

Agreed Minutes of AGM of Highgate Allotments Association, Highgate Primary School, 7.30pm Thursday 7th July 2022

Present: Rita Drobner, Guyonne James, Rob Wilson, Christopher Wilson, Ros Davies, Nick Moore, Michael Reece, Dan & Fiona Hackett, Sue and John Cakebread, Louise Wright, Kevin Ruane, Jo Todd, Sally Jones, Hilary & Graham Laurie, Nick Whittaker, Maggy Meade-King, Geoff Kemball-Cook, Sara Jolly, Hinchee Hung, Gundula Hearsum, Ann Lloyd (total of 24)

1 Welcome and Apologies

The chair (Hilary Laurie) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Sue Brown, Kate Calvert, Iain Cameron, Jeremy Chase, Tim Coppard, Julia Dick, Saul Estrin, Sarah Frame, Jill Gillard, Jim Greenhill, Rahid Khan, Sue Levine, Marshall Levine, Ruth Pavey and Wendy Whale

2 Site Secretary's Report (Geoff Kemball-Cook)

The report had been circulated and printed copies available at the meeting. There was discussion on a number of points:

- How to sensitively coax people into realising that they can no longer manage their plots and when to give them up: Geoff emphasised that it is important to be patient and not hound people off their plots. There were anecdotal comments from tenants about plot neighbours who appear to attend their plots rarely. Geoff assured those present that all plots on site are monitored and tenants contacted if their plots appear to be lacking cultivation.
- Maggy explained about the 3 month probation period, with support provided to new plot holders by Dan.
- Downsizing to smaller plots was also discussed and one tenant gave the example of needing to move to a smaller plot after an accident resulting in disability, expressing gratitude for the help given, and delight that her old, large plot is now giving great pleasure to the family who took it over.
- One tenant suggested the possibility of a communal plot with raised beds for people who could no longer manage their individual plots but still wanted the company and enjoyment of the allotments: others expressed doubts that this would work – people like having their own patch of land. The committee agreed to discuss this possibility.
- There was discussion of how the waiting list had hugely lengthened, partly due to increased interest in food miles, mental well-being etc. and partly due to lockdown and furloughing: eventually the waiting list had been closed to new applicant in 2021.
- On hire equipment, a suggestion was made that HAA could buy a lightweight battery-powered strimmer for hire by tenants, as our petrol-powered strimmers are too heavy for some tenants to use easily: others expressed doubt about the responsibility of maintenance and recharging of multiple batteries off site: committee agreed to investigate.
- Another tenant expressed worries about the amount of plastic waste produced by use of strimmers with plastic strimmer lines: Dan recommended a good pair of really sharp shears – or a sickle! – while others sang the praises of hand-push mowers which are cheap, easy to use for most people, and only produce a soothing summery noise, as opposed to the din of strimmers. Committee agreed to investigate.
- Dan proposed re-instating community working days. One could be a workshop on sharpening your tools; another could be clearing the junk from areas being used as a dumping ground. A skip could be hired, but would have to be 'policed'.

Maggy proposed a vote of thanks to Geoff particularly his tireless delivery to individual plots of items purchased from the shed shop during the time the shop has been closed: agreed unanimously by the meeting.

3 Treasurer's Report (Hinchee Hung)

Our new treasurer presented her summary of the financial position and asked for questions from the floor. One tenant commented that it was pleasing we have ample reserves, and discussion ensued about how these might be used in the future.

- Our previous treasurer explained the philosophy of the cushion of money as an insurance policy (as we are not insured) so that in the event of potential catastrophes such as the Shed Shop being burnt down, or the water supply needing to be repaired, we have the wherewithal to do it: it was explained that in addition of the £2000 pa Haringey maintenance grant the reserves are topped up by the 15% mark up on goods sold in the shop. Further possibilities for expenditure include purchase of a defibrillator, boundary plane tree reduction, or resurfacing of the circular road, all items that Haringey might have difficulty funding in future.
- A tenant asked why there was a policy of only being able to purchase goods from the Shed Shop for your plot, not for your garden at home. Geoff explained that there is a limit to the amount of stock we can accommodate and unload, and we would not wish to undermine the trade of excellent local garden centres.
- Graham Laurie was thanked for his past years of service as treasurer, and he in turn expressed his gratitude that Hinchee has taken on this important post.

4 Election of 2022-23 Committee

Eight nominations had been received: Rita Drobner, Dan Hackett, Hilary Laurie, Maggy Meade-King, Geoff Kembell-Cook, Sara Jolly and Hinchee Hung. The committee were appointed without an election as there were only 8 candidates for 10 posts as specified by the HAA Constitution.

5 Any Other Business

- Geoff reported that Jim Greenhill was much missed by all his friends on the site but that he is being visited frequently by committee member Don Adams. Jim sends his best wishes and looks forward to seeing us on site when possible.
- A question was put about the absence of free "eco-compost": Geoff explained that this was previously supplied from the Edmonton Waste/Recycling depot but the anaerobic digester supplying the compost had been removed due to reconstruction of the site, so Haringey's green waste was now being delivered elsewhere outside London.
- Another question was put about the timber enclosure on the verge under the plane trees at the boundary with Gaskell Road: Geoff explained that this is an electricity substation.
- There was discussion on the perennial topic of the main gates being left open and some tenants having difficulty operating the padlocks: Geoff pointed out that there were pros and cons to any potential solution investigated over the years and that those who passionately want new locks should volunteer to lead and spearhead the complex project of finding a solution suiting the fire brigade, tree surgeons and all tenants. Sara suggested a stern notice on the gates, reminding people that if they find the gate open they MUST lock it.
- It was suggested that a first aid kit could be available outside the shop: this was thought to be impractical, due to the likelihood of theft. It was suggested that it would be sensible for each plot owner to have their own simple and inexpensive first aid kit.

The meeting concluded at 9.00pm with more biscuits and refreshments!