

1. ATTENDING:

Tim Dilks - Chair
Alison Carling - Treasurer
Abi Macdonald-Grute - Trading Secretary
Steve Elliott - Sheet Rep
Georgie Thurlby - Association Secretary
Margaret Davis - Sheet Rep

The new committee members, Margaret and Georgie, were welcomed and appointed (proposed by Abi, seconded by Alison).

2. APOLOGIES:

David Mogg - Membership Secretary and Webmaster

3. MINUTES OF MEETING 20th JANUARY 2020

The committee reviewed the minutes from the last meeting. Accepted as correct.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The takings from the shed have increased since then and are now £1474.60 due to the end of season promotion. Abi confirmed that she has identified a new supplier for the Shed - BHGS Ltd in Chichester. They will provide all the usual essentials as well as potatoes in 2kg bags. Abi is in touch with the sales manager and they will be letting us know the cost breakdown shortly.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Last meetings totals (29/06/21): current account £565.22. Deposit account £646.52.
Account totals as at 28/07/21: current account £1291.32. Deposit account £646.52.
Plus £50 SPC Grant yet to pay in.

Confirmed we are now offering the ploholders from the Adhurst allotments the option of joining the association, without voting rights but with the ability to use the Trading Shed. Discussed how we could promote this facility to Adhurst ploholders as it would be a good way to increase the membership numbers. We could also offer to do their potato order as the person who used to do it has recently stepped down.

ACTION: Steve to get in contact with the committee members at Adhurst (Abi to provide contact details) to discuss how they might advertise the Shed more in future.

6. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

In David's absence, no report but Alison confirmed that there were over 55 paid-up members.

7. TRADING REPORT

The committee discussed the ongoing issues with administering the seed order. Previously this has been ordered centrally and then all the seeds are sorted and distributed, which is very labour intensive. It would be preferable to circulate a discount code and allow members to place their own orders with Kings. Discussed solutions for circulating the discount code - the difficult part is ensuring that this benefit is only available to members of the Association. There are some logistical issues due to the variety of ways in which members pay their £5 membership fee (sometimes they pay in cash at the AGM, sometimes they leave cheques, sometimes they pay at the time they submit their seed order) and time lags with synchronising these records. The committee agreed that they would need to discuss with David before proceeding any further with a decision on this.

ACTION: David to report back at next meeting what he had found out from Kings.

8. ASSOCIATION MATTERS

The committee discussed the reasons why people join the association and how the committee might improve engagement among the membership. Now that Covid restrictions have been lifted, it is a good time to restart events and social activities if there is a demand for this. Some members of the committee were concerned that poor attendance would mean that any effort put into arranging events would be wasted. The committee resolved that a short survey or poll that could be emailed round to all ploholders would be the best way to assess the levels of interest in social events, talks etc so as not to waste any effort in arranging events for which there is no demand.

ACTION: Georgie to arrange a poll and send round to other committee members for review before sending to PTC/SPC for circulation.

Ideas put forward by members of the committee for events and social activities included:

- Plot tours to show other members around
- Seed swaps and plant swaps
- Seed saving course/event/talk (e.g. Vital Seeds offer this)
- Day trip to Knepp rewilding project
- Talk on pollinators, biodiversity etc
- Day trip to a local commercial farm or market garden (e.g. market stall at Petersfield market)
- Day trip to the Sustainability Centre
- Day trip to Charles Dowding's market garden Homeacres
- Competition for children e.g. grow the tallest sunflower
- Talk on raw food (diet)
- Talk on wildlife e.g. water voles - South Downs National Park warden

Other ideas put forward for the committee to consider:

- Contacting BBC about Gardener's Question Time (often filmed on allotment sites across the country)
- Liaison with Free Shop Friday (food waste reduction scheme hosted at Petersfield train station)
- Liaison with Petersfield Physic Garden

The committee then discussed their role in liaising with the respective councils and whether they should take more of a lobbying role for issues such as the recent decision by Petersfield Town Council that ploholders at Tilmore must take down or reduce the size of any greenhouse, polytunnel or fruit cage over 6 x 8 foot. Other issues on which the committee could act as a voice for ploholders include: maintenance of communal areas (including paths, gates, fencing etc), allotment rents, cultivation standards and how these are assessed. Taking more of an active role in liaising with the councils might encourage ploholders to join the association as they would want to be represented.

