

Hotwells & District Allotments Association Ltd

Registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014

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Registered address: 2 Kennel Lodge Road, Bower Ashton, Bristol BS3 2JT
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Hotwells and District Allotment Association

Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 2pm , 4th Jan 2020

Present: David Thornley (President), Jenny Hendy (Chair), Tom Ward (Treasurer), Chris Hanmer (Secretary), John Buchanan, Chris Crook, Richard and Cheryl Bartelot, Lesley Woodward, Betty and Alan Gatland, Sarah Ogdon, Annabel Storrer, Anne Dockery, Graeme Dowling, Kean Lamb, Julia Hammond, Ann Martin, Rita Ignate, Stan Morgan, Roy Davis, Peter Tucker, Charlie Bolton, Jane Stevenson, Barbara Fowler, Iggy Fung, Lesley Nichols, Chris Wilson, Charlie Wilson, Phil Cass, John Parke, Craig Dunsford.

Apologies: Steve Fay, Peter Vowles, Terry Hoskins, Paul Finch, John Lansdall, Angie Tonge.

1 Welcome and In memorium

Jenny Hendy opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

She also noted the death of three tenants this year; Bert Thorn from the Meadows, Mike Coombes from Alderman Moores, and Jim Purdy from KL1. A plot holder from each site who had known them spoke briefly; for all of them their allotment were an important part of life and a source of pleasure.

2 Minutes of the AGM 2019

Acceptance of the Minutes of the AGM held on 5 January 2019 was proposed by Charlie Bolton, seconded by Peter Tucker and approved by the meeting.

3 Matters arising from the 2019 AGM Minutes.

None.

4 Awards

David Thornley, HwDAA President presented the following awards:

Harry Green shield for the Best Kept Plot was awarded to John Holland (White City 53) accepted on his behalf by Iggy Fung.

Eric Grimes Cup for Best Newcomer was jointly awarded to Lesley and Chris Nichols (White City 21A) and to Alan and Betty Gratland (Alderman Moores 284 A&B).

5 Chair's report January 2020

The full text is attached to these Minutes.

6 Treasurer's Report

Tom gave a Powerpoint presentation highlighting the main points from the printed annual accounts provided to the meeting. These show that although plot rents are the main source of income the shop profit is an important contribution to HwDAA funds. The greatest annual expenditure is on the sites' maintenance including security; shed repairs and replacements, and water bills.

There were no questions raised. The Accounts will be posted on the website with the AGM minutes.

On behalf of the Association Tom thanked Iggy Fung for again auditing the accounts and the meeting showed its appreciation of Iggy's work with a round of applause.

7 Internal audit of 2018/19 accounts

The meeting voted unanimously to accept that the accounts had been internally audited.

8 Approval of the 2018-19 accounts

The meeting voted unanimously to accept the accounts and for the Treasurer to submit them to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)

9 Notice of plot rents from 1st Oct 2020

Jenny explained that the AGM sets the maximum increases for plots for the following year (2020 – 2021). The committee recommendations for these are: Large £75.00, Medium £56, Small £44. Very Small £22.00 Mini £10.00. The increases still keep our rents lower than those of Bristol City Council run plots.

NB these are maximum potential increases

10 Election of President

David Thornley offered himself for re-election as President and this was unanimously agreed by the meeting.

11 Election of Committee Officers

Three committee posts – Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary – changed since the last AGM after the then-Chair (Roger Coffin)'s family move to York. The current holders of these and all other committee posts (except Treasurer) are willing to be re-elected. John Buchanan has agreed to be put forward as Treasurer in place of Tom Ward, who is stepping down. All posts have been separately nominated and seconded. The meeting unanimously agreed the new committee en bloc.

12 AOB

- Craig Dunsford (KL1) asked about the possibility of sinking a bore hole to the stream which runs under KL1/2. Jenny felt that although this could be considered, and costs and permissions need to be assessed. Jane Stevenson (AM) mentioned that Golden Hill allotments have installed a water pump.
- Jane Stevenson (AM) asked if HwDAA are aware that BCC are in the process of developing a new allotment strategy. Jenny will find out more from Jane after the meeting and follow up accordingly.
- Phil Cass (AM) suggested that plot holders should be encouraged to note wildlife on all sites and pass these on to the Greater Bedminster Partnership. In support of this, Julia Hammond (Meadows) asked that this should include identifying the different species of birds seen at the sites. Jenny suggested that Paul Finch (HwDAA Environmental Officer) could act as the link person.
- David Thornley (WC) suggested that we should all be encouraged to attract pollinating insects, particularly bees, by planting flowers and other pollen rich plants. In addition, we could help provide facilities for bees on the sites. Phil Cass (AM) noted that a new application to keep bees on BA site has been approved; this adds to the active hives, two on WC and two KL2.

