

**WINDSOR ALLOTMENTS AND HOME GARDENS ASSOCIATION LTD**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**HELD ON FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017 AT 7.45 PM**

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from: Susan Capell, Frank and Barbara Hovell, Mary and Eddie Morgan, Vincent O'Horo, Jan and Mick Slevin, Priscilla Ellis, Mrs Christine Cricket, Sarah Roddy, Michael and Raewyn Porteous and David Sparks

42 members attended.

**2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

3. Proposition to accept the minutes was put by Malcolm Osborn and seconded by David Hickman  
The minutes were accepted unanimously and there were no comments or matters arising.

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

**Obituaries**

Mr Tony Matthews, Mr Tony Bowra, Ms Nora Fenlon, Mr Barry Pateman, Mrs Deakin, Mr Cecil Lunn and Mr Mick Sibley.

The Secretary informed the members also of the death before Christmas of Mrs Hilda Bailey widow of our previous President. She gave details of Hilda's funeral for those who had been acquainted with her.

**Report**

The Secretary was delighted to report that the troubles with flooding seemed to have been resolved. However it is imperative that a watch is kept on the Bourne Ditch and the channel kept clear of debris to prevent blockages occurring to the flow of water. She thanked John Drewett and Fred Fletcher from the Spital site for their regular work on the Spital side of the drainage ditch and hoped that Fairground Allotment tenants would be similarly vigilant and helpful in this regard.

**Hall**

The Hall continues to be used by many local groups and requires continual maintenance. Cliff Partridge ensures the regular safety checks to gas and electrical fixtures and fittings. Recently he has had replacement fire doors fitted plus a new door to the outside toilet as well as a myriad of small jobs which regularly need doing. In addition to arranging for the work to be done, he oversees it and in some cases does work himself. We are indebted to Cliff for the many hours he gives to the Association in taking responsibility for the Hall.

**Treasurer**

The Secretary informed the members of the difficulties the treasurer had experienced during 2016 with the sudden and inexplicable closure of the Association bank accounts without warning.

The closure of the local branch of HSBC in Dedworth and the subsequent loss of Association records seemed to be the cause. Despite finance committee members attending the bank, filling in all forms to the satisfaction of the main branch manager and being told all was well; the accounts were closed without prior warning.

No one at the bank could explain or had any reason to give for the action. A strongly worded letter was sent to the head office and an apology was received plus an ex gratia payment.

This action by HSBC necessitated the treasurer and finance committee in opening other accounts. This took a considerable amount of time and caused a great deal of frustration.

The Association was fortunate in that its regular suppliers were happy to wait for payment.

The Secretary thanked the finance committee members for their forbearance over this matter.

### **Events**

A Nibbles drinks and quiz evening was held in May with profits from the evening going to the Thames Valley Hospice. An enjoyable evening was had by those who attended and a sum of £89 was sent to the hospice. The Secretary thanked Dave Morris for his help in organising the quiz.

The WAHGA Quiz team (known as the WAGAMAMAS) continue to represent the Association at the Datchet fund raising events (for the TVH) held twice yearly. Although never finishing lower than 5<sup>th</sup> out of about 20 or more teams they have yet to repeat their success in winning both the shield and the cup two or three years ago.

### **Talks**

Graham Ashley gave a talk for novice gardeners on two occasions. However both were poorly attended. He will hold another talk on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2017 for novice gardeners entitled "tools, techniques and working effectively". The Secretary thanked Graham for his willingness to share his expertise with newcomers to allotment gardening.

### **Fete**

In 2016, as a result of lack of interest by members, the Committee had decided not to attempt to hold a show but were willing to have a fete with the specific purpose of raising funds for the Thames Valley Hospice.

Kay Eglise masterminded the event with help from Caroline Jones. After a great deal of work and despite variable weather the event which was held in September, was a great success, enjoyed by all who attended. As a result of everyone's efforts a cheque for £1,000 was presented to the hospice.

Kay will not be able to run the event in 2017 so the Committee is looking to the membership for help if the event is to continue. Events do not have to be organised by committee members but committee members are very willing to assist anyone who would like to take on the task.

### **Membership**

The Membership Secretary, Lesley Spence, in conjunction with the Allotment Secretary carried out the annual rent collection, a process made difficult when members forget to inform them of any change of address.

At the end of the WAHGA financial year, September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016, there were 672 members. This was comprised of 457 allotment tenants and 215 Home Garden Members.

After the rent collections for 2016/2017 the membership stands at 591 of which 417 are allotment tenants with 174 Home Garden members. It is possible this number will rise as many home gardeners renew their membership in the spring.

### **Car parking**

The Secretary reported the difficulties which are caused by illegal parking at Fairground. Several cars are being left on the site regularly, thus restricting the space available to hall hirers and allotment tenants. It is fairly certain that the culprits are residents in St Leonards Road despite having been being asked not to do it.

The Committee continue to explore ways to stop this from happening.

