

**MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S
12TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER, 2008
at
SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST**

Present:

Freda Earl (Chairman)
John Driver (Vice Chairman)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary)
John Powell (Treasurer)
Bernard Axford
Philip Biss
Peter Block
Jane Dickenson
Ted Dyer
John Eaton
Peter Fowell
Cynthia Fulks
Rebecca Gee
John Goffey
Hazel Grimwood
Nick Hood
Fred Jackson
Joan Jackson
Tony Lightfoot
Grace Phipps
Ray Phipps
John Savage
Prue Scofield
Rachael Scott
Clive Smith
Angela Wheeldon

Apologies for Absence:

Deirdre Ahern
Brenda Baynes
Fiona Duck
Betty Fowell
Geoffrey Giles
Andy James
Olga Lassman
Rachel Lyons
Patrick Stileman
Angela Walsh

1/08 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above).

2/08 Approve the Minutes of the last AGM

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 24th November 2007 were accepted as a true record by all those attending.

3/08 Chairman's Report

Freda Earl reported:-

It has been quite an eventful year since I took over from Angela last November. As a change from drought we had a cold wet summer which was fine for some things like the beans and salads although the blight moved in with a vengeance on the potatoes and the tomatoes and the squashes and pumpkins just sat and shivered.

Our landlord, the town council started delving into the accounts and was tempted by the idea of the removal of hosepipes and punitive rent increases on the grounds that the allotments were a drain on the Council Tax payers costing three times their income.

This is where it helped to have a rep who had recently been chairman of AMT and knew what ought to be in the costs and what ought not. No figures were provided to justify the enormous costs which were claimed and the reps supported each other in refusing to discuss the matter unless figures were provided.

Allotments were to pay a proportion of Bob's time and of the heating of his office. All the capital works needing to be done by the council to protect its land whether the allotments were there or not like fencing. The capital cost of water supply all at once and a few other odds and ends. None of these had ever been charged before nor are they charged to other council activities. The Allotment reps fought hard against this.

We persuaded the council to remove Bob's costs and to put most capital costs to do with the land back where they belong in the council's own budget and to amortise real allotment costs like the water over a period of years suitable for the life of the facility. In return we agreed to a water rent which would cover costs expected to rise and accepted the rent rise of £2 per pole.

It is my opinion that allotments which are seen as a burden on the Council Tax payer are more likely to end up under bricks and mortar. There are protections at law to stop this happening but think about the allotments displaced by the Olympics and you will see what can happen. I never want to see this happen to us.

The AMT recommends. It has no power because the council can over ride what it says. On this occasion there was a serious danger of a mass resignation of the allotment reps as well as reasoned argument both at AMT and Full Council . Common sense prevailed. All is well for now but a paper is to be prepared at our request to lay down how allotment costs are to be calculated. The battle is likely to continue over the next year and there is no doubt that rents will have to go up again but gradually over a number of years

The SAS was started 12 years ago and is now respected by everyone who has dealings with it. Sunnyside is an amazing place to be both because of the companionship and the way the site looks. This is all done by the SAS, and the SAS is its members. The Council does very little. It provides for the main roads to be mown but not the pathways between plots. Ted has always checked on the water supply and turned it off in the winter, The Rabbit fencing is better than the Council would pay for, mainly because the Network Rail people were fed tea and best biscuits at the Tea hut whenever they visited the site. The nest boxes for the birds, the millennium and Jubilee Coppices which will soon be providing eco bean poles are all done by us.

When it started there were worryingly high numbers of empty plots on SSO and SSN was almost wild except for a few hardly souls. The job of the committee was much smaller then. Now that we are almost fully let we need more people on the committee, to replace and to strengthen.

The work is shared out among the committee members. Some jobs need frequent presence on site, others can be done on the computer or the telephone while the kids are in bed. We hope that some of these could be done by people on New who we are delighted to see include the younger tenants who will be the future of Sunnyside

One of the things we need to do this year is find ways of including them in what the SAS does and make sure that they have what they want rather than what we think they want.

