



## In advance of the Hackney Allotment Society AGM 2020, which will take place on 7th October, here are some of the issues which will be raised

### Congratulations!

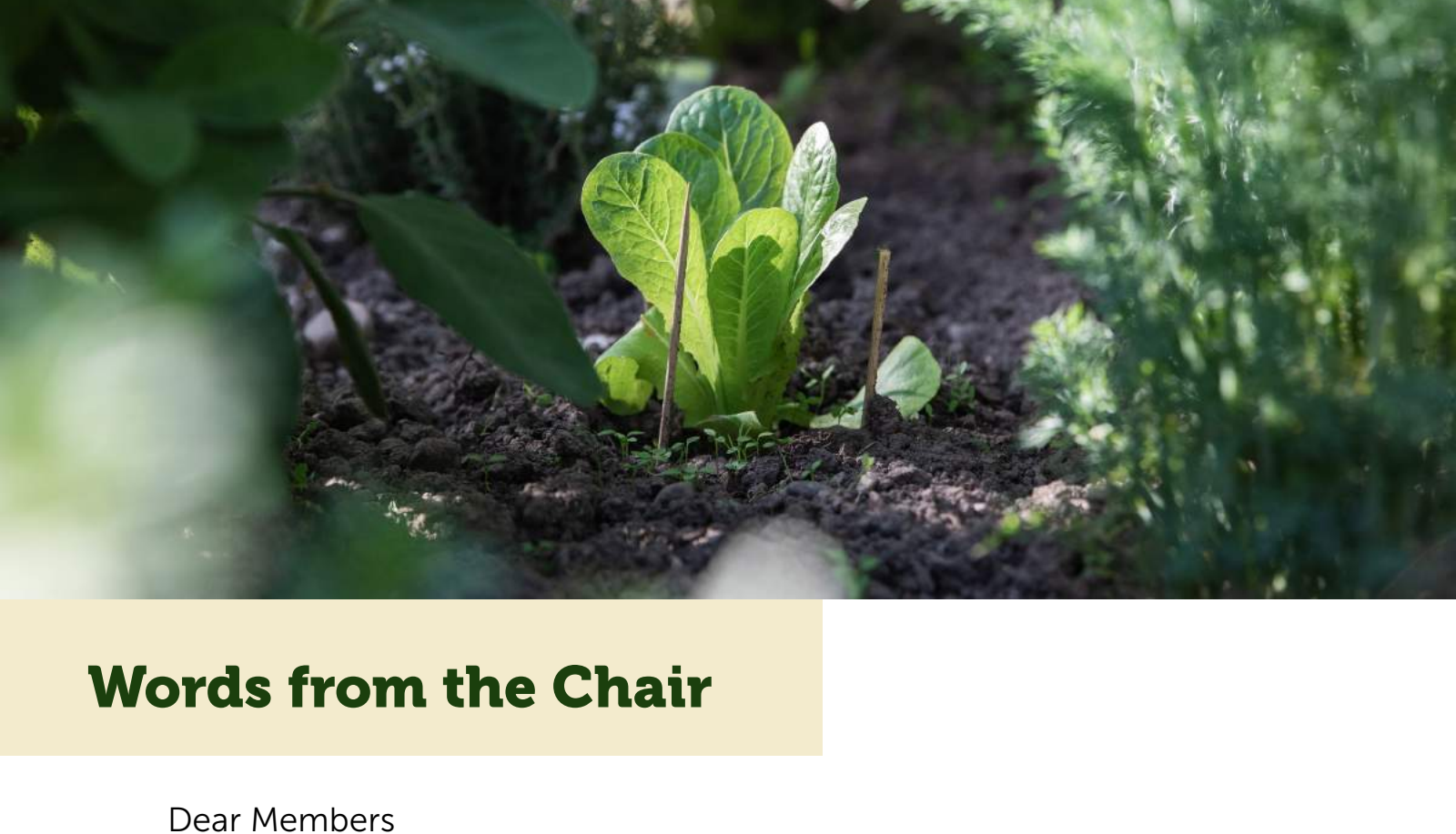
For the first time ever, all HAS members will be "at" the AGM! Of course, it does help that you can attend without leaving your home...

