

WALMLEY ASH ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WALMLEY COMMUNITY HALL – TUESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2019 AT 19:30

- 1. Present:** - AS (Acting Chair), PH (Acting Treasurer), BC (Secretary), LB (Notes), GC, JH and SP
Attended by: 21 plot holders in total
Apologies (Committee) – LC
Apologies (Plot Holders) – RW

As Acting Chair, AS welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked them for attending and thanked those who had provided and served the refreshments.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on 9th October 2018

The minutes of the AGM held on 9th October 2018 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising not covered on the agenda

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the Agenda.

4. Chair's Report

- i. AS stated he had been Acting Chair since January 2019 when SP stood down and gave thanks to SP for over 15 years of service at the site. SP would continue as a General Member of the Committee. A token of appreciation was presented to SP.
- ii. Thanks were given to Chris and Ken H for continuing to keep the toilets clean and tidy. A gesture of appreciation was presented to Chris and Ken for their continued support.
- iii. PH had been Acting Treasurer since CC stood down. Thanks were given to CC for his services as Treasurer.
- iv. Thanks were given to BC for all her hard work and enthusiasm demonstrated as Secretary over the year particularly in relation to the launch of the WAAA website, new site signage, involvement in developing schemes and improved communications. At the time of the meeting, there were no vacant plots.
- v. GC was thanked for all of the hard work he had undertaken in relation to trimming, preparing plots 38a, 38b and 10b, for the preparation and turfing of the area adjacent to the spinney as well as his involvement in ensuring the success of the National Citizen Service (NCS) activities.
- vi. AS gave an update on boundary fencing:
 - a) The new perimeter fencing along the spinney was already becoming weedy - it was necessary to try to keep the area weed free. Any help with that would be appreciated.
 - b) Area 1 needing attention was beyond the area of the new fencing by the spinney where intruders had broken into the site.
 - c) Area 2 on the boundary opposite the site hut to the rear of Walmley Ash Road housing. Agreement on boundaries was awaited.

It was hoped that a grant from the Flo Pickering Fund might assist with this work if the application was successful.
- vii. Successful visits by local school children had taken place, which children really enjoyed. A further visit was scheduled at 09.30 on 6th November 2019 by Walmley School with organisation led by John and Elaine M.
- viii. AS, GC, SP and Bob S met with representatives from the NCS prior to the NCS activity taking place on site.
- ix. Thanks and praise were given to all the participants in the BDAC organised competitions. In addition to plot holder categories, WAAA won the Best Improved Site category, which was a great achievement (a first since 1981).
- x. A 'Meet and Greet' was attended by approximately 20 people and was very successful with an ample supply of foods and drinks provided by the participants. It was hoped that more new plot holders might attend to make the most of meeting the Committee and getting to know some of the plot holders. Another social event was being considered.
- xi. AS extended thanks to all the new plot holders for all the effort they were putting into their new plots. There was a wide range of experience on site – the longest serving plot holder had maintained a plot since 1996 and the most recent for only 3 weeks. The average plot holder age overall was approximately 56 years old but there was evidence that renting a plot was becoming more attractive to younger people, particular with half plots which also generate more rental income.
- xii. BC, GC, SP and AS attended a BDAC Area 6 meeting with a view to entering more competitions. Statistics suggested that 2% of entrants win 75% of the awards - they have a sound knowledge of the best times to sow, plant out etc and lots could be learnt from their experience. Advance planning of at least 6 months would be needed for entry. It was suggested that, separately, WAAA could host its own competitions with, for example, best kept, most improved and best newcomer categories with an 'outside' judge to make the awards.

- xiii. AS gave a fund raising update:
- a) Of the £10,000 sought from Sutton Town Council, only £4,078 had been given with the proviso that any WAAA advertising must have their logo on it. This funding was intended for the proposed gazebo and raised beds. Further discussion regarding the shortfall would need to take place.
 - b) Further funding may be available from Sutton Coldfield Charitable Trust for 2020. The deadline for making applications was by Christmas 2019.

5. Secretary's Report

- i. The WAAA website was now well-established and running successfully. At the time of the meeting, it was receiving approximately 200+ hits per month. BC was receiving contact from schools, the NCS and from the public with greenhouses/sheds for sale or free collection and for downloading documents having found information available on the website.
- ii. With regard to publicity, the new gate signs with contact information had improved site presence. Enquiries had been received from people interested in knowing the origin of the signs. There were also notices on display at Asda and the GP Surgery.
- iii. The site noticeboards continue to provide information to keep plot holders up to date and are changed regularly.
- iv. For faster communication, plot holders were asked to provide an email address wherever possible. With the advent of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) plot holders will be asked to confirm that the data held is correct. This is a formality so plot holders should reply to the emails sent out by BC.
- v. Following several break-ins and thefts, security cameras had been installed on site. The police had been contacted and they had provided alarms and locks to try to deter thefts. Plots have had produce taken from them. In the event there is someone on site who is not recognised, please email BC.
- vi. BC contacted Network Rail regarding the fencing by Ashurst Road where intruders broke in. Proof of ownership was required **(Action: BC to follow up)**
- vii. BC thanked SP and AS regarding Chair and Acting Chair roles and CC and PH regarding Treasurer Acting Treasurer roles
- viii. BC gave an update on site maintenance – grass cutting was taking place but hedges had not been trimmed in accordance with the schedule. **(Action: BC to follow up monthly).**
- ix. A reminder was given that for school visits etc a completed Risk Assessment and Event form was required.
- x. Interest had been expressed by a plot holder regarding the keeping of bees on site. Agreement from the British Beekeepers Association, from Birmingham City Council (BCC) and from neighbours would be essential before it could be considered.
- xi. Two letters of concern had been issued regarding plot cultivation and improvements to plots had since been made.
- xii. A grant from the Flo Pickering Fund was being actively pursued to assist with fence repairs and security.
- xiii. Twelve NCS participants attended for one day and worked on plot 27a. Due to the success of the activity, NCS has said they would like to return for another session in November 2019 with a different group of participants. For clarification, the NCS was a voluntary programme working with teenagers interested in adventure and volunteering.
- xiv. Competition entries had proved worthwhile. Prizes and certificates were presented by AS for the best plots to Ruth and Roger S (First) and to Chris and Ken H (Second). The best 2 newcomer prizes and certificates were awarded to Mr Surajit D (First) and Mr Peter C (Second).
- xv. BC conveyed thanks from Walsall Road Allotments to all who had signed their petition aimed at preventing the site from being closed.
- xvi. With regard to establishing a poly tunnel on site, BC thanked plot holders for their email replies. At the time of the meeting, the matter was still under consideration.

