

**MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S
13TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
SATURDAY 28TH NOVEMBER, 2009
at
SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST**

Present:

Freda Earl(Chair)
John Driver(Vice-Chair)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary)
John Powell (Treasurer)
Deirdre Ahern
Michael Barwise
Peter Block
Wendy Calder
Andrew Calderwood
Diana Calderwood
Andy Dolwin
Ted Dyer
John Eaton
John Goffey
Hazel Grimwood
Graham Hall
Carol Hall
Nick Hood
Phillipa Jones
Chris Locke
Annick Mulcahy
Anna Penning-Powell
Ray Phipps
Adrian Scarborough
Prue Scofield
Rachel Scott
Clive Smith
Anna Thomas
Richard Thomas
Andrew Walker
+ one illegible signature

Apologies for Absence:

Bernard Axford
Fiona Duck
Rebecca Gee
Fred Jackson
Olga Lassman
Tony Lightfoot
Angela Wheeldon

1/09 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above)

2/09 Approve the Minutes of the last AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 25th November 2008 were confirmed and signed.

It was noted that Rebecca Gee and Rachel Lyon had been co-opted to the Committee to represent SSN

3/09 Chairman's Report

Freda Earl reported:-

The weather has not been startling this year and there has been the usual mixture of bumper crops and failures. Personally I think 4 and a half carrots from five packets of seed is pretty poor but then my French beans more than made up for it.

Last year's report dealt with the struggle to prevent the Town Council from viewing the allotments as a dreadful burden on the Town, costing three times their income and therefore in need of some heavy rent increases. The fight continued with various degrees of acrimony until last summer when a schedule of costs was agreed between the Town Council and the AMT. The main issue was who should pay for capital costs. An example was the cost of roadway repairs outside this building which were originally divided equally between the SRT and the Church and suddenly appeared on the list of things to be considered when deciding the rent. The reps continued to work hard to get full details of all the figures broken down into individual costings which enabled us to demolish proposed charges some on the grounds of fairness and some, like the charge for part of the Town Wardens services, on the grounds that he is fully funded by the borough council anyway. If you look at your minutes you will find that decisions about capital costs were actually made last year but unfortunately there were attempts to get some of them reversed.

Things improved after June when the appointment of a new Chairman of AMT Cllr Julie Laws and the addition of Cllr David Collins proved to be less punitive in their attitude than their predecessor. We were able to show Cllr Laws over tea and cake just what we as a society had done and hoped to continue to do for the benefit of our allotment, Berkhamsted as a whole and the Town Council. It is now agreed that the costs and income are roughly in line and I do not expect swingeing rent increases in the near future. However because the allotment costs are under such close scrutiny we as tenants will have to play a greater part in keeping those costs down by all being responsible for what is happening. The cost of water mounts rapidly if there are leaks. Please make it your responsibility to turn off taps and disconnect hosepipes properly. Remember that siphoning is free to tenants but the water used will appear in the rent calculations. Only water when you need it and NEVER leave a hosepipe or a siphon unattended.

The water use figures are now published each month. They obviously reflect the weather but there are odd discrepancies which could well be caused by dribbling taps and connections. We shall need to monitor all the tanks carefully. We would like there to be someone whose job is to keep an eye on their local tank, perhaps sharing the job with someone else and we would like

everyone to make if their responsibility to report of deal with any problems. Because of the old pipework many hundreds of metered water has been lost in the past. We cannot afford this happening in future.

Open Day was a huge success. The figures will be in the Treasurers report but as usual a big thank you to everyone who helped. There are plans for next year but we need a co-ordinator. Its fun and a great way of getting to know people and Angela who has been doing it for years will hold your hand but she needs a rest.

Same thing applies to the seed order. King's seed can represent a good saving on shop especially some of the bulk buys. Jenny has been doing it for years and she too needs a rest from it. The seed order won't do itself and if no-one does it then it won't happen.

How do you feel about dogs on site? A road is a public footpath. The Town Council was talking of banning dogs. Many tenants enjoy the company of well behaved dogs.

Town Council again. There are rules about the size and number of sheds and greenhouses. A tenant on Sunnyside has asked permission for an extra greenhouse because she is visually disabled. The Town Council has referred back its initial refusal to the AMT. My personal view is that it should be possible to waive rules under exceptional circumstances. I would like your guidance please

Discussion of the Chair's report followed:-

a) Seed Order. Jenny Sippings resigned from her role in charge of the seed order. Prue Scofield offered to take over this role.

b) Dogs on site. It was agreed that dogs should be allowed on site, if they were on short leads and properly controlled. Bold notices would be posted at entrances to the sites to make this clear. Michael Barwise volunteered to print colour notices which Jenny Sippings would laminate

c) Sheds and Greenhouses. The meeting discussed the request for a partially-sighted tenant to have permission for a second greenhouse. It was agreed to support this application as a discretionary exception.

4/09 Consider and approve the Society's accounts

John Powell presented the inspected statement of income and expenditure for the year 2008/2009 (Copy attached) It was noted that the date shown on the paper was incorrect and this was altered. Possible future expenses were discussed and it was agreed to survey members on items or projects that would be useful. Suggestions would be included in a future newsletter and comments invited. Projects suggested at the meeting included:-

Rent for a half plot for communal composting,

- Building to provide secure storage for SAS equipment,
 - Create an internet forum to exchange ideas. This would be restricted to SAS members.
- Clive Smith volunteered to set this up, if required.

5/09 Vermin

a) Cats were catching vermin. The allotment cat, Stripy, together with two local cats, were hunting on SSO.

b) Rabbit-proof fencing. This had been installed between SSN and the railway, and on SSO by the gate to Grantham Mews. Also, native trees and shrubs had been planted adjacent to the gate. Geoffrey Giles and Mark Gilmore for there help with these projects.

c) The remaining section of netting to be installed along the railway boundary, would be completed on the work day on 6th December 2009. John Driver would lead this project. Notices about the work day would be posted on noticeboards.

6/09 To Receive any Nominations for Officers/Committee Members.

a) The following resignations had been received:-

John Driver had resigned as Vice-Chair, due to other commitments.

Rebecca Gee had resigned from the Committee due to health problems

b) Nominations:-

John Eaton was nominated as Vice Chair by Prue Scofield and seconded by Nick Hood
Andrew Walker and Annick Mulcahy were nominated as a representatives of SSN for membership of the committee.

7/09 Election of Officers and Committee

The Officers and Committee members were proposed en bloc, including the new nominations, by Ray Phipps and seconded by Ted Dyer. This was agreed unopposed by the meeting.

8/09 Election of Allotments' representative on Town Coucil's Allotment Management Team

Freda Earl was elected as the Site representative, with John Eaton as Deputy.

9/09 Future Developments

a) Birtchnells Copse. Countryside Management volunteers were planning to work on Birtchnells Copse on December 2nd. Berkhamsted Town Council were in control of the site and are proposing to start a coppicing rotation. It was hoped the BTC would also be appointing a warden for the Copse.

b) Christmas Drinks. This event would be held on 20th December, 2009 at 12 noon. This information had been included in the newsletter and Jenny Sippings would be sending out email reminders.

10/09 Any Other Business

a) Security. It was reported that parts of a greenhouse on c road, SSO, and a roll of chicken fencing, SSN, had been stolen from the site. It was emphasised that the gates to the sites should be kept closed at all times, particularly to deter fly-tippers. It was suggested that reminders should be included in newsletters on a regular basis.

b) Allotment Watch. A deputy co-ordinator was needed to support the co-ordinator, Ted Dyer. Ray Phipps agreed to undertake this role.

c) Newsletter. A new assistant was needed to help Chris Locke with formatting and printing, following Rebecca Gee's resignation.

d) Greenhouse available. Anyone requiring a greenhouse should contact Ray Phipps.

e) Plots. Attention was drawn to the neglected state of plot 38, which was causing concern to the neighbouring tenants. Freda reported that procedures were underway to terminate such tenancies, but that this took time. Some difficult plots would be divided for letting, so that the task was not too daunting. Concerns were raised about dividing too many plots and it was suggested that these divisions should be planned.

It was reported that there were 37 names on the waiting list, but a number of these wanted plots in particular places and were prepared to wait.

Some concerns were raised about the wildlife corridors, as these were harbouring vermin as well as birds. It was felt that it would be helpful if these were managed, rather than just left alone.

The meeting closed at 12.20p.m.