

St Thomas Allotment Association



approved MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEETING 3 : Sun. Sept. 13th 2020

(open meeting)

2:00pm @ Veg Box Lawns, Guys and Hylton Allotment, Exeter

1. **Attendance:** **🍏 A1 Present** [*quorum pres.*] : **Executive/Officers:** Alison Walker (Chair & pro-tem lead for G&H Trading Shed & Site Mngr/Rep vacancies) | David Solman (Sec. & pro-tem lead for the Treasurer vacancy) | Angela R. (Vice-chair & Local Allotment Manager, Regent St.) | **Local Allotment Managers:** Richard Brownbridge (Clapperbrook) | Ron Blakey (Cowick, deputy for JB & pro-tem lead for Cowick Trading Shed vacancy. | John Butler (Local Allotment Manager, Cowick La.) | Rob Shields (Local Allotment Manager, Rackfields) | Bill Turner (Local Allotment Manager, Ashwood Rd.) | Heidi Miller (Local Allotment Manager, Guys&Hylton). **🍏 B1 Apologies:** Rob Harding (Local Allotment Manager, Ide Lane) | Sue Therrian (Local Allotment Manager, Pinces) | Ruth O'Neale (Web & Data Manager)
2. **Approval of Minutes.**
Noted (i) Draft Minutes from Cttee. Mtg. 2 of 10th March 2020 were agreed & signed off by the Chair.
3. **MATTERS ARISING. ... deferred to be taken with AoB.**
4. **MAIN ITEM 1 of 3:Trading Manager's Report/Update**
a/b) Ron B. updated the committee; he is providing pro-tem cover for the Cowick Trading Shed, as is Alison W. for the G&H shed and stock-checking would be undertaken at end Sept. Despite the poor trading conditions Ron B. estimates that the Cowick T.Shed earned more than it spent and sales of stock are now picking-up. He is trying over-wintering shallots and hopes stock of onions and garlic will come in soon from Tuckers. Potato order forms have gone to all sites; Potato Orders by 18th Oct, please. Angela R. asked if up-to-date stock lists could be distributed; Ron B. agreed (but potato, onion and garlic prices are not yet known). He reported that Charles Knill had recently discussed the vacancy for Trading Manager with himself, Alison W. and the Sec.; Charles was busy asking lots of questions and keen to learn about the role. Between now and Oct. 1st, Charles will be finding out more about our Association's previous trading operations and looking online at those of other allotment associations or charities, with the aim of being able to decide whether to put his name forward by the end of Sept. Cttee members were encouraged by Ron B. to give him (or Charles if/when appointed) their ideas for new lines of stock. He has recently been asked to try selling John Innes compost (now in-stock) and peat-free compost (currently being investigated for availability at a reasonable price). Richard B. suggested 'Strulch' (straw mulch for organic gardening) be looked into although it may be too expensive to sell well. Ideas for out-reach selling to allotments without Trading Sheds, were discussed (an area any new Trading Manager might be able to develop, with the co-operation of Cttee Members).

Noted (ii) In the first week of October, the Secretary will inform all Cttee members whether Charles Knill will put his name forward as a candidate to run the

Association's Trading Operations; (iii) Cttee Members to remind plot-holders to make Potato Orders by 18th Oct.; (iv) Ron B. to supply Angela R. and other Cttee Members with an updated list (priced where possible) of all available stock; (v) Cttee Members to come forward with ideas/events to supply to allotments other than Cowick/G&H e.g. by outreach.

c) The Sec. circulated a paper about the three main suppliers to the Association's Trading Sheds, and asked the Cttee to agree spending pre-approvals for these in the next financial year. Ron B. recommended a slightly modified budget and this was agreed.

Agreed (a) That the current three main Trading Shed suppliers (C.T.Moss, Edwin Tucker & Sons Ltd, and Lowes of Dundee) be used again for the financial year 2020-21 (beginning Oct 1st), to a maximum spend limit of £2,500 each; and the Trading Manager(s) be pre-authorised to raise orders accordingly.

Noted (vi) That the Trading Manager(s) will request further pre-approvals from the Full Committee or its Executive, on a case-by-case basis.

