

Golf Course Allotments Association:

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 3rd July 2022

Chair: Andrew Lewis
Minutes: Polly Hanchett

1. Welcome and Initial business

Andrew welcomed all present. 22?? people attended and there were 2 apologies, from Peter M and Alison B.

1.1 Minutes of the 2021 AGM

The minutes were approved with no amendments. Proposed by Karen S., seconded by Tony G.

2. Officers' Reports

2.1 Chair (Andrew L)

Allotment road: unfortunately, the road situation hasn't moved forward. Haringey were due to acquire quotes for remedial work, but this was delayed by Covid and, despite Andrew's reminders, there has been no movement yet.

Haringey Allotments Forum: this is starting up again, having stopped over the pandemic. Andrew explained that the group is the main forum for discussion with the council about how all allotment sites in Haringey are managed and run. Plotolders are encouraged to go along if there is anything you are unhappy with or would like to discuss. No date has yet been given, but Andrew will circulate it as soon as it's known.

Rules: there was a lot of discussion about potential rule changes at the last AGM, and the decision was subsequently made to redo the GCA rules from top to bottom. Clare W. put in a lot of work preparing a root and branch revisit of rules, guidelines etc. for which the committee are very grateful. A small Rules Sub-Committee subsequently met to talk about how to implement changes, putting together the draft Rules document which can be found on the website. (This was looked at in more detail later in the meeting).

Money: the financial situation is currently very good, with decent reserves for site maintenance and some reserves from general income (which is generated by the café, the shop and donations). However, we will need to dip into the reserves this year for large scale tree works which were paused this past year but are soon to resume.

Minutes of Committee meeting: following a query at last year's AGM, Andrew announced that these are now available to all plot-holders via the website. Password is trees.

Toilet: Andrew handed over to Karen S. to report. Karen described a small but faithful body of volunteers who do a fantastic job keeping the toilets clean and stocked with toilet paper. However, we are in desperate need of more volunteers. For example, there is no-one down on the rota to cover the next month, and if no-one can be found then the toilet will have to be locked. This would be a great shame and particularly inconvenient for plot-holders with children. Three volunteers present, Karen, Lynn and Tricia K. emphasized that it is not an onerous or, generally, an unpleasant duty. It involves perhaps 3 ten-minute visits each fortnight, to restock with toilet paper and give it a quick wipe over. Karen and Tricia reminded everyone of the importance of leaving the toilet in a condition that you'd wish to find it in; the committee are going to organise for notices to that effect to go up in the toilet in a selection of community languages after it was left in a very dirty state recently – a rare occurrence but one that shouldn't happen at all.

As well as needing additional toilet helpers, Karen would like someone to take over organisation of the rota of toilet helpers. Interested parties were invited to see her after the AGM. Andrew proposed thanks to Karen for her continued commitment to the cause.

Pipes: we had lots of difficulties with leaking pipes last year, and are indebted to Mick G. who continues to give his time and expertise willingly to ensure we enjoy running water on the site. Andrew proposed thanks to Mick for all his hard work.

Buildings: the allotment buildings (the community hall and the shop) have a limited life, and we are slowly but surely amassing a war chest for replacing them. This will hopefully not be needed for at least another 10 years.

2.2 Site Secretary (Tullio M)

Tenancies: At present, we have full allocation except for one half plot. There are currently 73 on the waiting list. Since the last AGM, 78 applicants were removed as they were failing to follow procedure and renew their interest every 3 months. We have had 22 new starters with just 2 failing their probation.

Disciplinary actions: 33 non-compliance notices were issued with 5 subsequent terminations. The council have introduced a new 'nudge' letter for plots that are close to requiring a non-compliance notice for having a dirty plot. It's hoped that this will encourage people to make the necessary changes a little sooner. Tullio reminded people of the importance of displaying their plot number clearly and accurately so that the right people receive notices!