In these strange times, we are having a strange AGM. No guest speaker, no seed/produce swap, just your Committee talking to you. We would like you to vote on the three proposals described below in these papers. The Committee thinks that each of these clarifies present, slightly ambiguous positions.

There is some feedback on the issues that last year's AGM asked the Committee to consider. And a separate attachment is a voting slip for you to indicate your agreement or disagreement. **WILL YOU PLEASE RETURN THIS BY 7 OCTOBER**, the time of the intended AGM? Not actually a secret ballot, but then raising your hand at a meeting isn't either. And, also separately, the accounts for 2019/20 produced by Hugh Naylor, our treasurer.

What is missing from this is the opportunity for you to question the Committee or to raise issues that you would like considered. Please do write in if there are things on your mind, and we will figure out a way of dealing with them.

Tomorrow, you will receive another email giving details of the fees and plot rentals that you owe, and how to pay. I hope it makes it easier for you to know what you need to pay and to pay it promptly.



### Words from the Chair

Dear Members

I hope, on behalf of the committee, that you are all well and coping with the strange times we're living through.

The pandemic has meant different things to different people, and many of us who are plotheholders have benefited from more time on our plots, as illustrated by the brilliant photos and comments in the current newsletter. For some though, of course, those shielding, involved in childcare, ill themselves, or working extra hours in healthcare, it has been a difficult time, with plots necessarily left untended. The overall impression though, fortunately, as members of the committee noted with pleasure during the inspections, is that plots are thriving and tended as never before, with huge improvements on every site a clear illustration of the fact that the more time we devote to our plots, the better the outcome.

In addition to Covid 19, we have been subject to a season of strange weather, with endless rain early in the year delaying planting and sowing, scorching temperatures in April, the driest May on record, followed by a very hot summer, ending in damaging storms and high winds. Nevertheless, a successful growing season for most of us, with a heightened sense of community as we met our allotment neighbours much more frequently than usual, and camaraderie emerged as we wrestled with the conundrums of keeping safe while sharing a gate. The questions of gloves, sprays and hand sanitiser became normal conversational fare, and soap was stowed on the plots for the first time.

