

## **RGS Committee Distance Reports and Zoom meeting Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020 9am**

- 1. Signed off the record** of the distance meeting reports from Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020
- 2. Feedback from committee members from previous distance reports:** all covered elsewhere on the agenda:

**Zoom meeting notes added in blue.**

**Attendees at the Zoom meeting:** Alison Linton (AL), Patrick Crawford (PC), Elaine Barnwell (EB), Carol Martinez (CM), Gill Tamsett (GT), Jackie Savage and Helen Finch (HF) Chair and Zoom Host. Catherine Maunsell-Bower (CMB) and Liz Smart (LS) joined late due to the ineptitude of HF's hosting. Brenna Lattimore tried to join but assumed technical problems so left.

**Apologies:** Charles Gillbe, Greg Wilcox, Dorcas Johnson, Vivien Fowler and Mike Cooper.

**Zoom Meeting Process:** HF said she will go through the reports below and invite comments and/or questions from the attendees.

### **3. Chair's report: (HF)**

- i) RGS President: Fleur Anderson has accepted our invitation to be our President. She hopes to come to our Autumn Show.
- ii) Introduce Dorcas Johnson - Treasurer. Dorcas currently is in Scotland with unreliable wifi so unlikely to join us. Dorcas has retired from being the IT person in theatres internationally so very computer savvy and enjoys working in teams. Her partner, Gerrard also is into computers and is familiar with Wave. They are fairly new plot holders on site 3.
- iii) AGM format and election of committee: All papers will be published on our website and hard copies will be available to view in the store. Comments and questions will be invited. I am not proposing any changes that require the membership's approval or needs discussion. We are working on how to manage election of the committee. Catherine is looking at the legal aspect of our AGM. HF suggests changing the date to November as dictated in the Constitution. Suggested date Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November. **Committee approved the change of date to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020.** HF suggested meeting with JS and CMB to ensure the admin and legal aspects of the AGM were properly covered. CMB and JS agreed.
- iv) Probationary period for lettings: This proposal was discussed at the Site Secretaries' meeting on 16/07/20. It was decided that now we have a robust procedure for breaches of the Tenancy Agreement having and additional procedure would be burdensome. It was agreed that the current procedure would be carried out more aggressively with tight deadlines with new plot holders who fail to cultivate their plots.

### **4. Projects:**

**Project 1: Communal shed site 3 and Project 2: Power on site 3 (JS)** Since July the Cabin has been painted inside and out (many thanks to Sylvia G and VF). Greg has built 2 raised beds which have been expertly planted by VF. The exterior area around the cabin is now well used by socialising plot holders.

The hold up now is to sort out the electrical connection to the National Grid. UK Power's quote to bring the supply to the site has been accepted and we are now waiting for 3 quotes from electricians to take the supply to the "Green Box" (which is where EDF will install their meter) and on to the cabin itself. Thanks to VF each electrician has been supplied with clear drawings and spec.

Once we have chosen our electrician we will arrange another site meeting with them and the UK Power surveyor to make sure we are all in agreement about what is proposed.

Only after we have had the appropriate trenches dug for the cables and the wiring (first fix) has been installed inside the cabin will we be installing the proposed work top and sink. Apologies to the membership for it taking so long! [Many thanks to JS, VF and GW for all the hard work that has gone into getting this far. The hut and the surrounding area is already a much appreciated facility so no apologies about taking so long are needed.](#)

***budget and costs:*** (HF) The spend so far on the cabin is £7,177. The budget was £7,266. An additional spend of about £450 is anticipated. The electrics and the building work that go with installation of the electrics are going to cost more than anticipated. We have had one estimate for £3,500 (including VAT) and one that is not the complete job for £1,500 (no VAT payable). Realistically for everything to be done we should budget £4,000. [The committee agreed to these additional budgets of £4,000 for the electrics and £450 for the SS Cabin. Costs will be kept as low as possible compatible with getting a good job done.](#)

***Project 5: Social area on site 2 (CM)*** The area behind the store was designated as the social area for Site 2 after the sudden death of Paolo Sidoli. The plan is to use the shed left on the plot as the tea hut which will be positioned directly behind the store and linked up to both water and electricity.

