



Henley on Thames Allotments Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held at 19.00 on Wednesday 3rd November 2016 at the Council Chambers,

Henley-on-Thames Town Hall

1. Apologies

Andrew and Wendy Hawkins, Liz Ware, Margot and Roelf Dapper, Gordon McBride, Angela Pengilley,

Caroline Bleackley, Sam Evans (Cllr), Janet Wheeler (Henley Town Clerk), Doug Richards (part).

2. Presentation of last year's minutes

The minutes were passed as correct.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Chairman's Report

A written report was circulated before the meeting. Dave McEwen drew particular attention to the Root and Branch Review conducted by Henley Town Council, which has been a very positive opportunity for us to help them learn more about the Allotments Association. They are supporting us to make progress on areas of concern: repair of the deer fence on Watermans will begin over winter; money has been voted to make safe the pedestrian entrance at Watermans; there is also budget available for improved signage and noticeboards at both sites. Health and Safety is an area of shared concern with the Council. We have developed a Health & Safety guide for allotment holders – this was circulated with the rent papers this year. A further bundle of user friendly general

guidance will be circulated in the New Year. From next Spring, there will be twice yearly inspections of the sites to identify hazards, which can then be resolved by the Council, Committee or plothead, as appropriate. The Chairman thanked his committee members and told the meeting that new members would always be welcome.

5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts/Appointment of auditor/Payment of honoraria

Dave Chilvers presented the accounts to the meeting. He stated that the financial position has improved over last year - £1100 higher than the closing balance last year. This is the result of additional fundraising events, a generous donation from the cricket club, and lower expenditure on equipment this year. In 2015 a small profit was made on the Christmas Dinner. The plant sale yielded lower overall takings this year as there was reduced footfall on the Whitsun weekend, although as there were fewer participants, our share of the total was similar to last year's. The commission received from the King's Seed Scheme has declined in recent years, as members have taken less advantage of the Scheme. In response to demand at last year's AGM, much more manure was acquired throughout the year. Since year end we have used some of our funds to buy two new brush cutters and safety equipment, and a second hand lawnmower, supported by the advice of Toad Hall Garden Centre.

The 2015/16 accounts have been audited by Margot Dapper, who recognises them as an accurate and true record of the finances of the Allotments Association.

Motion – That the Treasurer's Report and 2015/16 accounts be accepted

Proposed – Will Kuhl

Seconded – Peter Anderson

Passed unanimously

Motion – That Margot Dapper be appointed to audit the accounts for 2016-17

Proposed – Anne Sandars

Seconded – Sally McEwen

Passed unanimously

Last year, honoraria of £70 were voted to the Secretary, Treasurer, 2 Site Managers and the Assistant Secretary in recognition of their time, effort and costs incurred. It was suggested from the floor that the honoraria amount should be raised to £100 to reflect the increased workload undertaken over recent years (linked to increased plot holder numbers) and increased costs. The last time the honorarium was increased was in 2009.

Point of clarification: There is currently a vacancy for the Assistant Secretary position. However, Laura Dance has increased her Committee responsibilities during 2016 by becoming the official Minute Taker/e mail Manager as well as a member of the Social Committee.

It was suggested that that the Assistant Secretary payment should be paid to Laura Dance (and shared between the two other members of the Social Committee as appropriate) to reflect her increased workload in 2016.

Motion – That honoraria be paid as above

Proposed – John Moore

Seconded – Louise Hastings

Passed unanimously

6. Secretary's Report

A written report was circulated before the meeting. Marisa Francini drew attention to the changing profile of allotment holders, in particular the fact that 70% plots are now 5 poles or under, and the increased diversity of individuals (in terms of nationality, age and gender). She spoke of the challenges of harnessing the experience of longstanding plot holders when they gave up and asked for suggestions as to how this could be done. She informed the meeting that a series of guidance notes would be circulated in January, as a more user-friendly version of the legalistic tenancy

agreement, and which reflected everyday practices. She thanked Henley Town Council for an excellent and productive working relationship, and for their support of the allotments, and added that it was a pleasure to work with them.

