

Henley on Thames Allotments Association

Minutes of Committee Meeting held at 19.30 on Monday 9th May 2016 at 84 Makins Road, Henley-on-Thames

In attendance: Peter Anderson, Dave Chilvers, Laura Dance, Lewis Every, Marisa Francini, Dave McEwen, Sophie Pentacost, Doug Richards, Barry Tindall (guest), Max Wall.

1.0) Apologies: Helen Chandler-Wilde, Anne Sandars.

2.0) Minutes of last meeting: Passed as correct.

3.0) Matters arising from the previous minutes: 9.3: DM visited Greenshoots and ended up planting a lot of seeds for the Plant Sale event.

A new system is being trialled on the Agenda for this meeting: MF is apportioning approximate timings (as she thinks appropriate) to each agenda item to try to ensure that all items are given the time they need within an overall meeting time of approx. 2 hours.

Therefore, at the beginning of the meeting, DM asked if any of the timings were too short. He also suggested that Social Events be discussed first, as there were a lot of things to be finalised.

For simplicity, MF will report the minutes in the order that they were itemised on the agenda rather than in the order they were discussed.

4.0) Town Council Matters: MF showed the Committee the new signage package that Henley Town Council have finally signed off: the images for the allotments are still being worked on. Infographics will be used (visual designs that help to explain complicated data in a simple way) and the colour scheme will be green and grey to fit in with the Parks colour scheme. The allotments will have an external sign for non-plot holders (name of Site, website address, private land for allotment use only, etc) and an internal sign for plot holders where site rules can be clearly explained (e.g. dogs on leads, no fly-tipping, douse your bonfire, etc). MF will continue to update the Committee as things develop.

4.1) The date of the Root and Branch Review of the allotments that HTC have requested is still pending: it will not take place until late July/September at the earliest. MF will ensure that the Committee knows what is being discussed/the format of the presentation before the meeting takes place.

5.0) Building Review sign-off: This was discussed at the last meeting but MF wanted to check on a couple of points:

- a) New greenhouses will not be allowed on either site moving forward.
- b) The only buildings that need HTC permission are sheds, as these are permanent structures.
- c) The maximum sizes of polytunnels, fruit cages and sheds will be specified.
- d) Good anchorage guidelines will be issued to help plot holders understand how to anchor a building to withstand strong winds.

This was all agreed as correct. A letter will go to plot holders some time in the future to confirm the new regulations.

6.0) Risk Assessment: Committee members' views on the necessity of carrying out a Risk Assessment vary enormously. It was agreed to postpone the

discussion on this subject until the next meeting, when there would be more time for all the issues to be aired.

7.0) Treasurer's Report: DC reported there is £1921.96 in the funds currently, which includes a proviso of £489.50 for the NSALG fees which are due in mid May. The NSALG fee for May 2016 is £2.75 per plot holder: this charge will be passed on to plot holders with the rent letter in September 2016. DC explained that, although **all** plot holders paid the extra £2.50 fee for NSALG membership in October 2015, the actual monies collected by HTC on behalf of the AA was short of what was actually paid to the NSALG. This is because we charge plot holders retrospectively for NSALG fees, and plot holders who did not renew their plots in October (16 members) did not pay the NSALG membership fee.

It was agreed that the way around this was to pay the NSALG for active members only. MF will check if the NSALG fee is being charged when the invoices are raised by HTC for new plot holders who take on a plot during the season. DM commented that the number of Kings Catalogues the NSALG will send the AA in September will be in line with the number of plot holders we pay membership for and therefore will be short: this was not seen as a problem. DM also reminded the Committee that Margot Dapper will not be running the seed scheme this year and that someone else will need to be found to do this job by the end of August.

7.1) Other expenditure since the last meeting includes £96 for the plinths and engraving for Best Plot cups (a one-off cost) and £140 for extra manure at both sites (as requested by plot holders).

8.0) Watermans Update: all plots are let and there are 3 people on the waiting list.

8.1) DR has carried out the Risk Assessment on site with Pete Anderson and felt it went very well. Plot holders who saw him walking the site with a clip board had asked him what he was doing and once DR had explained why he was checking for hazards, he had a very positive reception. Due to the Committee having postponed their discussion on Risk Assessment until the next meeting, DM asked DR to keep any further views he had on the subject until the next meeting.

8.2) DR has walked the site with James Bellew, who is helping DR manage the site during the growing season. An anomaly with the numbering of the starter plots near the estate has been identified and will be sorted when JB meets with Elizabeth Lemuire at HTC. 6 plot holders were identified as requiring letters as they have not worked their plots at all this season. JB has asked for clarification from the Committee as to who is responsible for sending out these letters: MF has sent out these type of letters in previous years. The following was agreed:

a) Letters to plot holders who are not maintaining their plots should only be sent once DR has tried to contact the plot holders by phone.

b) Template letters have been signed off by the Committee and are the only letters that should be used.

c) All letters must be sent out and signed by DR as Site Manager.
Subsequent discussions with DR after the meeting agreed that DR should have copies of all of the template letters that MF has traditionally used and that DR would send them out moving forward rather than MF. JB's kind offer to help manage the site during the year should continue: regular walking of the site with DR and maintaining the master plot holders file with HTC is very much appreciated.

