

# Minutes of AGM of Highgate Allotments Association, Highgate Primary School, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## 1 General Meeting Part 1

The meeting opened at 7.30pm. Jim Greenhill welcomed everyone present – 23 plot tenants, 6 Committee members and artist-in-residence Chrissie Nicholls. All reports were circulated in advance and available on the HAA website: in addition 15 copies of each were tabled.

### 1.1 Apologies for absence

These were received from Helen and Richard Kwan, Celia Barnett, Wendy Whale, Graham and Hilary Laurie, Maggy Meade-King, Ruth Pavey, Leesa Herbert, Brigid Sheppard, Sue Sunkel, Geraldine McCarthy and Helen Welch.

### 1.2 Approval of AGM October 11 2018 Minutes

The minutes of the last AGM (11 October 2018) were approved.

### 1.3 Approval of Calendar Year 2018 Accounts

The accounts for year ended 31.12.2018 were approved.

### 1.4 Calendar Year 2019 Financial Performance to end June 2019

The summary of financial performance for the first half of calendar year 2019 presented a useful snapshot of our financial position.

The status of our solar lighting grant was queried. GKC reported that the money is safely in our account and has been partly spent on solar-powered and wind-up lanterns which are environmentally friendly. Once the new equipment shed is in place we will need further appropriate lighting which can be financed from this grant. In addition GKC has inspected an installation at Golf Course allotments which provides very useful lighting at minimal cost. An appeal was made once again for a volunteer (with accounting or book keeping experience) to take over from GL during 2019-20. The HAA accounts system is in good order and running smoothly and he will be happy to work in tandem with his replacement at the start of the handover period.

### 1.5 Committee Reports (as circulated)

#### 1.5.1 HAA Plot Lettings Report *Maggy Meade-King*

18 plots have been let since the last AGM. Two of these were re-lets as two probationers decided they didn't have the time to maintain an allotment. Everyone else was recommended for a full tenancy to Haringey, except for five sets of people still carrying out their probationary period. It has been great to see so many keen new gardeners getting stuck in. Despite our long waiting list, people are only waiting just over two years for a plot on average.

#### 1.5.2 Shed Shop Volunteers *Sara Jolly*

One or two volunteers have been assisting Jim in the Shop on Saturdays. We could do with more so that it is not too much of a commitment for anyone. Please talk to Sara Jolly, or one of the other Committee members if you want to know more about volunteering.

#### 1.5.3 HAA Site Secretary *Geoff Kembell-Cook*

It's been a relatively quiet year, yet notable for many quiet acts of generosity and kindness from one tenant to another, which is as we would hope.

### *Reorganisation of Haringey Allotment Administration and Tenancy Rent Rises*

Following reorganisation of the Haringey Council Allotment service, we are now served by a full-time Allotment Coordinator who started last November: this post has been created with sole responsibility for administration and inspections of all Haringey allotment sites, and has been fully funded thanks to our 75% rental increases. As part of the package, Site Associations received a significant uplift of up to 100% to their annual Repairs and Maintenance allocation from Haringey, so returning some of the monies raised to tenants' own sites. For Highgate this meant an uplift from £966pa in 2017 to £2006pa in 2018 and 2019 which enables us to continue with site improvements.

### *Plot Inspection June 2019*

After a gap of over 18 months we had our first formal inspection with the new Allotment Coordinator in June 2019. Four Non-Cultivation Notices were agreed on grounds of weed growth/non cultivation: two tenants subsequently gave up their plots voluntarily and the other two were successfully re-inspected a month later. Five additional plots were remarked on by the Allotment Coordinator and we agreed that HAA contact the tenants giving a n informal warning – all tenants responded positively.

### *Highgate Allotments Waiting List*

During the 12 months since the last AGM, 55 entries (ten more than last year) have been added to our waiting list, which now stands at around 145 entries. Currently the waiting time for those at the top is still less than two and a half years, but this is likely to rise in coming years. This short waiting time is a testament to MMK's efficiency in running the lettings process.

### *Equipment Hire*

HAA own the following items of petrol-powered equipment, which are all available for hire by arrangement: a Stihl strimmer, two Mountfield mowers and a domestic shredder (suitable for smaller tree prunings).

### *Equipment Shed*

After lengthy deliberation we decided against buying a secondhand shipping container in favour of purchasing an upmarket steel self-assembly container to house our equipment and tools. Thanks to Corporation of London Conservation Dept we have had the area to the left of the Shed Shop levelled, and concrete slabs for the base provided, all at no cost to HAA.

#### **1.5.4 Communications with HAA Membership Hilary Laurie**

There are about 160 subscribers on the HAA Mailchimp email list: newsletters and other shorter news items have been sent out during the year. Members have supported fellow tenants in a number of ways and helped out in the Shed Shop, as well as enjoying our annual barbecue and plant swap. We continue to be a friendly and welcoming gardening community! HAA's website at <https://www.highgate-allotments.org> is accessible to all tenants and gives a variety of useful information, particularly on the Documents page, including information sheets, forms and Committee meeting minutes. HAA also runs its own closed Facebook group. You can find us here: <https://goo.gl/fCw7Dy>

#### **1.5.5 HAA Probationer Support Dan Hackett**

Each vacant plot has a different profile. I make contact first by email and then view the plots with MMK or the prospective tenants and hand out advice according to the circumstances. In total 16 probationers have been approved for tenancy since the last AGM, with just two probationers not taking up the challenge.