Paths: At a recent inspection, the majority of allotment paths were noted to be unsafe, being either blocked by branches, brambles and other bushes, or with hoses or other structures in the middle or pathways constituting a trip hazard. Tenants are reminded that

Section 10.10a of the Contract states that all paths must remain clear and in a safe condition to walk around.

Rubbish: There has been a lot of dumping by the perimeter fence and also around the wood bin on the main path. Tenants are reminded that this is not acceptable, and anyone observed to be doing it will be reported under the Nuisance clause in the Contract to the council.

Dogs: A reminder that dogs, while extremely welcome on site, must be kept on leads at all times, not least because owners are responsible for picking up after them and will not know when it's needed if they are not with them. Failure to comply with this rule will be reported to the council under the Nuisance clause. Tullio also issued a warning to plot-holders to be aware that the dog in the final house in Bidwell Gardens (by the gate) has recently become very territorial over the allotment with typical guarding behaviour such as barking at people, running up to them, and behaving aggressively. Tullio to have a discussion with the owners about ways to ensure the safety of plot-holders and their guests going forward. Deborah suggested that a notice be put on the gate telling people to be careful. Shaun mentioned another incident when two dogs on the lead were chasing around in an alarming way. Tullio reminded all present to document such instances, taking a photograph if possible and reporting it to him promptly so he can follow up.

2.3 Treasurer (Tricia K)

Financial report circulated to all present (copy at the end). The figures have not yet been audited so should not be regarded as 'final', although we're not anticipating any major differences.

In summary, it has been a good year:

Show: generated a profit of £1,181, which is larger than the previous year's Show but still behind 2019. However, the Show was scaled down and was a quieter, smaller event than usual as we were still very much coming out of Covid, so it was felt that this was a very good result.

Calendars: a fantastic year! Calendars are sold in our allotment shop and at Sunshine Garden Centre and this year were completely sold out. Profit of £588.86 was generated, the best ever. Everyone present clapped their appreciation to Bruce who is the force behind it and who is responsible for organising and designing it and getting it printed. His efforts are very much appreciated.

Café: the monthly café started again in June last year as we were coming out of Covid. The profit is slightly lower than for 2019, but it only re-started in June and it has taken a while for people to feel confident to come together again. Thank yous were clapped to Liz Love and all her helpers. The café doesn't just generate a healthy income, but it is also of huge value to the social life of the allotment. Everyone is encouraged to come along and support it.

Shop: a fantastic year, with a profit £200 greater than in 2019. Demand is very high, stock runs out very quickly and custom is excellent. The shop is run primarily as a service for the members and for this reason takes a very small mark-up. That it has still generated such a profit is testament to the huge number of sales. A card machine was introduced at the start of the year, which is good value and which makes accounting far easier. It is also extremely popular; the majority of sales are now paid for by card rather than cash. While there are no plans to stop taking cash, Tricia reiterated to those present that they can use their cards on even small purchases. The card payer is also being used in the café. A second card payer has been bought for use mainly in the café, and a third card payer will be introduced at the Show. In response to a query from Tony G., Tricia confirmed that subs cannot be paid using the card payment as a legal condition of using SumUp. Thanks were clapped to Tricia for all her hard work and in particular sorting out the card readers, which have made an enormous difference.

Subs: these have generated an income of £615 which represents 123 plots. This is greater than 2019 but down on 2020. Tricia urged everyone present to pay as it pays for the toilet and all the services we enjoy. Diane W. suggested that the subs be increased as they have stayed at £5 for very many years. However it was felt that, with the current state of the economy, this is not the time to be doing this although Andrew pointed out that it may need to increase if we need to repair the road. Further discussion about whether the membership payment could be made compulsory, as it is in some other boroughs. However, this is difficult to enforce. Christine asked that a list of paid-up members be made available in time for opening of entries for the Autumn Show, which is only open to those who have paid their subscription. This will be provided.

