

# Men in Sheds MK

## Chair's Report – AGM 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019

### Another year, but masters of our destiny

Following the Shed taking on the lease of Unit 30 at the end of March 2018, we used the rent-free period of our lease to resolve the ongoing workshop lighting issues at a not insignificant cost. This was in place for the EGM last year and we have not looked back with being able to do as we require.

The funding that Age UK had been giving us also stopped. Since then we have been able to be entirely self-funding from either member donations, the sale of services and products – often to other community groups in need, or simply the disposal of excess equipment. We have also had some commercial donations from various sources. Gift aid via Local Giving has helped, for those that can do it, to provide a boost to the Shed's funds.

A persistent problem has been the amount of unlabelled clutter and projects left within the Shed. To this end, in mid-October we had a "hack the shed" weekend in which a lot of junk was cleared out, and the place given a good clean in areas that required it. Thank you again to all those who attended and who continue to try and keep the place tidy. On the back of this, we introduced a labelling system for projects and materials to ensure that items in the Shed were properly identified. There have been a few issues around this, but overall it is working a lot better than nothing or poor labelling.

Winter came again, and although not as cold as it could have been, it again presented challenges, against a continued rise in energy costs. A wireless heating control system was hastily put together by Paul of the Makerspace to ensure the Shed had pre-heating at the required time, but also to ensure that heaters were not left on when the building was unoccupied.

Late in 2018, we faced the issue of potentially having to temporarily close the Shed after we failed a water inspection by the water provider. This was triggered by a change of name on the contract as we took it into our own name. We had a list of improvements required: carry them out or they would stop our water supply. I don't need to say that without a fresh water supply we could not operate.

We had a tight deadline, and after a lot of looking like the work would not be completed in time by the nominated contractor, they came through with hours to spare, and the Shed passed their criteria. On the back of this, it meant we could have some more modern, lower level cisterns that use less water (we are on a meter!) and improve the aesthetics of the loos. These have been re-decorated and look vastly better than before. Thank you to Ron Bowles and his assistants for their efforts.

An annual issue has been getting the appropriate insurance cover for a sensible cost to cover our activities. A few weeks ago, we have again changed insurer to one that the UKMSA partners with, and other independent Makerspaces around the country. This has given us a reduction on our premium back to near where it used to be a few years ago but with extended cover for additional activities that we do as we have evolved. We are in the process of going through the policy documentation to ensure we comply with any stipulations that it brings. It is hoped that this will provide a more stable level of cover at renewal next year

We have made progress with the accreditation system over the past year, but is still far from perfect. The provided material and the Classmarker system is mostly working, although there is still material that needs to be produced to cover equipment that we are unable to accredit users for at the time of writing. Talk to us to find out how you can help.

I will take the opportunity to remind members that personal protection equipment (PPE) must be used as directed. It is not just your safety, but anyone around you. Even if you are not operating the equipment, please be aware of the potential risk of being nearby and report any issues promptly.

## Members

We have people come and go as their lives change, and membership levels are broadly in line with last year. The Makerspace group continues to grow and provide an additional level of income for the Shed, together with technical expertise and equipment that has been of great benefit to the Shed as a whole. Thanks also to Mark Sadler for overseeing the process of annual subs collection and assisting with the enrolment of many new members.

We have seen several community projects being undertaken: storage for The Bus Shelter project - an accommodation bus for the homeless, children's recreational wooden toys, for a nursery school, a display trolley for a food bank, a further order this year by Wolverton & Greenleys Council for planters, through to the ongoing project of cold frames for the Westbury Farm Permaculture Group. Many other community projects are awaiting starts but we are desperately short of people willing to get involved. These provide great publicity for the Shed and are an opportunity for all Shedders to do something worthwhile for the community. Special skills are not normally required and help is always on hand.

Thank you to Bernie Golds, Henry Suppiah, Ricky Briggs and Dave Tilley along with anyone else who I may have missed for giving their time to these and other community projects. Thanks also to Ricky for his installation of a better system for storage of timber, and Dave for having a clear-down and organisation of the woodworking hardware and consumables.

The metal shop has additional storage bins, alongside generous equipment donations by members and others. Quantities of scrap metal have been weighed by Andy and sold to the benefit of the Shed. Andy and John continue to improve the area as they have time.

In conclusion, special mention should be made of David Sawyer's very generous gesture in paying for the acquisition of a defibrillator for the Shed. This is one piece of equipment that we hope will never be used but it is reassuring to know it is there.

## Handing over again

As you will I hope appreciate, the Management Committee and Trustees, together with a relatively small group of members, keep putting in the work behind the scenes to keep the Shed going. Thank you to all of you who have contributed. Do not be reluctant to step up and help with the tasks, no matter how trivial they may seem.

I had two major personal setbacks within the past eighteen months of my life. I have tried to continue to keep the Shed operating to the best of my ability, in the role of Chair that 14 months ago I was not anticipating taking on. I have had the help and support of several members in particular through this period, which has made things easier - proof that the Shed can help your wellbeing. My deepest thanks to you.

When I took on the role of Chair, I was determined that this position would not take over my life, to be able to enjoy and use the Shed's wonderful facilities. To a great extent, this has been true, and I continue to remind people to do the same.

As you will have been made aware, Ron Bowles has been nominated for the role of Chair. My intention had been also to stand for the role, to try and keep some stability within the Management Committee and Trustees. In light of recent events however, I have decided to step down from the role of Chair, Trustee and Management Committee member. Ron will now take on the role of Chair, subject to endorsement at the AGM, alongside any other members elected or co-opted to the vacant roles.

I wish the Shedders, the Management Committee and the Trustees all the best for the future.

Michael.