

Minutes of AGM of Highgate Allotments Association,  
Highgate Primary School, Thursday 12 October 2017

1. **Welcome** The meeting opened at 7.30pm. Jim Greenhill welcomed everyone present – approx. 28 plot holders (including 7 committee members).
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Celia Barnett, Mina Cuogo, Julia Doyle, Sarah Ewans, Karen Fitzsimon, David Gittings, Paul Harris, Simon Hewitt, Ralph Manning, Pat Mealham, Ann Morris, Sam Oxley, Lawrence Pattinson, Carin Thuresson and Roger van Zwanenberg.
3. **The minutes of the last AGM (13 October 2016) were approved.**
4. **The accounts for calendar year 2016**
  - 4.1 Graham Laurie (co-opted Accounts Manager) presented the accounts for 2016 which showed the HAA to be in a good position financially. At the end of 2016 net assets were £19537, mainly cash in the bank. During 2016 slow-moving items of stock were disposed of, reducing the number of items stocked from 86 to 24. This resulted in a loss at gross profit level of £979. Expenses were greater than usual, the main expense being a new shed roof covering costing £1860.
  - 4.2 Update 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2017  
At the end of September we reported a small gross profit of £148, representing 5% on 9 months' Shed Shop sales of £2970. This is a most welcome turnaround on the loss in 2016. The programme to improve the HAA site continues in 2017, with new gates provided by Haringey. Expenses for calendar year 2017 are anticipated to be lower than in 2016.
5. **Committee reports October 2016 – September 2017**

**5.1 Site Secretaries' Lettings and Waiting List Report** Geoff Kemball-Cook & David Gittings

GKC read out a message from DG in which he apologised for his absence, sent good wishes to all and thanked the committee for their hard work in the past year.

**5.1.1. Inspections, Lettings and Waiting List** Two plot inspections by Haringey have been carried out since the last AGM, in April and September 2017 (Haringey having reduced the number of annual inspections from three to two). After the April inspection 3 tenancies were terminated and these have been re-let. No terminations were made after the September inspection. Bundling in a few voluntary tenant departures and some terminations carried over from the 2016 inspections, in all 13 plots have been let to new tenants, several to young families. During the same year, over 45 entries have been added to our waiting list which now stands at nearly 90 entries. Currently the waiting time for those at the top is still less than 2 years, but this is likely to rise during 2018.

Access to the Haringey management database (“Colony”) to allow us to update tenant records has still not materialised. Currently Haringey are due to implement a change in administration at year-end 2017 (see below) which may help communications and make this unnecessary.

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

A letter from Haringey on this subject was sent to all tenants in July 2017. Following the severe cuts imposed on Haringey’s funding, as the Allotment Service was not cost-neutral there was a plan to devolve administration tasks to Site Associations in order to save money. However a counter-proposal from the Haringey Allotment Forum seems to have found favour and should be implemented by the end of 2017. This is to raise all rents by 75% in order to finance a ring-fenced budget for a full-time Allotment Officer who will carry out all office administration (issuing of tenancies and record-keeping) together with all plot inspections across the borough. This officer should be in post by the end of 2017, and rents will rise from January 2018 (but be frozen thence for 3 years). This is the first rent rise in several years and brings Haringey more into line with other London boroughs.

As part of the package, Site Associations would also receive a significant uplift of up to 100% to their annual Repairs and Maintenance allocation, so returning some of the monies raised to tenants’ own sites. For Highgate this may mean an increase from £966 p.a. currently to nearly £2000 p.a. (to be confirmed), which will enable us to continue with site improvements.

**5.1.3 Main Gates and Fencing Replacement** This has been on a Haringey list of outstanding capital works for several years, and has been kept alive by our previous Site Secretary, Simon Hewitt. Haringey finally made available a capital sum in 2017 and the works on our main entrance were carried out in May 2017. We are again grateful to Simon for advising on the detailed implementation. The work was funded by Haringey, and the new gates were officially declared open by our Maintenance Manager, Angelo Guarino.

