

**WINDSOR ALLOTMENTS AND HOME GARDENS ASSOCIATION LTD**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**HELD ON FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014 7.45PM**

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from: Caroline Jones, Mrs. Jane Jones, Jill Tawney, Ian Bell Michael and Raewyn Porteous and David and Frances Hickman

2. **Minutes of the previous AGM held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and matters arising.**

The minutes were accepted and there were no matters arising.

3. **Committee's Report presented by Fran Hartridge**

**Obituaries**

Mr Dennis Hardy, Mr Laurie Dorree, Mr Jeff Webb Mr Brian Atkinson Mr Ray Alder, Mr Eric Grant and Mr Ted Bailey

**Committee**

The Secretary informed members that the committee had decided in view of the tremendous contribution made by both Ted and Eric to the Association, it would be appropriate to send donations to charities which had been supported by both Ted and Eric. This was done and a letter of thanks was received from Eric's son and an acknowledgement was received from Thames Hospicecare regarding Ted.

Due to Ted's death and the resignation from the committee during the year, of Richard Raynham, David Moores and Peter Cheeseman, four vacancies needed to be filled. Nomination papers with the names of four volunteers for the committee were made available to members.

The Secretary thanked the Membership Secretary, Lesley Spence and the Allotment Secretary for the efficient manner in which the rent and membership collections had been undertaken. During the previous allotment year ending in September, the number of members was 732. At the beginning of 2014, membership stands at 662. An increase in membership is expected as the growing season gets underway and Home Garden members renew their subscriptions. The secretary asked members to ensure that Lesley had current contact details including e-mail addresses where applicable.

Thanks were offered to David Hickman, an ex committee member who edits the regular newsletter with help from Lesley.

The Secretary reminded the members of the valuable work carried out by Cliff Partridge the lettings officer to keep the hall in a state fit for use and thanked him for his efforts.

### **Events**

In February Anne Montminy organised a very successful Scottish dance evening and her regular Thursday dance afternoons continued until July.

Pamela Bailey our show secretary organised two talks by Graham Talbot for the members. The first, early in the year concerned allotment gardening and the second in July was advice on how to show vegetables.

In September the annual prize giving evening was held with helpers invited to attend for the first time. This proved a success.

At the AGM in January 2013 Hilary Hopper volunteered to organise an outing if she was given assistance. Lesley Spence assisted Hilary and in September an enjoyable trip to Wisley was taken on the day of the Wisley Flower Show and sculpture trail. Members therefore enjoyed three events for the price of one.

### **Show and Fete**

The Secretary reported that there had been an increase in interest shown by members regarding the fete and thanked David Morris and Brenda Bateman who had also involved their families with organising and running stalls. More volunteers had arrived on the day and the event was voted a success. She thanked all those who had been involved.

Pamela Bailey the show secretary had worked hard to organise a very successful show. The work for this event begins in the autumn. The secretary reminded members that it was always worth having a go at showing as without exhibits there will be no show.

### **RHS**

The secretary reminded members, that as the Association has associate membership of the RHS, there is an entitlement to two tickets for members' use. The tickets allow members to take a guest and gain entry with a 30% reduction on the cost of each adult entry.

The tickets can be used an unlimited number of times.

The secretary holds these tickets and members should contact her when and if they would like to make use of them. She also reminded the members that the RHS Garden magazine is stored in the Fairground Road trading shed for members to see.

A special event at Wisley, that of a butterfly exhibition was due to open on January 18<sup>th</sup> 2014. It is well worth a visit especially as children under the age of 16years have free entry.

## **4. Treasurer's report presented by Frank Tarrant**

Frank explained that in accordance with FCA regulations it was necessary to ask the membership to approve the forgoing of a full audit of the accounts. Frank Tarrant explained to members that the Association could approve a limited scrutiny as our association is very small in financial terms. This decision had to be approved by the membership on an annual basis. Stephen Le Bras has overseen the accounts for many years and has charged a modest £250 for what is classified as a review whereas a full audit could cost in the region of £5000.

Frank went on to outline the main details of the accounts which overall showed a surplus broken down into three profit centres. These are trading sheds, allotment rental and membership income and hall and bar income.

