

Henley on Thames Allotments Association Draft Minutes of AGM held at 19.00 on 19th October 2015 at the Council Chambers, Henley Town Hall

1.0) Apologies: Liz Cope, Ken Carter, Mike Hails, Elizabeth Lemuire, Sally McEwen, Liz Reid, Liz Ware.

2.0) Presentation of last year's minutes: Andrew Hawkins wanted a correction to be made on point 4.ii). Annual weeds **can** be composted once the soil has been knocked off the roots, or they can be dug back into the soil. The draft 2014 minutes (now online) will be amended to correctly reflect this. Andrew also mentioned that soil/weeds are often deposited on communal areas at both sites and how wasteful this was, as it removed fertility from plots. It is much better to dig dislodged weeds back into the soil on your plot.

The minutes were accepted without further change.

3.0) Matters arising from the minutes: None.

4.0) Chairman's Report: It is the last year that Andrew Hawkins will be Chair and so he read out his report verbatim. Andrew has been Chair for 11 years and felt that during his tenure, both sites have been transformed. He passed on his thanks to all the Committee members, past and present, for their hard work in helping to manage the sites and make them more attractive. He also thanked the following: Henley Town Council, Becky Walker, Park Services, the Community Support Workers, Peter Herbert, plot holders and Greenshoots. Andrew has made many friends during his years as Chair and he wished his successor, Dave McEwen, all the best in his new role. He will still be keeping on his plot and hoped to spend more time tending his plants.

5.0) Treasurer's Report: Dave Chilvers took the meeting through the accounts: he has been Treasurer for 5 months, so the accounts have been calculated by him and Dave McEwen (previous Treasurer). The annualised income for 2015 is broadly in line with 2014, but the expenditure year on year has increased. This is due to the one-off costs of buying and maintaining the trimmers and mowers equipment for the Volunteer Group at Watermans. Previously, spending by the Volunteer Group has been funded via a "float", but in future money spent will be refunded directly against receipts submitted. Dave thanked the Cricket Club for their generous donation of £750 for 2015 Regatta parking and also for the financial support from Henley Town Council (£900). The Boat Trip did not go ahead in 2015, which resulted in a missed opportunity to boost the funds (in 2014 the boat trip made £390): hopefully this social event would be reinstated in 2016. The accounts were audited by Margot Dapper and from the records produced the accounts were in order. It was proposed that a better process for the financial control and reporting of the Waterman's maintenance float be implemented. There was a transcription error in the Financial Report presented to the AGM. The Annualised Income for 2014-2015 should have read £2278.39 not £2326.37 and a corrected report is attached. There were

no questions from the floor about the accounts, so their acceptance was proposed by Dave McEwen, seconded by Peter Herbert and passed unanimously by the meeting.

6.0) Secretary's Report: Peter Herbert presented the Secretary's Report. Peter is retiring as Secretary after 12 years and thanked the Committee for all their hard work. Marisa Francini, who has been Assistant Secretary for some years, will be taking over the role of Secretary. PH commented on the amount of work the Committee do for plot holders, a lot of which is hidden, and thanked the Committee for all their support. Peter confirmed that he will still be involved in maintaining the pumps at Greencroft, and that Hobbs will continue to provide a boat for the AA boat trip. He will be keeping his plot on, and hopes to be able to spend more time working it.

7.0) Election of Officers and Committee members:

The following members are standing for election/re-election:

Chair: Dave McEwen

Secretary: Marisa Francini

Treasurer: Dave Chilvers

Watermans Site Manager: Doug Richards

Greencroft Site Manager: Lewis Every

Events Manager: Anne Sandars

Watermans Representatives: Laura Dance. Sophie Pentacost

Greencroft Representatives: Peter Anderson. Max Wall (internet)

There were no other nominations: Andrew Hawkins proposed acceptance, David Gobbett seconded and the Committee was elected unanimously.

7.1) The new Chair, Dave McEwen, thanked Andrew Hawkins for his outstanding commitment as Chair over the past 11 years and wished him all the best for the future. Andrew is a wise elder and will be a difficult act to follow. He has been a plot holder for over 40 years and has a vast knowledge of plants and allotments. He has been the public face of the Committee during his tenure and has overseen many site improvements, as well as plot holder numbers doubling to around 200. He recently showed some new Councillors around the sites and gave an outstanding account of the allotments and how the Committee works to run them (supported by an excellent paper written by Marisa Francini). He has also always supported allotment social events and initiatives and conducted Committee business professionally and pleasantly. Dave presented Andrew with a gift and card from the Committee and other plot holders: a professional photograph of Andrew on his plot.