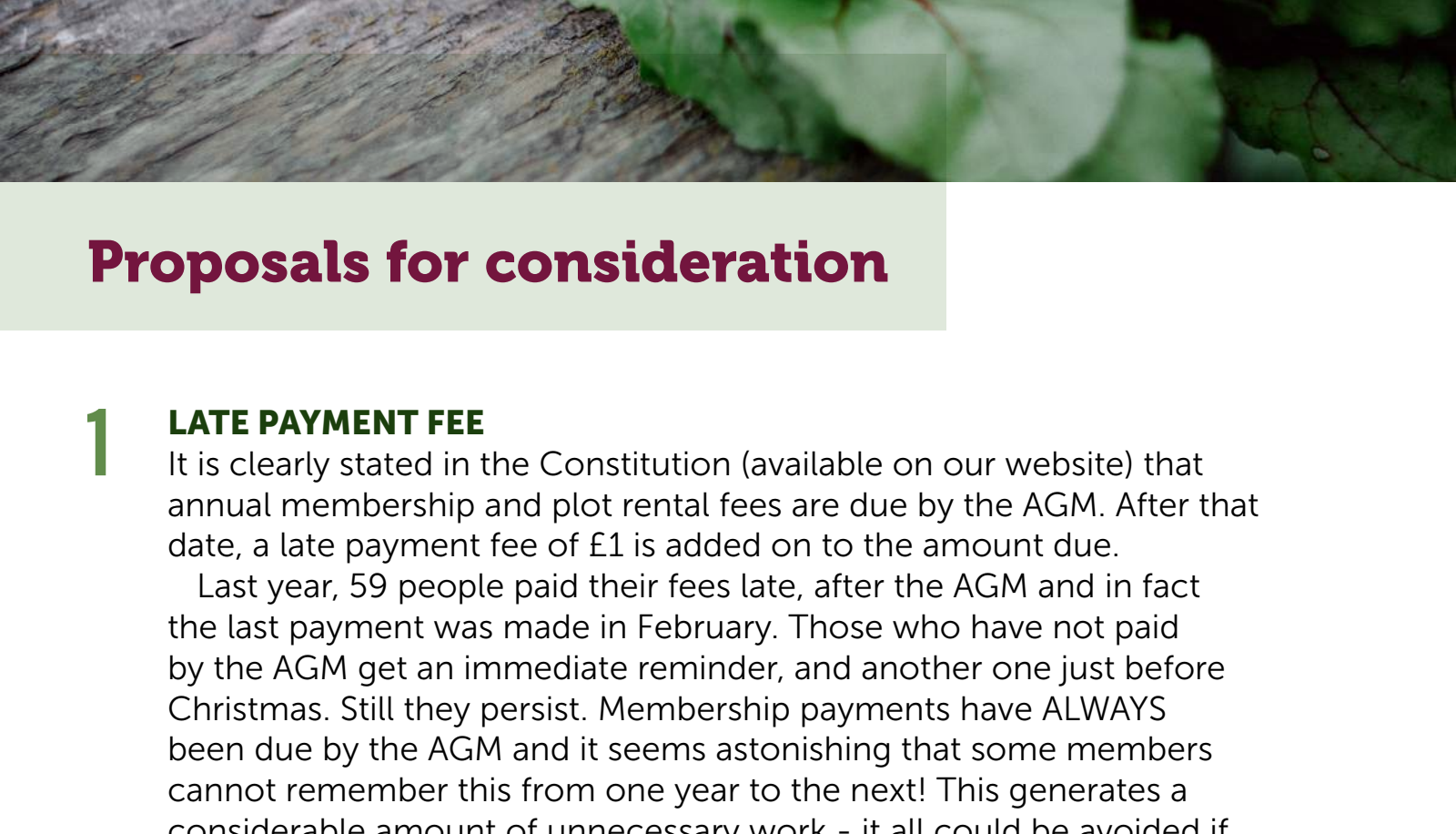
Covid aside, another strange and unusual problem occurred on the St Kilda's site. A neighbour, long known for his unreasonable behaviour decided to dump a mountain of building waste in front of the gate into the site, and took it upon himself to move our gate to another part of the fence, which meant that plotheholders accessed the site onto a plot rather than the path. All horribly distressing for the plotheholders, and a shock for the one who arrived to discover this. Thanks to Henrietta (site rep) and Nancy, the problem was resolved, although it took months and many phone calls. Eventually Hackney Planning Enforcement team sorted it out, and the site is back to normal. A unique event in the history of HAS.

On a more positive note, the Committee agreed significant renovations on our Queensbridge Road site, which are now going ahead.

Three plots were relet this year, quite a low number, perhaps due to the special circumstances.

So, well done to all of us, and lets hope we keep up the good growing and camaraderie that has developed this season.

Penny Miller (Chair)



### Proposals for consideration

#### 1 LATE PAYMENT FEE

It is clearly stated in the Constitution (available on our website) that annual membership and plot rental fees are due by the AGM. After that date, a late payment fee of £1 is added on to the amount due.

Last year, 59 people paid their fees late, after the AGM and in fact the last payment was made in February. Those who have not paid by the AGM get an immediate reminder, and another one just before Christmas. Still they persist. Membership payments have ALWAYS been due by the AGM and it seems astonishing that some members cannot remember this from one year to the next! This generates a considerable amount of unnecessary work - it all could be avoided if members simply paid their fees on time.

