

STONEBRIDGE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

MINUTES OF AGM HELD ON 9TH NOVEMBER 2016, 7PM, AT THE GUILDHALL

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from eight members who wished to attend but had prior commitments or were delayed by travel disruption. All expressed their best wishes for a successful meeting.

2. Welcome and introduction by the Chair, Sally Kerin

- 2.1 Sally thanked the 34 members present for attending the meeting, then introduced the current committee.
- 2.2 Sally outlined the agenda and format for the meeting. An Annual Report had been circulated and been made available to all members, outlining the activities and achievements of the Society during the previous year. Any questions on the report could be raised under AOB. The intention was to devote the meeting to essential business, including proposals for improving the site for the benefit of the members.
- 2.3 Claire Belsom, Chair of Faversham Town Council Allotment Management Group, had wished to attend the meeting and meet members, but was called to another meeting.

3. Secretary, Paul Edmondson

- 3.1 The Annual Report incorporates individual sections by the members of the committee. It was hoped that the membership found this an interesting and informative reference, obviating the need to reprise the previous years activities during the meeting.
- 3.2 Planning permission for the proposed tree works has been received. The planning permission for the new gates and fences was expected mid November. The work would proceed once this is received.
- 3.3 Discussions with Millfield and North Preston committees confirm that they have similar concerns about entering in to a 25 year lease. There is common agreement that a simple Management Agreement, similar in scope to that with Swale, is all that is required. This will be put to the next FTCAMG meeting. The members present concurred with this stance.

4. Treasurer, Andy Freeman

- 4.1 The audited accounts were received the previous afternoon and circulated to members by email and displayed on the website. Paper copies were made available at the meeting for those without computer access.
- 4.2 Andy explained a change in the accounting procedure. All monies received in rents were paid in as received, not after the end of year date, as previously. The statement of account covers all financial transaction during the accounting period, in accordance with normal practice. The apparently inflated figure for rents reflects this.

- 4.3 As the statement is a summary, Andy repeated the breakdown statistics included in his section of the Annual Report. He particularly thanked the members for their prompt payments and generous donations to fund improvement projects, stressing that there is no obligation to donate.

5. Proposed formalised Constitution

- 5.1 The files of the Society do not include a written Constitution. Enquires of the previous secretary confirmed no recollection of a formal written constitution. A constitution encapsulating the current practice of the Society was prepared by the committee and circulated to members for comment, with a dissolution clause added later.
- 5.2 The adoption of the proposed written constitution, including the dissolution clause, was moved and seconded from the floor and unanimously approved by the members present.
- 5.3 In order to implement the finally agreed Management Agreement with FTC, it will need to be signed on behalf of the Society. The proposal that the Chair and Secretary be authorised to sign on behalf of the Society was moved and seconded from the floor and unanimously approved by the members present.

5. Elections

- 5.1 The membership had been advised that the current officers were willing to stand for re-election, to continue the improvement works detailed in the Annual Report. No other nominations had been received.
- 5.2 The following were proposed, seconded from the floor and unanimously approved by the members present to be elected for the year 2016-7.

Chair	Sally Kerin	Plot 41A
Secretary	Paul Edmondson	Plot 27A
Treasurer	Andy Freeman	Plot 37
Member	Noel Perkins	Plot 15A

- 5.3 Sally confirmed that the elected committee would co-opt the following members to continue the valuable work they have performed in the previous year.

Laurence Young	Plot 54	Fund raising
Bob Gomes	Plot 28	Wildlife and Conservation
John Gould	Plot 45A	

Brenda Caldwell, currently incapacitated and unable to participate on the committee will be invited to re-join once she recovers. Two additional members, able to assist in developing the proposed projects and willing to volunteer, will be co-opted later. Anyone with suitable skills wishing to join the committee should contact the secretary to discuss what would be involved.

6. Proposed plans for improvements and projects

A number of projects to improve the site were discussed at the open meeting in May. A slide show presentation by Paul Edmondson and Bob Gomes updated the meeting on the progress made with these plans.

6.1 Orchard Area

The area has been largely cleared by volunteer work parties and the resulting bonfire lit late October. The area has been surveyed and a suggested layout produced for discussion.