### **Newsletter**

Caroline Jones with members Lesley and Phil Upton formed a sub committee to organise the quarterly newsletter. They held a competition to name the news letter and it was won by Louise Fetigan whose suggestion of "Diggers Digest" won the day. Louise was awarded a gift token to spend in the trading shed. The newsletter is compiled for publication in March, June, September and December.

Caroline is always pleased to receive items for the "Diggers Digest" and articles can be sent to her by email or left in either of the trading sheds for her to collect.

### **Trading Shed.**

The Secretary referred to the alterations to the trading shed on Fairground which are currently taking place. She thanked Bobbi and Richard Baldwin, who are tenants on the Maidenhead Road site. They have painted the inside of the new building and are eager to begin painting the current trading shed when convenient. She thanked them both for their efforts.

### **RHS**

The Association is an affiliated member of the RHS and receives the monthly magazine which is full of useful advice including suggested actions to be taken each month. Copies are available for members to read in the Fairground Trading Shed.

She reminded members that the Association has RHS tickets available for members to borrow. The tickets will allow four persons to gain entry to any of the four RHS gardens any number of times at a reduced price. The Secretary encouraged members to make use of them this year by contacting her when they are needed.

The Secretary also reminded members that the "Best Allotment Competition" continues to be held. It was won in 2016 by Paul Woodrup, a tenant on the Bolton Road site.

The Secretary informed the members of the Chairman, Frank Tarrant's decision to retire from the committee. She thanked him for all his work on the committee and hoped he would be willing to help in the future whenever it was necessary.

The Secretary finished the report by wishing all the members a successful gardening year.

## **5. Treasurer's Accounts presented by Graham Ashley on behalf of Gaynor Masters**

Graham explained to the members that it was a requirement of the law that approval from members was needed to forego a full audit of the accounts in favour of a review which had been carried out by Stephen Le Bras. He explained that there was a considerable difference in the cost to the association of a review and an audit.

Graham put the proposal to forego a full audit.

It was seconded by Malcolm Osborn

The vote was unanimous in favour of the proposal.

Graham explained to the members, that the accounts were in the format required by the FCA.

He asked the members to look at the last sheet on the accounts which gave far more detail and which is not part of the FCA Accounts. It gave a clear overview of the financial situation and listed the income sources which include the following:

### **Financial figures removed**

Analysis showed that the trading figures were slightly down compared with the previous year but allotment rents slightly up.

The larger utilities bill was due to a lengthy period of estimated bills rather than an actual reading. That situation has been rectified.

Taking everything into account the figures show there has been an overall increase of £19,681 to the Association's finances.

Graham then turned to the FCA Accounts and went through them page by page.

Page 4 describes where the funds are held which included a debtor of £1,284 which is a VAT repayment due to the association.

Page 6 shows the tangible assets including additions of various machines purchased by the association and trading shed improvements.

John Bastow asked about any interest on the funds and Gaynor explained that the small sum of £962 had been received and that the operating bank accounts are now with the Metro bank in addition to investment funds with the Nationwide Bank.

When Graham had finished his presentation of the accounts John Bastow asked about the HSBC account closure and Don Hartridge, a member of the finance committee gave a more detailed explanation of what had occurred.

David Hickman expressed his concern at the level of funds. The Allotment Secretary asked if discussion on this matter could be held until after his report.

The President then asked for a proposer to adopt the Accounts.

Martin Pritchett proposed the adoption and John Bastow seconded the proposal.

The vote was unanimous in favour of the adoption of the accounts.

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

Don Hartridge began his report with reference to comments he had received by some members concerning the level of association funds. He felt it necessary to explain how the Association had worked to achieve the present financial situation.

He informed members of the changes which had occurred in the almost twenty years since he became an allotment tenant and subsequently allotment secretary. Tenancy levels had increased from about 60% to well over 90%. This has been due largely to the hundreds of hours of voluntary work done to bring the land back to a lettable condition. In addition to the hard labour of the volunteers, machinery has been purchased to make reclamation less onerous.

At the same time, the hall built by the Association some years ago with the foresight of Tom and Dick Smith, has become a more and more popular venue for local groups. Cliff Partridge Lettings officer has taken on much of the maintenance work on the hall himself so that costs have been kept down and the

income inevitably has increased. Therefore with increased occupancy of plots added to increase use of the hall the association funds have inevitably risen to the level seen in the accounts.

Members of the committee are getting older and during the last year it had been necessary to use a contractor, who is first class, to help with some of the heavier work. This requirement is likely to increase in the future.

For information purposes the Allotment Secretary had estimated that the amount of work which Ginger Blackmun alone had done during the year and that had he had been paid at the same rate as the contractor it could have cost the association at least £10,000. At this point Ginger interrupted to say jokingly that he would accept!!

It is just one example of the many hours of unpaid work done by a small number of people for the benefit of the membership as a whole. Without this the accounts would show a very different picture.

