

Highgate Allotments Association Committee Meeting Wed 17 January 2024 Agreed Minutes

Chair Maggy Meade-King (MMK)

Present: Rita Drobner (RD), Dan Hackett (DH), Sally Jones (SJones), Geoff Kemball-Cook (GKC), Sara Jolly (SJolly).

1. Apologies: Ann Lloyd (AL), Don Adams (DA)
2. Minutes from the meeting on November 1st 2023 were approved

3. New Post Holders

In view of the regrettable loss of Hinchee Hung as a committee member and Treasurer it was proposed that GKC would take over as Treasurer and that SJones would take over as Site Secretary. MMK expressed the committee's gratitude to GKC for his splendid contribution as Site Secretary, particularly during the testing conditions of Covid. The committee all voted in favour of the new appointments.

ACTION: GKC to meet with Hinchee to hand over the post of Treasurer.

ACTION: GKC to grant SJones access to the Simplelist email system for sending to all tenants.

SJones/MMK suggested reviving and actively recruiting for the post of 'Committee Secretary', who would give notice of meetings, prepare agendas, take and circulate minutes, send to GKC for the HAA website and put up on the notice board. As the AGM is coming up, it would be an opportunity to recruit a tenant with the necessary IT skills and a talent for admin (unless AL wishes to take on the wider role).

It would be good to officially ratify the new positions as soon as possible.

A 'plots of concern' subgroup was set up a few months ago and SJones has drawn up its terms of reference. She will convene the first meeting of this group in the near future.

4. Site Secretary's report (circulated by email).

Co-workers

Discussion to clarify the new rules about co-workers. In future they will only be allowed to work for 3 months, in exceptional cases 6 months. This change will NOT be retrospective. It was clarified that an existing co-worker must get to the top of the waiting list before s/he is eligible to be offered a joint tenancy. It is good policy to strongly encourage new tenants to add their partner/friend to the tenancy when they take on a plot.

The employment of casual workers who come to help out on an ad hoc basis is not affected by the new rules, which are intended to prevent the unofficial occupation of plots/ queue jumping.

Possible Pruning of Leylandii over South boundary

The committee approved GKC's proposal to approach the owner of the large garden in View Road that backs onto the main path of the allotments site, to negotiate, and – if necessary – to offer to pay up to half of the quote for the services of a tree surgeon to considerably

reduce the height and spread of the Leylandii and a tall hornbeam. DH raised the possibility that this work might disturb any bats that roost, or certainly forage in and amongst these trees. RD and SJolly expressed similar misgivings. GKC said that tree surgeons are obliged to stop work if they encounter evidence of a roost while they are on a job. MMK thought it unlikely that bats would roost in conifers such as Leylandii. SJolly requested that the rampant fruit-bearing ivy to be left intact (i.e. not to be 'tidied up' in the course of the tree surgery) as the flowers & berries are a rich resource for birds and insects in the depth of winter.

A new probationer has requested financial help with the removal of a largish conifer on her plot. The committee agreed that it is fair to give financial assistance to deal with 'legacy trees' which should never have been planted on an allotment. Discussion ensued as to whether other such trees could be removed at the same time.

5. Treasurer's report

HH has resigned from committee so not present but had submitted accounts for 2023 which were approved by the committee.

6. AGM

The date for the AGM is Saturday 27 April. GKC to book the school from 1.30 to 4.30, with the meeting scheduled to start at 2pm. MMK agreed to organise the refreshments.

There was discussion about sounding out new people who might be encouraged to stand for election at the AGM. We have already lost Hinchee and RD will regrettably stand down at AGM due to her move out of London. Possible new posts include a Committee Secretary, as mentioned above, and someone to run the equipment hire and training sessions (see item 9 below). Individual committee members agreed to informally approach likely individuals.

7. Lettings and Probationers (MMK spreadsheet, circulated by email). Four plots have been let since the last HAA committee meeting. Several new plots have become very waterlogged as a result of the recent exceptionally heavy downpours.

8. Shed shop report

SJolly gave a short verbal report. Steady sale of manure, not a lot of other sales in deep midwinter. She and Hinchee did a thorough stock take just after Christmas, so that Hinchee could complete her financial report for the year. SJolly has more or less taken over the responsibility for ordering stock, though still seeking guidance from GKC as needed. SJolly to pursue correspondence re possible presence of asbestos. The next step is for someone from Haringey's contracted asbestos team to visually inspect and perhaps take a sample. RD kindly agreed to make a new flag for the shop, to replace the one whipped away by storm Henk.

9. Equipment Hire

New Arrangements? It was agreed that we need to give some thought to how this part of our activities can be efficiently organised. It was suggested that we all bring ideas to the next meeting. The booking system and the training in use of equipment can be two separate jobs. Possibly the bookings could be incorporated into the shed shop activities?

10. Winter Newsletter

MMK is preparing the next issue and requested good photos etc. Deadline for copy was agreed as Sunday 28 January. Discussion about possible article on the distinction between manure, potting compost and garden compost, as some new tenants are confused by the word 'compost' being used for both a sowing/planting medium and for the stuff we put on heaps.

Newsletter will draw attention to the fact that we are actively seeking new members for the committee; elections will be held at the AGM.

11. AOB None

12. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3rd April at 2.30 pm in Shed Shop. SJolly to chair.