5. MAIN ITEM 2 of 3. AGM Planning

a) In view of likely Covid-19 restrictions, the Secretary opened a discussion about a web-based alternative to the traditional approach. The drawbacks would include a risk that some people would be put-off by the need to download and use the software; questions and interaction would be less spontaneous; and the attraction of paid-for refreshments with a live presentation and discussion about events during the year, would be lost. Following a discussion, Alison W. recommended a postponement until the Spring so the usual format could be followed and would encourage more people to become involved.

Agreed (b) That the AGM be postponed until Spring 2021 and all site noticeboards display this decision.

b) Preparation of the annual financial and trading shed reports; and the timing of nominations/ elections (and the protocols for these, this year) - were discussed. It was agreed that despite postponement of the AGM, the Exec. Cttee could open nominations this Autumn and prepare the relevant information for each site notice-board; also to make copies of the financial and trading reports available at the usual time (November).

Noted (vii): That the Exec Cttee will draft a notice this Autumn about the protocol and dates for nominations to committee positions and make copies of the financial and trading reports available at the usual time (November); (viii) that if any positions receive more than one nomination the contenders shall await a vote at the Spring AGM and existing appointments for 2019-20 will be held over until then.

c) Back in Jan, the Secretary's draft Minutes of AGM 2019 were agreed by the Cttee. as a suitable draft to go before the AGM for approval; these were revisited but the Cttee had no late amendments to make.

d) The secretary proposed the committee agree to offer all Let & Check committee members and current volunteers a £15 voucher for use in the Trading Sheds to buy stock and/or membership subscriptions during the financial year 2020-21; or to agree an alternative. Also, to sign/approve leaving presents (diaries & national garden gift vouchers) for Fiona K and Gerald T.

and to forego Honoraria this year. John B. proposed that Honoraria be included in the thank-you arrangements for this year as it was important to show people their work is valued.

Agreed (c): That £15 vouchers be issued to current Let & Check and other current volunteers this Autumn for use in the Trading Sheds (to thank them for their work during 2019-20), (d) Site Mngrs/Reps to send their updated lists to the Sec.; (e) that leaving presents for FK> be approved (Richard B. to action for the Sec. to mail out); (f) that Honoraria be approved to thank officers for their work.

g) The committee discussed a proposal to put an amendment to the constitution on the agenda for the AGM to clarify that poly-tunnel tenants, householders of tenants, and people on a waiting list could be members of the Association.

Noted (ix) To defer this item for the AGM agenda, until agenda-making commences between Jan & March 2021.

6. MAIN ITEM 3 of 3. Financial Procedures Paper (FPP)

a) The Financial Procedures Paper had been circulated at the March Cttee meeting and on the Association website for further consultation. Following the consultation, an amended version (v3.2) had been pre-circulated to Cttee members to discuss for sign-off.

Agreed (g) That the Chair be authorised to sign the 'v3.2 Financial Procedures' paper as the adopted policy of the Association.

b) The Cttee. discussed whether to cease use of incoming cash at the Trading Sheds for small allotment site or trading shed purchases from the start of the new financial year, Oct. 1st. Angela R. asked about recording individual sales transactions and Ron B. explained he would like to see this implemented as it would then be possible to analyse sales, understand seasonal sales patterns, new trends etc.

Agreed (h) That incoming cash from sales at the Trading Sheds will be held separate from, and not used for, purchases of small items for the trading sheds or allotment sites, beginning on Oct 1st.

Noted (x) That a transaction record system be recommended to any new Trading Manager to improve sales and book-keeping analysis.

c) c-g) The Cttee discussed and agreed petty cash arrangements for the forthcoming financial year.