### **1.5.6 Environment** *Dan Hackett*

In the Newsletters I have advised on use of fertilisers, manures and composts, when and how to prune fruit trees and related issues. Newsletters are available to download on our website's Documents page here: <https://www.highgate-allotments.org/documents>

### **1.5.7 HAA Compost and Chippings** *Geoff Kembell-Cook*

**Compost Deliveries:** Unfortunately LondonEnergy have redeveloped the Edmonton Waste Depot and the large aerobic digester which generated hundreds of tons of free Eco-Compost was put out of commission, ending our deliveries. However we continue to provide large quantities of Thompson's rotted horse manure throughout the year.

**Chippings:** These continue to be supplied without notice and free of charge by local tree surgeons, as and when they are working in our immediate area.

### **1.5.8 HAA Site Security and Maintenance** *Don Adams & Dan Hackett*

**Security:** Happily we have had no recurrence of last year's site break-in which resulted in loss of valuable tools across the site, but tenants are advised that it is impossible to make the site perfectly secure and it is unwise to leave valuable tools in sheds on site. Such tools are unlikely to be covered by your insurance policy away from your own residential property and Haringey Council's insurance does not cover them either. Regrettably battery-operated power tools and petrol-powered mowers/strimmers are readily re-sellable and so are likely targets. Our best advice is either to bring them in from home as required, or at least make sure they are well-concealed.

**Mains Water Leak:** a mains water leak directly opposite the Shed Shop was excavated and repaired by excellent contractors organised and paid for by Haringey Council. Haringey continue to have responsibility for any mains water issues below ground level, while HAA deal with issues above ground.

**General Maintenance:** a number of small improvements and purchases have been funded in order to benefit tenants. Details of these can be found in the 2018 Accounts under "Expenses" and ancillary documents covering the first half of 2019.

### **1.5.9 Haringey Allotment Forum Representatives** *Dan Hackett & Geoff Kembell-Cook*

DH attends the quarterly public meetings of the Forum where information exchange and discussions take place with reps from across all the Haringey allotment sites. DH and GKC are now also both members of the HAF Steering Group which helps to monitor problems and formulate policies on allotment management across the Borough, with direct access to Council managers.

## **1.6 Questions arising from the Committee members' reports**

In response to a question about site environment issues, DH discussed the advantages of edible weeds, the summer sighting of ringlet butterflies, newts, frogs, dragonflies and even a hedgehog, although, alas, an ex-hedgehog. He confirmed that for the sake of hedgehogs and other wildlife the Shed Shop has stopped selling slug pellets containing metaldehyde, at the cost of about £100 for written-off stock that was then disposed of safely. We continue to supply the more expensive but environmentally friendly brand of slug pellets.

GKC gave an update on the planned storage unit. There will be a communal work day to prepare the base.

On the subject of waste removal and recycling, a question was asked if there were plans for any more skips. The alternative of several plot holders sharing a man with a van was proposed. It was confirmed that HAA are in a position to use some of our funds for rubbish removal and recycling.

Another tenant asked whether HAA funds could be used to subsidise parking in the CPZ bay outside the main gate. GKC agreed to look into the issue as to whether the site could be considered as a “resident” and therefore have access to visitors’ permits.

The Committee were asked what other plans spending were being considered. JG explained that the bulk of our funds must not be frittered away, as they insulate us against unpredictable events and problems. It was however agreed that some of the money could be spent on projects that will benefit the whole site – for example to revamp the Shed Shop once the equipment has been moved to the container. Another tenant pointed out that the descending portion of the circular access road just inside the main gate would benefit from repair. It was pointed out that this would, in fact, come under capital works from Haringey Council – and we can bid for the cash to get this done.

Finally GKC asked all tenants to email with suggestions if they come up with good ideas for improvements.

## **2 Election of 2019-2020 HAA Committee**

Since 9 nominations have been received for 10 Committee places, no formal election required.

The new Committee members:

Don Adams

Jim Greenhill

Dan Hackett

Sara Jolly

Geoff Kemball-Cook

Hilary Laurie

Graham Laurie

Maggy Meade-King

Iain Sheils

Jim thanked all the past Committee members and the helpers in the Shed Shop.

## **3 Any Other Business**

Our Artist in Residence, Chrissie Nicholls, introduced herself and invited people to look at the display of work she had set up. She stressed that she would only draw on people’s plots if they invited her to. She will have an exhibition next summer (2020). Her email address will be circulated so that people can invite her to draw their plot.

An appeal was made for a few more volunteers to sign up to help Jim in the Shed Shop.

JG expressed his thanks to the volunteers & also to the helpers who turn out to unload the deliveries.

An update on the house renovation taking place just outside the site was given.

A complaint was made about a media student who had filmed (with permission and with clear guidance given beforehand as to what was permissible) on the allotments – it was felt she had been unprofessional and not kept to the guidance. It was suggested that there had been miscommunication and an apology was made: this does however underline the potential difficulties of monitoring those who the Committee allow to come on site, after due consideration and with good will on both sides.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Committee proposed by Ann Morris.

JG also gave thanks to William Dean, Head Teacher of Highgate Primary School, for the use of school premises for the AGM and for Committee meetings throughout the year.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

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Next Committee meeting: Sunday 10 November 2019

Next AGM: Thursday 15 October 2020