Paul described the findings of the survey, including the existing features, obstructions and potentially hazardous areas found. The proposed layout, to fully develop the area for new plots, in accordance with the mandate from FTC was explained. The layout takes account of the existing machine bases, millstones and trees to be retained, whilst providing plots that benefit from full sun for the majority of the day once the planned tree works are completed. A decked area to bridge the filled pits and culvert to the south of the area is included, to be used as a communal seating and social area.

Broad agreement with the proposals was given by the members present, following discussion of the possibility of including managed wildflower areas, provision for raised beds in the more accessible main entrance area, and disabled access. It was agreed to ensure that the main level access paths are constructed to a suitable standard for wheelchair access to the seating area.

It is proposed to develop the area by a combination of volunteer labour, and employed specialists for the major tree works. Members with suitable machine tool certification have already volunteered to carry out minor tree work, grubbing out of tree roots and site levelling with a hired digger. The project cost will now be determined and funding sought to progress the work.

6.2 Brick Shed

This is the only fixed structure on the site and was in the past the site store. It has been vacated, partially cleaned out and surveyed. The necessary repairs and security measures required were displayed and explained. These have been scheduled and costed. The general repairs will be carried out by volunteer labour, with essential roof tiling replacements by a specialist contractor. The works will commence once funding to cover the cost of materials and the specialist work is received.

6.3 Bridges

A major element of upkeep on the site is the complex of bridges linking the islands surrounded by waterways on the lower south side of the site.

We have received a report from Swale BC on the long bridge replacement. The council's drawing of the proposed replacement was displayed. This is similar to the existing, is 1.2m wide, with balustrades both sides. We have asked that the centre span be raised to allow the punt to pass. We understand that the procurement process has now started, as funding is in place. Swale are being prompted on a regular basis for progress reports.

The other bridges over internal waterways are generally in need of frequent repair. Photographs were displayed and the individual deficiencies indicated. It was agreed that it is essential that we plan to replace them before they become beyond economic repair and unusable.

Funding will have to be sought in order to undertake these works. Laurence Young has suggested that we should link small projects in to larger combined bids to limit the number of applications to individual funding sources.

6.4 Waterways and ditches

The waterways are owned by Swale, but we are responsible for clearing ditches off the main waterways. Swale allow us to clear the waterways provided we observe standard H and S procedures and that work party members are trained and insured.

We have been asked to suggest which waterways require dredging and where walls require repair. Bob and Paul have surveyed the waterways and produced a drawing identifying defective banks, banks previously re-supported, depths of water over silt, and areas obstructed by bullrushes. This drawing was displayed, accompanied by photographs, and explained.

Our investigation concludes that any work to improve the waterways cannot be undertaken piecemeal unless an overall strategy is formulated by Swale. Removal of silt will undermine the existing bank repairs bearing in it. The design of any future new or replacement repairs will depend on the depth of silt that it is intended to remove. A report setting out the results of the survey, our conclusions and recommendations has been passed to Cllr Cosgrove for presentation to Swale BC.

Bob reprised the weed clearance strategy explained in his section of the Annual Report. Photographs of clearance work in progress and the ongoing results were displayed and explained. Further areas of bullrush will be cleared to gain access to water, whilst retaining suitable sized areas for wildlife habitat.

The totally blocked inner waterway has areas of bullrush cut back at surface level. This has re-grown as expected. This waterway will have to be dug out to restore the water flow, as Noel Perkins has demonstrated adjacent his plot 15A. It is proposed to use the tin enclosure at the end of the main drive for composting on the resulting material.

6.5 Trees

As the site is in a conservation area, mature trees cannot be cut back or removed without permission. Bob Gomes has prepared a tree plan, a schedule of immediate works plus details of long term maintenance for the whole site as part of a planning application to maintain the trees submitted through FTC. This has now been approved.

Bob displayed the tree plan and explained the background and strategy. The details will be published on the web site. Tenants will then be able to agree final details of tree works on their plots with the Committee before proceeding.

The removal of opportunistic sycamore saplings in common areas will be carried out by work parties. Where possible, help to remove overgrown previously pollarded willows or saplings on plot banks will be given by work parties, especially on recently let plots.

A number of large trees require maintenance work and are included in the application. These are the responsibility of FTC, the site owners. Where the Society needs to carry out the works as part of individual projects, they will include these in the plans and funding proposals. Works to some trees on common areas adjacent

plots have been included, as requested by tenants. The tenants affected will be able carry out the works as a local work party for the purpose after consulting the committee.