Young Gardeners: this was started by Nick and Clare Winstanley many years ago, but was wound up by Clare earlier this year with an outstanding amount of £1100 ring-fenced within the budget. The majority of the money was donated to local primary schools to run gardening activities and gardens, with two payments given to Coldfall school who were particularly keen. This left £156, which was donated back to the GCA main pot.

Donations: £572 in total, including fund-raising by Karen at the Christmas party and various miscellaneous donations.

Key deposits: there is a large amount of money from key deposits which is effectively a loan from plot-holders as the money will need to be returned to them when they give back their key.

Site maintenance: a grant is received for maintenance from Haringey. This pays for things like Mick's work with pipes, tree work, clearing of rubbish and general maintenance. We are also trying to save some of this money for larger future projects, as Andrew mentioned earlier.

Fraud: There have been four instances of fraud to deal with, where direct debits to the DVLA left the account. This was dealt with very promptly by the bank. The money has been refunded and the DVLA made aware. Led to extended discussion about the GCA bank account, and the lack of a card and ability to do internet banking. General consensus

seemed to be that it is important to keep our current system of needing 2 signatories for financial transactions for security reasons, so no changes anticipated at present.

Karen moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. This was seconded by Leila.

2.4 Trading Shed (Laura P)

Sarah M., who was elected Trading Shed manager at the previous AGM, was unable to continue due to unforeseen circumstances, so this post was taken over by her deputy Laura P. in January, with Tricia stepping up as Deputy Shop Manager.

Laura confirmed that the card reader has made an enormous difference to profits and has made the shop far more accessible to people. She has been using the site's unofficial WhatsApp group to promote the shop, gather volunteers and also take suggestions for what people would like the shop to stock, most recently including potting grit and blight-resistant tomato seeds. The range of things on sale in the shop has already expanded to more seeds and sundries and a small range of snacks which have been very popular with the children of plot holders. Shaun queried whether the primary compost sold, Sylvagrow, which we retail at the shop for £8.50, was rather expensive for most plot holders. Laura was able to reassure him that a cheaper compost is available, but that it is the Sylvagrow which is particularly popular, and which sells out most quickly and which people ask for more of. The allotment shop also offer Sylvagrow at a much reduced cost compared to local garden centres. Other attendees confirmed that, while it is relatively expensive, it is of very high quality and worth every penny! General discussion about the cost of compost, which is high and likely to get even higher over the coming year.

Volunteers: the shop continues to be run by volunteers on a rota. The rota is more or less full for this year, but Laura would always love more volunteers and asks that anyone interested contact her directly so she can arrange to train them. Tricia K. and Polly H. confirmed that it's a very nice, sociable job. The shop is open for 2 hours each day at the weekend, and although traditionally volunteers would sign up for a whole weekend, increasingly weekends are shared between two volunteers which means that people who can't do one or other of the days can still get involved.

Tricia proposed thanks to Laura for all her hard work and enthusiasm. The shop is now a real hub for our allotment community.

Other Reports

2.5 Show Report (Karen S)

Karen thanked everyone who has volunteered to help so far, 34 people in total. However, she still needs more volunteers, especially to help with the baskets, including the NGS basket on Show day, and helping Mick and his team set up the tents. Karen has tried to reduce the schedule and thus workload, removing the photography competition and

amalgamating some of the Young People's categories with the Novices. Even so there are still 80 entries; organising the Summer Show remains an enormous undertaking! Karen noted that last year there were just 24 participants entering the various categories, and encouraged more people to have a go this year, identifying prize winning vegetables, fruit or flowers, or making jams and preserves for Domestic entries.

Karen will not be continuing in this role next year. If anyone would like to learn the ropes with a view to taking over, she would be very glad of an apprentice. The Allotment Show has been a tradition since the 1920s and it would be a great shame if it had to stop.

Liz L. asked whether the flower categories could be expanded, as these were a feature of the Muswell Hill show she attended and were extremely popular. Unfortunately, the schedule is already fixed for this year, but Karen suggested that this might be something for someone else to investigate in the future.