**The Constitution stipulates:** All members who do not pay their annual membership fee and/or plot rental fee by the date of the AGM shall have until the end of the calendar year to pay but with a late fee determined by the AGM. (8b)

**The Managing Committee proposes** that the late payment fee be increased to £10 with immediate effect from the AGM (i.e. payments made after 7 October).

#### 2 CONCESSIONARY FEES

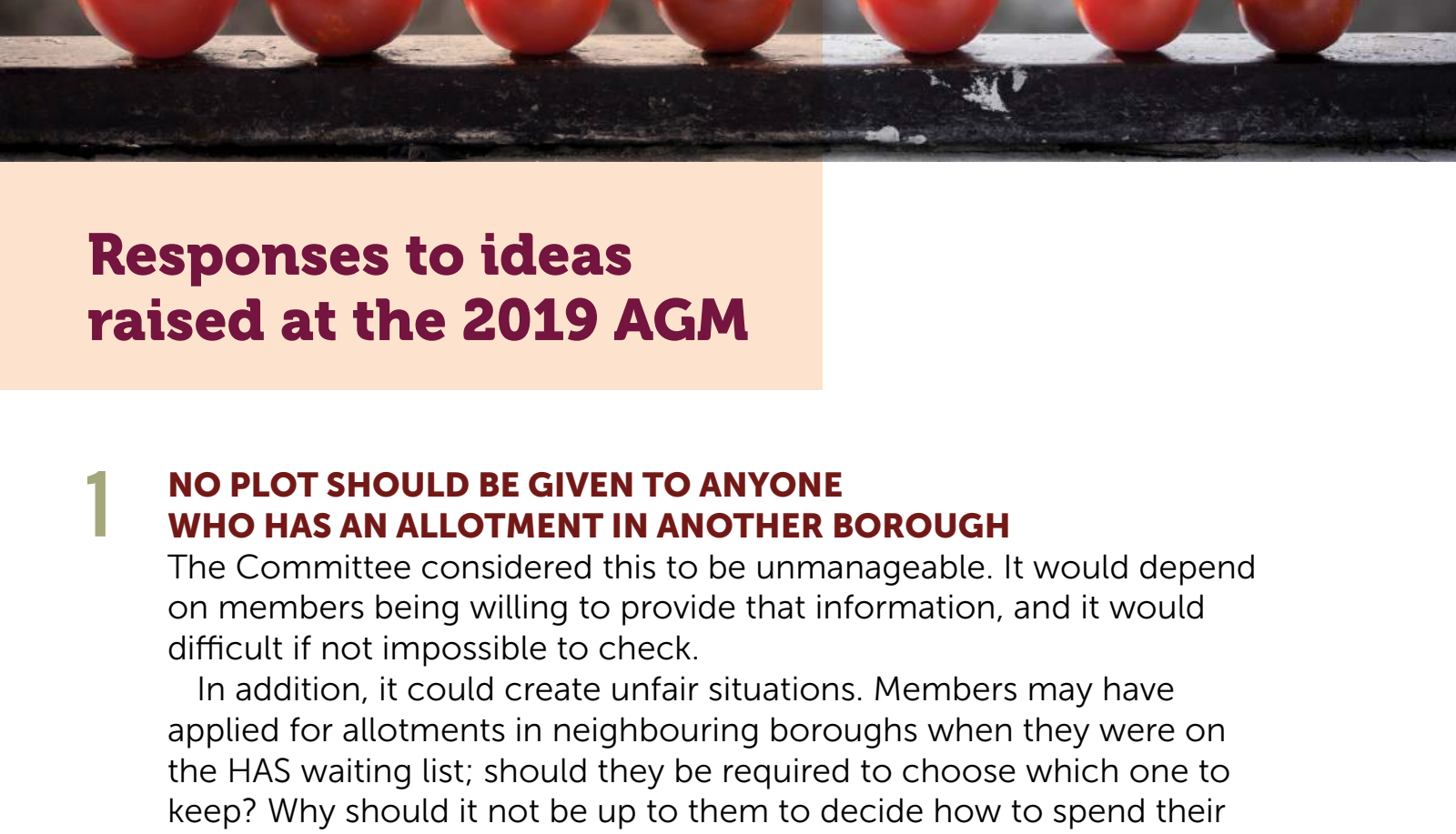
There is a great deal of uncertainty as to who is eligible to claim a concessionary fee of 50% for plot rental fees only; there is no concession on the membership fee of £4. There is no written guidance and the Managing Committee proposes the following to make the concessionary rate clear and fair to all.

