

Hackney Allotment Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Held Wednesday 6th October 2010 St Mary's Community Centre N16

Present: Jon Fuller (President), Penny Miller (Chair), Henrietta Soames (Vice chair and St Kilda's site representative), Jackie Breakwell (Treasurer), June Lancaster (Secretary and Church Walk site representative), Joss Bany (committee member), Guy Dehn, Jack Eldon, Annie Wilson, Philip Turner, Emily Mytton, Simon Hughes (site representatives) and approximately 40 members

Apologies

Apologies received from Jessica Datta, Pat Corrigan, Philip Pearson and Martin Klucowicz

Matters Arising

The minutes of the AGM 2010 were agreed as accurate and there were no matters arising.

The president opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting and reporting briefly on his own successful growing year with the exception of late developing tomatoes due to the wet August.

Treasurer's Report

Jackie Breakwell presented the statement of accounts and reported that expenditure had exceeded income. The reduction in income was almost wholly due to the reduction in interest rates. One notable item of expenditure was the purchase of a laptop for the secretary for the management of the 'Windows' based membership records. Forthcoming tree work, particularly at Aden Terrace, is likely to have an adverse impact on the Society's finances in future years.

Report from the Chair

The chair's report, delivered by Henrietta Soames, noted that just 9 of the Society's plots had been re-let during the year and that 6 neglected plot letters had been issued. With a waiting list of 147 it was imperative that those members fortunate enough to have a plot managed it with due care and those that couldn't cope should consider surrendering their plots. It was emphasised that the Society is run on a purely voluntary basis and committee members needed to be provided with support from the general membership. This was particularly the case with the secretary's workload, the search for new plots and the recent initiative to work with a local housing association in the management of the gardens of their street properties.

Site representatives provided the following reports:

Aden Terrace

It's been a good year with plots being generally well tended and also quite productive. I would have liked to have completed more tree work ... but only achieved a small amount. A quiet year!

Church Walk

After a slow start due to the cold winter, it's been one of the best years I can remember in terms of plot maintenance and productivity. The site as a whole was

looking fantastic during the summer...

Leaside

All the plots are looking good - lots of late crops coming through - maybe down to the harsh winter and wet August? Middle tap still leaks but has been looked at by Joss and needs more attention.

Overbury St

We've had a good year, no major problems apart from a recurring lock issue which is hopefully sorted now. We've let two plots (which is 25% of what's available), with one going back on the market due to illness - we're sad to see the plotholder go as she did a fantastic job with it!

Queensbridge Road

A patchy year at Hackney's smallest site. Despite the cold winter, spring was very productive. Cabbages, chard and purple sprouting were all abundant, enjoying more light thanks to some tree pruning. However, summer was difficult, and the lack of water supply caused problems in June and July when the water butts ran dry. One of the 3 plots is currently being re-let and we look forward to a new neighbour in the near future.

St Kilda's

All OK but fox problems. Henrietta is trying chilli flakes with some success so far.

Springhill

The most exciting development at Springhill this year has been the introduction of bees to the site on the initiative of plot holder, David Harradine. David took a course in beekeeping at Hackney City Farm and set up his first hive on the roof of the site shed in early summer. Plot holders have welcomed the bees with enthusiasm and there has been a lot of interest in their progress. To date they are doing very well and have been spotted roving far and wide over the marshes. David is settling them in for the winter and we all hope they will survive. No honey has been collected this year but we are looking forward to sampling it in 2011.

Plans to build changing rooms for rugby and other players on the sports field have progressed very slowly so there have been no Springhill stakeholders meetings in the last year. Jessica previously attended these with the hope that we might be able to expand our site as part of this project. The planning application for the changing rooms has recently been validated, however, and will go to the council's planning subcommittee in October. We have been informed that stakeholder meetings will resume after a decision has been made.

There has been little change in plot holders and, in general, it has been a stable year. There were some thefts from plots over the summer and we do not know how intruders got in but these seem to have stopped in recent months. We have bought three shiny red wheelbarrows. Thanks to Guray who produced a map of the site with plot holders' names giving our 41 plot holders no excuses for not knowing their neighbours. Thanks to Emily for arranging for compost to be delivered and, after many months, for managing to get hold of keys for the main gate.

We have plans for a clear up weekend with a skip (30-31 October) which will include tidying up some compost bins, removing rubbish and an opportunity for plot holders to get together.

Springdale Rd

All plots are being worked at Springdale and we've had a successful growing season. The warm sunny Spring led to a bumper soft fruit harvest and the light levels have been improved by our neighbours cutting back their trees. Foxes spreading rubbish have been the only unwelcome visitors since the fencing was put up.

Spring Lane

Two new ploholders joined site.

New hand pump installed - now much improved water supply.

Tree work - two large willow branches dropped (one across plots) but removed quickly by Parks dept.

Drama of rat in shed (departed).

Japanese Knotweed at north end of site currently under control with glyphosate.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

Penny Miller was re-elected as **Chairperson**, (proposed Sue Fairbrother, seconded Neil Wilson).

Henrietta Soames was re-elected as **Vice-Chair**, (proposed Sarah Kissack, seconded Jeff Manning)

June Lancaster was re-elected as **Secretary**, (proposed Joss Bany, seconded Sue Carling).

Jackie Breakwell was re-elected as **Treasurer**, (proposed Joss Bany, seconded Sue Carling).

Maggie Henton and Bob Geater were re-elected as **auditors**, (proposed Sue Carling, seconded Tim Mabey) .

Amanda Scope was re-appointed as **Newsletter** editor & Joss Bany as an additional committee member.

Site Representatives

Aden Terrace: Vicky Yapp was elected.

Church Walk: June Lancaster was re-elected.

Leaside Road: Guy Dehn, Diana Whitworth were re-elected, Jack Eldon was elected.

Overbury Street: Anna Harding & Amanda Scope were re-elected

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Queensbridge Road: Philip Turner was re-elected.

Spring Hill: Jessica Datta, Phillip Pearson and Emily Mytton were re-elected.

Spring Lane: Simon Hughes
was re-elected.

St Kilda's Road: Henrietta Soames was re-elected.

Springdale Road: Annie Wilson was re-elected

The appointment of newsletter editor, additional committee member and site representatives all to be ratified at the next committee meeting.

The president and members acknowledged the important work of committee members & site representatives during the year.

Plot Awards

Plot inspections were held in July; criteria for the awards were variety of produce, creativity, productivity, most improvement etc.

Aden Terrace: best plot - Bronwen Lloyd-Jones, plot 14

Best newcomer: N16 sites - Pat O'Leary, plot 1 Aden Terrace
N16 most improved: Vikki Yapp, plot 19 Aden Terrace
N16 small sites best plot: Deborah Jefferies, plot 5 Church Walk

Leaside Road best plot: Ian Dick, plot 11
Best Newcomer E5/E8 sites: Aimee Snell, plot 8

Spring Hill best plot: David Harradine, plot 25

Spring Lane best plot: Christine Turner, plot 18

E5/E8 small sites best plot: Ranjit Saha, plot 3 Queensbridge Road

Organic Seed Order

Sarah Kissack will again be organising a combined seed order for those interested. Copies of the Organic Gardening Catalogue were distributed at the meeting. Orders are to be emailed to Sarah and collection will be from her house.

Any Other Business

Various methods of deterring foxes were discussed.

Arising from the Chair's report Sarah Kissack offered to provide some support to the secretary, Liz Anderson offered to help liaise with the housing association regarding the management of street property gardens and Julia Clarke offered to collate research into potential new sites.

The tree roots by the gate at the west end of Aden Terrace are causing problems and large trees in the vicinity are shading plots. The Hackney Council tree officer has offered advice but the Society will have to pay for any tree works. Item to be included on the agenda of the next committee meeting.

Thefts of crops have been reported. The general view was that biological control – pyracantha and similar – was the only answer.

The length of the waiting list was discussed with the need to vigorously apply the neglected plot policy to ensure fairness to waiting members. At a later point it was confirmed that the waiting list will remain closed for the present.

The lack of a proper water system at Spring Lane was raised. Agreed that this should be an item for the next committee meeting.

A representative from a local bee-keeping association (and waiting list member) asked about the possibility of keeping hives on allotment sites. It was suggested that an article on this subject be submitted for the next newsletter.

The meeting closed at about 9pm.

The next committee meeting will be Wednesday 3rd November.