There will be space for a picnic table and another small table with chairs.

There was a vote amongst committee members as to which type of ground cover was preferred and paving came out as the majority, followed by gravel. The latter was seen as a problem if wheelchairs and buggies are to be welcomed as well as the need for more maintenance. Vivien made various scale drawings and the final one includes mostly paving and a small area of gravel.

There will be a raised flower bed to demark the border between the social area and the adjoining plot.

We have managed to obtain many used paving stones and some earth for the base layer which will reduce the cost of materials.

We have narrowed down 4 quotes to 2 and asked the two companies to requote following the decision to have a gravelled area. Expecting these to arrive in next few days and then Graham has agreed to check them both out. I expect it will be October before either will be able to start the job. The paved area would need to be done professionally and would be expensive (the quotes were for about £3,500) hence the decision to reduce the paved area and have some gravel which can be done by volunteers and would give a pleasing change of surface. (please see Vivien's sketch attached).

(HF)***Budget:*** VF has kindly drawn up a budget (details attached) for £4,000. This assumes we are able to use the old shed and it is kitted out as a tea hut. [The committee approved this budget of £4,000.](#)

- 5. Water supply on site 3 (PC)** As Committee Members are probably aware, the new water pipe was laid by the Contractor in early August. At the same time, the bases for the new water tanks were also installed. PC has been informed that the 11 new water tanks will be delivered and installed on Site 3 early next week. At the same time, the bases will be repaired if required.

In order for the project to be completed, Thames Water have to undertake their work to connect to the mains water in Huntingfield Road. This work is still outstanding and PC continues to chase Wandsworth for a date as to when the work will be undertaken.

[HF has seen the water tanks that have been delivered and noticed that there are holes in the bottom. PC agreed to contact whoever was appropriate regarding the tanks.](#)

- 6. Lease renewal (PC)** As the renewal of the water supply on Site 3 has now commenced, PC has written to Cllr Sutters on 31 August asking her to begin discussions with Peter Tiernan of Wandsworth Council on the renewal of the lease along the lines previously stated by the RGS. Given the passage of time and for ease of reference, these are:

- A 35 year lease
- Obtaining a peppercorn rent
- Maintaining our protected status under the Landlord & Tenants Act, 1954, Part 2
- Not having a rent review but adopting “open book” accounting procedures
- Limiting liability to the assets of the RGS

PC will report further once he has heard from Cll Sutters.

**7. i) Treasurer’s report:** (EB) SEE ATTACHED Account Summary report from WAVE with details of income and expenses etc.

**Financial Year End** - please remember the RGS financial year ends on **30th**

**Sept.** Any invoices/receipts for items or services that were done in this current financial year (i.e. up to 30th Sept ) need to be sent to Treasurer asap, so that they can all be paid before end of September. If you are planning to buy something towards end of Sept, it may be best to just hold on until after 1st October.

**Year End Activities** – this will involve a stock taking exercise in the store(s) and counting the cash in the Till. These figures will then be entered into the accounting system to produce a statement as at the end of the Financial year.

**Bank Accounts** - Current account balance as of 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept = £28,506.27 with additional £10k in a fixed term account earning 1.05% interest, due to mature on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021.

**Special Projects** – total spent to date on the projects is £15,399.04 – gazebos, store door, soakaway and approx. £7,178 for Sonia Sawyer tea cabin so far. *HF said the original budget for all the Special Projects was £20,000. The additional spend agreed at this meeting will mean the total spend will be up to £24,000. HF made the point that the money is there (EB agreed) and the committee do have a duty to make good use of the funds.*

**UKPN Electric on Site3** - The initial quote was for £4618.80 and has been paid.

Waiting to decide on timing for further meeting with UKPN surveyor to finalise the extra works required. EDF had a backlog of work and when contact in July said they could not book anything to fit the meter - this will be done **after** UKPN have done their work.

**Maintenance** – If base calculation on the actual annual rent collected this year, after the 80% of rent collection is paid to Enable, RGS will have approx. **£3360 for maintenance**. As of 5th July, RGS has spent **£3,841.40** of which £1645 has been work on/clearing plots. *Now gone over the of the remainder (the 20%) by £481.40*

**Bank Account access** – Several committee members were logging in with same credentials. Ali has now been set up with own view only access. The process for Dorcas to have full access was also started. Will check who else needs to have access to the Lloyds account and set up accordingly.