6.6 Brown water systems

A trial brown water system is expected to be in place for next year adjacent plot 50. The main tank and water pump have been donated to the Society, together with other building materials. Trevor Foster and Peter Hill will be setting up the system in the new year. A new inlet through the bullrushes will be cleared by plot 50 to allow access to pump water.

The success of the trial will be monitored next year. Any lessons learned will inform plans to replace the mains water feed to the three existing tanks at the top of the site with pumped water from the streams. An additional installation at the top of plot 8 would also improve water access for tenants in this area.

Clearance of silt and a large tree in the ditch between plots 53 and 61 would allow water to reach remote plots near Davington Hill. A relatively shallow depth of water would fill a deeper sump dug at the head of the ditch.

6.7 Raised beds for disabled and elderly

The area of the carpark by the stage could be used for raised beds for the elderly and disabled, with carparking in front. Plans for this provision will be progressed through the coming year so that funding can be sought.

In addition to the construction of raised beds, disabled access through the main gate would have to be considered. This not possible, unaided, at present. The gates are the responsibility of FTC and currently require repair. The possibility of improvements will be raised in discussions with FTCAMG. As ever, the main stumbling block will be funding.

7. Any other business

- 7.1 Caroline Stockley asked what action was being taken to ensure plot 11 was cultivated and maintained in accordance with the site rules. Although some reduction of the surrounding hedges and trees had taken place this year, the adjacent plot is still shaded and subject to nuisance from extensive tree root incursion.

It was explained that the problem of the plot was long standing. It is not known why the tenant was allowed develop the plot as an overgrown wooded area, contrary to the requirements of the prevailing Management Agreement with Swale and the Tenancy Agreement. The situation has to be rectified, but a heavy-handed approach does not appear to be justified. Ongoing discussions with the tenant have resulted in the limited clearance this year. Further improvement will be required with a view to full compliance within a reasonable period, although FTCAMG may insist on more precipitate action, with their backing.

Other plots have been identified with similar longstanding issues causing nuisance to adjacent plot holders. These are will be dealt with in a similar manner.

Currently, where plots start to fall short of compliance, a policy of talking to the tenant at an early stage has been adopted by the committee, with positive results. Warning and enforcement letters will only be used as a last resort.

- 7.2 Evan Parker asked what was being done about the accumulated weed in front of the small weir. He had noticed that the silt had built up since the weir was opened. There are no fish in the stream.

It was explained that the waterways are not the Society's responsibility. The arrangement is as outlined earlier under waterways. Bob explained that weed growth was a particular problem this year on all waterways. Opening the weir allowed normal floating weed to self clear. However, a plug of weed became stuck above the long bridge and moved during the previous wet period. It is quite thick and is taking longer to break up. There is a similar problem in front of the main weir. If it persists, the residue may be cleared as part of the next work party.

The current depth of water over silt has been measured. It is unlikely that this has changed significantly during the last few months. The moving water in the area is now clear, making the stream bed more visible, perhaps giving the impression that it is closer to the surface. Fish, both large and small, are still active in the stream above the small weir. Their activity has been observed and remarked on by many visitors and tenants during the year.

- 7.3 Marion Ripley thanked the committee, on behalf of the membership, for their efforts during the year. This was enthusiastically endorsed by the members present.

8. Closing remarks by Chair.

- 8.1 Sally thanked the members for attending and contributing to a successful evening, closing the meeting at 8.25pm

STONEBRIDGE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

NAME

The name of the Association shall be "STONEBRIDGE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY"

OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIETY

The Society exists

1. To manage the Stonebridge Allotment Site on behalf of Faversham Town Council, the owners, under the terms of a Management Agreement dated (to be inserted), maintaining members and waiting lists, letting plots, collecting rents, and applying these to the routine maintenance of the allotments.
2. To promote the interests of allotment holders and to take joint action for the benefit of members
3. To co-operate with any committee set up by government, local authorities or other bodies, to further the interests of allotment holders
4. To co-operate with any committee, local authority, national or local body set up to provide seeds, potatoes, tools etc for allotment holders
5. To take whatever steps are required by the local authority for the good management and cultivation of allotment gardens
6. To protect members from damage, trespass or theft where ever possible
7. To arrange lectures, film shows, demonstrations, competitions and other social events
8. To co-operate with other gardening associations in matters of mutual interest

MEMBERS

All persons who are current, legal, holders of allotment gardens on the Stonebridge Allotment Site will automatically be members of the Society.

