

Grange Lane Allotments AGM 7th November 2021, 10.00am in the Ismay Room, Scout Hut A G M

Present: 46

Tyrrell Evans welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained Nigel Grant, the chair, had been called to Scotland due to serious family health issues. Tyrrell and Sarah Thurman would be acting as joint chair. He also explained the changed agenda and went through the ground rules for the meeting based on respect: contributions to be short and to the point; keep to the agenda; treat each other with respect; no interruptions; no raised voices; no personal issues to be brought up.

All agreed to the recording of the meeting for the accuracy of the minutes.

1. 2019 minutes: These were approved.

2. Survey findings: Sarah Thurman and Sarah Lyness gave a presentation on the findings of the two surveys using a powerpoint presentation. The survey results will be made available on the website.

3. Committee election process: Sarah Lyness explained that the committee wanted to include all plot holders by giving an electronic vote, but had not given an opportunity for plot holders voting in this way to come forward for election, which has always happened in person at the AGM. Specific tasks would become apparent as the survey results were analysed and plot holders would be able to stand for particular roles. It was therefore proposed by Adrian Hill, chair of CDAS (Camberwell District Allotment Association), that the current committee continue until this process had happened. An election would take place at that point. This was carried unanimously. Co-chairs: Tyrrell Evans and Sarah Thurman. Committee: Mark Aaron-Thomas, Peter Allen, Maureen Erny, Nigel Grant, Sarah Knight, Sarah Lyness, Susan Miles, Jill Panni.

Electronic vote: 15 for re-election of the committee, 2 against; 14 for the election of Tyrrell Evans and Sarah Thurman as co-chairs, 2 against.

4. Break and plot holder participation: During the refreshment break, all plot holders were given stickers to place on a board to show what they thought should be the priority over the coming year. There was a second board for people to volunteer to help with specific tasks and a third board for ideas.

5. Reports

Chair's report

Tyrrell read out Nigel's report as follows. Thank you all for coming and I would like to thank the Committee for all their hard work and creativity over the past 12 -18 months. It is important to stress that their hard work is voluntary and that a huge amount of time and energy goes into managing the Site. I would also like to give particular thanks to: Vic for grass cutting and maintenance of the water tanks, amongst other things. To Mike for working on the hut and eco toilets, plus cake making. To Patricia for cake making and to all the others who have contributed to our social events, including Martha and Mabel doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Thanks to Paul Vagg, who has generously donated many jars of honey for us to sell. The money has been used to improve things for the site and the Hut. To David Scholey, who organises skips for the site. There is one coming this Thursday (11th November). To you all for contributing your excess produce to the local foodbank at

St Mary's church and to Tyrrell for taking it there every Monday. They are delighted to receive it and it is distributed the same day.

The past 18 months have been very challenging for many of us with regard to Covid-19. However, we have been privileged to have enjoyed access to our plots throughout lockdowns. The Committee has successfully delivered on several fronts, despite Covid-19. I think many of you are aware that we are currently in 'breach of lease' with Dulwich Estate due to the presence of structures that are outside our rules. One of the consequences of this is that Dulwich Estate will not start any works on the top fence until we have resolved the issues. We are currently working closely with CDAS to resolve things.

I would like to express thanks and appreciation to all our plot holders who have participated in the two surveys.

I am standing down as Chair after five years. It has been a privilege being your Chair for that period of time and I have enjoyed meeting many of you individually and at our monthly social events. Thank you for all your support and encouragement.

I would like to mention that Martin Beard is also standing down from the Committee after ten years as treasurer. Martin has many attributes and he has successfully steered us through some turbulent financial waters and challenges. We are very grateful, Martin, for all you have done.

Tyrrell added: We as a committee would like to add our enormous thanks to Nigel as our chairman for all his energy, leadership, enthusiasm, and his connectivity with so many of you plot holders. We obviously wish him and his family well at this difficult time.

Secretary's report

General

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.

Newsletter October 2020

We were unable to hold an AGM last autumn due to Covid-19 restrictions, so we decided to keep everyone up to date with our first ever full colour newsletter. If you haven't seen this, it's on the website.

Community Hut

Last autumn we had electricity connected to the Community Hut. This was made possible by applying for and getting Lottery funding. Having electricity has helped our monthly social events at the Hut as not only do we have light, but we no longer have to take up lots of flasks of boiling water for the refreshments! We also now have a cold water tap. Various committee members spent many hours organising and overseeing all this work – particular thanks to Peter Allen and Tyrrell Evans. The Hut is for the use of all plot holders. The key can be accessed from the key safe on the left hand side – same code as for the toilets. Please lock after use, return the key and scramble the lock. We've had several plant sales during the year, selling organic seedlings of a whole range of different plants. Committee members have baked lots of cakes for the socials, as have a number of plot holders – thank you. There is another social next Sunday, 14th November, and a special Christmas event on Sunday 12th December with mulled wine and mince pies. All are welcome to come. These events provide a brilliant way of meeting people with plots on other parts of the site.

