

STONEBRIDGE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 25TH NOVEMBER 2015
BULL INN HALL, FAVERSHAM AT 8PM

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies received from Evan Parker, Maureen Wale and Laurence Young.

2. Chairman

- 2.1 The Secretary, Brian Clayton, advised that as the Chairman, Martin Apps, had resigned before the AGM, he would normally chair the meeting but could not do so and act as secretary. It was suggested that the new Chair be elected at this point. This was agreed.
- 2.2 Sally Kerin was proposed, seconded and elected by a show of hands from the floor and took the Chair.

3. Minutes of 2014 AGM

- 3.1 The Secretary read out the minutes and asked that the Chair sign them. After Margaret Law advised that the minutes conformed to her memory of the meeting, the minutes were duly signed.

4. Matters arising

The secretary reported the following:

- 4.1 The transfer of the site freehold from Swale to Faversham Town Council is still in progress. The former Town Clerk has advised that the draft is with the lawyers.
- 4.2 Contact had finally been made with Swale as regards waterways. On reed cutting, Graham Tuft had advised that Bob Gomes was in contact with him. Bob read out his email and the response received by return, setting out Swale's conditional agreement. Brian agreed this amplified the information he had.
- 4.2 The operating agreement and insurance cover for the sluices is still outstanding. Graham Tuft has said he will dig out the paperwork.
- 4.3 Swale has said the long bridge will be replaced this financial year. The funding has been in place for some time. There has been no consultation on the design and installation.

5. Treasurer/ Land Administrator

- 5.1 John May circulated copies of his report which is appended.
- 5.2 Rents have been held at £3 per rod.
- 5.3 John May summarised the number of plots, average size etc. Some plots have been let or transfers taken place since the committee meeting.
- 5.4 John May said he would be standing down and not seeking re-election as Treasurer and Land Administrator as he took personal issue with complaints related to plot

management. He outlined why he would not publish the waiting list, how he managed the timing of lettings, and why some small plots were let.

- 5.5 John May suggested, in his absence, that Joe Coppins be given a one off honorarium in recognition of the work he undertakes on behalf of the Society. £300 was suggested and agreed by a show of hands.

- 5.6 John May was given a vote of thanks for all the work he has undertaken on behalf of the Society during his tenure.

6. Land Manager's Report

- 6.1 Joe Coppins reported no police involvement this year, but tools have been stolen from plot 7. He outlined the various projects he has led this year. These included replacement of small bridge decking, relaying anti-slip wire, replacement of top gate and fence, creosoting fences and decking, overhauling site furniture and water weed clearance.

7. Secretary

- 7.1 Brian Clayton said he would be standing down and not seeking re-election as Secretary as he took personal issue with complaints.
- 7.2 Brian finalised and closed his minute book at this point.

8. Election of Officers

- 8.1 The following were nominated, seconded and elected by a show of hands from the floor:

Secretary	Paul Edmondson
Treasurer	Andy Freeman
Land Manager	Joe Coppins
Committee Member	Noel Perkins

- 8.2 The following agreed to be Site Representatives and were co-opted on to the committee:

Brenda Cardwell
Bob Gomes
Penelope Wilson
Laurence Young

- 8.3 A Land Administrator was not elected. The committee will decide the arrangements for maintaining the waiting list, lettings and monitoring compliance with site rules at its first meeting.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Paul Edmondson stated that he had presented a summary list of comments and requests that he had received from tenants, to the first and only committee meeting this year, held on 3.11.15. The list was intended for discussion at the committee meeting so that decisions could be reported to the AGM. He had asked at the last AGM for the meeting dates to be set in advance so that members could fix them in their diaries, but this had not happened. Whereas his tenancy Agreement stated that

meetings would be held monthly, usually on the third Tuesday of the month, with four meetings open to tenants, this has not occurred for some time. The resulting list was long and had been circulated to the committee in advance. Some members took issue with some points as elaborated earlier in the AGM. He circulated copies of the list, as appended, for members to refer to. The new committee would consider matters on the list which require action.