3. Motions and proposals

3.1 Draft new regulations of the Golf Course Allotments Association for adoption. The document is available on the website. If the new regulations are adopted then they will come into force once the AGM is finished. This AGM operates under the old rules.

Lynn suggested that paragraph 6.2 should refer to 'shop manager' rather than 'trading shed' manager.

Liz asked for clarification of what a 'financial member' is. Andrew confirmed that it refers to someone who has paid their subscription that year and is therefore a member of the Association and doesn't confer any financial liability.

Peter M drew our attention to some other issues by email. He suggested a change in the title of the document from 'Rules and Regulations' to 'Constitution', which Andrew proposed we accept. He also pointed out a typo in paragraph 2 ('alternations' rather than 'alterations'), a mistake in Rule 5 which requires us to add 'by another member of the Committee'.

The Committee also discussed Rule 4.1 in the last meeting and consider that it should read

Subscriptions shall be payable in advance, and are due on or before 1st January each year. Membership will cease if a subscription is not paid by July 1st each year.

Lynn proposed that the new Rules document and amendments be accepted; Seconded by Tony. These are now adopted.

END OF PROPOSALS

4. Elections

- 4.1 Site Secretary: Tullio Moglia.** No voices against.
- 4.2 Chair: Andrew Lewis** No voices against.
- 4.3 Treasurer: Tricia Kelly** No voices against
- 4.4 Shop Manager: Laura Proffitt** No voices against
- 4.5 Minutes Secretary: Polly Hanchett** No voices against
- 4.6 Assistant Site Secretary** No names put forward
- 4.7 Show Secretary: Karen Sellars** No voices against
- 4.8 Vice Chair: Karen Sellars** No voices against
- 4.9 Assistant Shop Manager: Tricia Kelly** No voices against
- 4.10 Probationer Support Officer: Miles Hooton** No voices against
- 4.11 Committee members:** Alison Boon, John Newman, Mick Gerrie, Sarah Maguire, Steve Davies. Peter Moore has resigned. No-one else has put themselves forward.
- 4.12 Café Manager: Liz Love**

5. Appointment of auditor

Andrew L. proposed Robin Hodgkinson be appointed as the GCAA's auditor; seconded by Karen S.

AOB:

Rubbish (Diana): concern about the amount of rubbish that is present on sites and also that is left on sites when plot holders. Andrew explained that special arrangements are made for new ploholders on particularly 'dirty' plots e.g. not charging rent for a year, or helping with rubbish disposal. However, the general rule is that if there's a really bad plot we will clear it, but otherwise the new plot holder is expected to manage this themselves. Skips were ordered in the past but unfortunately this was abused, with the skips being piled up high and inappropriate things being dumped in them (butane gas cylinders and a washing machine, for example). Some discussion about other possibilities including short-term skip hire and local rubbish removal firms as well as local recycling centres; Summers Lane was singled out for particular praise as being very easy to use.

Additional query by Andrea about whether there needs to be something in the rules about what people can and can't bring on site. Andrew explained that there already is, but that in practice it is often difficult to prove whether the rubbish appeared before the anti-rubbish clauses appeared on the contract or not, and it can be difficult to enforce the rules. Really we rely on people being sensible and responsible. However, he will have a look at it.

Communal 'field' behind the Community Hall (Mick): this is currently very overgrown. There will be a working party next Saturday at 11am, and people are asked to come along and help if they are able, ideally with strimmer in hand. Thanks to Mick and to Ann Hunt for organising this.

6. END

Andrew calls end of meeting at 12.24pm

Treasurer's Report for the financial year ending 31 st March 2022

For those who don't know me, my name is Tricia Kelly and I took over as Treasurer from Simon Padmore after the last AGM.

