

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Hackney Allotment Society held on Thursday 7th October 2004 at St Mary's Church Hall, Defoe Road.

Present: Joss Bany, Jackie Breakwell (Treasurer), Sue Carling (Secretary), Mary Connolly, Jon Fuller (President and Chair for Meeting) Edward Couyet, Sarah Kissack, June Lancaster, Peter Logan (Chair), Sara Mott, Mairin Power, Mary Roberts, Maggie Wilkinson (Minutes), (Committee Members) and approx. 30 other members.

Apologies: Gene Feder

Jon Fuller welcomed the members.

Minutes of the previous meeting 1/20/03: Noted: 2 spelling mistakes in names; otherwise the minutes were agreed.

Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

Chairperson's Report – Peter Logan

Main site issues: there had been major tree work at **Aden Terrace** – also some thefts and vandalism. All was well at **Church Walk**. **Leaside** had shown great improvements having begun the year in a mess; there were now two site reps and a good deal of clearing had taken place, though illegal dumping had continued. At **Overbury Street** clumps of pyrocantha had been cleared and the site was generally well managed. **Queensbridge:** rubble had been removed from outside; there was still no water and negotiations continued with developers to try to provide it. Problem with a dead tree needed resolving. **St Kilda:** large poplar in neighbour's garden reducing light and ploholders were trying to identify owner. Some rubble there too. **Springdale Road:** long awaited repairs on adjacent house had finished successfully with little disruption. A tree needed attention there too. There had been hawthorn hedging planted at **Springhill** to reinforce the boundary; problem of rubbish dumped by ploholders had been resolved. **Spring Lane** had seen break-ins and tools stolen but as gate had been left unlocked this was not surprising. New shelving in shed but shed itself will need attention before long. Both fencing and paving would need money and work. There had been an encouraging site meeting and communal work done on creating a sitting area.

Generally it had been a good growing year after some encouragement to some ploholders. Members were reminded that subletting was not permitted outside the household.

Production of the Newsletter had been patchy with editor difficulties. A website would be an alternative in the future and certainly sending out the newsletter by email would save money and time. All members urged to assist in this by providing email address.

There had been no opportunity to provide events for those on the Waiting List, now over 100, apart from a fairly well attended Open Day of plots in August. Plans of all sites had now been completed thanks to Joss Bany and only needed some clarification over numbering.

The Council had taken back from Nelson Bakewell the task of landlord agent. Negotiations continued and the Committee were stressing the importance of allotment use to be enshrined in rental agreements.

Comments on the Chair's Report:

The Leaside dumping had now been stopped and had recently been cleared
The rent had been paid up and we were not in debt.

Soil Testing. This topic took up the major part of the meeting and as each plot holder has received correspondence since the meeting, here is a summary.

The Secretary and Chairman outlined the background: A law passed in 2000 gave the Council a duty to test soil in areas of recreation. Accordingly the allotments had been tested in May/June, and after initial results given at a committee meeting in July, further tests had been made. The Committee had then been called to an urgent meeting with Pollution Control, whose opinion was that there was contamination of lead and arsenic higher than recommended levels on all sites except Overbury Street and St Kilda's, with Aden Terrace and Queensbridge most seriously affected. A full report had been provided on the afternoon of the AGM and the Society was told that the Council would be writing with advice to ploholders and an invitation to a meeting as well as a phone number for queries.

A wide-ranging discussion followed with the following points made and questions raised:

- Further advice should be sought from the London Hazard Centre
- It was hoped to get a re-test on Aden Terrace and the testing of crops as well as soil had been suggested, as had happened in other boroughs
- There were several variables likely to affect the take up of contamination
- Remediation may involve replacement of top soil to a depth of half a meter with a membrane laid down before new soil was brought in
- DEFRA funding would be sought by the Council to do this
- Soil had been tested when the Society was first set up and the results had been satisfactory – we should try to get these results from the Council
- Leaside soil had been replaced when the site first opened and Spring Lane was tested in 1998 – since then standards had changed
- In context, crops would need to be eaten regularly for many years for any serious affect and more danger came from eating or otherwise ingesting the soil
- Several members expressed anxiety that this was a precursor to the Council taking over sites for development; the Committee assured members they had and would continue to express this fear but the Planning Officer had denied any such intention. However it remained a worry and it was vital to get the use specified in the rental contracts.
- Growing Communities had already undergone testing and remediation.
- Development of a website would be useful for assisting information to members
- There should be research into alternatives to replacing soil, what the levels were in other parts of London and into which vegetables were most in danger.
- Any remediation the Society could provide might be used as a negotiating factor
- In a show of hands it was clear that the vast majority of members intended to continue eating their crops as before.

Treasurer's Report – Jackie Breakwell

Our expenditure had been greater than our income chiefly because of tree work at Aden Terrace. Three estimates had been provided and the cheapest one used. Church Walk was so far the only site with a water meter. Since the accounts had been done the rent had been settled with the Council.

Questions to the Treasurer: none.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

Peter Logan was retiring as Chairperson and was thanked by the membership. Maggie Wilkinson was elected as Chairperson.

Sarah Mott was elected as Vice-Chairperson.

Sue Carling was re-elected as Secretary.

Jackie Breakwell was re-elected as Treasurer.

Sarah Mott agreed to do the Newsletter as well as being Vice-Chair.

In the absence of any volunteers to do the minutes it was agreed that committee members would rotate in the duty. (However this is not easy for the Secretary or Chair)

Site Reps:

Aden Terrace: Matthew Goulcher was re-elected. *Post-meeting note – he has since resigned so we are without a site rep for Aden Terrace.*

Church Walk: June Lancaster was re-elected

Leaside: Ian Dick was elected

Overbury Street: Gene Feder and Sarah Mott were re-elected

Queensbridge: Ian James was elected

St Kilda's: Mary Roberts was re-elected

Springdale Road: Mairin Power was re-elected

Spring Hill: Eugene Clerkin was re-elected and Frederica Brooks elected as joint site reps

Spring Lane: Edward Couyet was re-elected and Christine Turner and Gavin Everall elected as joint site reps

Other committee members:

Joss Bany, Mary Connolly, and Guy Dehn were elected. Guy Dehn has a legal background and Ian Dick (Leaside site rep) is in Environmental Health. Joss Bany has agreed to be Project Leader on Soil Testing Issue. Jon Fuller would lend support when possible.

Auditors: Andy Rashleigh and Maggie Hinton agreed to serve.

(If any member wishes to know names of proposers and seconders, please contact the Minutes Taker.)

Best Plot Awards 2004

The following awards were announced:

Emily Mytton, Spring Hill 31

Lou Crisfield, Leaside 12

Debbie Cunliffe, Aden Terrace 26

Elsa Hamasa, Spring Lane 12.

Any Other Business

The Committee was thanked for their work by a new member and by the President.

A waste patch in Whiston Road might be a potential allotment site – member to give exact details to Secretary

Organic Gardening: a Spring Hill member enquired about how sites might become organic in a co-ordinated way. It was explained that in the past a site had become organic following voting by site members. It was tricky to legislate over other members. To ask new members to adhere to organic methods would require a change in the bye laws – this would involve registering a motion of the next AGM with good notice, publicized in the invitation to the AGM. The meeting, while generally supporting organic gardening, was divided between those who supported a change in the rules and those who were uncertain as to how such a rule might be policed and preferred a mission statement to a rule change.

Mass compost delivery – member who put this on agenda did not turn up.

The meeting closed at about 9pm.