Petersfield Town Council has a user group meeting for allotment holders every year but not many people attend.

The committee agreed that an area where the committee could benefit from improved communication with the councils would be on the enforcement of cultivation standards at Tilmore. Currently the procedure is that PTC inspect the plots on a monthly basis and send a letter to anyone whose plot seems to have been neglected to find out whether there is a reason for this. If the problems are not rectified the ploholder may be encouraged to reduce the size of their plot. The committee would benefit from knowing when plots are about to be given up as they would then be able to recruit new members more effectively. Also offering support and guidance to current ploholders who may be struggling or who may have underestimated the work involved in keeping an allotment. Agreed that there is a lot of confusion about what the cultivation standards are and how neglected a plot needs to be before it gets reallocated. Some ploholders have received letters and have strimmed their plots to reduce the weed cover, but are not exactly 'cultivating' the plots as there is barely anything growing there. Agreed that clarity would be useful for all on this issue.

ACTION: Georgie to liaise with Petersfield Town Council to find out the protocol for enforcing the cultivation standards and whether the Association might be able to assist with monitoring and intervening where necessary, also supporting ploholders who may be having difficulty.

ACTION: Steve to send Georgie a copy of the agreement for Sheet as the system works well there.

The committee then discussed the communication channels that the Association has with its members and with the non-member ploholders on both sites, these being:

- Website
- Noticeboard
- Email (inc newsletter)
- Facebook page? Previously existed but was not really being used
- Instagram? Not currently but could be an option to explore
- In person - bumping into people on the site
- Social events

Agreed that the Association could benefit from using these channels more effectively, though the details of how this would be done best still need to be worked out.

The committee discussed the communications issue in relation to the mailing lists - email communication with members is somewhat limited due to the need to send all comms to the council officers for circulation to ploholders (because of GDPR restrictions, we must verify that all contacts have consented to their information being stored by the Association and used for communications). Suggestion that we could use a platform like Mailchimp, which features a consent form for members to opt-in, to be able to send emails directly to ploholders. Mailchimp is free for email lists of less than 2000 addresses and also has lots of other features including analytics etc.

STAA Communication Strategy

Aim: To drive information sharing to plot holders in order to widen engagement with the Association and increase membership.

Communication Channels

- Newsletter
- Website
- Email
- Meetings
- Notice Board
- Facebook Group
- Word of mouth
- Communication Plan

A monthly update to members regarding the activities of and the opportunities within STAA.

Month	Topic
Jan	Seed Order Collection
Feb	Shed Opening Plans
March	Shed Opening
April	Shed Opening
May	Invite to Plot judging/Shed Opening
June	Reminder of Plot Judging
July	
August	Invite to AGM/Committee invites/Potato orders
September	Reminder AGM/Potato Orders/Seed Catalogues
October	Minutes AGM/ Seed Orders
November	Seed Orders
December	

Other ideas:-

- Plot holder meetings/Representations to Council/Synergistic Projects within Petersfield/Committee Meetings
- Roles and Responsibilities

ACTION: Georgie to put mailing lists item on the agenda for next time so it can be discussed with David present.

The committee discussed the allotment competition judging which will be happening shortly. About 5 or 6 ploholders have entered the best kept plot category from each site.

ACTION: Alison to notify Steve when the judging will be taking place so that he can arrange for the gates of his plot to be unlocked.

Abi had received a deputation from Julie Yardley about size of structures (polytunnels, greenhouses, fruit cages) on the Tilmore allotments having to be reduced to 6 x 8 foot. There was some speculation that the council would be taking down structures in the dead of night if not compliant. Agreed that it would be useful for all to clarify why Petersfield Town Council have made this decision and what they are planning to do to enforce it.

ACTION: Tim to make a representation to the Town Council on behalf of the Committee on this issue.

The committee discussed the upcoming plans to paint the Trading Shed.

ACTION: Steve and Abi to agree a day to do this.

Discussed whether the committee could set up a WhatsApp group to make co-ordination easier but agreed that it would not be possible at this time as not all committee members use WhatsApp.

The next meeting was confirmed for 7.30pm on Wednesday 1st September 2021.