

**Agreed Minutes of AGM of Highgate Allotments Association,
Highgate Primary School, Thursday 15th October 2015**

1. **Welcome.** The meeting opened at 7.30pm. Jim Greenhill welcomed everyone present – approx. 40 plot-holders and 10 committee members.
2. **Apologies for absence** received from Celia Barnett, Graham Hart (part), John Lane and Catherine Tutton.
3. **The minutes of the last AGM (16 October 2014) were approved.**
4. **The outstanding accounts for 2014:** JG explained that these accounts would not be presented because of a typing error. He assured the meeting that the monies were correct and that the balances were not affected. The corrected accounts will be posted on the website as soon as possible.
5. **Committee Report**
Simon Hewitt (Site Secretary) reported on behalf of the committee.
 - **New Constitution** This was approved in 2014. There is a committee of 10 members, with roles agreed for and by the elected members at the first committee meeting of the year. Chairing of meetings rotates between committee members.

2014/15 members are

Angelo Guarino - Security and Maintenance
 Jim Greenhill – Shed-Shop
 Maggy Meade-King - Newsletter and Website updates
 Karen Fitzsimon - Waiting List and Lettings
 Hilary Laurie - Committee Secretary
 David Gittings - Probationer Support Team and Rubbish Collection
 Julia Doyle - Probationer Support Team
 Sarah Frame - Probationer Support Team
 Geoff Kemball-Cook - co opted for Allotment Forum Meetings
 Simon Hewitt - Site Secretary

Website Now fully established as the entry point for new applicants and the place for members to view records of committee meetings and AGM proceedings, as well as other useful information including HAA Terms of Reference and Haringey Guidance Notes. Thank you to Rahid Khan, our web master, and to Maggy Meade-King, now managing the regular updates.

- **Outlook/Email address** - highgateallotments@outlook.com, This deals with members queries and the applications and lettings process.
- **Lettings and Waiting List** (KF) Now a transparent and publicly available list, submitted regularly to Haringey for their information. Applications for an allotment

can be made via the website or with hard copy and are added in strict date order to the waiting list.

In the last year

Plots let – 22

Offer of plots deferred by applicant – 7

Plots terminated by Haringey Council – 6

Number of names currently on waiting list – 55

Number of names removed from waiting list because they no longer want a plot or could not be contacted when their name came to the top of the list – 11

Number of names added to waiting list – 41

- **Membership Secretary (MM-K)** There are 182 names on the membership list covering all 159 plots.
- **Newsletter (MM-K)** There have been 7 newsletters this year, covering forthcoming events, walks, talks and deliveries. 112 people subscribe to the email newsletter which is also posted on the notice board and shed.
- **Eco compost (DH)** Free eco-compost is delivered, 15 tonnes at a time, by LondonWaste, Edmonton. There have been 2 deliveries this year, the last on 25th September. As agreed at the AGM in 2014, deliveries are scheduled so that members at work during the week can take their share at the weekend. Members are asked to each take a maximum of 10 barrow loads. The next delivery is planned for spring 2016.
- **Hard-standing for compost delivery lorry** Better level hard-standing near the gate may be required at an approx. cost of £2-3000.
- **Eco awareness-raising** Entomologist Dan Hackett gives very interesting walks and talks around allotment with. These are advertised in the newsletter.
- **Probationer and new tenants support** David Gittings, Sarah Frame and Julia Doyle make contact with probationers and offer follow-up support and advice once a new tenant has taken on a plot. Each new tenant is given a 'starter pack' and there is information about the application process on the website.
- **Working party 8 November 2014** Members made repairs to the allotment shed (which JG thinks was put up some 40 years ago) and also helped clear a plot for a member in hospital. In July 2015 a group of volunteers painted the shed.
- **Communal Plot** behind the shed, with wild flower area, is now in good shape. Thanks to Chris Wilson for mowing of grass throughout the year and to Angelo Guarino for planting additional fruit trees. A picnic in the plot for all members and friends is held regularly in early July.

