

Grange Lane Allotments AGM 27th November 2022, 10.00am in the Ismay Room, Scout Hut

A G M

Present: 88 members, 96 in total

Apologies: Frank Kunna, Paul Widdecombe

Sarah Thurman read out the ground rules – show respect and courtesy, keep to the point, no interrupting or talking over people, phones on silent, votes are for plot-holding members only – all have voting cards. All agreed to the recording of the meeting for the accuracy of the minutes.

1. 2021 minutes: These were approved unanimously, along with the EGM minutes of 27th February 2022.

2. Surveys: Sarah Thurman explained the background to the two surveys last year and the process since then that led to the matters being voted on today. Sarah Lyness then took questions. There was a discussion around the issue of systemic herbicides and pesticides and the decision was taken to defer the matter and vote pending further clarification.

3. Voting on changes to the Rules

Rule change proposal to ban fixed cameras: for 69, against 4 – no fixed or installed cameras are allowed

Rule change proposal to allow shallow ponds: For 76, Against 4 - shallow ponds are allowed provided they are in line with insurance requirements and guidelines.

Rule change proposal to modify the rules relating to storage, grow tunnels and cold frames: For 69, Against 1

Rule change to no longer allow allocation of second plots or half plots: For 53, Against 10 – no longer allowed

Rule changes on substantial structures: Would you like a change to the current rules to allow substantial structures on plots? Yes: 25, No 50. No new substantial structures allowed (sheds, shelters or polytunnels).

4. New tenancy agreement

For: 74

Against: 0

The new tenancy agreement will be adopted.

5. Chair and Secretary's Reports

Chair's report – Tyrrell Evans

As Co-Chairs, Sarah Thurman and I have had a challenging nine months or so in post since the EGM. We would like to share with you all some of our successes and our plans for the future. We have been very surprised at the amount of time and work involved.

Lease: We need to clear up any uncertainty about our Lease and the reasons for its renewal earlier than planned. It is because our predecessor committee agreed to give back to Dulwich Estate the little woods at the bottom west side of our site. This is being enacted and as a result Dulwich Estate had to redraw our Lease map and decided it would be sensible to rewrite our lease and that of our two neighbouring sites now. So CDAS established a group including us and the Chairs of the other two sites to settle the Heads of Terms with Dulwich Estate. This we have done and all is agreed; we all believe the terms are very favourable, although we cannot give you all the details now. But some we can, such as

the new Lease is for 25 years, there is no unexpected associated rental increase, we do not have to pay the Estate's legal fees for the lease, and the core structures limitations which we have already discussed, are helpful. But importantly, each site makes its own decisions on what and how many structures are allowed. Which you have just done.

Organisational structures: We have been listening to members and working on our rules and constitution so that it reflects the best interests of our wide membership. And as a result, we have become increasingly concerned that, as part of an unincorporated society, the trustees who hold the leases, the committee members, and all of you as plot holders carry a potential liability risk if any claims went beyond our reserves or were not covered by our insurance. Whilst it has never happened in our 70 years of existence, it is a potential risk we do not think we or you wish to carry any longer.

We have been talking through the issue with CDAS, NASLG and other organisations and we all believe now that becoming a Registered Co-operative Society is our best way forward. We are advancing that and hope to come back to you in early 2023 with an update. We hope you will support this initiative, but it will also need the support and agreement of our fellow sites and CDAS and under our present overall structure within CDAS, which we wish to continue.

Regular meeting: We have started regular meetings with our colleague allotments: the Gunsite and the Grove, CDAS officers and Rosendale Road Allotments officers. Here we have been sharing concerns, challenges and information, which has been very useful.

Paths and waterlogging: Drainage at the site has been an ongoing problem as was particularly difficult last winter. You have all been sent a very helpful report by two retired civil and water engineers and this informs us of a good and practical way forward. A key issue for us all is maintaining the drainage channels down the sides and across our plots. We hope to move forward with their suggestions very soon.

Health and safety: One of our committee members, Frank Kunna, has produced a comprehensive health and safety report for the whole site. This was necessary to ensure everyone on the site is protected and to comply with insurance requirements. We will keep you informed of any necessary actions on our plots.

Waiting list: We cleared our Waiting List and reopened it for a short time in the Autumn. We will need to decide soon to reopen it.

Filming: We were approached by a film company in the summer that ended up using one of our allotments in a film advertising the Cooperative Societies Community Activities. We had around 40 people, about ten vehicles, and they filmed young actors at work on our allotments for about five hours one afternoon and evening in the summer. In the final advertisement, which you may have seen on ITV, our allotments appear for about three seconds. They paid £2,000 as a site fee to our finances.

We also had Gardeners World approach us looking for "special and different" plots and we suggested Helen's plot 209. I think we sent you all the link to it, and we wish to thank Helen and her mother-in-law for their involvement and kind words as we know the filming took around 4-5 hours on that hottest day of the year!

Line Managers: We are grateful to all our line managers for their help and support through the year. Details of line managers are on the website and on the notice boards. If you have any plot or site issues, then in the first instance, please contact your line manager.

Thanks: We are very grateful to the National Allotment Society and to our neighbouring allotment sites and CDAS for all their advice and help throughout the year.