- 8.2 Andrew Lees suggested that the rents should be raised to accumulate funds to finance shared equipment and site projects. Andy Freeman, the Treasurer, suggested that an increase should only be considered once the aims and costs had been agreed with the membership in order to minimise any increase.
- 8.3 Margy Perkins proposed that the Association should have a website such as Millfield has, in order to improve communication. She suggested enquiries be made of the membership for a suitably experienced person to set this up, or otherwise find out the cost etc.
- 8.4 Margy Perkins proposed that the successful picnics should continue, weather permitting. She also proposed that an October Apple Day be started to take advantage large crops as experienced this year. She had access to two presses and a scrapper for breaking down the apples.
- 8.5 Margy Perkins suggested that several raised beds could be constructed at the rear of the carpark by plot 34A, to be used by the elderly who are no longer able to manage a normal plot. This would allow them to still enjoy the site.
- 8.6 Bob Gomes publicised a Heritage Lottery project to promote bumblebee habitat. He has information packs for interested members if they wish to discuss this with him. It may be possible to arrange for a representative to give a talk in the New Year.
- 8.7 Penelope Wilson queried the use of weed killers on the plots. The site policy is to promote organic cultivation, although this not enforced. It was agreed that the committee would review its policy and ensure tenants are periodically reminded.
- 8.8 Margy Perkins suggested a Plant Swap Day on May Bank Holiday. This would make use of the surplus plants we would otherwise waste after finishing our planting out.
- 8.9 It was suggested that we liaise with the Friends of Westbrook Stream in order to benefit from their experience, especially as Bob Gomes has also acted as an adviser to the group, as well as volunteering with them, along with several other allotment holders.
- 8.10 Margaret Law queried the problem of water levels. Bob Gomes explained how the weir controlled the level throughout the streams. The bypass should only be required in exceptional circumstances.
- 8.11 Sally Kerin asked that attendees give their email address to her before they left.
- 8.10 Committee meetings are to be held monthly on the third Monday of the month, with the exception of the first meeting. This is to be held on Monday 14.12.15 at 8.00pm at Margy and Noel Perkins house, at 72 West Street.
- 8.11 The meeting ended at 9.50pm.

Financial Year October 1st 2014 - September 30th 2015Matters relating to the financial year 2014/15

The major regular cost for the Society this year has again been our public liability insurance which rose to £376.38 this year, a rise of just over £10.00 which is to be expected. The other major outlay was the work done on the boundary wall at a cost of £450.00.

Earnings from interest (gross) have again been affected by the low interest rates but is rising. We gained £6.74 this year on which we paid £1.35 tax. This reflects a slight increase on last year's figure of £5.42 gross on which we paid £1.08 tax.

In view of the current balance the management group have decided there will be no need for a rent increase in the next financial year so rents remain at £3.00 per rod. As the matter of reorganisation between Swale and Faversham Council is still not fully resolved we have no idea whether there will be any financial implications for the Society, particularly in relation to bridge repairs, so rents have not risen in anticipation; we shall wait and see.

General

Cash in the Nationwide Building Society account at 31.09.15 stands at ~~£2434.74~~

with petty cash in hand at **£38.68**

Potential rental income for next year is **£1346.25**

The distribution of costs to the Society were as follows:

Insurance	£ 376.38
Wages	£ 83.04
Professional Fees	£ 5.00
Tax	£ 1.35
Materials	£ 503.95
Equipment	£ 8.00
Recorded post	£ 1.72

The sources of income were as follows:

Rents	£ 1197.00
Gross Interest	£ 6.74
Donations	£ 3.00
Sale of shed	£ 411.00

The full accounts for the financial year 2014/15 have been audited by *Andrew Shepherd Accountancy Services* who certify that they reflect a true and accurate record of the Society's accounts.

John May



Treasurer 2014 - 2015

SUMMARY OF POINTS TO BE RAISED AT COMMITTEE MEETING

I have received many comments and requests from tenants, some in immoderate terms. I have endeavoured to summarise these below, so that they can be addressed by the meeting. I will then be able to convey the consensus responses of the meeting to them.