The Allotment Secretary thanked all those who help on the various sites. They are Tom McCreath and Graham Ashley on Clewer Park, John Drewett and Fred Fletcher on Spital, Ginger, Bobbi and Richard Baldwin on Maidenhead Road and Martin Pritchett and Steve Clark on Fairground. He is continuing to look for someone to have oversight on Municipal. He himself looks after the Bolton Road site. He finished his report by adding that the future well being of the Association depended on like minded people coming forward who would be prepared to give as much time and energy as has been done in recent years. He pointed out that several committee members were over seventy and could not continue indefinitely. At the end of his report a discussion followed regarding use of the funds.

David Hickman expressed his appreciation of all the work done to keep the Association in such a healthy financial state. He asked what would be a reasonable sum to keep for contingencies. He asked if the funds could be used for special projects.

Harold explained that work was done as and when necessary. He informed the members that part of the track on Clewer Park had recently been repaired at a cost of £6,000.

The maintenance grant from the Council had not been increased for several years and a quote from the Council for the complete road repair would cost over £80,000.

A kitchen refurbishment is being considered and steps are being taken to get estimates for this project.

The Allotment secretary went on to talk about security fencing. He had considered having some installed at the bottom of Municipal but was concerned that it would not be enough to keep out intruders.

John Bastow referred to the occasions when a break in had occurred on the Clewer Park site. Security fencing in places on Clewer Park might be considered. Don said it was on the agenda. He will be placing an order with the company whose quote has been accepted for the Municipal site and will get them to look at Clewer Park.

Trish Weller referred to Insurance costs and the need to have regular safety checks.

Frances Hickman wondered whether it would be a good idea to sponsor some kind of event for members. One idea might be to offer a course in garden design.

It was explained to the members that David Eglise had compiled a list of possible actions which might be considered.

However an important point to remember is that with the hall bringing in a regular income of about £20,000 annually whatever is spent it will be difficult to keep the funds at a low level.

## **7. Purchasing Officer's report**

John Spence explained that the purchasing year followed a regular cycle with very few opportunities to change. He is happy to receive ideas from members and suggestions for items to stock.

The potatoes will be arriving in February as usual. In 2016 there were a lot of seed potatoes left so he has ordered less this year. He is stocking a new variety called SWIFT. This was recommended by a member and Maidenhead Road shed has already sold its allocation. A variety called Nicola recommended by a member and by Sarah Raven the Telegraph garden correspondent is gradually becoming more popular.

Onion sets and shallots should arrive with the potatoes. John stocks spring bulbs annually and a trial of agapanthus last year was very popular and sold out.

The new season seeds had arrived and would be in the trading sheds soon. He will always notify the membership by email when new arrivals are in the trading sheds. He asked that members who have changed their email address to send it to [membership@wahga.org.uk](mailto:membership@wahga.org.uk) to let us know.

The Purchasing officer reported that Graham Talbot, a member, who is a lecturer at Berkshire College of Agriculture, had recommended the Humax and Sinclair composts. One of his students had as a result of his lectures joined the Association.

John referred to occasional requests he had received from members to pay by card. The association does not have the infrastructure for this. Card companies extract a charge for each transaction. But as every effort is made to keep the overheads as low as possible and the prices down a loss would be incurred by making this method of payment possible. Cash is infinitely preferable and simplifies administrative tasks. The Purchasing Officer explained that the new build at the end of the trading shed, which had been a store room, would eventually become a shop. The building was supplied by the company used for the trading shed at Maidenhead Road. There is no time scale for this as an electrical supply needed to be installed and internal doors needed to be altered. He thanked Bobby and Richard Baldwin who put in sterling work with painting in the cold weather. He finished his report by thanking all the volunteers who help in both the trading sheds.

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

#### **Election of committee members**

The President then explained that three committee members had served their three years but were willing to stand for re election.

The members concerned were

Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Harold Mitchell	Ginger Blackmun	Don Hartridge
Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Steve Clark	Don Hartridge	Lesley Spence
Kay Eglise	John Spence	Fran Hartridge

The President explained that David Eglise had been co-opted on to the Committee due to vacancy and his position need to be approved.

He was nominated by Fran Hartridge and seconded by Frank Tarrant.

There remained two vacancies on the committee

Lesley Upton had been proposed by Caroline Jones and seconded by Harold Mitchell. The President asked if any members present would be willing to serve.

Malcolm Osborn volunteered from the floor.

He was therefore nominated by Harold Mitchell and seconded by Lesley Spence.

The President then asked if members would vote their approval for the nominees to serve.

The vote was unanimous.

The President then asked if there were any other matters members wished to raise.

Elizabeth Grey asked with the Presidents permission if she could mention to members another horticultural society of which she is a member.

The society is the Windsor & Slough Chrysanthemum, Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society. It holds five shows a year and as WAHGA no longer held a horticultural show she suggested that those members who liked to show their flowers and or produce, could participate in some of these. She will put notices in both the bar and entrance hall advertising each show and encouraged members to give serious thought to the invitation. She also invited WAHGA members to come to the talks which are given, and details will be advertised on the notice boards.

There being no other matters the President thanked members from coming.

The meeting closed at 9.06 pm.