Agreed (i) That Alison W. set-up and oversee management/reporting of a petty cash float (for the general purposes of managing G&H allotments and its facilities) for the financial year 2020-21 with a £100 prime from STAA's bank account;

Agreed (j) that Cowick Trading Shed set up and oversee management/ reporting of a petty cash float (for the general purposes of managing Cowick allotments and its facilities) for the financial year 2020/21, this to be primed with a £100 float and maintained by the new Trading Manager if/when appointed (in the interim by Ron.B and John B);

Agreed (k) that the existing G&H petty cash float (held at the Veg Box) be retained for the new financial year but be restricted to purposes connected to the provision of refreshments and meeting facilities at, or in the vicinity of, the Veg Box; also that this

float may be used for purchasing gas cylinders for the Veg Box (as an exception to the standing rule that items above £25 can not be purchased through petty cash floats), and that the new cash book for the Veg Box float in the forthcoming financial year should record the money paid into the bank account by the Veg Box.

h) Poly-tunnel management and rents were discussed. It is anticipated that ECC will bill the Association for the ground rent in Sept. or Oct. and rents will be collected by the Association in Jan. The Cttee discussed moving to non-cash payment of rents and formalising the terms of tenancies.

Agreed (l) That Alison W. manage the Poly-tunnel finances/rents/plots and encourage tenants to move away from cash to bank transfer for the new financial year; also that Alison W. and the Sec. would draft an agreement for tenants to sign.

i) The Cttee. discussed the the Association's 'Reserves Policy' for the new financial year, beginning on Oct 1st. Alison W. recommended it be amended to incorporate emergency or other repairs to the Trading Sheds and this addition was agreed. Potential capital improvements from this Reserves Budget were discussed. Alison W. proposed that the former trading shed at Ashwood Road Allotments be the subject of a site visit by herself and interested members of the Cttee. so that a plan can be worked-up to to bring it into good repair during the new financial year. Bill T. reported that Ashwood Road tenants were actively tidying it up after a period of neglect; that it could already be used for holding surplus trading stock and it should be feasible to re-open it as a trading shed without too much expenditure/repair work. Ron B. reported he had approached the Council about repairs to the sky-lights in the Cowick trading shed and was seeking to have the old ones replaced, and additional ones put in. Alison W., Heidi. M and the Sec. reported they had been looking into repairs to the Veg Box solar panel system and a new toilet for G&H. Council ward grants were then discussed.

Agreed (m) That the Association's 'Reserves Policy' for the financial year 2020-21 be £7,500, nominally comprised of (i) a reserve of £3,000 for three year's running costs, (ii) £1,500 for potential bad debts, (iii) £2,500 to cover any emergency or other repair costs for the Poly-tunnel, Veg Box and Trading Sheds, and (iv) £500 for contingency.

Noted (xi) that plans are being developed for use of some of the Associations capital along with applying for local grants or Council works (e.g. the possible opening of a third trading shed and repairs to the Veg Box and current two Trading Sheds) and this may use some of the reserves.

j,k,l) The Cttee discussed pre-approvals for expenditure. Items covered were:the Association's insurance using the current provider's renewal quote, when rec'd during q4 2020; renewal of the Association's website/host/domain using the current provider's renewal quote, when rec'd during q4 2020; and the possible printing of a membership leaflet for the Association based on the draft pre-circulated at the last Cttee Mtg in March.

Agreed (n) That the Association pre-approves expenditure on the Association's insurance using the current provider's renewal quote; its website/host/domain using the current provider's renewal quote, when rec'd; and the printing of a membership leaflet for the Association.

m) Planned Expenditure was discussed. It was noted that the Exec. (i) intend to purchase two card-readers for the Trading Sheds (c. £40) subject to being able to access an internet signal at these facilities; (ii) and obtain a postal address for the Association (£20 for the necessary map/plan to make the application to ECC). It was also noted that the Trading Sheds will require approval during the coming financial year, of expenditure for purchases other than for the current three main Trading Shed suppliers (C.T.Moss, Edwin Tucker & Sons Ltd, and Lowes of Dundee).

7. MEMBERSHIP & EVENTS

a) Angela R asked the Cttee for an update about its work to periodically e-mail plot-holders. The background to this work had been completed in Jan-March. Ruth O'N and the Sec. had been keen to progress it. With Angela R's help, it may be possible to complete it but it was time-consuming and officers were already doing considerable extra work due to vacancies. The Cttee. agreed that the Assn would likely be more successful in recruiting to vacancies and encouraging participation, if a newsletter could be issued periodically to plot-holders.