**Treasurer Tasks** - Have created a document of all the Treasurer related activities, it's been reviewed by Helen and sent to Dorcas.

**Gmail tasks** (non-Treasurer task)- have created a document of all the Gmail administration and sent to Jackie/Helen.

*CMB and LS joined the meeting at this point. HF apologised for leaving them in the ‘waiting room’. LS made the point that the meeting was showing it was being recorded. HF apologised for not telling those present that the meeting was set to record. No objections were raised. (When doing these notes having the meeting recorded was very useful)*

**8. i) Trading Secretary's Report:** (GT) Deliveries are getting easier although there has been difficulty in getting some of the John Innes composts and Slug Stop has been out of stock for sometime as have watering cans which is a shame as members were keen to buy these this year.

We have a new specialist compost - Sylvgrow Multipurpose Compost - which is used by professional growers for seed sowing, pricking out, potting on and cuttings. It contains balanced nutrients sufficient for the first 4-6 weeks of growth. It is expensive at £8.25 for a 50 litre bag but hopefully produces good results. GT would appreciate receiving feedback from those that use it.

We have a new Maxicrop Natural Fertiliser Plus Seaweed Extract which stimulates strong root growth and promotes green leaves. It is slightly more expensive than the other 2 we sell at £5.50 per litre.

We have ordered some tulip, daffodil and allium bulbs which we will sell at the Autumn Show and then in the Store if there are any left. These will need to be bagged up and sealed. Garlic and onion sets have been ordered.

ii) **Click and Collect (JS)** This was most successful during the lockdown. However now we have a card reader in the site 3 stores we are selling bulk composts (and a few other boxed items) direct to members on a Sunday between 10.5 and 12.30 **12.15**. There is a rota of 3 people to manage this (GW, HF and JS). **JS pointed out that a rota of 3 was not satisfactory. AL agreed to join the rota. HF said she would modify the rota and see if more site 3 plot holders could be recruited for this duty.**

## **9. Allotment Secretaries' reports:**

i) Site secretaries' meeting (AL): **16th July 2020 at 10am in site 3 veranda.**

### Lettings: -

During the Covid pandemic it was agreed

- Only one member of the household to attend initial viewing.
- Paperwork to be done online but second meeting at the Store wearing a mask and distanced with the doors wide open.
- The new tick boxes on the reverse of the Letting Agreement should cover all the important points and emphasis to be made re children and rubbish.
- If possible enquire about their skills in general conversation and time commitment.

### Plot inspections: -

- i. The June plot inspections highlighted the difficulties for some plot-holders who have been shielding. If they normally maintain their plot it was agreed to be as understanding as possible but if their plot was not maintained before the pandemic the usual procedures would be followed.
- ii. Only 2 people had done the inspections. It was agreed that if possible the Site manager would be asked to attend them all.
- iii. November Plot Inspections will be held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November.
- iv. Helen agreed to write to Valerie Selby and ask if the usual rubbish collection will take place in the autumn. **Action: HF.** This has been done. Valerie intends for it to go ahead as usual and will let us know the dates nearer the time. (HF)
- v. The paths, fences and gates (with the exception of a section on site 2) are all in reasonably good order.

GDPR: It was agreed to 'self-audit'.

Probationary period for new plot holders: It was agreed that this was an extra 'burden'. We will use the tools we have more aggressively giving specific dates for tasks to be carried out.

Bindweed: We will continue to contact 'culprits' and there will be an article in next May's Bulletin.

Communal Greenhouse on site 2: Helen explained the scenario, which seemed reasonable, but as

it was making exceptions to the rules we decided against it. It was noted that the person concerned was growing plants for 'community gardens' in the Borough and this is not the remit of the RGS. With such a long waiting list the plot in question should go to the person at the top of the list. This led to some discussion. HF explained she had met with Lee and he had said he wanted to modify his proposal before it was shared with the committee. It was agreed we would wait for his new proposal. JS said Lee needs to be given a deadline as plots need to be let as soon as possible.