It's been a learning curve and I have to apologise because I am presenting these figures as draft final year accounts - they have not yet been audited as I was not ready in April/May when the auditor was free and will now have to wait till August for final ratification but he has assured me that presenting draft figures is completely ok for an AGM.

There's been a lot of late night poring over numbers and checking of spreadsheets – and I have to thank Simon my predecessor for his invaluable help and support!

However I'm confident that the figures I'm presenting to you today are correct and that it is a true and accurate picture. Hopefully next year I will have my ducks in a row in good time!

2021 /2022 was a much improved year for all of us socially as things gradually opened up again after the lockdowns of the previous year. It was also a much improved year for the allotment income.

Our opening balance in April 2021 was £12,7343.63 and by the end of March this year, our closing balance was £16,857.77 – an increase of £4,124.14. On top of the £6502 ringfenced for large site maintenance projects – which I'll come back to at the end, that gives us an overall liquidity balance of £10,198.65.

The main sources of income, besides the annual site maintenance grant we get from Haringey of £2703 , were from the sale of our calendars, the monthly cafés and our Annual Show – the latter two both reinstated after the previous year when we had a virtual online show and no cafes at all. We also make money from members subs, a little from donations and occasionally from the trading Shed.

Taking the show first:

Takings on the day were £1519.85 and after expenses of £338.34 the profit amounted to £1181.51.

The year before our show was virtual so there is no point comparing the figures but in 2019, the overall takings were £1907 and after expenses, the profit was £1352.92 so you can see that final takings were slightly down in 2021 by around £171 – possibly because we ran a slightly smaller show

as we were only just coming out of the pandemic, and possibly because footfall was slightly down for the same reasons.

Hopefully, you'll all come in September and tell your friends so we can have a bumper show this time.

One of the other big earners for us is the sale of the Allotment calendars at the show, in the Trading Shed and also via Sunshine Garden Centre . We had a very good year on this so much so that we sold out of all of them, much to some people's dismay.

Calendar sales amounted to £1134.02 and with production expenses at £545.16, they made a healthy profit of £588.86 – our best year. Many thanks to Bruce Shayler for all of his hard work producing them -choosing the photographs and organising the design and printing – I think we can all agree that the calendars are a wonderful asset to our allotment community and they make good presents too.

Turning now to the Monthly Lunch Cafes

These started up again in June last year after a lengthy stoppage because of the pandemic.

Income was £1380.38 and with low expenses of £132 thanks to the regular generous donations of food dishes and cakes, the overall profit was £1248.42. This was about £250 down on 2019 figures, but we started 2 months later in the year and it has probably taken a while for some people to feel confident to come back and mingle again. Numbers have fluctuated but all thanks to Liz Love and her helpers, the café is a real boon to the social life of the allotments and we are lucky we have it. If you haven't been yet – do try it. Lovely food and an opportunity to meet your fellow allotmenters.

Now to the Trading Shed otherwise known as our Allotment Shop :

This was an excellent year's trading. Sales amounted to £3742.49. Interestingly, this was just a little less – by £200 – than in the lockdown year of 2020/21 when we nearly hit £4000 in takings, but compared with 2019 when the figures were £1727, there has been a £2000 increase in annual turnover in the past 2 years.

Laura Profitt and before her, Sarah Maguire, have worked hard to make sure the shop is usually fully stocked with compost, manure and even snacks and it's great that we are seeing good custom as a result.

The shop is run as a service for the benefit of allotment members and we source our stock at a good discount, almost all of which is passed on to you, with a very small mark-up. So the main purpose is not to make a big profit but I can tell you that we made a small profit of £252.87, which is pleasing.

Card Payments

The biggest change in relation to the Shop is that I have introduced the ability to make card payments.

After the pandemic, when we were all being advised to use cards not cash and seeing that even buskers and Big Issue sellers were taking card payments, it seemed ridiculous that we were still cash only.

