

Committee Distance Meeting Reports

Sunday 5th April 2020

1. **Sign off the minutes** (attached) of the meeting held on Sunday 1st March 2020 agreed ex committee.

2. Chair's report: (HF)

- I. **Covid-19:** The advice sent out to plot holders generally well received. One plot holder objected to the closure of the toilets but not touching the taps has been more contentious. Site 2 have automatically filling dipping tanks but site 3 do not and have too few tanks. HF and Jeanette Sweetland have been filling the tanks. 2 standpipes are now leaking but controlled with isolation valves. As the season goes on we may need to give advice on how to use the taps for hoses protecting the hand from contamination using a plastic bag over the hand or disposable gloves – single use only. If no advice is given the probability is that plot holders will use the taps anyway but if this advice is followed there would not be cross contamination. All other Wandsworth allotments have no water at all. The water has not been turned on the reason given is leaks cannot be fixed. Social distancing seems to be adhered to well.
- II. **Morale on allotments:** Initially after the lockdown notice was given by the government there seemed to be a lot of tension in the air on the allotments but that seems to be quietening down. Only two plot holders have said they will not be able to tend their plots because they travel to their plots by public transport. AL has suggested that a communication is sent out to plot holders saying the committee understand that there may be difficulties at this time but for plot holders to think about getting digging parties together when the crisis is over so they can get their plots back into shape.
- III. **President Justine Greening:** Email has been sent but no reply so HF wrote a letter to JG which JS delivered by hand. No response. HF proposes not to do anything more until the current pandemic crisis is over.

3. Projects:

Project 1: Communal shed site 3

(JS) We have now had plot 68 cleared and we have a very nice size area to work on. Bob Aveling was most cooperative and has moved to the other end of the plot. Many thanks also to Vivien, Greg and Helen for all their help in finalising the work. MG Clearances dismantled shed and green house and took 2 full lorry (skip size) loads to the tip. Next step is to level the ground and order the Tea Hut.

(GW) Work to assess the base that currently exists, after Bobs green house was removed, hasn't progressed as yet. Could look to start an online chat with Philip Osorio of Osorio Installations? Sending him photos and dimensions etc listing the current guide variations in levels etc?

We had initially considered brick piers to provide a level base for the Site 3 Social Shed. Intended to discuss this with Philip. Assume that he would require to visit the site at some point. For which he has quoted a sum to do so but might be able to start an online dialogue to keep things moving.

(VF) Tuin are still delivering their log cabins. VF contacted the installer, Phillip Osorio. He said we must have a level, stable base for the cabin to be erected on and that brick or concrete piers are not an option. The conclusion was that concrete was the best thing for this - 6m X 3m X 100mm thick without reinforcing. It would also give us a solid level base for the open paved area.

We then discussed the solar panels on the roof. The roof (and other sections do not come preassembled). Philip said the roof can take the weight of two men - 180 - 200kg - working on it. The required solar panels weigh about 180kg (See PC's report).

Project 2: Solar Power on site 3 (PC)

At the previous Committee Meeting, PC was asked to look at providing an off grid solar power installation which provided more solar power than the installation previously reported. It was suggested that the use of a 3kW kettle would be required together with the power for a suitable shredder.

Again, with the considerable assistance of allotment holder, Anthony Fitzsimmons, a possible solution was sourced from Voltacon. Their Super S3 off grid solar power kit may well be possible as it would provide enough solar power for a kettle and shredder (not at the same time) as well as internal lighting. It may also be able to provide enough power for strimmer battery packs to be charged in the summer months.

The installation would require 9no solar panels, batteries, inverter, cables, etc. At present, PC is progressing matters with Voltacon to resolve outstanding matters. In his view though, there is a major area of concern:

Will the proposed Chappo Hut support the required 9no solar panels on the roof? There is probably adequate space on the roof for the panels and their mounting trays, but PC is pursuing this. The main problem is that the weight will be about 180kg for the panels and mounting trays. PC has been in contact with Chappo but they are unable to say whether the structure is strong enough to support the proposed solar panels. He has also examined the detailed construction drawings for the Hut. As such, PC does not believe the Hut structure will support the solar panels without additional support but feels that further advice will be required; probably from a Structural Engineer. PC will try and progress this and would ask if there may be an allotment holder who is such an Engineer who might provide some assistance. Inevitably, even if additional support can be provided, the cost may be considerable.

