

**MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S
15TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
SATURDAY 26TH NOVEMBER, 2011
at
SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST**

Present:

Freda Earl (Chair)
John Eaton (Vice-Chair)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary)
Fiona Duck
John Powell (Treasurer)
Jean Axford
Phil Biss
Peter Block
Diana Calderwood
Andrew Calderwood
Jane Dickenson
Andy Dolwin
John Driver
Graham Hall
Hazel Grimwood
Tricia Kennedy
Neil Kennedy
Chris O'Callaghan
Lin Phillips
Grace Phipps
Kate Rankin
Adrian Scarborough
Clive Smith

Apologies for Absence:

Phil Biss
Wendy Calder
Susie Dabbagh
Ted Dyer
Debbi Figueiredo
Helen Gray
Simon Heywood
Chris Locke
Annick Mulcahy
Maria De Oliveira
Ray Phipps
Meg Robinson
Rachel Scott
Nicola Stevens
Val Stephenson
Christian Wallace
Simon Weightman
Angela Wheeldon
Jeanne Woodcraft

1/11 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above)

2/11 Approve the Minutes of the last AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 27th November 2010 were confirmed and signed.
Matters arising:

3/11 Chairman's Report

Freda Earl presented her report (attached).

Discussion of the Chair's report:-

a) appointment of a successor to Prue Scofield to co-ordinate the SAS seed order: **Action: Chris O'Callaghan to take this task on for one year.**

b) running the Open Day: agreed to divide areas of preparation and work to groups of people working on sub-committees, depending upon their experience and interest.

Action: Committee to publish a framework of areas of work following the next committee meeting in January 2012.

c) problem of dog poo on paths: proposals included a specific dog toilet site, notices to be posted pointing out the site is used by children, or to close the gates once a year.

Action: to be discussed at next committee meeting.

d) honorary memberships for those helpers who no longer have plots:

Action: to be discussed at next committee meeting.

4/11 Consider and approve the Society's accounts

John Powell the treasurer presented the annual accounts, which were unanimously approved. He asked those attending for ideas for future expenditure. The following proposals were discussed:

a) wind turbine to be erected, or solar panels to be affixed to the tea hut:

Action: Clive Smith to research these options and present to committee.

b) SAS to pay for a plot to be reserved for communal projects, or for a community orchard:

c) Development of a system for collection of rainwater, and/or enforcement of SAS requirement for shed-holders to attach at least one water butt:

Action: the above ideas to be considered by committee.

5/11 To Receive any Nominations for Officers/Committee Members

The following were nominated as officers:

Chair: Freda Earl

Vice-Chair: John Eaton

Treasurer: John Powell

Secretary: Jenny Sippings

Nominations for the committee: John Driver (associate member), Andy Walker, Chris Locke, Annick Mulcahy, Simon Weightman, (Debbi Figueiredo & Marc Gilmour in reserve), Lin Phillips and Angela Wheeldon.

6/11 Election of Officers and Committee

Those nominated were all elected to the committee. It was noted that members are welcome to attend and observe committee meetings, and that proposals may be sent to the Chair in advance.

7/11 Election of Allotments' representative on Town Council's Allotment Management Team

Freda Earl was elected as the Site representative, with John Eaton as Deputy. It was noted that the AMT minutes are posted on the Council's website.

8/11 Future Developments

As well as those noted above, there was a proposal for a clubhouse, to incorporate the tea hut, office space, and possible eating/drinking area - subject to planning permission and AMT approval.

Action: to be discussed at Committee.

9/11 Any Other Business

- a) help with allotments for those unable to keep theirs up or who need particular work carried out: a list of people who could be hired, including the Sunnyside Rural Trust, to be kept in the tea hut. Suggestions of names to be given to Committee members.

Action: Clive Smith to provide a name. Jenny Sippings to ask for others via the newsletter.

- b) Help for people who are ill: if people would let a committee member know, a working party may be able to cover an area with mypex.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm

APPENDIX 1 – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Most chairmen's reports start with something about how unusual the weather has been. Let's not bother with that.

We have had an eventful year. We have repelled boarders who were trying to establish a right of way for vehicles across the site from the garden of a neighbour house. We took legal advice from NSALG who said it was extremely unusual for any allotment owning Council to even consider granting any sort of right of way across the boundaries of allotments. Thanks to support from a large number of members we were able to create a considerable fuss. In the end we were able to delay matters until after the royal wedding.

What has that to do with Sunnyside? - A lot because the neighbour trying to establish the right of way destroyed his claim by seeking permission to have a bouncy castle delivered across the site for his family celebrations. To claim a right of way you have to establish use without permission for a number of years... ask permission and you have blown it. We were all thankful to be able to get back to the peaceful enjoyment of our site.

