

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
SENLAC ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**

The Almonry, Battle, 26th October 2017

1. **Welcome:** Trevor Henning (TH) welcomed everyone to the 2017 SAA AGM which was attended by 13 members.
2. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies received from Anne Gavin, Glenna Favell, Sally Lampitt, Ian Henson, Steve Mellor and Clive Richardson.
3. **AGM Minutes:** The members present agreed the minutes – Proposer Fern Burgess, Seconder Elaine Harmer.
4. **Matters Arising:**
 - Item 1.8(ii): The old agreement has been rescinded, letters were issued in January 2017.
 - Item 2.8(v): This has not been shelved but has been added to the long term plan.
 - Item 3.8(vi): Starter plots are still available but there has been no interest in these.
 - Item 4.8(vii): BTC staff who are regularly on site monitor the grass and this is then cut as required. The Council pays £90 for each cut and there have been 3 cuts this financial year.
5. **Treasurer's Report:** Alan Gavin (ALG) advised that there was no expenditure during the year. The balance of the SAA account stands at £308.25. ALG thanked Clive Richardson for auditing the accounts. Clive has agreed to continue as SAA auditor.
6. **Chairman's Report:** TH advised:
 - i. As Chairman, I would like to thank the committee for their time and the hard work during the year and especially to Anne for her work as secretary. The minutes of last AGM must have taken ages to write up in so much detail and on behalf of the committee, we are grateful for the time Anne spent doing this.
 - ii. I would also like to thank the Council for their support during the year. There has been a noticeable difference in the shared areas, such as the paths and the surrounding trees, in Virgins Croft and we are grateful for the time and money that has been spent on this work. Michael, in particular has put in a lot of work over the last year and we would like to thank him for his enthusiasm and the work done on each site.
 - iii. There continues to be quite a large number of vacant plots and un-worked plots. There is often a reason why plot holders cannot maintain their plot due to sickness, work etc. but it is unfair letting the weeds grow wild spreading seeds everywhere. The Council try to keep the weeds at bay with weedkiller and rotovate before a new tenant takes the plot.
 - iv. The Joint Inspections with the SAA rep, a Council member, Jane and Michael have been very useful. The inspections are programmed for 4 per year so problems are brought up and the council makes decision and Michael is on hand to take instructions.

- v. BBQ: This year's BBQ had a new location. It was held at the Allotments at Watch Oak. I unfortunately could not attend as I was abroad on business. The reports I received were that an excellent evening was had by all. The committee and I must say a big thank you to Jacqui Post and her husband and to Christine Coleman. They really hosted a great BBQ and hopefully will repeat next year.
- vi. Prize winners: Could I add my congratulations to all those who won a "well deserved prize. Glenna has made a comment on the procedure for the judging which will be looked at later in the meeting
- vii. Skip: Arrangements worked well last year with the skip being delivered Friday before the May Bank Holiday.

7. **BTC Report:** Glenna Favell emailed the following report:

- i. Michael Deboick, the member of the BTC grounds staff with special responsibility for allotments, is a valued member of staff who is dedicated to providing good service to the town. Unfortunately, he is currently spending a disproportionate number of hours on allotment maintenance, but hopefully this will reduce in time as the sites get into a better general condition.

In the interest of safety and health of BTC staff and tenants, please could I remind tenants:

- a. not to have bonfires without asking permission and clearing ashes afterwards
- b. to ensure that the paths are free of tools, rubbish and waste plant material
- c. not to leave compostable waste on empty plots
- d. not to leave glass adjacent to paths

There is a particular issue on the Cherry Gardens site that the AGM is requested to consider – outside allotment plots typically include the boundary hedges or fences unless there is a grass path inside the boundary. As Michael is required to maintain a boundary hedge (see 3.2 of the Agreement), access to these areas need to be clear of rubbish. There is an area of the boundary at the bottom of the Cherry Gardens site that requires particular attention, but it contains rubbish and organic waste that restricts safe access. In the interest of consistency, please could the meeting confirm that all outside plots, where there is no external grass path, extend to the site boundaries and tenants will therefore keep the boundary free of rubbish to allow access by grounds staff.

AGM comments:

The majority of issues above are stated in the allotment agreement issued to each plot holder. Point (a) is contrary to 2.2.8 of the agreement. Is it the council's intention reword 2.2.8 of the allotment agreement?

The boundary of each allotment has already been mapped. The statement that certain plots on Cherry Gardens be extended to the hedge is a matter for BTC to address directly to the individual plot tenants. One plot holder advised that most of the rubbish and organic matter alongside the hedges was inherited from previous plot tenants.

- ii. At their last meeting, the Environment Committee agreed to recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that rents should remain the same for 2017/18, but will increase by 1p per square metre in October 2018. Members discussed a report that the level of deposits for new tenants was not acting as a deterrent; with grounds staff putting much time and effort into getting allotments into a cultivatable condition for them to be returned in a poor condition. It was therefore agreed that deposits for new tenants would be increased to £50 for a small allotment and £100 for a large plot.
Members also agreed to purchase replacement padlocks and keys for the Watch Oak site.

AGM comments:

Change in rent for October 2018 was duly noted. It was felt that the deposit increase would act as a deterrent to new tenants taking plots. Watch Oak thank the Environment Committee for their agreement to purchase new padlocks and keys.

- iii. Allotment inspections have been undertaken at intervals throughout the year. Letters have been sent to various tenants requesting that work is carried out. Most tenants have responded positively, but some have had their tenancies withdrawn.
- iv. The judging criteria for the Allotment Competition were amended in 2017 following comments from members of the Environment Committee. Members had also requested that the date for judging should be announced. These changes led to a flurry of activity resulting in weed-free plots that didn't reflect their normal state and several plots being awarded similar points. These changes will be reviewed and plots that have poor inspection records will not be judged.

AGM comments: It was considered that the individual allotment representatives should be advised, in ample time, when allotments are to be inspected so they can ensure they are present. One SAA member, Enid Pound, wished all plot holders to be advised when inspections would be taking place. All other SAA members present disagreed with this as they should not be warned in advance.

- v. I hope that the article in the BTC Newsletter will encourage more residents to rent an allotment and grow their own food.

AGM comment: One member present was charged additional postage as a large letter for the newsletter she received by post.

- vi. Carol Harris, Town Clerk, asked by email for it to be advised that there is a high level of water supply costs currently being received at the allotment sites; particularly, Cherry Gardens and Watch Oak. The Council would obviously appreciate any reduction in use or notification if a leak is suspected.

AGM comment: No one present could provide a reason for this and no leaks have been noted. It is possible that some plot holders are using hoses. The SAA secretary was asked to contact the council to establish what the actual volumes of water used at each site compared with the last two years, rather than cost of water supplied.

8. **Election of Officers:** The Chairman advised, as per the SAA Constitution, that all officers stand down at the end of the year. TH asked if the current officers were prepared to be re-elected and if there were any present who wished to stand for office. No one new wished to stand and the current officers were re-elected – Proposer Enid Pound, Seconder Jackie Post.
9. **Any Other Business:** Jackie Post asked that SAA apply for a CCTV camera for Watch Oak under the community funding put forward by the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner.
10. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.00pm. The next AGM will be in the Almonry at 7.15pm on Thursday 25th October 2018.