PC wonders, therefore, if the roof of the proposed Chappo Hut is the correct location for the solar panels. Should consideration be given to locating these elsewhere? Another possibility would be to position the 9no solar panels at ground level or on a small purpose built platform at low level. The location could either be adjacent to the Hut or on a nearby plot. The size of the area required would be similar to the roof area of the Hut; roughly 6x9 metres. Locating solar panels at low level is not uncommon and Voltacon provide mounting trays for such a situation. The views of the Committee on this matter would be very valuable, he believes.

The cost of the Voltacon Super S3 off grid kit, including the 9no solar panels, battery packs, inverter, cabling, mounting trays, delivery, etc. will be some £4,500.00. This sum includes VAT but does not include any cost for a supporting structure if this is required. As stated above, the sum does not include any costs for strengthening the Hut roof.

PC will report further when he has received further information.

Project 5: Social shed on site 2 (LS & CM)

(GW) Work on moving and setting up the Shed could start in the absence of work on the soak away, but it would be useful to have the waste soil. (see project 10)

CM agrees we should wait for the waste soil.

Project 6: Store doors (JS)

Store doors. These have now been fitted and await final paint (green), weatherboard, draught excluder and cabin hooks. Notice board will be moved to other side of the doors so that the water butts can be moved when soakaway has been dug.

Project 10: Soakaway site 2 (JS)

We have accepted the quote for the work from Allium which includes moving the soil from the hole to the rear of the store and moving 2 water butts to the front of the store and joining them into the soakaway, but this has been put on hold until Allium can get back to work.

(GW) the waste soil from the work on the soak away, would be useful as part of the base for the Site 2 Social Shed. This will have some savings as RGS won't incur any "carting away" costs.

Project 13: Gazebos for Summer Show (JS & CM)

We now have 4 white gazebo roofs, feet and gutters and 8 sides ready to go! JS sorted the supply of gazebos including the gutters. also noted that 4 gazebos were purchased, so that was approx £200 more than the estimate for them. There's plenty of money, just making the point that 4 were purchased as opposed to the estimated three. A good "deal" was achieved on getting free guttering.

Project 14: Communal greenhouse (HF)

HF contacted Anthony Fitzsimmons to see if he was agreeable to not only getting the communal greenhouse established but also to run it on a day to day basis. He said he was not willing to manage the project long term, just set it up. He said he would see if he could find someone who would take on long-term management of the communal greenhouse. Unless a credible committed management team is identified by Anthony, this project will not be progressed nor will land be reserved for it.

4. Water on site 3 (PC)

Since the last Committee Meeting, PC has been in touch with Wandsworth Council and last week received a further update from them. It would appear that they still await an updated quotation from Thames Water but continue to chase them. Wandsworth have stated that the present Covid situation exacerbates the lack of progress. Once they receive the revised quotation they will liaise with Westminster Building Services, the chosen Contractor, about a commencement date.

PC is of the opinion that the renewal of the water supply on Site 3 is now on hold for the foreseeable future as many building sites are closing down and new projects will not commence. Nonetheless, he will continue to liaise with Wandsworth Council.

5. Lease renewal (PC)

Given the situation with the renewal of the Water Supply on Site 3 and the present Covid outbreak, PC would report that there is no further progress with the lease renewal and that this, too, will be the situation for the foreseeable future.

6. Wandsworth Heritage Festival (JS)

JS has been in touch with Claire Leiper. On hold

7. Treasurer's report: (EB)

After the bank reconciliation up to about 5.30pm Friday 3rd - only 10 have not paid.

EB will check again end of day Monday and if still not paid or emailed, will send a chaser email and ask for confirmation that they received them. So far for rent income, there have been approx 40 cheques, as opposed to the expected "handful". Many of who were capable of doing online or going to own bank. This should be reviewed in future as cheques are prone to error and take a lot of extra processing/ going to bank to deposit and then reconciling against invoices. People can get friends and family members to do bank transfers for them.

Approx 40 Associate members have not renewed. A chaser was sent to them.