Andrew was thrilled with the gift and said he had loved his time on the Committee. However, after 11 years as Chair, he felt he had achieved all he could and wished Dave all the best in his new role.

N.B. Andrew also received theatre vouchers at a later date following donations given by plot holders at the AGM.

7.2) Marisa Francini thanked Peter Herbert for all his time and commitment over the past 11 years and wished him the best for the future. He has been outstanding as AA Secretary, has dealt with many issues that have arisen in a calm, professional manner and has taught her much. He is a kind person, has always gone out of his way to put others before himself and has been an example to everyone on the Committee.

He has recently purchased a camper van and hopefully would now have more time to use it. Marisa presented Peter with a gift and card from the Committee and other plot holders: the gift was a cold frame.

Peter replied by thanking everyone for such a wonderful gift. He said he would miss the Committee, but felt he had served his time and it was the turn of others to take over from him.

8.0) Honoraria: Dave McEwen informed the members that an annual honoraria of £70 was usually paid to the Committee members carrying out the most onerous roles. This was paid in recognition of the time and effort put in. Roles that were being proposed for an honorarium are as follows:

2 Site Managers, Treasurer, Secretary, Assistant Secretary.

DM asked for a proposer for the honoraria: this was proposed by Dave Cook and seconded by Martin Bidlake-Corser and voted for unanimously.

8.1) Dave Cook asked if there were plans to appoint another Assistant Secretary. If not, he felt the Secretary should have a larger honorarium due to the workload involved. DM replied that a replacement was being sought but to date no-one had come forward. The honoraria being voted on today was retrospective, and that an increased honoraria for the role of Secretary would be considered next year if a replacement had not been found.

9.0) Appointment of Auditor: Margot Dapper has agreed to audit the accounts again in 2016. She was proposed by Laura Davies, seconded by Pete Anderson and voted for unanimously.

10.0) Social Events: DM told the members that a separate Events sub-committee is being trialled, with 3 Committee members involved: Anne Sandars will run the sub-committee and co-ordinate the calendar, with Laura Dance and Sophie Pentacost helping. Other plot holders are needed to join the sub-committee: Greencroft is currently not represented. Volunteers are also needed to help run individual events. MF mentioned that a number of new events were trialled this year, all suggestions from plot holders. These included coffee/tea mornings, the September Produce Sale and the Bonfire Night at Watermans. Anne Sandars also mentioned the Chelsea Fringe in May, where a Canadian canoe had been dressed by the AA. All of these new events had been very well received and hopefully would continue next year. Plot holders had great ideas for social events and the Committee was restructuring to allow for better support for plot holder ideas. Other ideas that had been put forward but not followed through (due to lack of time) included a trip to the Malvern Show/Hampton Court Show and a Gardeners' Question Time.

10.1) DR confirmed that the AA Christmas Dinner at Christchurch would go ahead on Thursday 17th December and would cost £19pp. This consisted of a

4 course meal with aperitif and coffee: attendees are invited to bring their own drinks. Attendance forms were available at the meeting with details. A minimum number of 40 is needed for this event to be viable.

11.0) Any Other Business: MF confirmed that 3 questions had been put in writing for discussion (by Dave Cook):

11.1) Question: Watermans have a successful volunteer team to help maintain plots. Could a similar team be organised for Greencroft? It was agreed that the Volunteer Group had helped enormously with the maintenance of Watermans and if the Site Manager, Lewis Every, felt he needed a group to help him, then it could easily be set up if volunteers were forthcoming. It was felt that some areas needed tidying up at Greencroft and that either a volunteer group or the Community Support Workers could tackle these areas e.g. the brambles near the car park. LE confirmed that a working group was needed to help clear the hedge on the cricket club boundary and that he would be looking for volunteers to help in November.

11.2) Question: Why do plot holders not pay a subscription to belong to the Henley AA, as was the case a number of years ago? DM replied by saying that plot holders were already being asked to pay an extra £2.50 with their rent for membership to the NSALG, and that the AA funds were healthy at the moment. For now it was felt that an extra fee for membership was not needed.