Discussion of the Chair's report followed:

- a) Allotment Rents. It was agreed to support the Chair's view and her wish to take a paper on the matter to the SAS Committee before agreeing to any proposals at the Allotment Management Team.
- b) Water Charges. It was noted that water costs would go up as part of the drive to reduce water usage.
- c) Sunnyside New. The wish to decrease the sense of isolation felt by tenants on SSN was discussed. Rebecca Gee had emailed tenants on SSN and those who responded wished for some central point for meeting, but most would have difficulty in finding time to organise this, due to family and work commitments.
It was suggested that the names used currently inferred that SSNew was a junior partner and less important. Alternative names were put forward, such as SSEast and SSWest, but no final decision was made to give time for further discussion.

4/08 Consider and Approve the Society's Accounts

John Powell presented the inspected statement of income and expenditure for the year 2007/2008. (Copy attached).

He reported that the financial situation was healthy at the moment and that the SAS subscription could be held at £2.50. However this money was not enough to cover the Society's annual expenditure and the shortfall was made up by monies raised at various events. For example, the Open Day raised £449 but this was not a reliable source of income as it was dependant on the weather.

New expenditure included raised subscriptions to the National Society, NSALG, and the costs of employing others to do mowing or clearing. Funds were sufficient to help with a project for SSEast(New).

The accounts were approved.

5/08 Vermin

- a) Rabbits. Rabbits were seen about on the allotments, The farmer's boundary had been fenced and Network Rail had fenced most of the common boundary between SSO and the railway bank. Network Rail had agreed to provide materials to provide similiar fencing along the railway boundary on SSN, but tenants would have to provide the labour and a project manager.
- b) Rats. Fewer sightings of rats had been reported in recent months. The allotment cat, Stripey, had settled in well, though the second cat had disappeared. A neighbouring cat, Tilly, was proving to be a good baby rabbit catcher.
- c) It was suggested that the number of plots that still showed signs of neglect were encouraging the breeding of rabbits and rats. It was reported that the Chair and Vice-Chair inspected plots quarterly and reported neglected plots to the Town Council, so that the eviction process could start. This process took about 3 months.

6/08 To Receive any Nominations for Officers/Committee Members

- a) Committee. The following Committee members were stepping down:-
 - Ted Dyer, who was also resigning as Allotment representative on the AMT. Ted was thanked for his sterling service to the Association since its inception
 - Fiona Duck, who was the last of the original SAS committee member with Ted.
 - Anna Dolan, who is too pressed for time following the birth of her third child.All these were thanked for their help and service to the SAS.
- The rest of the existing committee (Brenda Baynes, Prue Scofield, Rachel Lyon, Rebecca Gee, Angela Wheeldon and John Eaton) were willing to stand again which left one vacancy to be filled. No nominations had been received in advance of the meeting, but Nick Hood was nominated by Angela and seconded by Freda at the meeting, It was hoped that a second member could be appointed from SSN.

b) Officers were prepared to stand again:

Chair: Freda Earl

Vice-Chair: John Driver

Treasurer: John Powell

Secretary: Jenny Sippings

7/08 Election of Officers and Committee

The existing officers and committee were re-elected. Nick Hood was also elected onto the committee.

Barbara Driver was re-appointed as Inspector of accounts.

Site Representative: Freda Earl and John Eaton was proposed by Freda and seconded by Angela as Deputy Site Rep.

8/08 Any Other Business

- a) Seed Orders. It was reported that the seed orders had arrived from Kings and could be collected after the meeting.
- b) Calendars. Calendars were on sale at £5.00. these had been printed by Strong's and the quality was good. Jenny and Angela had put the calendar together and the photographs had been taken by Angela and John Driver. The calendar would be advertised in the Christmas Drinks invitation and people were encouraged to buy them, to meet the increased costs of professional printing.
- c) Picture. The picture on the front of the calendar was a painting by Sarah Moruzzi, who ran the art group. She has donated the original watercolour to the SAS and this will be auctioned at the Christmas Drinks Event. A note of this auction will be included in the invitation.
- d) AGM Minutes. A request was made for the AGM minutes to made available before the meeting on the SAS website.
- e) Plot Numbers. It was requested that Committee Members' plot numbers could be given in the newsletter along with their 'phone numbers.
- f) Neglected Plots. It was noted that those who contributed to the SAS, such as Committee Members and Officers, should not be penalised if their plots were less than perfect. The Chair reassured the meeting that such matters were taken into consideration when plot inspections were undertaken.
- g) Working Parties. Those present were reminded that Sunday 7th December was the date for the next working party.
- h) The chair recorded her thanks to the Committee for the work done during the year.

The meeting closed at 11.50 a.m.