8.3) The plot holder who has built a large structure on his plot without permission has started to correspond directly with HTC. Following a meeting between the Town Clerk, DR and MF, HTC will be responding to his letter.

8.4) A new plot holder has been using the woodland between the allotments and the estate to dump her weeds. DR has contacted her to tell her she cannot fly-tip in this area and she should create her own compost bin on her plot. It was agreed that signs need to be produced with immediate effect to stop further dumping: MF will ask BW if she has a few spare signs at HTC. If not, SP will laminate a few signs for temporary use.

8.5) DR thanked the Volunteer group at Watermans for the great job they continue to do on the site in helping maintaining it.

9.0) Greencroft Update: All plots are let and LE has 4 people on the waiting list. He has walked the site and will be contacting 6 plot holders who have not been working their plots.

9.1) One water pump is not working: LE has contacted PH at Hobbs to see if it can be repaired.

9.2) LE walked the site with James Bellew with the Risk Assessment form. His views on the form and its usefulness will be discussed at the next meeting.

10) Website Update: MW has a few updates to do on the site and will try to do these in the next few days.

10.1) Max has decided to give up his plot with immediate effect and therefore will be resigning from the Committee. His circumstances have changed and so he is no longer in a position to continue having an allotment. The Committee thanked Max for all his hard work over the past 2 years, he will be greatly missed. The 'land1' contact for the site is Dave McEwen but Max currently pays the 6 monthly fee for website hosting and has also recently paid for the domain renewal. MF asked Max to ensure he claimed back his expenses from DC as soon as possible so he is not left out of pocket.

LD agreed she would be happy to learn how to load information onto the website so that the Social Events calendar could be updated short term: MW and LD will need to arrange a time to meet so she can be taught how to do this.

MF asked LE if Sue James still had a plot at Greencroft, as she had offered to help a couple of years ago when Jon Lock had left the Committee. LE confirmed she did still have a plot and that another plot holder called Laura might also be willing to help. LE will let MF know who Laura is and MF/DM will contact them both to see if they would join the Committee to carry out this role.

11.0) Social Events: Andrew Hawkins ran a second Practical Workshop at Greencroft on Saturday April 9th where he planted parsnips and beetroot. Around a dozen people attended the morning: tea, coffee and cakes were provided by Sophie. Andrew will run another Workshop on 14th May, where he will be planting beans.

11.1) AH also led a walk in a private wood near Rotherfield on Sunday 8th May: only 5 people attended, but the walk was wonderful and lasted around 4 hours. The unusually hot weather may have contributed to low numbers.

11.2) Plant Sale LD recently sent out an e mail reminding plot holders to plant extra seeds for the Plant Sale and also asking for helpers. To date no-one has replied. DM suggested a follow-up e mail with a timetable around 10 days before the event. MF will e mail LD the newsletter details from 2015 so she can see what arrangements were made last year.

The timings are as follows: 8.30am help needed for set-up. 9-11.30 morning session, 11-1.30 late morning session. Breakdown will also need helpers. Someone needs to be available to open the Town Hall: MF will e mail Louise

Hastings to check who that will be. 7-8 tables will be needed: 3-4 for the AA, 2 for Greenshoots and 2 for Chelsea Fringe (see below). Gazebos also need to be available in case of bad weather.

DM will visit Greenshoots and agree selling prices for various plants: once this has been agreed, Sophie can laminate posters for the tables on the day. AH has agreed that his front garden can be used to drop off plants in advance of the day, starting from Wednesday 25th May: his address is 19 Berkshire Road. Other drop-off points for plants include the trailer at Watermans (a notice will need to be made to ensure plants are not taken by other plot holders) and the table at Greencroft. DR is not available on the day so the trailer from Watermans will be delivered and returned by Sophie. Rhubarb bundles need to be organised in advance: it was agreed that they should be approx 2lb bundles to be sold at £2 each. Last year, around £150 was taken on rhubarb: it is an easy way to take money and so should be promoted with plot holders. DC will check the market/food stores for rhubarb prices to ensure that £2 for 2lbs is a good deal.

Chelsea Fringe have organised 6 English Flower growers to have cut flowers at the event and they will be selling flowers in buckets on one table and wrapping flower bundles on the other table. Michaela at the Henley Herald has offered to make butterfly crafts for passing children to put alongside seeds/plants: this was agreed. Henley in Bloom has offered help with selling: LD needs to forward her e mail asking for helpers to Becky Walker (b.walker@henleytowncouncil.gov.uk) and ask her to forward the information to the HiB Committee.

