Minutes - Southern Allotments Society Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 12th November 2025

The Woodstock, Barlow Moor Rd, Didsbury,

Attendees: 16 attendees including 6 committee members

1. Welcome
   Apologies – Ray, Fiona

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

   Acting chair Craig Wilkinson summarised achievements / updates from this year.

   IT update - Website and data base have been updated on a new system.
   Society email package is upgraded to:- "Society Admin" contact email plus designated email addresses for Lettings/ Treasurer/ Inspections correspondence.

   Nature reserve – managed by Ray O'Neil and Frances Farrow.
   This last year, designated opening times at the weekend, have enabled plot holders to deposit untreated waste wood and green waste, on a managed basis.
   The area is now getting full. A period of temporary closure is required, to allow things to rot down and recovery.

   Speed Safety – The speed limit is 5 mph across the site.
   There are still episodes of speeding observed on the main drive.
   Additional speed signage will be installed on the site.
   Driving over the 5mph limit on site is also in breach of council safety rules.
   Vehicle bans may be issued by the council, for those cars repeatedly speeding.
   Please help promote a culture of safe driving on the site and advising the committee when speeding is observed – so this can be promptly addressed.

   Workdays
   The car park area has been cleared - the chair gave thanks to all the supporters who came out to help.
   An ongoing project to clear debris left behind on the community polytunnel plot, is near completion. This will create 3 new adjacent plots to be let.

   New Starters - Probationary period
   Michele Menns now oversees the Lettings/ plot vacations. The society has implemented a 3 months probationary period for all new starters. 25% plot cultivation/ preparation is required *before* being offered a tenancy with the council.

Noticeboards and communication
Noticeboards are being installed on both gates.

Communication and engagement with plot holders is now supported by:
- Quarterly newsletter updates
- Site noticeboards with easier access to key website information
- Society Facebook page
- Contact the Committee online form

Contact the Committee form – is welcomed for any questions, concerns or suggestions, or to let us know if your contact details have changed

Annual Plot Holder Survey – is due Jan/ Feb 2026

Inspections
The team now comprises Frances Farrow, Ray O'Neil and Alvin Pinder.
The inspections record: a) main grade for plot condition and b) curb rating.
It is essential the adjacent curbs are kept clear for road safety.
There will be future projects to promote visible number signage on all plots.

Zero Food Waste Initiative – The Southern Allotments website has a dedicated page with directory of local food charities. These will all accept fresh produce for their weekly food clubs. Plot holders are encouraged to donate any surplus, so unused harvest does not go to waste.

Cabin area – has had a full clearance and rubbish removed. This year's annual show & BBQ included space for live music and gazebos to shelter from the rain.

Committee roles and Supporter roles
We are all volunteers, and this is a large-scale allotment society.
The committee roles are being gradually demarcated, to designate the essential work of the society in a shared and sustainable way.
2 new committee roles have been created and will enhance work of society
- Learning & Events
- Site & Facilities

Plot holder contribution to help run the society, is being widened through Supporter roles, and Project roles (eg accessible plot project, plot buddy scheme)

Any Supporters attending the site work days, as further incentive have access to use the society tools, as well as an opportunity to meet other plot holders.

SOME FUTURE PROJECTS

Accessible plot – This needs project team, research of accessible plots/ beds, and consultation from people with disabilities including wheelchair users.

Plot buddy scheme - This year, there have been around 30 new starters – nearly 25% of our total society membership.
Schemes being proposed are a) Plot Buddy scheme where new starters can be linked up with an experienced plot holder, and b) Row buddies/ site contact – a plot holder can answer queries and offer advice to other plot holders in their row.

Tree work needed on the site borders - with cemetery and Princess Rd.
The committee remain in active communication with the council, to get tree overhang addressed.

Car Park Space - now this has been cleared, signs & lines will be added, and costing obtained for tarmacking

One remaining underground water pipe leak – This has been accepted as an essential job for council repair, and is on the list for council works department.