I researched a few different options and in the end went for a SumUp reader, which was reasonably priced, had low charges – 1.69% on any card transaction- and very well supported by excellent back office services. SumUp provide full reports of transactions both daily and monthly and clear detailing of their charges, all of which makes my job as Treasurer much easier than keeping track of large amounts of cash.

The card reader was introduced in January and it's my experience that members are finding the ability to pay by card a very useful addition – it means they can buy a lot more compost without having to have lots of cash and we think sales are going up as a result. In the first 3 months of the year it was in use, card sales were £807.48 against £443 in cash so twice as many people were paying by card and this trend has actually increased incrementally since then.

We have also been allowing people using the café to pay by card if they had no cash, but I can announce that I have now bought 2 new card readers, so for the café ongoing, that will be a standard offering.

It also means that come the show, we will have 3 card readers available – probably one for the teas, one for the produce stall and another whose use can be decided – it could be a roving one. This will hopefully mean that guests will spend more because they are not inhibited by lack of cash!

I have to say that it makes my job a lot easier – and people should not feel that any amount is too small to pay by card - that is the purpose of them -they are designed for small businesses and social enterprises.

However I know that some people will always prefer to deal in cash and might feel nervous or mistrustful of card readers.

I can assure them that they are a safe and secure way of paying, but if they still prefer to deal in cash, that is fine - we have no plans to phase that out.

Moving on to Subs .

We took in £615 in Subs last year- still well up on 2019 but that was £100 less than the previous excellent year - representing a loss of 20 membership fees. I would urge everyone to pay their subs – and tell your neighbours to also – they help pay for things like the toilet and all the services of the site that members enjoy.

Young Gardeners

Sadly Young Gardeners wound up this past year. We have always looked after and ringfenced their money. And at the beginning of the year there was over £1100 in their pot.

Clare Winstanley asked me to give large donations of £400 each to 2 local schools – Rhodes Avenue and Coldfall to help with their gardening activities and then followed up with an additional £200 to Coldfall who had been particularly proactive about how they could use the money.

At the end of this there was a sum of £156.31 left over which Clare has kindly donated back to the allotment funds – thank you Clare.

Other donations during the year included £100 in memory of Geoffrey Austin, a donation of £100 from Peter Moore, £60 from 49 Winton Avenue, and stalwart fundraising efforts from Karen

Sellars at the Xmas party. Together with odd extra change and donations at the Shop, overall donations added up to a total of £572.76.

Keys

The money we get from key deposits is theoretically a returnable charge and by the end of this year we had £1170 in the bank from keys over the past 3 years, money which can be put to general use as we don't expect everyone to ask for their deposits back all at once!

A word about the toilet.

Obviously we don't charge you to spend a penny, it's a service to members, but there are costs involved. Last year maintenance and cleaning products cost £793. (The hire of another Portaloo for the show is separate and comes under show expenses.) I'd add that cleaning is done by volunteers and the cost to them is considerable if it is left in a nasty state. Please leave it as you would wish to find it and clean up after yourself.

Finally Site Maintenance.

As I mentioned earlier, we get a grant from Haringey towards site maintenance of £2703. Some of this is used during the year on everything from the ongoing work of fixing leaking pipes and taps – thanks Mick Gerrie – to repair of fencing, cutting of trees, clearing of rubbish and general maintenance.

However we also have been saving much of our site maintenance budget towards larger projects and we currently have £6502 ringfenced for this making an overall liquidity of £10,198.65 carried into 2022-23.

A quick postscript about DVLA Fraud!!

Back in January I noticed a peculiar payment, and then another, and another - all to the DVLA and all for different amounts and related to given vehicle registrations.

In the end, there were 4 payments deducted as Direct Debits out of our account. Having checked that we had no vehicles that should be claiming their road licences against our account, I quickly realised these were fraudulent payments and contacted the bank. To be fair, they acted extremely quickly to refund our money and I also wrote to the DVLA with a list of the registration numbers involved. Hopefully that is the end of that.

And that is the end of my Treasurer's Report for 2021-22.