- **Security & Maintenance** (AG) Unfortunately there have been some thefts of produce and equipment over the year. Please keep valuable or useful articles out of view and question strangers politely.
- We have had to challenge two **boundary encroachments** from neighbours in View Road and Denewood Road. In both cases the fence lines have been corrected in accordance with the proper boundary. These encroachments arose because existing spiked railings had been set 1 metre behind the boundary. The committee proposes to make any spiked railings safe or to remove them entirely where possible.
- **Planning Application** for building work in Sheldon Avenue was successfully challenged by the committee and nearby members on grounds that it might have an adverse effect on the water table. A resubmission has been made.
- **Bank Accounts.** Arrangements for the management of the HAA on-line bank accounts will shortly be completed. There are three new, mandated committee member signatories.
- **Allotment Forum** (Geoff Kemball-Cook) The Forum is the meeting point for all Haringey allotment representatives and Haringey Council management. It meets 4 times a year. Any member may attend the meetings.
GK-C reported on the possible devolution of allotment management from Haringey Council.
This is driven purely by need to cut Council costs. No decision has been taken by the Council and, if implemented, what model of devolution will be chosen. The deadline for this decision is December 2016.
The Allotment Forum members are pushing the Council for the appointment of a full-time Allotment Officer.

HAA committee members have had several informal discussions with Barnet site officers (already devolved) to learn lessons, should devolution go ahead.
Haringey Council is planning to link Site Secretaries to their tenancy database to reduce administration at their end, but this will increase administration for Allotment Associations.
Other Issues:
The threat from Thames Water to change all allotment site tap fittings to remove hosepipe unions seems to have evaporated. Nothing heard for many months.
The Council reminds all tenants that (a) no petrol should be stored in sheds unless in a locked cupboard, but small gas canisters for boiling kettles are OK (b) that 'unauthorised toilets' (i.e. open latrines) are not permitted.
GK-C offered hard copies of the agenda and associated papers from the most recent Forum meeting on 10 October for any interested HAA members to take away.
- **Shed-Shop** (JG) Open most Saturdays and Sundays at lunch time. Jim rings the hand bell when he opens the shed-shop. He would like to thank everyone who has helped off-load heavy bags and supplies.

- **Rubbish Collection** (DG) There have been 2 successful collections this year which were made good use of by the membership. This is a free service. Rubbish must be put out on the day only. It should not be stockpiled in advance, as this encourages dumping. If a member cannot be present at time of the collection, they should ask a plot neighbour to act on their behalf. Rubbish must be bagged and non-recyclable. Members must not put bags on to the lorry themselves. Haringey Parks Dept. waste-collection staff have been very helpful and are much appreciated. They go above and beyond their remit, making several collections each time and filling their lorry to over-capacity. Next collection: 26 October 2015.

- **Legal title** - Because of the possibility of devolution, the Site Secretary has obtained a copy of the legal title from the Land Registry. This shows that there are restrictive covenants on the use of the land which the Church Commissioners sold to Hornsey Council in 1926 for £2800. The Council must *Use the said hereditaments as allotments and for no other purpose whatsoever and will at all times hereafter cultivate or cause the same to be cultivated in a proper and husband like manner as allotments and keep the same in good heart and condition and free from weeds.* MMK commented that it was nevertheless important that we ensure that all plots are cultivated as - in an environment where the Council is short of both money and land for housing, in an area where land values are very high and developers are constantly looking for opportunities - we mustn't give them any excuse for saying that the covenanted land is not being used properly.

- **Committee Secretary** (HL) The Committee Secretary does not make a report. She records minutes and writes emails and letters on behalf of the committee throughout the year. She corresponds with members only on behalf of the committee and not in a personal capacity. MM-K proposed a vote of thanks to HL.

- **Additional Objectives for Committee and Members, Looking Forward**
 1. Celebrating HAA's 120th year: HAA allotments began in June 1896
Suggestions as to how to celebrate this anniversary requested.
 2. Possible devolution discussions with Council and other advisors will continue
 3. Access to Haringey 'Colony' database under discussion
 4. Replacement of main gates - dependent on funding and work on taps
 5. Possible improvement of hard standing to enable better lorry access for eco-compost deliveries
 6. Decision on what to do with the neglected barbeque area adjacent to the shed
 7. Make safe the spiked railings on the southern boundary
 8. Repairs to the shed roof and painting of the shed windows
 9. Working Party Sunday 8th November to clear around shed and provide help for plot holders in need of short-term assistance. Members should put forward suggestions or requests.
 10. Eco habitat boxes to be constructed and installed by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) on 8th November.