11.3) Hobbs Boat Trip This will go ahead on Thursday 9th June, 6.30pm boarding for 7pm-10.15pm sailing. *N.B. This time has now been changed by Peter Herbert of Hobbs to 7pm boarding for 7.30pm sailing.* Food options discussed at the last meeting were subsequently discussed with Peter Herbert and a number of options, e.g. fish and chip supper, were discounted due to Hobbs' regulations. PH recommended using Chocolate Strawberry as an external caterer, as they were used to working with Hobbs and produce a very good spread at a reasonable cost. Lynne from Chocolate Strawberry has quoted £12 a head for the following: cold meats, salads, quiche, crusty bread, desert, coffee. VAT can be avoided if the AA pays her directly. Hobbs' expenses for the crew and cleaning are £300.

MF produced a table to show the profit that would be made at various price-points/various ticket sales. Some Committee members felt the tickets should be priced keenly to ensure high numbers and others felt that a couple of extra pounds on the ticket price would not make any difference to numbers. A vote showed the Committee split 50/50: 5 votes for £20 a head and 5 voted for £23 a head! The AA funds currently stand at £1900, so funds are not particularly short at the moment. The following was agreed: Tickets should be sold at £21 a head, thereby making the following profit: 40 tickets sold = £60. 50 tickets sold = £150. 60 tickets sold = £240. If numbers were low, refunds for absentees on the night might not be possible. It was also agreed to open the trip to friends from the start, rather than limit it to plot holders initially. DM felt the challenge would be to get new people to come on the trip, as there was usually a hard core of regulars that would come so long as they were free of other commitments.

A raffle was also discussed: money collected is usually donated to a charity but might have to prop up a loss if ticket sales were really poor. Businesses need to be approached for good quality prizes. The following businesses will be asked: Gorvett and Stone/Machins = DM. Baskerville Arms = SP. Toad Hall = LE. Callum Best gym = BT. Shaun Dickens and Spice Merchant = Pete Herbert (*Peter agreed to contact these 2 businesses after the meeting*)

A gardening quiz has also been organised in past years: it was decided to give this a miss, as plot holders usually complained about the difficulty of the questions.

11.4) Mikron Theatre 7.30pm Thursday 21st July. This will take place at the Eyot Centre, outdoors if the weather is good and indoors if the weather is bad. The Eyot Centre will open at 6pm for picnics. The play, called "Canary Girls", is set in the summer of 1914 and is a story about the hopes and dreams of 2 sisters who work in a munitions factory. Entry is free: a cash collection will be made after the show. This event has been very popular in the past: all friends and family welcome. The show is sponsored by Dave and Sally McEwen and Marisa Francini and Keith Brown.

11.5) DM updated the Committee on an opportunity for the AA to sell their excess produce in September. The Produce Sale that took place last September cannot go ahead this year as the Market Place is solidly booked from the end of August to mid October. MF has already booked the Market Place for mid-September 2017 so the event can be repeated then. DM is a member of the Henley-in-Transition group and they are holding a one day exhibition on either 10th or 24th September outside the centre of town (exact venue still to be decided) to promote the group. As the AA would have excess vegetables and fruit at that time of year and selling allotment vegetables/fruit fits in with the HiT ethos of sustainability, DM suggested this could be an alternative to the Produce Sale for this autumn. The idea was agreed in principle: DM will update the AA on details at the next meeting.

11.6) An organisation called 'Apples for Eggs' based in Wargrave has contacted the AA to ask if a 'Swap Day' they have organised in mid June could be promoted to the plot holders via an e mail. This was agreed: LD will send the e mail when she can.

12.0) AOB: DR will buy 2 waterproof First Aid boxes from the cash and carry for both sites if required: it was agreed that this purchase should be deferred until the next meeting when the Risk Assessment discussion will take place. DR mentioned that he wanted to resurrect the First Aid Flag System he instigated at Watermans a few years ago, where trained First Aid Officers would identify themselves by raising a flag when on site. There was no objection to this.

12.1) The trailer that is used regularly at Watermans has deteriorated through use and needs some new wood to make it safe. This will cost somewhere in the region of £40. It was agreed that DR could purchase what he needed to do the repairs.

12.2) PA informed the Committee that Rob Parker, who had had an allotment for many years at Watermans, had recently died suddenly. The Committee did not know this and thanked PA for letting them know.

13.0) Date of next meetings: These have already been set and are as follows:

Monday 6th June. Monday 18th July. Monday 5th September.

MF is on holiday for the 6th June meeting, so the minutes will be taken by LD.

The meeting closed at 21.30. It was agreed that the approximate timings had helped the meeting's structure but that the time guesses on the agenda by MF had been poor....!