Since then the grassed areas to either side have been superbly enhanced by perennial planting by tenant Sue Cakebread with much help from her husband John (and a little from other tenant volunteers). Tenants warmly thanked Sue and John for their tremendous work to improve the site.

**5.1.4 Tree Works Improving SW Boundary** Unfortunately there is no legal restriction on tree height in domestic gardens at the boundary of allotment sites. Tenants in the SW corner of the site have long suffered particularly badly from shading by tall trees in the gardens of Denewood Road houses. This year, thanks to DG’s extensive negotiations with residents and tree surgeons, a number of trees have been reduced. This has greatly improved the amount of sun available, all largely paid for by the Denewood Road residents themselves, with a small contribution only by HAA.

Several tenants have voiced their unhappiness with the height of the 27 plane trees on the boundary with Gaskell Road. The estimated cost of a 20% crown reduction of these trees is £35-40K. The Council will get involved only if there is a clear health and safety issue.

**5.1.5 Disabled Parking on the site and keeping the circular lane clear** It is to everyone's benefit that the circular lane be kept clear of encroaching vegetation, so if your plot borders the lane please keep everything cut or tied well back – or you may find it chopped away without notice.

A reminder that casual parking for non-disabled drivers is not permitted anywhere on the site, although a car or small van can be brought on site briefly for loading or unloading. There is now a new marked disabled parking space in the NE corner of the site, and the two disabled parking spaces on the top lane have been marked and improved. Disabled drivers must display their Blue Badges. [See item 7 below for modifications to local parking rules.]

**5.1.6 Volunteer Working Parties** A concrete hard standing for lorry deliveries of eco-compost and horse manure was constructed late last year, together with a good clearance of shrub and tree growth in the areas near the HAA shed and main entrance. Shrubs encroaching on the circular lane SW extension were also cleared in 2017 ahead of tree works. Grateful thanks to all who have helped in those working parties and others, weeding beds, repairing and painting the shed and mowing the communal plots, paths and lanes on the site.

## **5.2 HAA Membership Report** Maggy Meade-King

There are 158 subscribers on the HAA MailChimp email list: newsletters and other shorter news items have been sent out during the year. Members have participated in a number of working parties 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!

Marc Haynes was thanked for his help with the newsletters.

## **5.3 HAA Probationer Support Report** Dan Hackett

Each vacant plot has a different profile. I make contact first by email, view the plots with GKC or the prospective tenants, and hand out advice according to the circumstances. In total 19 probationers have been approved for tenancy since the last AGM; only 2 probationers were unsuccessful

## **5.4 HAA Environmental Report** Dan Hackett

On the butterfly front, I recorded the Ringlet butterfly for the first time, alongside the Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper (which are regulars), incidentally on a neglected plot. A Red Admiral was seen laying her eggs on the nettles behind the barbecue picnic area during the ceremony for commissioning the new gates.

### **5.5 HAA Compost and Chippings Report** David Gittings & Dan Hackett

Compost Deliveries: Tenants have benefitted from several deliveries of free eco-compost organised by DG, plus two deliveries of horse manure (organised by DH) sold at a knockdown price per barrow load. These deliveries will continue – compost 2-3 times per year, and horse manure as available (even though this was found to contain weeds, particularly fat hen, tenants appreciated its quality).

Chippings: Supplies continue without notice and free of charge, made by local tree surgeons as and when they are working in our immediate area.

### **5.6 HAA Site Security and Maintenance Report** Angelo Guarino

**Site security** has been improved greatly by the installation of the new main gates and adjoining fencing.

**Maintenance** No single item of major expenditure has been made since the last AGM: a number of small improvements and purchases have been funded in order to benefit tenants. Details of these can be found in the 2016 Accounts under “Expenses” and ancillary documents covering most of 2017.