Use of lower part of site by School

We were approached by the School below our site about using a small part of the wood in the bottom corner of the site for a forest school. Discussions are still ongoing and we have stipulated that the facility should be open to other schools/children in the area.

Photographic book on the three allotments

We were pleased to allow the photographing of the site by two delightful photographers, Jimmy and Hannah. Their book came out in January and we have copies available in the Hut, if anyone would like to buy a copy. All profits go to Trussell Trust, which runs FoodBank.

Paths and waterlogging

During the last couple of years, various committee members have met with drainage experts to see what can be done to improve the drainage of the site. Opinions have varied and quotations for the work have been extremely high. We continue to look into this but in the meantime individual plot holders are encouraged to take responsibility for the condition of their plot and the surrounding paths and work with plot holders below them when doing any remedial work so as not to cause further problems.

Signs

A plot holder suggested we get proper signs for Grange Lane Allotments and this has now been done. Particular thanks to Tyrrell Evans for organising this.

Database

We now have a new database, which necessitated a lot of work researching options and then transferring data across. Particular thanks to Peter Allen for this.

Surveys

We want to hear the views of all plot holders and as you know organised two surveys. We would love more people to get involved in the running and wellbeing of the site.

Bench in honour of Verney Montoute

We were delighted to commission a bench in memory of Verney Montoute in July this year – at the top of the site for the use of everyone. Verney was a well known and loved plot holder who served on the committee for many years and helped out in various ways on the site. Plot holders contributed towards the cost of the bench.

Waste management

Following a suggestion by a plot holder at an AGM two years ago, and with his help, we now have eight green bins for organic waste that we pay to have collected weekly. We also have one 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 Widdecombe for keeping the two eco toilets clean, well stocked and functioning well. Thank you.

FoodBank

We have continued to take produce from the allotments to our local FoodBank.

Line Managers

Susan Miles has done an excellent 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.

Site management

During the year, the committee deals with issues as they arise, carries out necessary maintenance tasks, conducts regular inspections, re-lets empty plots, deals with Dulwich Estate and does whatever is necessary to keep the site functioning well.

Thanks

We would like to thank Adrian Hill for his help and support during the year. Our thanks to Nigel for his hard work as chair. And lastly – on behalf of us all - I would like to thank the committee and other volunteers who have given their time freely during the year and worked so hard. It's been great working with you.

Treasurer's report

Details of the finances for the year to 30th September 2021 were distributed. Peter Allen as acting treasurer gave a brief report. The annual rent rise would be limited to £1, to go up to £73 for a whole plot. There were no questions.

CDAS report

Adrian Hill said he was giving up his plot and would be standing down as chair of CDAS at their AGM early next year. Each of the sites was undergoing a review of structures.

6 Voting on proposals

NB: Proxy votes were included throughout.

6.1 Code of conduct: This was discussed and various views given. Several thought the document should be shortened. It was explained it was needed for when things go wrong. A vote was taken to agree the document in principle. 43 for, 5 against. Vote to shorten the document: 26 for, 10 to keep as it is. The committee agreed to shorten the document and re-present it.

Electronic votes: 19 for, none against.

6.2 Helpers' rights and responsibilities: Again, this was discussed. It was felt a helper should be temporary, although the point was made that if someone were elderly they might need the continued support of a helper. A vote was taken. 34 in favour of adopting the document, so the motion was carried.

Electronic votes: 16 for, 2 against.

6.3 Electronic voting

There was discussion around voting electronically and different views were expressed. Voting electronically allows the participation of more plot holders. Some thought you needed to be present to hear presentations and arguments for and against whatever was being voted on. A suggestion was made to use the socials at the Hut to discuss issues. No vote was taken.

Electronic votes: 19 for, none against.

7. Questions and any other business:

Why can the upper fence not be mended by Dulwich Estate before the lease is sorted out? Intruders and dogs are coming in through breaches. It was agreed the committee would raise the issue with Dulwich Estate.

When will the waiting list be opened? Once the changes to the database are complete – probably quite soon.

Could we start an online forum for plot holders?

One plot holder made a personal statement against the request of the co-chairs.

Two helpers were asked to leave at the start of the AGM as the meeting had been designated for plot holders only due to Covid 19. One left. The other remained and interrupted the meeting on multiple occasions.