Some specific people we would like to thank are:

Peter Allen, who handled the Membership manager role on our behalf throughout this year. Steve Smith and his son James, who replaced the damaged padlock on the gate quickly and efficiently.

Mike Mellor, who gives our hut and toilets an annual coating of timber preservative each year.

Dan Shepherd, who is our contact with Buckingham Palace re our stable manure deliveries. Mark Aeron-Thomas for organising deliveries of well-rotted stable manure from Shannon Leigh stables.

Vic for all the mowing of common parts and who keeps our water supplies running efficiently, attending to leaks and damage very quickly.

The Volcano/coffee bean chaff rota team who, regardless of weather, collect heavy wet sacks of the chaff, which is excellent for compost.

Paul Widdecombe, who helps us return very overgrown plots back into action ready for re-letting.

Sarah Knight and Jill Panni for putting out the blue bin every week and keeping the brown bins tidy.

Carol, who provided the useful large thermometer on the outside of the hut.

And Keith Irvine from Rosendale Road allotments, who has helped with some plumbing tasks.

We continue to be very grateful to Amy Aeron-Thomas and Paul Widdecombe for heroically keeping the two eco toilets clean, well-stocked and functioning well. Thank you so much.

Finally, and most importantly, a huge thank you to our committee team: Maureen, Jill, Sarah K, Sarah L, Mark, Frank and Alex for all their help and work in getting us through this year.

Secretary's report – Maureen Erny

General This is a short report to let you know some of the things that the committee has been doing on behalf of everyone to keep the site running smoothly and to introduce improvements where we can. It's also to acknowledge and thank those who have played particular roles during the year.

Work in the background The committee has spent countless hours during the year working on various documents to help the site run fairly and well. Tyrrell and Sarah Thurman in particular have spent a huge amount of time liaising with Dulwich Estate and the National Allotment Society. Every committee member gives their time entirely free of charge.

Community Hut The community hut continues to be put to good use. It is there for the benefit of all members. A social is held at the hut once a month to give an opportunity to meet plot holders from different parts of the site and to build a good community spirit. Those who have held plots for a good number of years will recognise that through the hard work of the committee, there is now a much more positive atmosphere at the site than there was some years ago. Tea and cake help! Committee members bring the bulk of the cakes but we are grateful to the ~~kind~~ plot holders who kindly also bring contributions.

Communications Which leads me on nicely on to communications. We don't want to inundate our members, but we do want to keep you up to date with what's going on. From social events to regular emails and notices on notice boards, not to mention keeping the website up to date – it all takes people behind the scenes to make it happen. Special thanks to Jill for organising the socials and to Mark for the emails and website.

FoodBank We have continued to take produce from the allotments to our local FoodBank during the year. The main person who does this is Jill Panni so our thanks to her. I'm sure, like me, you are grateful that as far as possible, excess food is distributed to people in need within the community.

Site management During the year, we deal with issues as they arise, carry out various maintenance tasks, hold regular inspections, re-let empty plots and do whatever is necessary to keep the site functioning well. From blocked toilets to intruders, to broken fences, fallen trees, welding that needs to be done, occasional thefts, leaking tanks – issues

need to be dealt with by someone. And that someone is often two people in particular – Jill Panni, aided and abetted by Sarah Knight, so I'd like us to give a big round of applause to them to thank them for the huge amount of time they spend ensuring the site is well run.

Volunteers The reason the plot rents are as low as they are is because most of the work is done by volunteers – mainly the committee but also some others. Everyone on the committee is a volunteer. If you are able to give us some of your time to do a specific job, please let us know.

Thanks Our special thanks to Tyrrell and Sarah Thurman for the endless hours they have poured into Grange Lane Allotments over the last year. They have worked tirelessly on behalf of us all and we are very grateful.

6. Treasurer's report – Sarah Lyness

Details of the finances for the year to 30th September 2022 were distributed. Sarah Lyness gave a brief report. There is a surplus of about £4,000 due to the filming fees and not yet having upgraded the fencing and top gate. The annual rent rise is below inflation. There were no questions. The finances and accounts were approved unanimously by the members present.

Peter Allen, who has kindly been continuing as Membership Secretary, pointed out that about £4,000 of rent had still not been paid at this late stage. Reminders would be sent.

7. Elections of Committee and Chair

The meeting was handed over to Philip Milner, Chair of CDAS, to conduct the elections. The votes of members were recorded.

- Block vote for the committee members standing for re-election – Sarah Knight (Lettings), Jill Panni (Site Manager), Sarah Lyness (Treasurer), Mark Aeron-Thomas (Communication), Maureen Erny (Secretary), Frank Kunna, Alex McGillivray
For 71, Against 0. Those committee members standing for re-election were declared duly elected.
- Contested position of Co-Chairs:
William Stanley and Vaulda Simmons read out their statements, followed by Tyrrell Evans and Sarah Thurman.
Voting:
Tyrrell and Sarah – For 74
William and Vaulda – For 1
Tyrrell and Sarah were declared duly elected.
- New committee nominations:
Susan Miles – For 69, Against 0
Don Marshall – For 75, Against 0
Susan and Don were declared duly elected.

The meeting was closed.