OFFICERS

The Officers shall be the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, who shall be ex-officio members of the Committee. They shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting (AGM). Retiring Officers shall be eligible for re-election.

COMMITTEE

The affairs of the Association will be conducted by a Committee of Management of not less than 4 members. The Committee will retire at the AGM but will be eligible for re-election. The

Committee shall fill casual vacancies as necessary. The members so appointed shall hold office until the AGM. A quorum at committee meetings shall be not less than 3 members.

GENERAL MEETINGS

The AGM, of which 7 days notice will be given and at which the audited accounts and Chairman's report shall be submitted and the officers for the ensuing year shall be elected. If a Special General Meeting is necessary, it must be called by a minimum of six members at Committee or a General Meeting. Six members shall form a quorum, and in the case of equal voting, the Chair shall have the casting vote. Voting shall be on the basis of one vote per allotment holder, irrespective of the number of plots cultivated. Members shall be notified in advance of any proposed changes to the constitution, which will be discussed and voted on at a General Meeting.

EXCLUSIONS

No party-political or sectarian discussions shall be raised or resolutions proposed at either Committee or General Meetings.

FUNDS

The Committee shall open a Banking account in the name of the Society and all monies received from any source on behalf of the Association shall be paid into such account. 2 out of a possible 3 signatories shall sign cheques. Association funds will not be spent by the Committee other than to pay rent to Faversham Town Council or its successors, or unless it directly benefits allotment holders on the site.

AUDIT

There shall be appointed an Auditor, who is not a member of the Committee, to audit the accounts and submit a Report to the Annual General Meeting.

DISSOLUTION

The Society may be dissolved by a Resolution approved by a two thirds majority of the members present and entitled to vote at an AGM or SGM called specific ally for the purpose. In the event of dissolution, any funds remaining in the account of the Society are to be transferred to Faversham Town Council.

APPROVED at the Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 9th November 2016.

Sally Kerin Chair

Paul Edmondson Secretary

**The Stonebridge Allotment Society
Income & Expenditure Accounts
Year Ended 30th September 2016**

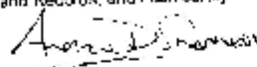
	<u>Note</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
Income			
Income from Plot Rents	1	4759.20	1,197.00
Income from Society Activities		109.00	-
Sale of Shed		-	43.00
Donations received		654.00	3.00
Release of Key Deposits held	2	-	47.80
Grants from Swale Borough Council		791.84	-
Interest Received		5.08	5.39
		<u>4,119.17</u>	<u>1,292.39</u>
Expenditure			
Insurance		391.64	376.38
Water Rates		241.22	83.04
Repairs & Maintenance		2,464.24	503.95
Equipment		710.00	8.00
Administrative Costs		24.90	1.72
Meetings and Associated Expenses		80.00	-
Sundry Expenses		51.58	5.00
		<u>3,963.57</u>	<u>978.09</u>
Surplus for the Year		355.60	314.30
Surplus Brought Forward		2,475.45	2,159.15
Surplus Carried forward		<u>£2,829.05</u>	<u>£2,473.45</u>
Represented By:			
Building Society Account		2,817.72	2,434.71
Cash in Hand		11.33	38.68
Society Funds		<u>£2,829.05</u>	<u>£2,473.42</u>

Note 1. - Income from Plot Rents is recognized upon receipt and not apportioned over the period of the Rent.

Note 2. - The Key Deposit Money held represents an old balance due back to members in return for the return of Keys to the Allotments, by members giving up their plots. It has however become the practice for members not to request the return of their deposits, and deposits formerly recognized in the Accounts related to keys retained in previous years. It was agreed to recognize the fact of the practice and the true liability, by releasing the deposits to Income.

Auditors Report

The Annexed Accounts have been checked against the underlying Books and Records, and I can certify that they are in accordance therewith.


Andrew Shepherd

21st November 2016

Andrew Shepherd Accountancy Services
18 St. Ann's Road,
Faversham
Kent
ME13 8RH