Organisation*) so as to implement the independent consultant's recommendation to become incorporated and thereby properly hold a contract from the Council for Let&Check services, whilst also removing personal liability from committee members.

(4i) Agreed: That work on 'incorporation' of the Association be kept under review, but priority be given to establishing a fully legitimate, up-to-date membership scheme.

b) **Automatic Membership for All Plot-holders.** The committee recalled that three years ago it tried, unsuccessfully, to obtain Council agreement to an automatic membership scheme for everyone at the ten allotments where the Association traditionally works (Pinces, Regent St, Guys, Hylton, Ide La., Newman Rd., Cowick La., Rackfield, Ashwood Rd. and Clapperbrook La.). Failure to obtain such an agreement had led to the Association's work on developing its own scheme consistent with current requirements such as the Data Protection Act. This is now drafted for committee approval, following a second round of consultation last Spring. Significantly, there has been a recent change in personnel at the Council, so a fresh opportunity arises to ask the council whether they might agree a co-operative membership scheme that would provide automatic enrolment for plot-holders.

(4ii) Agreed: To appoint Rob S. and John B. as a sub-committee that will report back to this committee within 4 months (Nov- Feb.) about their success in putting together a strong case, and then gaining the Council's agreement, to incorporate STAA membership in plot-holder contracts (e.g. as in the Crediton Model) so the Association can work more comprehensively, and in a simplified way, to benefit plot-holders at Pinces, Regent St, Guys, Hylton, Ide La., Newman Rd., Cowick La., Rackfield, Ashwood Rd. and Clapperbrook La.

Initially, John B. and Rob. S. intend to circulate an outline of their likely approach to the committee and invite comments or input into their ideas.

(4iii) Agreed: To defer (for 4 calendar months Nov-Mar incl.) any decision on approving the Association's own membership scheme, as informally deferred from the agenda of 31 Jly.

5. ANNUAL STAKEHOLDER AND MEMBER MEETING

The committee discussed its approach to planning the next Annual Stakeholder and Member Meeting. The circulated agenda notes outlined the association's customary open approach of inviting unenrolled plot-holders (they would have advisory votes) as well as association members (who alone have mandatory votes), and to organise this event in November soon after the September 30th close of its financial year using *draft* accounts. It was noted that the next Stakeholder and Member meeting would only be able to provide attendees with a clear approach to the new membership scheme, if it is

scheduled a few months later than Nov. (after completion of planned discussions with the council, in Feb.) Also, that a date in the spring is necessary to allow audited or independently examined accounts, rather than *draft* accounts, to be tabled (which is the usual practice for clubs and associations). A spring meeting would likely attract more people, due to covid.

(5i) Agreed: that the Association's Annual Meeting will be planned for the 2nd week of May.

6. FINANCIAL ITEMS

Following a discussion, the Committee decisions were made:

(6i) Agreed that accounts for the financial year 2020-21 will be prepared by the Secretary in simple R&P format and passed on to the Association's accountant for independent examination.

(6ii) Agreed that, as advised by Charles K. a stock value at financial year-end 2020-21 of £1,863.04 and a cash float of £105.26, be added to the draft accounts for that financial year;

(6iii) Agreed that the Secretary will pass the Association's existing *draft Treasurer's Role Description* to the new Treasurer and ask him to review it and bring suggestions for amendment to the committee;

(6iv) Agreed that the Secretary may renew the Association's insurance using the current provider's renewal quote, when rec'd (likely during q4 2021) and reclaim this at cost from the Association;

(6v) Agreed that the Web and Data Manager (and/or Secretary) may renew the Association's website/host/domain using the current provider's renewal quote, when rec'd (likely during q4 2021) and reclaim this at cost from the Association;

(6vi) Agreed that there is currently no need for Charles K., as Trading Secretary and pro-team lead at G&H, to set-up (and/or oversee) the previous three petty cash floats at G&H and Cowick allotments, because he agrees to pay for sundries on his credit card and reclaim from STAA, and because the Veg Box is closed pending repair of its solar panels;

(6vii) Agreed that Charles K. manage or oversee poly-tunnel fees due in Dec./Jan. (for which he will further encourage the move away from cash and towards bank transfer, which was begun last year) and amend the payment terms to coincide with the Association's Financial Year (which ends on 30th Sept.), also to liaise with the Secretary for the necessary user/renewal records;

(6viii) Agreed that the current three main Trading Shed suppliers (*C.T.Moss, Edwin Tucker & Sons Ltd, and Lowes of Dundee*) be used again for the financial year 2021-22 backdated from Oct 1st, to a max. spend limit of £3,500 each; and that Charles K. as Trading Manager be pre-authorised to raise orders accordingly, either directly or by delegation to any other committee member and/or that of volunteer Ron Blakey), also that Charles K. may request further pre-approvals from the Committee on a case-by-case basis.

(6ix) Agreed that Charles K. be authorised to purchase card-reader(s) for the Trading Shed at Cowick and any ancillary data solution, for the purpose of experimenting from Jan.onwards with their use and application for the sale of goods to plot-holders; further, to accommodate any associated cost adjustments in the annual pricing review - and then report back to this committee on the potential benefits or drawbacks of making their use permanent at Cowick or other facilities.

(6x) Agreed that during this financial year Rob S. be authorised to purchase and install a comprehensive system of additional water supplies at Rackfield allotments as set out in the Projects and Proposal form for this scheme (up to a cost of £560), but to first approach the council to either fund this scheme or match-fund it, and only go ahead at the Association's cost if Council funding is not forthcoming.

7. **RECENT STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS**

The Committee had first been circulated with all the stakeholder comments about organisational structure in September. These had subsequently be grouped by the Secretary into categories for ease of members' review, and appended to the agenda paper. Committee members highlighted some of the common strands consultation brought up, such as that the purpose was not clear, and that very few people responded. How to thank those who did respond would be looked at further, and whether some points might be thoughtfully replied to.

(7i) Agreed: that each Committee member will read the recent stakeholder comments individually, and endeavour to take them into account in their work.

8. **AoB**

The Flow orchard project approached the Association to help them store their tools and associated items at G&H, which would be convenient to their project sites along the overflow canal. They would like to use any spare space storage the Association may have available, and/or liaise over the possibility of putting up their own storage shed.

(8i) Agreed: the committee agrees to Flow using the Veg Box over the winter until May 1st at their own risk, for which they will need a key; Charles K. to liaise further with them to explore scope for them to use their own storage shed after May, close the the G&H trading shed and Veg Box.

9. **DoNM**

The next meeting will be at Exeter Community Centre, 11am Sat. 15th January 2022 (subject to the Secretary being able to make a booking for that date).

David Solman, Secretary @ staacommittee@yahoo.com

Cttee. signed:
Dated: **Jan 15th 2022**