6. Treasurer's Report (information withheld as not for public viewing).

As Acting Treasurer, PH reported on all accounts:

7. Amendments to the WAAA Constitution

- i. The proposal to allow officers of the Committee to stand for two years rather than one year was proposed, seconded and agreed.
- ii. The proposal to change the date of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to another date was proposed, seconded and agreed. This would be held yearly and at least 28 days' notice will be given.
- iii. The proposal to amend the constitution to enable partners/sons/daughters to become Associate Members of the WAAA was proposed, seconded and agreed.

8. Election of Allotment Association Officers

The following were proposed, seconded and agreed to stand:

AS (Chair), PH (Treasurer), BC (Secretary), LB (Notes), LC, GC, JH and SP

9. Motion to be put to AGM

A proposal to charge each plot holder a fixed amount of £10 per annum to cover additional site expenses was discussed at length. It was suggested that, if a charge was introduced, then plot holders would not have to pay for manure and/or chippings. There were strong views both for and against the introduction of such a charge. Arguments in favour of the introduction centred around the need to ensure that site expenses for security and maintenance were covered, which was common practice on many other allotment sites. It was also to help minimise the collection and accounting for the numerous but small amounts of cash from manure and chippings sales. It was also noted that, as some people take manure but don't pay for it, the charge to all would appear fairer to all. Arguments against imposing a charge were that it was not enforceable, could prove difficult for plot holders with limited budgets and that some people never used the manure or chippings. It was suggested that other means of fundraising should be explored for covering site expenses such as organising social events, Quiz Nights etc. After further discussion, the proposal was amended to a more flexible voluntary annual subscription of £10 for a full plot, £5 for a half plot and to increase the payment per barrow load of manure/clippings when available to 50p each. This revised motion was proposed, seconded and agreed.

10. Any other business

- i. Following receipt of the £4,078 from Sutton Town Council, AS stated that the car park area would need to be cleared and prepared in readiness for the installation of the base for the gazebo and raised beds. Volunteers would be needed to assist with this. Further discussion with Sutton Town Council requesting additional funds to complete the task would be initiated and volunteer dates would be circulated once the funding position was confirmed. Assistance from the NCS was considered pending confirmation regarding their November visit and whether or not it would be a suitable activity for them to assist in.
- ii. BC reported that, at the recent BDAC Area 6 meeting, Terry Wood had indicated that he would like to see WAAA site as part of the Sutton in Bloom event. Discussion took place about what might be involved. As WAAA was quite a large site it would be harder to keep it tidy. Going forward, it would be necessary to continue improving the site.
- iii. BC drew attention to the Durga Festival taking place 4-8th October 2019 at Winson Green to which all plot holders were invited.
- iv. As the hedge by the Walmley Ash Road entrance had been cut only once, Jeff Gilbert volunteered the use of his large hedge cutter if someone wanted to borrow it in the interim.
- v. BC reported that the Donkey Sanctuary had contacted the farmers who supply their hay to check if any banned pesticides had been used. The farmers said not and no other Area 6 plots had raised any concerns. There had been an adverse effect on some potatoes, tomatoes and beans at the WAAA site. Plot holders were advised to check first before using it on plants or to leave it to rest for a year before use.
- vi. AS reported there had been two Health and Safety incidents (only two since 2007) and recommended:
 - a) When tidying plots, plot holders should ensure tools, equipment and vegetation do not overhang the paths and verges.
 - b) Dogs were welcome on site but should be kept on short leads.
- vii. AS reminded plot holders that if a plot holder is genuinely unable to cultivate their plot as well as they would wish, they should inform a member of the Committee.
- viii. Bob St informed the meeting that Clive Birch, BDAC, had been in hospital twice but was recovering. He suggested sending an amusing 'get well' card from the site.
- ix. It was confirmed that the water supply would be turned off from 1st December 2019 to 1st March 2020 (depending on the weather).
- x. The code on the spinney gate would be changed and padlocked from 1st December 2019 to 1st March 2020.

AS thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions to the discussions.

The date and venue for the next AGM is to be confirmed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:50