

Hackney Allotment Society

Minutes of AGM held on Wednesday 18 October 2017 at

St Mary's Church Rooms, Stoke Newington, N16.

Present: Penny Miller - Chair
Ruth Gladwin - Vice Chair
Hugh Naylor - Treasurer
Nancy Korman - Secretary

The following site representatives: Susan Sharples (Aden Terrace), Maggie Wilkinson (Church Walk), MJ and Helene Gulleksen (Leaside), Philip Turner (Queensbridge Road), Henrietta Soames (St Kildas), Julia Clarke (Overbury Street), Jon Fuller, Beth Webber (Spring Hill), Helen Bishop (Spring Lane) Annie Wilson (Springdale Road)

Apologies: Betty and Jeff Manning, Sarah Welsh, Jane Hough, Ian Dick, Tim Maby, Virginia Strawson, Christine Hathaway, Chris Skinner, Sue Carling, Elsa Hamaz

1. Minutes of the 2016 AGM

These were accepted without amendment.

2. Report from the Chair

Penny mentioned the improvement made on the Queensbridge Road site for a system of rain-collecting water butts, which is working satisfactorily in the absence of piped water. The Council made safe the leaning wall on the Springdale Road site, something which had been of concern to the plot-holders for a few years. The Council also repaired a leaking tap on the Aden Terrace site, and a leaking stopcock on the Spring Hill site. Thames Water repaired a broken stopcock several leaks on the Leaside Site. She also reported that 8 plots had been relet during the year, and that 8 Neglected Plot letters and 1 Notice to Quit had been issued. There was a general concern about trees and the cost to HAS for pruning. Plot-holders were urged to get rid of saplings as soon as they were spotted, and to undertake any tree pruning that they could safely carry out themselves.

3. Treasurer's Report

Hugh started by pointing out the low costs for tree work that we incurred this past year, largely because quite a lot of work had been done in the year before. So far this year, there had been a need for emergency repair works on the Church Walk site when heavy rain pulled down ivy and bricks from one of the boundary walls, and for the removal of a tree that fell down due to high winds on the Aden Terrace site. He thought that the figure of £4000 annually for expenses was about right. There was a question from Sarah Kissack about plot rental fee increases. The Committee replied that this was the last year of the fee increase previously agreed by the AGM and if Hugh thought that there was a need for any further increase, it would have to come back to the AGM for approval.

4. Election of Officers

As there were no new nominations for officers, the existing officers had agreed to serve for another year. The same was true for the site representatives. It was noted that Frederica Brooks had resigned as one of the four representatives of Spring Hill.

5. Additions to Bylaws

- (i) Plotholders contribute to upkeep of their site as a whole

The discussion included the issue of sanctions against those who did not contribute. It was agreed to amend the proposal so that it now reads:

Plot-holders are to be encouraged to contribute to the upkeep, maintenance and improvement of their site as a whole. This may be by attending organised work days or by undertaking individual projects at the request of the site representative. **Passed unanimously.**

- (ii) Members being rude to each other

There were concerns that this would be ineffective without monitoring, how someone could appeal against having their plot re-allocated, and a need for adjudication. It was agreed to amend the proposal so that it now reads:

Members are expected to treat each other, and in particular, site representatives, with courtesy and consideration at all times. Rudeness and abuse will not be tolerated, and will be reported to the Committee. The Committee may decide to investigate further and this could lead to the loss of a plot and expulsion from the Allotment Society. **Agreed by vote of members.**

6. Proposal to re-open the waiting list

This item was introduced by Ruth Gladwin. She explained the discussions had by the committee and how it was proposed not to give priority to applicants from ethnic minority groups but to ensure that they had additional information about allotments so that they may consider applying, which hadn't been the case in the past. It was proposed to advertise the re-opening of the waiting list in *Hackney Today*, to put a notice on each allotment site, to have a special page on our website about this and to put material in libraries, along with application forms. There would be a process of randomly selecting no more than 100 names to go on the waiting list, to avoid giving false hope to many people as had happened before;. 100 people on the waiting list could take up to 10 years to clear.

There was a lively discussion about groups of people other than those from minority ethnic groups who could also be considered, in particular those without access to a garden, noticeably those on Council/Housing Association estates. Each group so identified was worthy of consideration and there were good arguments for and against. What needs to be recognised is that we are a small association, with, in many years, a very low turnover of plots AND we are not the only food-growing organisation in the borough. What we would be offering would be providing information about allotments so that those interested could at least apply. There was also a considerable discussion on how to increase diversity and whether it was feasible or indeed desirable to carry out a minority survey with both present and future members.

An amendment was proposed that priority should be given to those without access to a garden, with the argument against being that it would be impossible to police such a policy. The vote was 8 in favour and 15 against. Therefore the following proposal was accepted:

The Committee proposes that the waiting list be re-opened for a limited period of time, allowing a maximum of 100 new names to be accepted. This was accepted.

7. Best Plot Awards

The following people won awards for their plots:

Aden Terrace:

best plot - Vikki Yapp

Most improved - Cathy Yexley

Leaside:

Best Joint newcomers: Lorna Hays and Jo Easton

Spring Hill:

Best Plot - Kay Kante

Most improved - Ginny Strawson

Spring Lane:

Best Plot - Eleanor Jackman

Best newcomers: Henrike Donner and partner, and Imelda Messenger

Small sites:

Val Shepherd and Mark (plot 4, Church Walk). Not so much best plot (altho their plot is always really good) but for being such team players for the site. Always ready to lend a hand with any repairs or maintenance issue and always make the work days.

8. Items raised by members

Fran Walker suggested that the room be arranged differently next year so that people would be closer to the speakers.

Joss Bany suggested that we survey the membership for diversity.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

