

## Hackney Allotment Society

### Minutes of AGM held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November at

#### The Gallery, Edward's Lane, N16.

#### Present:

Penny Miller (Chair); Nancy Korman (Secretary); Hilarie Kerr (vice Chair); Site Reps:- Diana Whitworth - Leaside; Vikki Yapp – Aden Terrace; Henrietta Soames – St Kilda's Road; Rosanna Preston – Springdale Road; Philip Pearson – Springhill; Val Shepherd and Caroline Gilchrist – Church Walk; Simon Hughes – Spring Lane and approximately 27 members.

#### 1. Introduction and apologies

Apologies were not read out, but were received from: Jon Fuller, Tim Maby, Philip Turner, Sarah Kissack, Ruth Gladwin, Angela Waplington.

#### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 2012 AGM were agreed as a correct record.

#### 3. Report from the chair

Penny Miller gave a very interesting talk on biodiversity: -

“I recently came across Jennifer Owen, a retired biologist, who recorded wildlife in her ordinary back garden in Sheffield for 15 years. She recorded: 21 species of butterfly, 263 species of moth, 91 species of hoverfly, 100 species of bees and wasps, and 15 species of ladybird. It is estimated from her findings that there were 8,500 *species* of insect in her garden. She even found 4 species new to science.

This year we've been looking at our objectives, and thinking of including biodiversity, as an objective of the Society. Surprisingly, I have discovered that Hackney is the greenest inner London borough, with more than 40% of our land made up of parks, open spaces, gardens and other green areas, and the area that is allotments is likely to have up to 30% more biodiversity than the average park.

Hackney has a biodiversity action plan, as does London, both worth a look, and Hackney are conducting a survey of wild life, which I would urge all of us to participate in, details on LBH website. I also discovered that 20% of greater London is private gardens, which, with allotments, provide space and green corridors for wildlife.

- In terms of our own allotments, we can increase biodiversity even more with biodiversity friendly practices. Some obvious ones are:
- find alternatives to pesticides for example, companion planting, encouraging creatures that eat aphids and slugs;
- not being too tidy, or if you are, make a log or stick pile, or a leaf pile, which provide homes for small mammals and insects, many of which are predatory on aphids and slugs - for example, violet ground beetle and shrew both eat

- slugs, and live in leaf piles, wasps eat cabbage white butterfly caterpillars;
- a pond, however small;
- birdboxes, bat boxes, insect hotels;
- grow plants that attract beneficial insects such as hoverflies that eat aphids;
- grow bee attractants for pollination;
- encourage birds with berries - hawthorn and elder are particularly good , and of course birds also eat aphids, snails and slugs;

We can encourage wildlife for its own sake, and also find the ways it is also useful to us as vegetable and fruit growers. Although it's rather a grand word, we are in fact custodians of approximately 2 of the 32000 acres of allotment land in Britain. We need to nurture in ourselves that sense of both responsibility, but also a sense of opportunity, that we can actually make a difference to the number of birds, animals, insects in the world and specifically in the neighbourhood of our allotments.”

#### **4. Items of Information**

- Two new potential site areas are being investigated.
- HAS fed into the Hackney Development Plan and suggested that all new housing developments should have allotments included in the space allocation.
- We currently have 207 memberships and between 215 and 220 members.

#### **5. Report from the Treasurer**

Sarah Kissack prepared the Treasurer’s Report but was unable to attend the AGM. In her absence, Nancy Korman presented the Accounts to the meeting. The accounts had been audited by Hugh Naylor and Zarina Patel.

There followed a discussion of the accounts, covering:

- why expenditure exceeded income – this was because there had been a lot of expense in tree felling and pruning. This was acknowledged by the meeting as a necessary investment.
- There was a suggestion to put up fees, but
- It was pointed out that as a charity our Reserves should not be too high, and that currently our balance exceeds our annual expenditure.
- The Committee reported that at a previous meeting it had been agreed that when the Reserves reached £7,500 we would consider whether to raise additional funds.
- It was felt that the Committee should continue to consider future expenditure , and not just run funds down. Some members suggested that we should use some of the available funds to create a development fund

#### **6. New Site Discussion**

There was an extensive discussion, led by members on the waiting list, about possibilities and options for new sites in order to offer more people plots.

- It was pointed out that there are other organisations competing for land for growing in Hackney, like Growing Communities, and so it is not easy.
- It was thought that HAS could maybe do more to promote itself in the community.
- It was suggested that a waiting list member be coopted onto the Committee , and
- A Working Group be established to champion new sites.
- It was suggested that we seek a person with public standing, who could endorse our work, and help raise the profile of the Society and allotments in general.

## **7. Election of Officers**

All existing officers were re-elected unopposed.

Hugh Naylor was elected as Treasurer

Steve Newsom was elected as waiting list rep.

## **8. Proposed Constitutional Amendments**

Nancy introduced the paper and discussion on proposed Constitutional amendments.

**a. Objectives:** It was clarified that the Objectives were not to be changed at present, but that they would be considered next year. All members are encouraged to consider the existing Objectives and give any suggestions to the Committee by next June.

**b. Constitution:** Nancy clarified that the most of the changes were reorganising, clarifying and making consistent the substance of the existing Constitution. Two changes were:

Removing the posts of Honorary Officers, as, with the exception of Honorary President (Jon Fuller) they have not been filled in many years. Jon was in a unique position as a founding member of HAS and would stay as Honorary President for as long as he was willing to serve.

A clause has been added on Dissolution, saying that, should HAS decide to dissolve the association, the Committee would stay in post as long as necessary to ensure an orderly closure.

The proposed Constitutional Amendments were approved by a majority.

**c. Bylaws –** Revised bylaws were approved by a majority.

## **9. Site Reports**

Reports included information on the tree work improvements; the allocation of plots to people on the waiting list, the issues of shading and in particular the unfortunate impact of the building of a tower block at the Green Lanes end of Aden Terrace which

will create a serious problem of shade, the problem of fumes from a neighbouring garage at Church Walk, the addition of a bee hive at Leaside, and recent storm damage on some sites.

#### **10. Best Plot Awards**

Leaside	Most Productive – Nick Middleton, Plot 5 Best Plot – Patsy Hans, Plot 13
Spring Hill	Best plot – Claire Tyler, No 22 Most productive – Maris Frasca, No 8 Most improved – Liz Riddell, no 37
Spring Lane	Best plot – Justine Armitage, plot 10 Best newcomers - Helen Bishop and Kate Elander, Plot 8
Aden Terrace	Best plot – Chris Coe, no 5 Best varied plot – Sofia Craxton
Small Plot Awards:	Most improved – Cara Phlips, Plot 2, Queensbridge Road Best plot – Annie Wilson, plot 4, Spingdale Road

#### **11. Any Other Business**

It was reported that the gate at Queensbridge site is damaged and leaning in. This will be looked into.