Agreed (o) The Cttee agreed an important priority for the new financial year is to involve more people and develop a better sense of community; all Cttee members to revisit this with ideas/proposals at the next meeting.

Noted (xii) Angela R. to talk with the Sec and Ruth to see how best to progress the mailing and newsletter projects.

b) The Cttee had intended to discuss whether to establish a sub-cttee to bring back a recommendation to the Cttee on the question of whether STAA should become a registered charity or operate as an Association. In the event, the Cttee left the question of whether to establish a sub-cttee undecided. Members had a lengthy, but also inconclusive, discussion about association membership, beginning with a proposal developed by the Secretary and Angela R. to issue new 7yr membership cards at £2 per membership for 2020/21, the cards to be kept alphabetically in the trading sheds (and for sites without trading sheds, the proceeds to go into a site float for local site improvements). Ron B. and Rob S. proposed that we might incorporate memberships into new Let&Check sign-ups, to the extent this may be possible given rejection by the Council Allotments officer of moving to a combined tenancy and membership agreement as in Crediton.

Noted (xiii) The Cttee is undecided whether to be a Charity or Association, and how best to move forward with its new membership scheme; these issues to be resolved during 2020-21.

8. Financial Report

This had been pre-circulated by the Sec., a week in advance of this meeting, along with a copy of all book-keeping to date. Bill T. asked about the Let&Check fees from ECC; The Sec. reported these would not be paid by ECC until Jan 2021. It was noted that the Sec. will send the year-end accounts to all Cttee Members in October.

9. Media Update/Report

Ruth O'N wasn't available for this Cttee meeting, but it was noted that recent news and updates were available at: <https://www.stthomasallotmentsassn.org.uk/> and also:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/Stthomasallotmentsassn/posts/>

10. Vacancies Update

The Cttee agreed to continue to advertise the following 3 committee vacancies until an appointment is made or a member is elected: Treasurer, Trading Manager, the second G&H Site Manage/Rep.(not necessarily for Let & Check). Also, to advertise the co-opted position of Publicity & Projects Officer now Alison Williams has left.

11. AoB & Matters Arising

a) It was noted that approval of the Treasurer Role Description had been deferred from the March Cttee mtg. to this one.

b) it was noted that the signing of the committee membership paper had been deferred for Rob Shields, Tim Snell, Bill Turner, and Rose Mounce to this one. Rob S. and Bill T. signed, leaving only Tim S. and Rose M.

c) Rob S. proposed the Assn. look into employing a paid treasurer/book-keeper for the new financial year. Ron B. raised the concern that this would set a precedent that could lead Cttee members to then buy-in other functions at market cost, such as a trading manager. On balance the Cttee. favoured keeping these roles voluntary/unpaid.

d) John B. proposed that the Assn. develop and publicise a 'Code of Conduct' for the notice-boards at each site. This was agreed. Ron B. to ask Becky Wells for a copy of the code used in her time as secretary.

e) Alison W. proposed that there should be a notice-board at all entrances to a site; there are two pedestrian entrances without a notice-board at G&H. and possibly others across the STAA allotments. Ron B. to ask Becky W. if she has information about the procurement and specification used for the existing notice-boards, and pass this to Alison W. who will explore co-funding from Council ward grants.

f) Members discussed the possibility of organising an Annual Show for Summer 2021; this could be the Association's '101st Anniversary Event'. It was agreed to provisionally book a/the venue asap.

Noted (xiii) To defer adoption of the Treasurer Role Description to the next Full or Exec. Cttee Mtg.; (xiv) some members still to sign the committee membership list for the 2019-20 session; (xv) John B. to ask Becky W. for a copy of the old code of conduct and to draft a new one for Cttee Approval; (xvi) Ron B. to pass Alison W. information about procurement and specification of the existing site notice-boards with a view to putting up more; (xvii) a cttee member to provisionally book a/the venue for a summer 2021 show.

12. DONMs/Events

It was decided not to plan-in dates at present due to uncertainty about Covid-19.

David Solman, Secretary @ staacommittee@yahoo.com

Cttee. signed:

Dated: 22/2/21 [approved at Online Mtg of the Committee on 5th Feb 2021]