



MINUTES OF SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY'S 28th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held on

Saturday 25 January 2025, at 10.00 am at the Sunnyside Rural Trust

Present:

Diana Ball (Chair)
Andy James (Treasurer)
Jenny Sippings (Secretary – Minutes)
John Eaton
Kate Rankin
Clive Smith
Fiona Naylor
Ian Peplow
Paul Ham
Carole Yearley
Judy Grundy
David Grundy
Neil Kennedy
Tricia Kennedy
Lesley Johnson
Andy Dolwin
Will Facey
Jacqui Thomasen
John Goffey
Lilly Black

Apologies for Absence:

Jane Dickenson
Clive M
Jo Banks
Jeff Naylor
Angela Wheeldon
Fiona Duck
Peter Block
Lin Phillips
Tom Hall
Marsha Facey
Simon Lewis
Fiona Lewis

Diana Ball welcomed everybody to the meeting

1/25 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received (see above).

2/25 To approve the minutes of the last AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held in January 2024 were approved as a true record.

3/25 To receive the Chairman's report

Diana thanked JohnE for advising her, the committee and other volunteers over the past year. Jenny our Secretary distributes the newsletter, emails and the website and waiting lists. Clive for the newsletter. Special thanks to Clive Smith for all the things he does and Andy in his bonfire lighting, and not forgetting all our toilet cleaners (we need more volunteers).

The committee is a point of contact for the members and the council work programmes, letting plots, events, water management and plot inspections.

John Goffey has stepped down (thank you John for all your hard work) from organising Working Parties and Tom Hall has taken over. Congratulations and a small gift were given to Tom and Gemma on the arrival of Myles. Thank you to all of you who turned up in very cold weather. Work included clearing coppices, wildlife areas, hedge trimming, road/path renovation, tea hut and Sunnyside New car park.

There is a lot of future work for which volunteers are necessary, even if it is just for an hour, lunch is usually provided. One thing in the plan is to hire a mini digger and clear the brambles on B16 and alongside A4 and B2 which may one day be more parking. We had to cancel one working party due to bad weather so we may add some on the end.

Four times a year allotment representatives attend Allotment Working Group meetings with the Council. At the last meeting we were informed of a price increase in rent and water from next September, this was decided at a full council finance meeting and we had no control over it. The increase is £1 per pole for a full plot of 10 poles and water charges are by £2.50 for a full plot and pro rata.

The council have reduced the allotment officer's working fees and ground maintenance visits are down to 6 per year, there is modest budget for tree work and the council have said they will consult us before any work is undertaken so we don't have an enormous cost as in the previous year, some of the work we could do ourselves to reduce cost. There was a shortfall of £2,000 and the allotment budget now has no reserves, so there could be more increases in the future. The present budget is designed to just break even.

Following the Town Council's resolution to support action to protect butterflies, it was proposed that butterfly-friendly plants should be grown in the wild areas around the allotment sites. These would be planted by the Council's Community Gardening group and not fall to the allotment reps or tenants to manage.

Andy James suggested that the council should send out a list of plants tenants could plant on their plots. Also put articles in newsletters,

With regards to dog fouling, there are still some culprits. The town Clerk has a pink spray which has been used elsewhere, but Diana was a little confused as to the effect.

Apparently there is only one dog poo bin on SSO and Andy James reported a lot of people exercising their dogs in the SRT orchard on New.

Fingers crossed no break ins in the last year, just one incident recently with youths lighting a bonfire pile on a plot and the fire brigade called, but no damage done.

We have had problems with fly tipping of wood chip on Sunnyside New. It was advised that if you see anything, do not confront them, but if you can discreetly take a photo of the vehicle and send it to Diana.

Please keep the gates shut at all times, put your car in and shut the gate, if any one is passing and a gate is open shut it please.

The Council continues with annual one day closure to confirm the Council's rights of way and to ensure no one else can have rights by default. Access for Allotment holders is not affected.

There is a long waiting list and there are some vacant plots. Diana will be working down the list and holding viewing at the beginning of February,

David Grundy suggested unlettable plots could be cleared at working parties.

Jenny and Diana inspect plots about three times a year in order to see that the Council tenancy terms are being met. The next inspection will be some time in April. People experiencing problems should contact a committee member. In general, tenants should keep plots clear of junk.

The Council will be tighter on untidy plots and late rent payments

We had a very successful open day, thanks to Kate for coordinating, Also Christmas drinks were well attended.

In the future lighting to be installed in Tea Hut and under the canopy

Andy Dolwin thanked Diana for her hard work.

A number of tenants had a bad year with crops.

John Goffey asked why the council didn't publicise when AWG meetings were to take place or the minutes on their website. Tenants might like to attend as observers.

4/25 To consider and approve the Society's accounts and to consider proposals for expenditure

Andy James reported that all but 8 tenants paid SAS subs (collected by the council). Open Day and the seed order were very successful and £200 was donated to two charities.

Andy James explained the seed order system. All seeds have arrived apart from potatoes.

The surplus for the year was: £728.40
Balance £6469.98

There are plans to spend money eg digger hire for clearance work.

We pay public liability insurance to cover the sites (not individual tenants). This has gone up this year.

Jacqui asked if there is any money ring-fenced for hardship.. It was suggested that there could be an article in the newsletter about sharing seeds for example. There is a plastic box on the tea hut table for seeds and one for magazines. Also discussed was a seed/produce area on SSN eg. a kiosk at the end of SSN carpark.

It was suggested that there should be a link to the Sunnyside Facebook page on the website and in the newsletter.

The accounts were approved - proposed by Will Facey, seconded by Tricia Kennedy.

5/25 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members

The following officers were nominated:

Chair: Diana Ball
Treasurer: Andy James
Secretary: Jenny Sippings

The position of Vice Chair remains vacant.

All remaining current committee members seek re-election.

Jacqui Thomasen volunteered to become a committee member.

6/25 To elect Officers and Committee

The following people were elected to the committee by group election:

Chair: Diana Ball
Treasurer: Andy James
Secretary: Jenny Sippings

Committee Members:

Angela Wheeldon
John Goffey
John Eaton
Kate Rankin
Diana Ball
Clive M
Tom Hall

7/25 To elect Allotments' representative on Town Council's Allotment Management Team

Diana Ball was elected as the site representative, and John Eaton and Jenny Sippings as deputies.

Proposed by Will Facey and seconded by Carole Yearley.

8/25 To consider future developments

The following were discussed:

- Clearing the wildlife area B16.
- Ensuring paths between plots are well maintained.
- Another family picnic.

9/25 Any other business

Will asked if there were any plans to clear C13 and C15 (wildlife areas). He would prefer them left alone.

Any clearance would need to be done before bird-nesting time.

David Grundy asked if A41B had been let. It has been let to Tom Hall.

Lesley asked about how to deal with mowing paths if you don't own a mower. Will suggested a push mower and Diana suggested Work Aid in Chesham.

Clive S recommended that tenants do not buy petrol strimmers.

It was also pointed out that tenants can ask neighbours for help with mowing – maybe offering petrol money in return, or buy shared mowers. The other alternative is to pay someone to do mowing.

Other discussion included:

Andy asked about suppliers of greenhouse glass.

Tricia asked about tenants knowing about discounts at Mannings etc. Jenny mentioned the welcome email and the allotment handbook on the website mention these.

Tricia also asked about what date the Open Day would be. Most likely 17th August.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.