

1. ATTENDING:

Steve Elliott - Sheet Rep
Georgie Thurlby - Association Secretary
Alison Carling - Treasurer
David Mogg - Membership Secretary and Webmaster
Margaret Davis - Committee Member

2. APOLOGIES:

Tim Dilks - Chair
Jerry and June Germey - Tilmore Rep
Slaney Hopkins - Tilmore Rep
Abi Grute - Trading Secretary

3. ELECTION OF NEW CHAIR

Following the resignation of Tim Dilks as Chair, the committee was to elect a new Chair. Steve withdrew from standing, as did David. Margaret was duly voted in as Chair and took up chairing the meeting.

4. MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

A brief update was provided on the actions from the last meeting. Many of the actions related to preparation for the AGM which had been completed. On the remaining actions the following updates were provided:
The STAA Facebook group had been set up and was being moderated by Georgie and Steve. There were still only a few members (around 10) but it was hoped that this would increase, and there had been some activity on posts from different people.

Abi had approached Petersfield Town Council about getting a replacement noticeboard for Tilmore (as the existing one as you enter the car park is in poor condition) and had found out that the council consider the noticeboard under the tree, which is in better condition but fogs up, to be the property of STAA. It was agreed to defer this item until Abi was present.

David confirmed that he had not received any amendments from committee members on the roles and responsibilities documents.

The committee approved the minutes of the last meeting.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Alison provided a brief update as follows:

Balance of community account £1303.13 Balance of deposit account £646.56

Since the last update, 20 x £5 membership fee payments and £110 cash from AGM membership fees had been received. Four seed potato order payments had been received.

A £25 payment had been received in error (it had been supposed to go to Sheet Parish Council for plot lease) so Alison had written a cheque for the same amount for Jenny at SPC, as we are not able to do transfers out of the STAA account.

Agreed that a £50 cheque would be given to Tim to thank him for his many years as Chair of the association.

ACTION: Alison to arrange £50 cheque for Tim.

Alison confirmed that the cost of our insurance, which is provided via the RHS, is £35 for affiliation, £70 for insurance covering the Shed and £75 for public liability insurance covering members' plots = £180 in total. The insurance is provided by Sports Insure, who insure 'RHS groups'.

Also agreed that the RHS entry cards would not be purchased this year, as discussed at a previous meeting, because they were very rarely used.

Alison confirmed that David now has view-only access to the bank account so that he can check whether membership fees have been paid without needing to ask Alison.

Confirmed that the signatories for the bank accounts would need to be changed now that we have a new Chair.

ACTION: Alison to arrange getting Margaret added to the bank account as one of the signatories and getting Tim removed from the list.

6. TRADING SHED UPDATE

This item was deferred in Abi's absence.

7. SEED ORDERS

David provided a brief update: only 2 paper forms had been received, with all other orders being placed via the Kings website, which was good news as it reduced the administrative burden on the committee. In addition, several positive comments had been received from members about how easy it was to order online and how quickly the seeds had been delivered. It was also noted how much more useful it would be to be able to order seeds year-round and as many times as desired.

It was agreed that next year we would ask Kings to change the code for getting the discount to a new code, so that we could stop any members from reusing the old one and not having to renew their membership.

8. OTHER RETAILER DISCOUNTS

The results of the member survey had shown that there was interest in the committee arranging discounts with other retailers. For example, a member at the AGM had requested that in addition to the Kings discount, the association could arrange something similar with a supplier of organic seeds (as they felt there was not enough choice of organic seeds offered by Kings). Slaney had emailed the Organic Gardening Catalogue to find out if they offered a discount scheme for allotment associations and the like, and had found out that they have a scheme where the spend from association members has to be at least £200 (before discount) in total over the whole year, otherwise the discount will not be available the following year.

It was agreed that it would be worth pursuing this, as we are guaranteed the discount in the first year, and to communicate with members that we have to reach the £200 threshold to continue receiving the discount in future years in the hope that that would encourage them to spend enough. We would look to offer this in time for the 2023 growing season but this might be a good news story to communicate with members in the meantime.

Discussed the importance of maintaining a good relationship with Kings and not diverting custom away from our existing discount scheme, as this works well for the majority of ploholders (so we would not look to negotiate discounts with other seed providers, for example, unless they offered something that Kings did not). It was also agreed that any other discounts sought from other retailers should not be for items which are sold by the Shed, as this could divert custom away from the Shed.

It was agreed to establish a small subcommittee of 3 or 4 committee members to investigate discounts and keep a record of which companies had been contacted, and report back to the committee with their findings. Georgie and David volunteered. Action: Georgie and David to discuss how best to do this and to ask at the next committee meeting if there were any more volunteers.