Planning and budgeting for high cost items/ projects
For high cost projects, there will be identified funding streams – whether using allocation from reserve funds or funding via grant applications.

Federation of Manchester Allotments (FoMA) are holding a workshop early 2026, on processes for external funding applications

Scoping of areas around the site will help identify assets eg gate, fences, paths, who looks after these (society or council), & potential costs should replacement be required.

Thanks from the Acting Chair
Craig thanked committee and acknowledged the evolving change process as the society adapts to future challenges and opportunities.

Thanks were also given to :
All work day supporters, to Annie Murray, Sue Powell and to Ray O'Neil for representing the society at the Love Parks Event, to Michele Menns and Huner Kako and Huner's physical work across the site, and to Frances Farrow for multiple trips with trailer to the tip.

Gratitude was expressed to Pete Field for his continued oversight in care and emptying of site compost toilet, and for his previous purchase manure for the society.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Frances presented the accounts for the last year, income and expenditure.
A summary was provided and is attached.
Key points:
Currently MCC are paying for society mains electricity and main water.

Society balance at the end of October 2025 - **£10,127.59**
This is split between the main working account and reserve funds savings account.

The society account has transferred to Lloyds Bank. The new account has strong benefits of easier transactions, online banking, dual authorisation of payments.

Society Membership annual fees – essential for all members and Associate members. This offers protection against any personal liability claims pertaining to your plot.

QUESTIONS TAKEN

1. Does the council allotments application form routinely ask if an applicant has a disability or accessibility needs?

Currently the application form does not ask this, and prospective plot holders raise on individual basis, if they have specific accessibility requirements.
The society recognise there are a range of disabilities to consider, and will do our best to accommodate these where feasible, with available facilities and resources.

2. Is there a website page for FAQ? Would be very useful as a supplementary to the info in the Welcome Pack.

Currently the society website does not have an FAQ section. This will be considered over this next year. In the meantime, plot holders are welcome to informally approach experienced tenants on the site, or please feel free to raise your query using the Contact the Committee form.

3. How do Manchester residents find out about the Bee Club/ Bee area, and how they can apply?

Martin Oldham explained that newcomers to the Bee Area are welcomed, though some prior training and basic level qualification is required.
The society will put information on the website regarding who to contact, and outlining if they need to be existing plot holders to apply to join this area.

4. Does Southern Allotments Society link up with any Community Interest Groups (CIG) ?

No formal links currently, although opportunities and joint community interests will inevitably arise.

Peta Chearnaigh will share details of CIG with one of the new committee members as possible learning and development project opportunity.

5. How does a plot holder obtain clearance/ authorisation to build a unique growing project on their plot?

For anything more specialised & larger scale than usual allotment practices, any plot holders wishing to start a new project on their plot, are advised to send details with photographs to the committee. These can then be raised for discussion with the council.

6. Can the society reserve fund account also generate income for the society through high interest savings?

Craig explained that most bank interest accounts require minimum £20k balance, to generate significant income. The society will aim to get the best return from the Reserve Funds account.
Frances explained that a number of banks were explored and approached, before finally settling on the Lloyds account. The challenges and time involved in setting up a new society bank account were highlighted.

KEY VOTING DECISIONS MADE

a) **Society Constitution** – had previously been circulated to all members for comments - Changes were accepted and majority carried by vote.

b) Committee nominations and elections

Co-opted members were voted in as elected members

- Craig Wilkinson - Chair
- Michele Menns - Lettings Officer
- Anna Kushlick - Secretary

Previously elected members were voted back in

- Frances Farrow – Treasurer and Inspections
- Ray O'Neil – Inspections
- Alvin Pinder – Inspections and Deputy Chair

Nominations for new committee roles

- Learning and Events – Sue Powell was voted in
- Site and Facilities – Bruce Shillitoe was voted in

For those committee members still willing to contribute, but unable to commit to a full time role, Project Supporter roles have been created.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm – thanks to all attendees