**The Managing Committee proposes** that, from the October 2021 AGM, concession fees apply only to those reliant on income-related state benefits.

#### 3 PERCENTAGE OF PLOT TO BE UNDER CULTIVATION

The Neglected Plot policy currently stipulates that two-thirds of a plot should be under cultivation. It is actually difficult to measure exact proportions of a plot but it seems reasonable to suggest that in the main growing season of the summer months, as much of the plot should be under cultivation as is possible, given the pressure on land in Hackney and the size of our waiting list.

**The Managing Committee proposes** that at least three-quarters of a plot should be under cultivation during the main summer months.



### Responses to ideas raised at the 2019 AGM

#### 1 NO PLOT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ANYONE WHO HAS AN ALLOTMENT IN ANOTHER BOROUGH

The Committee considered this to be unmanageable. It would depend on members being willing to provide that information, and it would be difficult if not impossible to check.

In addition, it could create unfair situations. Members may have applied for allotments in neighbouring boroughs when they were on the HAS waiting list; should they be required to choose which one to keep? Why should it not be up to them to decide how to spend their free time. At present we have only two requirements for eligibility for an allotment: being a Hackney resident and being over the age of 18, and the Committee agreed to keep to these.

#### 2 NO PLOT SHOULD BE ALLOCATED TO ANYONE WHO HAS A GARDEN

In a similar discussion, the Committee also considered this to be unmanageable. What is meant by a garden: balcony, courtyard, what size, totally shady, communal? People's living circumstances change, they move home and may gain or lose a garden in the process. Although it is an attractive idea, it has a large number of pitfalls and would complicate an existing simple situation of providing plots. There are other ways within Hackney that people without gardens may gain gardening opportunities.

#### 3 THE LATE PAYMENT FEE SHOULD BE INCREASED TO ENCOURAGE PROMPT PAYMENT

The Committee completely agreed with this suggestion and there is a proposal to do exactly this. Please support!

#### 4 MEMBERS SHOULD BE SENT INDIVIDUAL INVOICES FOR PAYMENT OF FEES AND PLOT RENTALS

The Committee did not agree with this because of the amount of work this would entail and because members ought to be able to identify what they are due to pay from the schedule of fees due included in the newsletter. However, as a compromise, this year the Committee decided to send out a separate email about fees being due, in the hope that this would get members' immediate attention for prompt payment.



### Current Officers and Site Reps

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS (UNOPPOSED)

**Chair** Penny Miller

**Vice Chair** Ruth Gladwin

**Treasurer** Hugh Naylor

**Secretary** Nancy Korman

#### SITE REPRESENTATIVES (NOT ELECTED BUT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW WHO THEY ARE)

**Aden Terrace** Susan Sharples

**Church Walk** John Clarke and Sarah Madge

**Leaside** Guy Dehn and Jack Eldon

**Overbury Street** Julia Clarke

**Queensbridge Rd** Philip Turner

**St. Kilda's** Henrietta Soames

**Spring Hill** Sylvia Cummins, Jon Fuller, Kay Kante, Andrea Sinclair

**Spring Lane** Helen Bishop and Elsa Hamaz

**Springdale Road** Annie Wilson