On the subject of royal celebrations- We had a birthday party for Ted this year and a lot of people came and enjoyed a really nice celebration. The feeling was that we should have this sort of event more often. It was hard enough to persuade Ted to have a birthday and another one is out of the question so we are thinking about a "Plant a tree for the Jubilee" event at the time of the allotment Picnic. We could have another good party and then eat the fruit over the future years.

I have brought a bag of brown soil courtesy of Angela. Pass it round and look at it. What do you think it is? That's right it is leaf mould. Before the plundering of irreplaceable peat bog for soil conditioner leaf mould was the soil conditioner of choice. The gardeners at stately homes all had their own closely guarded recipe for potting compost and leaf mould was a major constituent. Not much in the way of nutrient but it holds water and encourages growth. We have been having leaves delivered by Coopers who have the contract for clearing up the school grounds and carting the leaves miles away. Unlike roadside trees the school grounds are free of traffic pollution.

It takes two years to rot down to this lovely stuff. You can leave it in the heaps delivered by Coopers but then you may have to sieve out the roots of bindweed and such. If you collect the leaves when they first arrive and take them to a pen on your own plot you will have a weed free supply replenished every year and it is FREE. It can be used as a mulch or part of your potting compost. Free soil conditioner and a halo what more can you want. It has arrived already this year

The winter working party days this year are partly reorganising the wood heap. Our usual session in Birtchnell's Copse will be in January – on the 8th we didn't think the first would be too popular. We have a pretty good selection of timber for allotment use. Consult Ted who knows where everything is and he will find you something suitable and advise you what sort of donation to make to SAS funds.

Prue has given up her plot to deal with matters closer to home. Lin is happy to take over her job as minutes secretary but not the seed order.

As usual none of your existing committee has time to take this over and some of us can't add up well enough. In any case it is a bad idea to allow an existing committee to keep mopping up the jobs that need to be done as they fall vacant. Is there anyone here willing to consider the job of seed monitor! Jenny has done it before and will be happy to explain how it is done if you want to know more about it before volunteering. The usual proviso applies – no seed monitor – no cheap seeds.

Open Day was its usual success this year thanks to Angela's team. We make money for ourselves which is good, the raffle proceeds go to the Hospice which is perhaps even better but best of all we keep up the high reputation which Sunnyside enjoys with the people of Berkhamsted. We are very lucky to have one of the best allotment sites for miles and we like to share it with other people. It may seem odd with all the woodlands round about that Berkhamsted is well below the national figure for open space. Consequently we get joggers and birdwatchers and families out for a walk in greater numbers than usual for an allotment and we welcome them. One day we may need their support again to keep the bogeyman of housing at bay. The planning laws are in the process of change and who knows how the new presumption of permission may affect us in future.

SO we need a good open day. Not only is it a fun day for everyone but it forms a big part of the community spirit which make Sunnyside so special. If tenants never work together on working parties and enjoy themselves at Open Day and the Christmas lunch it is more difficult to make friends and offer support when it is needed. It is also more difficult to find a good home for those surplus courgettes

I mentioned Angela's team, I mentioned the committee mopping up jobs which need doing. This is what has been happening with open day. As a result Angela has been making a brilliant job of co-ordinating the team for TEN YEARS. She said last year she would not be doing it again after this year and we were trampled under the rush to take the job on. The job has grown dauntingly big as people have fallen by the wayside. IF open day is to continue we need a new way of organising it which puts one person to co-ordinate and a series of teams, which are already in place to deliver just their bit.

My first thoughts are based on the cabinet system; a ministry of food to deal with the cakes, ministry of agriculture, the produce. A foreign minister to deal with outside organisations, like organising publicity and groups like the SS Preschool to do flower pot painting Home office to deal with the smartening up of the site and internal directions.

I am sure that we have people with organisational skills who could improve on this model. I'm afraid my treasury minister would keep it all in jam jars. I see meetings kept to the minimum. If you are organising produce all you need guidance in principle about pricing and to know that outside produce, like plums from Broadway orchard belongs to the foreign ministry so you do not need to know about it, still less sit through a meeting discussing possibilities.

Angela wants to concentrate on the Jubilee picnic and the potato tasting event. She is not being allowed to have anything to do with Open day apart from as an arms length archive.

The theme of the calendar this year is 'Potatoes'. It is on sale for £5.50.

Last September very few people gave up their plots but this year there have been and soon will be a lot of new tenants and we welcome them to Sunnyside. We hope that they will continue the tradition of supporting our community and spend some time if they can spare it on keeping Sunnyside the truly amazing place it is.

Thanks to everyone on the committee and Ted for their work during the year and to everyone for attending.