The costs for the year had gone down by a small amount. He explained that profits were higher this year as there was no exceptional expenditure and most of our capital assets are fully depreciated. Although the accounts show that the Association is in a healthy financial state, there are several projects under review which will be very expensive.

The hall which is a popular venue for local groups needs to be redecorated.

The trading shed at Maidenhead Road is in urgent need of repair or renewal. Research by committee members regarding this matter is underway.

The leases for sites will soon be coming up for renewal. Negotiations with the council will take place this year and the Association will attempt to keep the costs down but there is bound to be an increase.

Flooding at the entrance to the Fairground site is happening on a regular basis. A solution needs to be found and is likely to be expensive.

The chairman explained that members could always make contact with any committee member to make suggestions, either in person or through the site supervisor or by email. It need not be too formal. Members present then put forward some of their concerns in order that they could be considered for attention.

Elizabeth Gray expressed her concern regarding security lights outside the hall. It is difficult to see when exiting the hall at night without the lights working.

One member suggested that hirers be asked what if any improvements they would like.

Many were concerned about security which is a particular problem for those on Fairground. It has been discussed many times by the committee, but there is no obvious solution.

Fencing the allotment plots on Fairground would be prohibitively expensive and not fool proof. All sites are vulnerable to determined thieves and vandals however good fences and locked gates may be.

Specific problems with the gates on Municipal and on Maidenhead Road were mentioned. The Allotment Secretary agreed that the Municipal gate lock will be looked at, but the Maidenhead Road gate was a more difficult problem to solve. As the intention is to renovate the trading shed it might be sensible to have the gate dealt with at that time.

A chain for the padlock on the town end gate on Maidenhead Road was requested.

One member suggested that a professional company was consulted to discuss security. The allotment secretary explained that security experts had been consulted.

Indeed a two day visit by the local police officer responsible for these matters had visited the Fairground site. It was suggested that perhaps warning signs informing the public that all tools and equipment had been security marked might deter criminals. Another member asked if one committee member could be a designated security officer to whom members could refer worries or incidents.

At the end of this suggestion period, Alan Dommett proposed and Richard Baldwyn seconded the proposal that the membership agree to an audit review. The members present were unanimous in agreeing to an audit review. The Chairman thanked Gaynor for dealing with the accounts.

## **5. Allotment Secretary's report**

The Allotment Secretary reported that allotment tenancies remained very much in line with recent years. He had seen a slight decrease in demand for plots and as a result applicants for tenancies on the larger sites had been accommodated almost immediately. The Secretary thanked his small band of volunteers who regularly helped on the various allotment sites and had given many hours of their time to undertake maintenance and land reclamation. It is much easier to let well presented plots than those that are overgrown. It is also easier to expect tenants then to maintain their plots in good order. The Allotment secretary asked that members act as his eyes and ears and let him know if plots are regressing to a wild state so that he can contact the tenant concerned before the situation gets out of hand. Alternatively the site supervisor can be informed.

At the end of the rent collection period, it was necessary to terminate the contract of 16 members for failure to pay rent. Only one of those tenants asked for a review thus confirming the secretary's opinion that the others were really not interested in continuing. He repeated his request that if a member feels it necessary to cease allotment gardening, that notification is given sooner rather than later to prevent plots becoming overgrown.

In recent years he had asked for volunteers to act as site supervisors. He was delighted to report that Steve Clark on Fairground supported by Steve Gray has come forward and on Municipal Joe Horan with some assistance by Denzil Jones are the men to go to with concerns. As usual incidents have occurred which cause financial loss or annoyance to members. He was pleased to report the success of the bonfire ban but reminded members that when having a fire on site it is necessary to consider wind direction, proximity to houses and other allotment holders. Consideration for others is the watchword.

There have been incidents on many sites of crops being taken. He asked that members politely challenge anyone not recognised. If necessary call 111 or 999 if you think a crime is being committed. Regrettably on some occasions crop theft has actually been committed by other allotment holders. This has been considered a very serious activity and if proved may well result in expulsion. Members' property has also been subject to vandalism. Sheds and chicken coops have been targeted and on one occasion 6 Association containers were broken into and all hand held strimmers were stolen. It was obviously a well organised crime. The insurance company in addition to the police were informed. A vehicle must have been used so members are asked if they see any unknown vehicle on site please note the number. It may assist the police in apprehending those responsible for theft.