Most regrettably, as last year, valuable time and money was wasted on repairs to vandalised blue plastic water pipes. All tenants, please keep your eyes open for any suspicious behaviour. A reminder that if any tenant is proved to be responsible for vandalism on site, this means immediate termination of tenancy and also possible prosecution for criminal damage. AG was warmly thanked for repairs to the vandalised pipes and other routine maintenance during the year.

### **5.7 Haringey Allotment Forum Representative Report** Marc Haynes

For news of the planned reorganisation of Haringey Council administration and proposed rent rises, see 5.1.2 above.

Discussion has begun in the HAF on the provision of electricity to allotment sites.

### **5.8 HAA Website** Jack Humphrey

JH asked for suggestions for improving the newsletter. He proposed setting up an HAA Facebook page, to create an online message board for plot holders, and this suggestion was welcomed.

## **6. Election of committee**

Since 9 nominations for election to up to 10 places on the HAA Committee had been received, it was agreed that a ballot was unnecessary. Therefore the 9 nominees were returned unopposed.

The members of the new committee:

Sarah Ewans

David Gittings

Angelo Guarino

Jim Greenhill

Dan Hackett

Jack Humphrey

Geoffrey Kemball-Cook

Hilary Laurie

Maggy Meade-King

## **7. Changes to Local Parking Rules**

The current local rules for on-site parking are as follows:

1. There is no unattended parking allowed for any vehicles on site, apart from vehicles displaying blue disabled badges
2. Vehicles displaying blue disabled badges should normally be parked in one of the three marked disabled parking bays.
3. The circular access lane on the Highgate site must be kept free for emergency vehicle access at all times.
4. Tenants or contractors acting for tenants may temporarily park cars or other light vehicles on the circular lane for the purpose of loading and unloading materials to or from their plot. These vehicles must be driven off-site as soon as the loading or unloading is completed.
5. Contractors' vehicles must not be brought on-site without the relevant tenant present at all times. Tenants have the responsibility for ensuring that contractors observe the rules for on-site parking.
6. If it is necessary for any vehicle to park on the circular lane and left unattended, a notice must be placed on the dashboard giving a mobile phone contact number and the plot number where the driver may be found.
7. Larger vans or lorries with heavy loads may not use the circular lane and must unload or load by the main gates.

It was agreed by popular vote of tenants that the following should be added:

8. Disabled tenants parking vehicles on-site must display their blue badges on the vehicle dashboard with the tenant's name uppermost to allow for identification and location of the tenant on site. Refusal to do so may constitute a breach of tenancy.
9. It is suggested that disabled tenants parking a vehicle on site aim to occupy a disabled space for no more than three hours in any one day, so as to make the limited parking spaces (currently 3) available for other disabled drivers. This is a guideline only, not a rule as such, something we ask disabled drivers to bear in mind when planning their work on the site.

The amended Local Parking Rules will be displayed on the HAA noticeboards and website.

## **8. AOB**

One member whose plot contains many dandelions asked if, in principle, they are disliked and should be removed. It was agreed that, since they are a food source for bees, they could be left but best picked before they go to seed.

Rob Wilson thanked members who have contributed produce to Gary Sycamore's stall at the weekly Alexandra Palace market. All proceeds from the sale of crops and

flowers (from HAA and Shepherds Hill allotments) go to the Harington Scheme. On a good day this can amount to around £500. This will end in late October but it is hoped to do the same again next year. Rob was warmly thanked for these efforts. Members were encouraged to take advantage of the 50% discount offered on vegetable and flower seeds by King's Seeds. Catalogues were available at the meeting and are also to be found in the HAA Shed Shop.

9. Before closing the meeting, JG thanked Highgate Primary School for the use of its hall for the AGM and for allowing the HAA to hold committee meetings in the school throughout the year.

He noted with regret the deaths of Margaret Jarvie and Julian Silverman in the past year and, on behalf of everyone, he sent good wishes to those members who are unwell.

He thanked the committee for their help, especially Site Secretary GKC who has worked 'above and beyond' his brief.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

**10. Date of next AGM: Thursday 11 October 2018**