[Carl Lambourne was presented with an award at this point, out of agenda order. Please see under item 12 for details.]

7. Election of officers

Dave McEwen informed the members that 2017 would be his final year on the Committee, as he had recently reached a milestone birthday and felt he had contributed all he could during the past 20 or so years. He also confirmed that there was currently a vacancy on the Committee for a Greencroft plot holder. The following members stood for election/re-election.

Officers

- Chair: Dave McEwen
- Secretary: Marisa Francini
- Treasurer: Dave Chilvers

Committee Members

- Greencroft: Lewis Every (Site Manager), Sara James (Web Manager), Peter Anderson
- Watermans: Doug Richards (Site Manager), Anne Sandars (Events Manager); Laura Dance; Sophie Pentecost

Proposed – David Cook.

Seconded - Sally Mc Ewen

Passed unanimously

8. Social events report

Anne Sandars reported on the events that had taken place this year and thanked all those who had supported them, either through helping or by attending. Events had included:

- Spring sowing and planting workshops
- Woodland walk
- Plant Sale
- Boat trip
- Mikron Theatre evening
- Watermans Bonfire Party (for both sites)
- Christmas Dinner

In addition to these, extra events proposed for next year were:

- Gardener's Question Time
- Produce Sale
- Coach trip to the Malvern Show

She encouraged anyone who wanted to help with events to get in touch, stressing that it was not necessary to join the Committee to do so.

9. Website update

Sara James gave a presentation on the new, updated website, which was now on a more modern and responsive platform and had updated content. She said that the next stages would be to boost interaction, with a forum. She asked for any volunteers to write a regular blog or an occasional blogpost to contact her. Sara was thanked by the Committee for all her work to update the website.

10. HTC Root and Branch review presentation

Dave McEwen gave a shortened version of the presentation given to the Henley Town Council Recreation & Amenities Committee in September 2016, setting out the history of the allotments in Henley, current activities, what we offer to the community and what we need in order to work more effectively and safely.

11. AOB

Nothing had been sent in writing, but the following questions were raised from the floor.

- What is the position with regards to beehives on the sites?

The NSALG favours the idea, and the HAA Committee is supportive. There were previously bees on Greencroft, which had worked well until an incident when someone was badly stung, at which point the bees were removed. The Committee now has certain safety measures it would require if a future request were made.

- What is the position with regards to the hazel patch on Greencroft?

This was planted a few years ago on a spare plot, and has been tended by Andrew Hawkins. A first small harvest was taken this year, and distributed at random, but a fair access policy will be developed for next year onwards.

Mike Hales thanked committee for all their work throughout the year.

12. Presentation of silverware

The award winners had been announced in September at a joint ceremony with Henley in Bloom. A new award was presented for the first time this year. This cup is not expected to be presented each year, but in occasional recognition of outstanding achievement. The first winner was announced to be Carl Lambourne, following his performance at the Malvern Show 2016.

- Watermans Best Plot - Mick Blackall
- Greencroft Best Plot - Mandy Taylor
- Watermans Best New Plotholder - Keith Rawlings
- Greencroft Best New Plotholder - Peter Crook
- Community Award – Henley on Thames Cricket Club, in recognition of their supportive relationship with the Greencroft site.

- Outstanding Achievement Award – Carl Lambourne, in recognition of outstanding performance at the Malvern Show 2016. Carl won second prize for the heaviest pumpkin (weighing over 540lbs), second prize for the heaviest squash (weighing over 200lbs) and fourth prize for the longest runner bean (with a length of 36”). The BBC programme Countryfile were filming at the show and have said they intent to interview Carl at Watermans next July to see his work in progress.

13. Date of next meeting

The next AGM will be held in October 2017, with further details to be confirmed closer to the time.