- **Working with Haringey Council, our 'Landlord'**

Allotment Enquiries are looked after by Donna Smale who deals with all day-to-day paperwork, processes tenancy amendments and probationer tenancies. She is in frequent contact with the Site Secretary and Lettings Officer.

The Allotment Officer, Clare Pappalardo, works with contractors and organises site work and site inspections. Also deals with issues such as asbestos removal (as currently on plot E1).

Plot Inspections Are Carried out by Allotment Officer 3 times a year. There are always at least two HAA committee members present. This year 6 committee members were present at the spring inspection on 28th April.

The decision to issue notices is entirely up to the Allotment Officer and not to the committee or Site Secretary. The Allotment Officer may permit an intervention by the committee on behalf of plot holders and agree to the sending of an Advisory letter to establish if the plot holder is in difficulties. This year Advisory letters, issued by Committee Secretary, were sent to 4 plot holders.

The committee agreed to 4 applications for an additional named tenant to be added to a tenancy - being a spouse, partner or child. This process, performed in conjunction with Haringey Council, requires endorsement by the committee and the completion of a new application form, without which such a tenancy is invalid.

At the end of the Site Secretary's report, MMK proposed a vote of thanks to KFS and SH for their excellent work.

6. AOB

Call for volunteers to join a small committee to organise the 120th anniversary celebration. Sara Mokone offered her services.

7. Members' Q and A discussion

GK-C was asked for more information on possible devolution. He reported that Haringey have some 28 allotment sites. The Council has to reduce its spending by £60 million over the next 3 years. The Parks and Allotment Service costs approx. £1 million; savings of £60K from allotments proposed. Management of plots may be devolved to individual associations or to a forum or federation. HAA contributes £9,500 annually in tenancy rentals of which approx. 50% goes to paying water rates. With devolution, this money would be under our control.

A member expressed fears over the possible lack of accountability if power passed to the committee which, he felt, has behaved badly in the recent past and shown a lack of humanity.

Another member commented on how devolution would mean passing responsibility from the paid to the unpaid. Although not critical of the current

committee, she was concerned by a possible loss of security and accountability in the future.

The cost of an allotment officer to the Council was raised. It was not possible to give an accurate answer as Council staff work on allotments and in other areas concurrently.

One member described the Council's failure to send letters to his correct address leading to unnecessary and unpleasant problems with billing. It was agreed that Council data is sometimes inaccurate.

A member complained of circumstances in which a dirty plot notice was issued. She claimed that the committee guided the Allotment Officer to the plot and that no warning had been given to the plot holder. Committee members disagreed that this was the practice.

Regarding a decision to end another tenancy, a member stated that the plot holder had been in hospital during the inspection and had been unable to contact the Allotment Officer. SH said that the tenant had not been in hospital when the inspection was carried out and that he had already agreed to give up this plot.

Asked if there would be an ombudsman or some form of legal representation available on devolution, GK-C said that there would be a legal contract with each site to protect the council, the site association and the tenants.

8. Election of committee

Each of the 16 nominees made a brief statement.

All attendees eligible to vote marked their ballot papers, selecting a maximum of 10 names. The completed papers were collected and counted by three non-voting, independent observers.

The following members were elected:

Karen Fitzsimon
 David Gittings
 Jim Greenhill
 Angelo Guarino
 Dan Hackett
 Marc Haynes
 Simon Hewitt
 Geoffrey Kemball-Cook
 Hilary Laurie
 Maggy Meade-King

9. JG thanked everyone for coming and the committee for their hard work over the past year. The meeting ended at 10.15pm.

Next committee meeting: 10am Sunday 15 November 2015, Highgate Primary School. Next AGM: Thursday 13 October 2016