The Allotment secretary finished his report by expressing his own regrets over the loss of Ted Bailey. He informed those present that Ted had been involved with the Association since he came home from the war. He gave many hours of his time and his practical skills as an engineer to the Association and only joined the committee when he retired. He had worked tirelessly in many roles, latterly as President where he brought greater controls and efficiency to all parts of the organisation. On a personal note the Allotment secretary acknowledged the invaluable help given to him by Ted when he had expressed an interest in growing dahlias but new very little. Ted had been a national champion and willingly gave considerable help and advice until the day he died. Ted had always been in favour of the annual show and he urged members to support the show in memory of Ted.

## **6. Purchasing Officer's Report.**

John Spence explained the role of the Purchasing Officer for the benefit of any new members present. He buys and prices non perishable products for members to purchase from the two trading sheds. The items are sold at favourable prices to members. The trading sheds are run with a small group of volunteers in both.

During the past year he had tried out some new items. Display stands hold fruit cage netting in 4 widths, black plastic and semi- permeable membrane and latterly hanging basket liner. These items have proved very popular.

It is difficult to gauge how well perishable products will sell, but onion sets sold out very quickly last year, so this autumn larger quantities were ordered and sales were very good. Garlic and Allium bulbs also sold out. He promised to find something to surprise members this coming year.

Last year was the second year in which Dobies packaged seeds were stocked. Larger seeds continue to be packaged by committee members. This coming season almost the entire seed range will be from Dobies and the supplies are being displayed in the sheds during the coming days. A considerable discount is given which enables some of the most popular varieties of beetroot, carrot, cabbage, leeks, lettuce and parsnips to be sold at the advantageous price of 60p. A small stock of more expensive seeds are held and are also sold with a hefty discount. Matching supply and demand is difficult. He urged members to buy seed early in order for him to re-stock the best selling items before too late in the growing season. He also asked for suggestion from members to fill gaps in stock.

The 2012 peat harvest had been poor owing to wet growing conditions. This impacted on the price and quality of composts. Humax original compost, good for seed growing maintained its quality. He will continue to stock it. Levington professional compost was reported by some to be below standard. Some stock was returned. A new compost from Sinclair is being trialled. It appears to be of excellent quality it is in trading sheds now. In order to keep costs down it is being sold at cost. It seems that 2013 peat harvest was good, but it remains to be seen what impact it will have on prices. He is awaiting the 2014 compost price list from the supplier. Potato orders are down on last year so the Purchasing officer urged members to place their orders if they have not yet done so. Prices are very competitive at £1.10 per kilo which is one third of the price of Marshalls on line. We do not charge for carriage.

John finished by saying that he could not do the job without the help of volunteers who brave the weather to eagerly await the members hopeful faces as they rush to purchase their items for the growing year! Regulars have included Alan Dommett Ginger Blackmun Frank Hovell Lesley Spence and Don and Fran Hartridge. More members have signed up to help in the Maidenhead Road trading shed so he offered thanks to those who had responded to the appeals.

## **7. A.O.B**

The Chairman explained that 4 places on the committee had become vacant. There were 4 nominations as could be seen on the nomination sheets distributed to the members. He asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. There were none. The membership was asked to vote. The members were unanimous in voting for all four nominees. There were no abstentions.

The Chairman went on to explain that in accordance with the rules of the Association and the recent death of Ted Bailey the President it was necessary to elect a new President.

The committee felt that the most suitable candidate was Harold Mitchell who had been a committee member in the past, had been a long time member of the Association and was familiar with the way it functioned. It was felt he would be a worthy successor to Ted Bailey. Elizabeth Gray proposed and Graham Ashley seconded the proposal. The vote was unanimous in favour of Harold becoming the President.

Hilary Hopper asked for some ideas for another outing this year and asked that once again she be given some assistance in organising the event. She herself favoured a trip to the Lea Valley but would welcome a response with ideas.

Elizabeth Gray thanked Cliff Partridge and Don Hartridge for dealing with the flooding at the front of the building and then went on to give a brief description of the Windsor and Slough Chrysanthemum, Fuchsia and Pelargonium society which meets once a month on a Thursday afternoon in the Hall between 2 and 4pm. New members would be welcome.

There being no other business the chairman closed the meeting at 9 pm precisely.