Proposed date for next AGM – Saturday 2 or 9 Jan 2021

The meeting closed at 3pm

Chair's report

AGM

Thanks to everyone for coming. The AGM is essential to the smooth running of HwDAA, to ensure our probity as a registered Co-operative and Community Benefit Society, agree our committee membership, and pass the accounts for submission to the Financial Conduct Authority. It is also one of the many ways in which we hear from the membership of the association. Without members like you giving up a January Saturday to sit in the cold we could not get this business done.

Roger Coffin, our chair for the last AGM, moved away from Bristol in May 2019 and I took over as Chair then. Although only chair for 18 months Roger oversaw a smooth transition from the previous chair, was hands on in all aspects of the Association and is a hard act to follow.

So this report covers six months of Roger's time as chair and six months of mine.

Volunteers

The main task since the changeover has been keeping the Association running smoothly. This means ensuring that HwDAA supports the horticultural efforts of members/tenants, keeps the allotments productive and well tended, fulfils the obligations of our tenancy agreements with Bristol City Council, and fulfils our legal obligations.

Before I took over as chair I knew HwDAA depended on volunteers. Since becoming chair I now have a much greater appreciation of the contribution of all the volunteers.

Without them we would not be an independent association, our sites would not be as well maintained and our tenants would not be as well supported with well managed sites, a shop, occasional events and advice and help with cultivation when requested. Specifically I'd like to give heartfelt thanks to:

The site reps:

Chris Crook – Meadows

Roy Davis – Bower Ashton

John Lansdall – White City

Terry Hoskins – Kennel Lodge 2

Phil Cass – Alderman Moores

Assistant site reps **Paul Finch, Bob Corfield, Pete Vowles, Kean Lamb** share the load.

Other Volunteers will be mentioned throughout this report.

The Shop

The Allotment Shop is a great service to tenants. It is run entirely by volunteers, offers a comprehensive, very reasonably priced stock.

Steve Fay has managed the “dry” stock, including compost, netting, ground cover etc,

Lesley Woodward has managed seeds, potatoes, onions and garlic.

Phil Cass carries the responsibility for the shop building (shutters, plumbing, toilets, drainage etc). Phil also helps with deliveries, stock etc.

Angie Tong manages an army of volunteers who serve in a shop which is sometimes overrun with customers and sometimes very cold and empty. These volunteers cover one shift per month, are too many to list but they know who they are and we greatly appreciate their time.

As you will see from the treasurer's report the shop contributes significantly to the association's income as well as being a service to tenants.

Steve Fay has transformed the shop since he took over and is now moving on. I'm really please to say **Pete Creed** is offering to take over from him.

Lesley is continuing to manage the seed order but is giving up the perishables – potatoes, onions, garlic etc. Any offers?

Sites, Plots and Tenants

No of sites 6

No of plots 557

No of tenants 517

Vacant Plots 1

We continue to split whole plots so that all new tenants start with a half and we reduce our waiting list. We therefore have a steady, small increase in the total number of tenants. It is a great achievement by the association, particularly **Peter Tucker** the membership secretary and the site reps, that we currently only have one vacant plot.

Inspections

Roger started the 2019 inspection process and I took over. Every year the site reps do inspections, firstly of their own sites and then to give a second opinion to colleagues from other sites. These inspections are designed to ensure that plots are productive and well maintained, to identify any issues, and work with tenants to sort out any problems. We try to strike a balance between ensuring plots are well used and fulfil the terms of our tenancies with the council and supporting any tenants who for whatever reason have not been able to maintain their plots as they would like.

Inspections are not intended to be a draconian policing process.

This year 46 letters were written to tenants the majority of whom replied promptly, positively and sorted out any issues. I'm very grateful to tenants who respond positively and keep in touch with site reps. In the face of ongoing problems tenants receive at least three letters or emails and a phone call where possible.

This year only two tenants didn't have their tenancies renewed, a tribute to the work of the site reps. There is guidance about standards and inspection processes on the website.

Waiting list

We experiment with ways of keeping the waiting list, trying not to let it get too long so that people give up waiting or move away before hearing from us. We currently have approximately 50 people interested in a plot and hope to open up the lists again soon. It is important for us to demonstrate the demand for allotments.

Improvements, Repairs and Maintenance

We have a constant programme of repairs and maintenance.

Some is planned and predictable. This year we have repaired walls on the Meadows site, improved the security fencing on White City, and repaired huts on all site. We have maintained fences, hauling ways, and hedges.

Those at last year's AGM will remember discussion about the installation of solar panels on the roof of the shop. These have been installed, provide light and significantly reduce the use of the diesel powered generator.

Some maintenance expenditure is unpredictable: for example the leak which some of you will have seen by KL2 which we were responsible for repairing and the leak **into** the septic tank on Alderman Moores site. