

Hackney Allotment Society
Minutes of AGM held on Tuesday 4 October 2022
Church Rooms, St Mary's Church
Stoke Newington Church Road

Attendees: Rowena Altheer Spring Lane
Sandra Boyce Spring Hill
Sue Carling Aden Terrace
Julia Clarke Overbury Street
Oliver Craxton Aden Terrace
Jack Eldon Leaside
Richard and Susan Kay Aden Terrace
Hillaire Kerr Leaside
Sarah Kissack Aden Terrace
Nancy Korman Aden Terrace/Secretary
Andreas Kyriacou Spring Hill
Yvonne Lloyd Overbury Street
Dave McCarthy Aden Terrace
Betty and Jeff Manning Aden Terrace
Penny Miller Aden Terrace/Chair
Hugh Naylor Aden Terrace/Treasurer
Val Shepherd Church Walk
Phil Turner Queensbridge Road
Annie Wilson Springdale Road

Apologies Deborah Alwright
Annie Blackmore
Fiona Clarke
Sofia Craxton
Guy Dehn
Ian Dick
Marianrosa Fresca
Ruth Gladwin
John Grover
Tim Maby
Sophie Mathias
Maggie Ross
Marlis Scholz
Marian Shaughnessy
Henrietta Soames
Ginny Strawson

Sam Parry, Parks Development Manager, Hackney Council – *Connecting Green Spaces*

Sam Parry described the travel he had undertaken to look at parks and green spaces in the United States (Highline in New York and the Emerald Necklace In Boston) and others in Norway and Sweden. Parks are changing to reduce or remove the boundaries between formal green spaces and the communities in which they are located, to become more user-friendly, more a part of the community, safer places to be. At the same time another trend is to connect up green spaces so there is a continuous river-like flow of open space which is better for people (improving their wellbeing) and better for wildlife (improving biodiversity). Sam is leading activities within the Parks Department and with other parts of Hackney Council involved in the development and management of public spaces trying to bring some of this new way of seeing urban open space to Hackney streets and parks. Residents of streets can apply to have a parklet established on their street, to become involved in caring for the green space in their areas. Sam also mentioned the development of other environmentally sensitive actions, encouraging all parks to use their own green waste for compost, avoiding herbicides and pesticides. There are many possibilities for future action and this is an exciting time in Hackney.

A very lively question-and-answer period followed Sam's talk. There were suggestions on how allotments could complement and support the work of the Parks Department which can be taken forward by the various sites. The meeting expressed its appreciation of this stimulating talk.

Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies

These were noted above.

2. Outcomes from the 2021 AGM

Accepted as a true record of the meeting. After the meeting all members were given the opportunity to vote on the proposal that new members should not be allowed to have more than one allotment, including an allotment outside Hackney. The vote was 86 in favour, 6 against and 1 abstention, so the proposal was accepted and will be incorporated within the Bylaws.

3. Chair's Report

Penny recommended that members read the *Green Ideas for Change*, the report of Capital Growth which had been circulated with the agenda. This report contained a statement of values and ideas for encouraging biodiversity in urban settings. Many of these could be adapted to our own circumstances.

4. Treasurer's Report

Hugh Naylor presented the accounts and highlighted that the Society's finances were in good condition. Although expenditure was slightly higher than the previous year, broadly the cashflow position was neutral. In addition to a good balance in the bank, he mentioned

that at some point in the future the Society would be receiving two legacies from a former member and her husband of up to £10,000 each.

5. Election of Officers

The current officers (Penny Miller Chair, Ruth Gladwin Vice-Chair, Hugh Naylor Treasurer and Nancy Korman Secretary) had all agreed to serve again, and as there were no other nominations, congratulations were offered.

6. Applause for Site Representatives

Congratulations and thanks to the site representatives for their work during the year.

7. Best Plot Awards

Aden Terrace: Best plot - Ian and Susanna Burton
Best newcomer – Jennie Long

Leaside: Best Plot -Wayne Minter
Best newcomer – Grant Cocks

Spring Hill: Best Plot - Marlis Scholz
Most productive – Jon Fuller

Spring Lane: Best newcomer – Judith Losing

Small Sites: Best Plot - Ann Leatherly (Overbury Street)
Most improved– Mairin Power (Springdale Road)

7. Discussion

Annie Wilson proposed that all sites should become pesticide and herbicide free. It was recalled that at last year's AGM, Spring Hill had proposed that all newcomers to its site should agree not to use pesticides. There were points made for and against, some in recognition of the intention to support wildlife and biodiversity, others recognising that it is often difficult to coerce others and difficult to monitor. Hillarie Kerr mentioned that on Leaside they use a policy of discussion and persuasion with members and the site is largely free of chemicals, slug pellets aside. This approach is also used on Spring Lane, as Rowena Altheer mentioned. It was pointed out that notice has to be given to members if proposals are made to change the bylaws. **It was agreed that such a proposal would be made to the next AGM and that we could use this coming year to promote this idea in the newsletters.**

In light of the requirement for notice to be given to members for proposed changes to be bylaws, **it was agreed that the secretary would ask members six weeks before the AGM if there were any proposals for discussion and that there should be a link to the website so members could review the bylaws.**

Julia Clarke described the frog ponds at Overbury site. Three micro ponds have been installed in 2021 with spawn to encourage a frog population to control the snail/slug population.

Sarah Kissack suggested that the wider use of water butts on sites is promoted as a way of making better use of water during periods of droughts and to prevent flooding. Phil Turner described the situation at Queensbridge Road which does not have a supply of piped water. Instead they have 10 or so water butts that collect rainwater off a roof. They also use large storage containers to empty the water butts towards the end of the winter so they can store spring and summer rain (when we have rain). Several members mentioned that Hackney Council offers a discount on water butts and **the site representatives might want to explore this with the plotholders on their sites.**

Penny Miller reminded members that they needed to leave 18 inches between plots for pathways, for accessibility and safety (it has also been noted that the lack of clear paths has led to plotholders encroaching on land belonging to a neighbouring plotholder). She also mentioned the importance of plotholders discussing the planting of trees with their site representatives BEFORE planting and that trees need to be on dwarf root stock. Bay trees in particular grow into thugs and they should be planted in pots to prevent them growing unmanageably large.

There was an inconclusive discussion about how to respond to plots being left unused during the summer and the proportion of a plot used for flowers and this should go back to the Committee for further discussion. There was a strong feeling at the meeting that people who let their plots unused during the summer should get a Neglected Plot letter.

Bug hotels and wood piles should be promoted on each site

Penny also reminded members that 75% of the plot should be under cultivation during the main growing season.

Lastly, it was mentioned that some plotholders do not harvest what they grow. Betty Manning mentioned that St Mary's offers free lunches every Thursday and Friday from 12 to 4 and would welcome donations of vegetables and fruit. Hillaire Kerr knew that the Migrants Centre at the Church would also welcome such donations. Food banks might be added to this list. We need to make this more widely known.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm