

## **Grange Lane Allotments AGM 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2019, 10.00am in the Ismay Room, Scout Hut A G M**

Present: 42. Apologies from: Diana Vernon and Jeremy Truelove

**1. 2018 minutes:** These were approved.

**2. Chair's report:** Nigel Grant spoke of the new payment system which has been introduced. Committee and members were thanked for their hard work. More members have participated in joint tasks on the site and there is a growing sense of community. Previously there was a lot of friction and tension and no sense of community. In the last three years there has been a real change. The site is more relaxed, helpful and peaceful, which aligns with the vision set for it. It has taken hard work to achieve that vision – work, thought, commitment and dedication of the committee members, whom he thanked.

Vic, the site handyman, was thanked, along with line managers, Mike Mellor for treating the huts and eco toilets with wood preservative, Emma Rowley-Conwy and Sarah Thurman for organising plant sales, Joe Crilly for organising green and general waste, Paul Widdecombe for collecting coffee grounds for the site every Friday and Paul Vagg for donating 40 jars of honey. Members were thanked for developing and maintaining the site, sharing crops and making donations of produce to the West Norwood FoodBank. Nigel wants to build on the success that has been achieved and encouraged members to participate.

### **3. Secretary's report**

**General:** Maureen Erny opened by saying that, as with every year, there have been a lot of challenges, but hopefully everyone has had some successes with their crops this year. It's certainly been a bumper year for tomatoes and fruit trees!

**Gates:** We listen to comments made by members. Last year we recessed the gates at the top of the site to make it safer and easier to drive in. This year we organised yellow lines either side of the entrance to make it safer to leave the site by car.

There have been a few problems with the padlocks this year. A reminder not to use any type of oil in the locks. If there is a problem, let a member of the committee know. The only oil to be used is silicone based and Martin has placed a can of this in the Hut.

**Skips and waste management:** Joe Crilly has been very helpful in the whole area of green waste and general waste collection by Southwark. We now have eight green bins for organic waste that we pay to have collected weekly. This year we have added a large blue bin for general waste that is also collected weekly. It's a brilliant facility and saves countless bonfires on the site.

**Toilets:** We are very grateful to Amy and Paul Aeron-Thomas for keeping the two eco toilets clean, well stocked and functioning well. Thank you very much.

**Community Hut:** The Community Hut has really come into its own this year and has been used for monthly social events open to all plot holders. These have been well attended, with between 20-50 people, depending on the weather! Committee members bake cakes each time, which seem to be hugely enjoyed, and plot holders also bring home made cakes, which is much appreciated. We have also sold pots of Grange Lane honey to members at a low price. There were two organic plant sales and Emma Rowley-Conwy gave a talk recently on composting, with input from Mark Aeron-Thomas, to which all were invited. There is another social next Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, and a special Christmas event on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December. Last December we organised a mulled wine and mince pie special event, with the hut beautifully decorated with the help of a 13 year old as part of her Duke of Edinburgh bronze medal. We now have permanent tables and chairs near the hut for plot holders and their

visitors to use throughout the year. Money raised at various events is spent on items for the benefit of members and the site.

**Corporate volunteers:** With the help of a Southwark based charity, Trees for Cities, eight Corporate Volunteers came to the site in October and started clearing some of the overgrown areas at the west side of the site. They filled a whole skip with rubbish and brambles and we hope will be back to finish the job in the New Year. This will create a wildlife corridor and hopefully result in the establishment of a small orchard.

**Site management:** During the year, we've dealt with lock issues, got welding done, liaised with Castle Water about a supply of water to the hut, got quotations for an electricity supply to the hut, sorted out individual plot holder issues, bought and constructed picnic tables, provided volunteer experience for a Duke of Edinburgh student, liaised with Dulwich Estates about various maintenance issues, carried out inspections and done a lot more besides to keep the site functioning well.

**Manure:** We resolved the temporary cessation of manure deliveries. We were required to confirm we were properly certified to receive the manure. Martin researched the issue and the application of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 and was able to certify we fit within waste exemption T23 and the deliveries resumed!

**Wheelbarrows:** Peter Allen has organised four wheelbarrows at the top of the site for everyone to use when taking manure or woodchippings to their plots.

**Website:** We are grateful to Mark Aeron-Thomas for taking over the updating of the website and also for his and Martin's sending out MailChimp communications.

**Renewals:** Peter Allen has worked very hard on setting up a new database and a new online renewals system. This has included checking email addresses, sending out information, collecting the rents, dealing with queries, etc. Our thanks to Peter for his work on this. Every year we ask people to renew and pay promptly as it causes a lot more work when people don't. If payments haven't been received by the end of November, we will assume your plot can be re-let.

**Lettings:** Sarah Knight has again done a fantastic job during the year on lettings – so our thanks to Sarah.

**Line Managers:** Jill Pani and Sarah Lyness have done a great job in building up a good team of line managers. Each row of plots from the gates to the wood has its own line manager. Details 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. A big thank you to all our line managers. We are now looking to recruit a new person to co-ordinate line managers. If you think you might be interested, please see Maureen.

**Inspections:** We normally aim to have two inspections a year. A warning is given to plot holders who are not keeping their plot in good order and if no progress is made, then their plot is re-let. A team of three or four people from the committee carry out the inspections and then reinspect the plots that have had a warning.