Some 40-50% of tenancies are held or shared by females. This proportion is not reflected in the management structure.

Perhaps it is time for a female chair.

Many ladies are reluctant to attend business meetings in a public house. Many of the male members/tenants have also indicated that meetings should be held in a quiet meeting room elsewhere, where their views could be heard and discussed in a calm atmosphere.

The officers have been in place for some years, whilst the regular and orderly conduct of the association appears to have lapsed. Personal convenience appears to override proper management. It would be useful if Brian provided copies of the society's rules to the committee members at the meeting.

Formal dates for committee meetings need to be set for the year in advance to allow members to set the time aside in their diaries to facilitate attendance.

Minutes of the meetings should be circulated to the members immediately after, so non attendees are informed. Also AGM minutes should be posted or circulated shortly after. Email will facilitate this for many members.

Plots have been left vacant for prolonged periods, whilst others are not maintained in good and weed free condition. At present, plots 28(d?), 41, 45, 55 appear uncultivated. Plots 48, 19, 20 have large areas of longstanding weeds. Others such as plots 12, 32, 32A, 47, are suffering from recent neglect. Several plots have recently become available but I understand John does not propose to let these, and others available from earlier, until after the AGM.

Surely plots should be let as soon as available to avoid adverse comment, prevent nuisance to adjoining plot holders and allow the new tenants to prepare them before the onset of winter.

As John appears to have less time these days to follow up lettings, etc, I suggest he should concentrate on the Treasurers job and pass on the maintenance of the waiting list, lettings and follow-ups to someone with the time to devote to it.

A common concern is that the waiting list is not regularly published, even to the committee. This needs to be addressed to obviate the undercurrent of disquiet that is apparent at present.

Some plots have been subdivided excessively. Given that a 'standard' allotment is still defined as 10 rods, the committee needs to consider what is the minimum practical size it is fair to offer. John's latest proposal would include another of 1.5 rods. There are at present four others of this size, which are tiny.

Site maintenance and work parties have been problematic again this year. Last minute emails for mid week events are never going to gain support. Younger members have expressed their frustration that they are not given sufficient advance notice of preferably weekend work parties, so that they can contribute. At least one lady volunteer has been turned away. Apparently, only men were wanted, with women making the tea!

The management committee needs to draw up a list of annual tasks, such as waterway clearance, grass cutting, plus infrastructure repairs, so that these can be planned seasonally in advance for regular work parties, taking account of weather and wildlife concerns. In this regard, Bob Gomes has volunteered to draw up a plan for waterway clearance and tree maintenance and conservation. As you are aware, I have volunteered to work with him and Joe to compile an annual plan and update members by email.

It would help if Brian could provide copies of the existing management agreement for the committee so that our current obligations can be clearly understood by all.

Plot holders should be regularly updated on their responsibilities. Responsibility for the cleanliness of adjacent stream banks and waterways needs to be clarified, especially the safety aspects of the waterways.

The bullrush incursion in the north reach needs to be discussed. I previously reported my own and Bob Gomes opinion on the cause. Lack of flow and silting up at the west end appear to result from the design of the new outlet at the east end. Swale would need to be consulted on establishing an effective weir at this point to restore flow. Bob and I have a simple suggestion for the meeting to consider.

Bob Gomes would like to trial several alternative bullrush removal techniques, to test their effectiveness. One includes the use of a small mechanical underwater cutter for which he is trained and insured.

Bob Gomes is keen to promote biodiversity on the site. The encouragement of pollinator friendly plants in spare corners would help. Perhaps a useful list could be provided to tenants.

Lack of tree maintenance has also been raised.

No doubt Brian will be reporting on the following which are frequently raised by tenants and others :

Site transfer to Faversham.

Progress on long bridge.

Boundary dispute at plots 47/48.

Interaction with Friends of Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond.

'Boating' on Stonebridge pond.

Operation of sluices.

Updated email contact list