11.3) Question: Should risk assessments be carried out for both sites? This is quite a simple task, mostly a tick box system.

DM agreed this was an excellent idea and should be carried out annually in conjunction with Henley Town Council (who own the land). This assessment would pick up any hazards on the sites: some hazards would be the responsibility of the AA, but others would be the Council's responsibility. With more families and children at the allotments, this would prove very useful. Simple things such as open water butts and overhanging tree branches could be formally identified and dealt with before an accident occurred. DM confirmed that this would be an agenda item at the next AA meeting. Mandy Taylor informed the Committee that there was a dangerous branch overhanging her plot at Greencroft (plot 10) that requires attention.

Questions were then invited from the floor:

11.4) A plot holder asked if baths on the sites that were being used as water butts could be covered with mesh for safety reasons. DM confirmed that this would be part of the risk assessment.

11.5) Laura Dance asked if the rules concerning dogs could be better enforced. Plot holders' dogs are allowed on site but only if on a lead. Some plot holders are persistently breaking this rule, and dog faeces had been found on others' plots. It was agreed that this was completely unacceptable: allotments provide food for people to eat and the thought of dog faeces next to growing food was disgusting. A plot holder mentioned that the allotments were used by some members of the public to walk their dogs and was this allowed? DR suggested that, if dogs were seen running around the site, plot holders should find and challenge the owner. If they were not plot holders they should be asked to leave the site: the land is private Council land and for the use of plot holders only. Plot holders who persistently offended could

be evicted, but the Site Manager needed to know who these people are for this to be carried out. Another plot holder said she knew a member of the public who walked her dog on a lead every day: she lived locally and was elderly and it seemed churlish to evict her. Another member asked for formal signs to be erected at various points around both sites that could be referred to when these problems occurred. Visual signs were proposed rather than written signs, as many plot holders do not have English as their first language. MF will talk to Henley Town Council and get these installed as soon as possible. There will be two different signs: one to confirm that the land is private and another to show that plot holder dogs are allowed but must be on a lead.

11.6) A plot holder asked if anyone knew why a drone had been flying very low over Greencroft at 6am one morning. DM confirmed that it belonged to a plot holder who had sought HTC for permission to fly it over various parts of Henley to practise using it. A copy of the film is available for plot holders to see: DM will ask if it can be put on the website.

11.7) Another plot holder asked about manure and if there would be another delivery this year. DR confirmed that the manure costs £80 for the 2 sites and availability depended on the stables having manure to spare. Another plot holder commented that the quality of the previous manure was not great: DR felt that it represented very good value for money.

11.8) DR commented that more funds could be raised if more plot holders provided spinach, kale, and rhubarb for the Plant Sale and Produce Sale. In May, DR collected 90 bundles of rhubarb from various plot holders and sold the bundles for £1.50 each. This alone produced £135 for AA funds. DM confirmed that excess produce could legally be sold to raise funds for the AA. What was not legal was using allotment land to grow produce commercially. DM mentioned Greenshoots and the good work they carry out to help people with disabilities. They are always looking for people to help them, and also to pass on growing expertise.

11.9) DM reminded plot holders that Kings seed orders were due by Friday October 23rd latest.

12.0) Presentation of Silverware: The names of the winners of Best Plot and Best Newcomer were read out: judging had been very difficult due to the high standard of many plots. Gift vouchers and certificates had already been presented, on 23/9/15 in conjunction with the Henley in Bloom awards. The full list of winners was announced, as follows: silverware was awarded to the two Best Plot winners.

Watermans Best Plot: Sheila Stanbridge-Bennett/David Williams - Plot 34

Watermans Best Newcomer: Robert Hudgell - Plot 8A

Greencroft Best Plot: Martin Bidlake-Corser - Plot 55A

Greencroft Best Newcomer: John Gibbs - Plot 32

Henley in Bloom Community Award: Watermans Volunteer Support Group: James Bellew, Mick Blackall, George Bowsher, David Eggleton, Tony Issacs, Pat Main.

A warm round of applause greeted each announcement.

13.0) Date of next meeting: The next AGM will be October 2016, probably on a Monday or Tuesday due to the room being available free of charge on those days. The exact date will be confirmed nearer the time.

The meeting ended at 20.35 and was attended by 41 plot holders.