**Plot numbering and paths:** Members were reminded they should have a clear number at the top and bottom of your plot and that we are all responsible for maintaining the paths below and to the right of our plots as you look down the hill towards London.

**Dumping in the woods:** Members were reminded not to dump anything in the wood or elsewhere on the site.

**FoodBank:** Members were encouraged not to waste produce by letting it rot, but rather to take unwanted produce to the hut to be taken by Nigel to FoodBank. If produce isn't wanted, this should be mentioned to a line manager or a committee member to arrange for it to be taken to FoodBank.

**Thanks:** On behalf of the committee and members, Maureen thanked Adrian Hill for his help and support during the year and Nigel for being such a good chair.

#### **4. Website and payment system**

Peter Allen explained the rationale for the new payment system. Information held was often inaccurate, which breaches data protection regulations. The average renewal took him 15 minutes per plot, x 236, so it makes sense to go over to a more automated payment process. The database will be integrated with the email system. All queries have been dealt with promptly so encourage people to get in touch with any issues. Members were encouraged to keep passwords safe. Some of the £3 renewals have fallen through the net. Reminders to pay will be sent on 8<sup>th</sup> November. Even if members have paid cash, they should log onto the system.

#### **5. Treasurer's report and accounts**

Martin Beard presented the accounts to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and explained the details. After a couple of years of deficits, they showed a surplus (income of £18,299.00, outgoings of £14,138.86). The surplus reflects some savings and delays to projects which have been held over to the New Year. The balance at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 of £14,187.50 is in line with what it has been in the past. The reserves are needed to meet the anticipated cost of improvements to the Site.

The new payment system will remove much of the exorbitant time and energy taken up with collecting rent and fees and Peter Allen was thanked for his work in introducing it. The cost of the system has been lower than was budgeted.

The rent and fees paid to the Main Society and the Dulwich Estate was over half the expenditure. The water charges are substantial as a result of the long dry summer. The water supplier, Castle Water, charged £2,029.33 last November (reduced by a credit) and a similar bill is expected soon.

This year there is an additional source of about £430 in respect of funds through the hut – plant sales and donations for tea, coffee and cakes.

We have saved money on skips (thanks to Joe Crilly and all involved in implementing the new general waste system). Mark Aeron-Thomas was thanked for his work which keeps the web-site cost to an absolute minimum.

The rent each plot holder pays has been increased by the amount of inflation over the year – as requested by members at last year's AGM. It is £72 per plot or £36 per half plot. This is £1.39p per week, up from £1.35p per week. The increase is 4p per week. For the privilege of a plot on the Site, this payment is very low. Where appropriate, concessionary payments are considered in some cases, eg, those who are only on a basic State pension or welfare payments.

The accounts are audited each year by a professional person who prepares accounts for a living and who requires evidence of each item of expenditure. No charge has been made for the audit work. The meeting expressed consent to funding the reasonable cost of a nice lunch for the auditor.

Martin expressed his thanks to all who do tasks for the Site and members. They save lots of money.

#### **6. Report by Adrian Hill, Chairman of the Camberwell and District Allotment Society**

The Camberwell and District Allotment Society is made up of three sites: Grange Lane, Gunsite and the Grove. All are in good standing. The Grange Lane lease comes up for renewal on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026. There is a rent review every five years and ours is due at Christmas 2022. Increases are now tied to RPI. Adrian is dealing with Dulwich Estates about holes in the fencing at the top of the site and various tree issues. Each site pays a levy of 10% on the rent, which funds insurance and various things and covers the indemnity of the trustees of the main association. Mark and Amy Aeron Thomas are helping Adrian with his plot, which enables him to continue as a plot holder and chair. Adrian will chase Dulwich

College to resolve the flooding issue at the bottom of the site. The school hasn't pursued wanting to use a piece of our woodland. Part of the wood has been licensed to a neighbouring resident, who uses floodlights which disturb the wildlife and bats. London Wildlife Trust are following up this issue.

**7. Election of the committee:** The present committee were willing to be re-appointed. There were no other nominations. Adrian proposed the re-election of the whole committee and this was unanimously agreed. The committee comprises: Nigel Grant, Maureen Erny, Martin Beard, Peter Allen, Verney Montoute, Jill Panni, Sarah Knight, Sarah Lyness and Sarah Thurman.

**8. Any other business:** Joe Crilly raised the question: why do we have bonfires and suggested a survey of members. His contention was that most people only had occasional bonfires so if there were fewer bonfire days, this would work well. Others disagreed. In the end it was decided to keep things as they are at the moment.

**9. Questions, ideas, suggestions:**

- A question was asked about access to the site in the event of an emergency. Maureen reminded members that a key to the padlock is held by the golf course opposite for just such emergencies. Members will be reminded of this.
- It was pointed out that there used to be a bench at the top of the site. The committee will look into getting one but will check with plot holders in the intended area.
- It was suggested we have quarterly surgeries at the hut to discuss things brought up by members. This would be in addition to social events at the hut but could take place before or after
- Joe Crilly suggested looking into having a bore hole to provide all our water. A sub group to investigate this will comprise Joe, Nigel and Vic
- Joe also suggested getting a commercial composter to turn all our green waste into good quality compost. This could be sold back to members at a subsidised rate. Joe will investigate.
- There was a suggestion to gather unwanted apples on the site and turn them into apple juice. Possibly a commercial company would do this. Jacqui Pick will investigate.