9. POSTER FOR NOTICE BOARDS

Slaney had prepared a poster to go onto the notice boards to give ploholders information and advice and encouraging them to join the association. However, as Slaney was unable to attend this meeting, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

10. PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

David provided a brief update on his discussion with Jenny, the aim of which had been to find out 1) whether the parish council would be able to enforce ploholders taking out public liability insurance (as this is one of the benefits the association offers and would therefore be likely to increase our membership) and 2) whether they would be able to change Section O of the tenancy agreement, which currently refers the ploholder to another organisation (rather than STAA) to procure public liability insurance. Confirmed that SPC were unable/unwilling to enforce the holding of public liability insurance by ploholders, but that David had asked Jenny to change the reference to organisations that offer public liability insurance to promote STAA. It was hoped that this might push new ploholders to join the association.

Jenny had also commented that it was very useful to have Steve as the Sheet rep as he was very knowledgeable and helpful during plot inspections.

11. TALKS AND EVENTS

The results of the member survey had shown that there was interest in the committee arranging events and talks on a number of different topics.

Discussed the practical and logistical issues that would need to be considered, including but not limited to:

Cost of speakers - the etiquette is generally understood to be that any travel expenses would be paid, especially if the speaker is not receiving a fee. Higher profile / more well-known / popular speakers would be likely to expect a fee which could be prohibitive

Venue/location - obviously a venue which we could use at no cost would be preferable (though uncertain whether the Half Moon, for example, would tolerate us holding regular talks), but we could also look at community halls and the like, as these are often available for community groups to hire at a reduced rate. Venue would need to be accessible for members (ideally within walking distance of both sites). Online (using Zoom or similar) is also an option though it was felt that generally the membership would prefer in-person events

Timing - events during the summer might be less well attended as people are more likely to be tending to their plots, especially during good weather. Over the winter, however, it might be appreciated to have a programme of talks set up in advance to keep people interested and engaged while not much is going on at the allotments

Responsibility for any Covid precautions - if we held an event at a pub, the responsibility for ensuring any events were in line with any restrictions/guidance at the time would be with the pub, but if we were to hire a community hall or similar venue, the responsibility would be on us so this would need to be considered

It was suggested that we might organise a couple of trial events, ideally at a no-cost venue with a guest speaker who did not expect to be paid, to see how they go, and could then look at rearranging a programme of events if these trial ones were successful.

It was also suggested that we could offer entry to non-members for a small fee (£2 or £3, for example) which would encourage them to join the association and would also help members feel that they are getting their money's worth from being part of the association.

David suggested that he talk to a contact in the Gardeners Club to find out what they are doing for events and if they might be interested in, for example, offering entry for STAA members to their talks in a reciprocal arrangement.

ACTION: David to put out some feelers with the Gardeners Club and report back to the committee.

Steve suggested that it might be worth speaking to Martin Cox at Adhurst as he grows a lot of show veg and might be willing to do a talk. Agreed that the formation of a subcommittee for this purpose would be deferred until the next meeting, when more of the committee would be present and David would have had a chance to do some research.

12. CONSTITUTION AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Following the EGM in December at which the Constitution had been approved, it had been previously agreed that some further consideration and refining of the draft would be required, for example some of the wording needed to be clarified to avoid misinterpretation. There had also been some comments and suggestions from members which would need to be considered. It was agreed that the best way to do this would be to form a small, focused subcommittee of around 3 people to go through the Constitution line by line and make any amendments deemed necessary. This would then be brought back to the committee to approve prior to taking the revised version to the AGM for adoption by the membership in the autumn.

Agreed that Steve, David and Georgie would form the subcommittee and would meet to go through this in the next couple of months. Action: Steve, David and Georgie to meet to go through Constitution and suggest amendments.

The roles and responsibilities were briefly discussed, particularly the situation at Tilmore where we have not yet decided if one of the committee members should be the normal point of contact with Petersfield Town Council. It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting with the Tilmore reps present.

It was also noted that the Constitution requires that all committee members must attend at least 50% of the committee meetings throughout the year to be eligible for re-election at the AGM.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Alison brought up the issue of continuity and access to systems (the 'if I got hit by a bus' scenario). Agreed that Alison and David would write procedure notes for any systems/applications they use (e.g. bank account, STAA website), including passwords, and that these would be sent to Georgie to keep in case of emergency. It was suggested that they could be stored on Dropbox (or similar free cloud-based storage).

ACTION: Alison and David to write procedure notes / instructions for systems and applications they use and send to Georgie for storing online.

The meeting was closed at 8.50pm.

Date of next meeting: 7.30pm, Tuesday 1st March 2022