Toilets: These are remaining closed for the foreseeable future but it was agreed to have an extractor fan fitted when an electrician is next on site.

**ii) Site 2 (C MB)**

**Lettings:** None

On the whole, most plots are looking very good indeed but some problems persist.

**iii) Site 3: outer area 50-100 (VF) Lettings:** One letting early July. No lettings in August.

**Site Inspections:** Plot holder asked whether she would like to go on Secondary Waiting List as plot has been neglected over the summer.

Plot holder sent Stage 2 letter re lack of cultivation and vegetation spreading to neighbour's fence and adjacent path, with follow up email after no progress seen. Being monitored closely.

Plot holder met HF and VF at plot to discuss unsatisfactory cultivation method. Plot remains unchanged.

**Neighbours:** Neighbour contacted RGS re rubbish and vegetation against her fence. Matter now resolved.

**Other matters:** Good woodchip deliveries.

Manure deliveries delayed due to Holly Lodge Stables trailer awaiting repair

**Inner area 101-127 (AL)** The large tree on plot 109A has been removed and we are grateful to the plot holder who organised it.

Many thanks to Helen for meeting with plot holders and arranging the siting of the new water tanks.

**Lettings:** Two tenants had been unable to tend their plots owing to Covid. They are now on the secondary waiting list and have been re-assured that they will be welcomed back when the situation changes.

Plot 113C has been let

Plot 115C has been let

**10. Bulletin Editor's report (CM)** The article on back care by a physiotherapist who has just taken on a plot was very much appreciated.

The deadline for the next edition is Monday 21st September and will have photos from the 'show'.

**11. Show Chair's report (CM)** Autumn Show: The show will be held next Sunday 13th September. It will be informal, with no RHS rules on numbers and no judging, just a chance for plot holders to showcase the crops they are proud to have grown. There will be a produce stall and an auction at the end which will be the only sources of income as there will be no charges for entries and no refreshment sales.

## 12. Site Manager's report (CG)

13. PR: (JS) Putney Eco Fair September 20, 11am - 3pm St Mary's Church Square:

RGS have agreed to have a table at this 'Eco Fair' which aims to show how a more environmentally sustainable way of life is achievable for everyone in lots of different ways. There will be businesses such as renewable installation companies, plastic-free food shopping, local cafes as well as organisations such as Wandsworth Cycle Campaign (with bike-based activities), Wandsworth Living Streets, Transition Town Tooting, TfL, Little Ninja/David Smith air pollution campaigner & cargo bike enthusiast who will be organising cargo bike rides, Southfields Green the Grid etc.. They are designing a poster from promoting mainly on social media and would like all exhibitors names on it.

RGS will be promoting allotmenting in general, and our allotments in particular and just chatting to people about growing their own food! We will sell some seeds and ??? all ideas welcome.

It is 4 hours long and needs 4 people to man it. HF and JS – (Georgina can't be there). JS appealed for Volunteers. CM, CMB, AL, JS and HF volunteered. JS said she would draw up a rota

14. Trading allotment produce (HF) CMB researched this issue and concluded it is ok to sell allotment produce but not on site. CMB found in her searches that so long as produce was primarily for the PH and family's consumption selling excess produce for personal gain was permissible off the allotment site.

## 15. Events and Diary dates:

- Gardeners' Question time (CG) :
- Research feedback re lead on allotments (ES)
- AGM 15/10/20 changed to 12/11/20 although in reality the date is a deadline rather than a meeting date
- Alternative event to Guy Fawkes bonfire night: Postponed until next year

## 16. AOB -

Path Mowing Service: GW kindly has offered to mow between plot paths for a fee which he will donate to RGS. It would be great to have this service. However, I think this initiative would need a coordinator to ensure all parties involved agree and pay for the service. Do we have any volunteers? It was decided not to have a formal service but for Greg to offer to do paths for an RGS donation if requested. (post meeting HF spoke with GW and he agreed to this ad hoc approach)

EB appealed to the committee to buy anything needed within the next week as the accounts will close at the end of September.

Date of the next meeting **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020**