8. i) Trading Secretary's Report: (GT)

The Store is fully stocked but access to it for our members is challenging. Efforts are being made to sell a restricted list of items to members. It is most important that ways are found to protect those serving and our members whilst doing so.

BL has raised the issue of the use of Peat. The previous Labour government had planned to phase out the use of Peat for home gardeners by 2020. We should review whether we should continue to stock the Clover peat-based compost in the Store, albeit allowing us to provide a cheaper compost alternative for our members.

ii) Online trading (CG)

You have seen my suggestions as to how this could be managed on site 2. I cannot think of a way of doing it safely on site 3. Furthermore, the labour involved would be very considerable. I am reluctant to adopt a non-delivery solution because the virus can remain viable on plastic for up to 72 hours. For this reason, plastic bags should not be handled by more than one person in that period. I therefore think the delivery service is the only viable option. Since this is inequitable across sites, I take your point that it should not go ahead in this form. A postal service for seeds would be possible. I would be happy to use my low turnover bank account to run this and would be happy to organise it if somebody else did with dealt with the shop angles.

9. Allotment Secretaries' reports:

i) Site 2 (C MB)

Plot 18B – 2.5 rods has been split and added to the 2 neighbouring plots.

Plot 40 – 5 rods has now been divided into two plots, namely plot 40 and plot 40G.

Lettings: 5 new lettings since last meeting.

Plot 20B - 2 rods has been re-let.

Plot 38A – 2 rods has been re-let

Plot 40 (new) - 2.5 rods has been let

Plot 40G (new) – 2 rods has been let.

Plot 40F – 2 rods has been re-let.

Problems: there are 5 plots that are of concern and are being monitored/investigated.

ii) Site 3:

outer area 50-100 (VF)

Lettings

Six plots have been let.

One plot has been subdivided – the excess area added to the adjacent plot.

Plot Inspections: No particular problems

Other matters: No manure deliveries as stables are in lockdown. Payments up to mi March were good.

Inner area 101-127 (AL)

Two plots are available to let. They have been offered. They have both said they would like plots and have read the welcome pack, sent by email.

A huge thank you to Helen for doing these viewings.

Problems:

Plot 122B

The plot has been divided into 122B (2.5 rods) and 122C (2 rods). They are now ready to let.

Lettings

Plot 109C (3 rods) Has been let

Plot 105A (3 rods) Has been viewed. We will put a key through her door once she has paid her invoice and completed the Tenancy Agreement form.

10. Bulletin Editor's report (CM)

The Bulletin will be very short this time. To include a Chair's report plus copy from BBC Gardeners World about being allowed on allotments.

Composting tips from Valerie Selby at Enable.

Welcome to new plot holders.

Expecting a report from Brenna about peat but if unable to supply copy this time it can go when store is open again.

Deadline for copy is **6th April**.

CM has checked that the printer is working so there will be printed version available.

11. Show Chair's report (CM)

CM assumes that the June show will not go ahead but is hopeful that September is OK. Have we had a formal booking form from the church? Are there cancellation charges? **Action HF**

12. Site Manager's report (CG)

Nothing to report.

13. PR: Gardeners' World allotment visit (JS)

JS has sent suggestion to GW but heard nothing. However most outside filming has been stopped at the BBC.

14. Events and Diary dates:

- Committee trip to Southside (BL)
- Members trip to Wisley (BL) maybe possible in the autum.
- Gardeners' Question time (CG) I am gradually embellishing the application form and will have it to HF within the next couple of weeks for amendments.
- Gardening quiz for AGM(HF) No progress.
- Research feedback re lead on allotments (ES)
- AGM 15/10/20
- Alternative event to Guy Fawkes bonfire night
- Sharpening event 03/05/20 (HF). To be cancelled. **Action:** HF to contact Adam Bennet

15. AOB - All

- Enable did include us in their Autumn Allotments Newsletter but forgot to send us a copy. It had Carol's Summer Show article and photos in it. This Spring the newsletter has the photo of our seed swap.
- Plot 122B due to be cleared by MG on Thursday 2 April.
- We had an email from Enable to say the water on all allotment sites in Wandsworth has not been turned back on because there would be leaks that they would not be able to fix.

Date of the next meeting **Sunday 3rd May 2020** 9am at the store or Distance reports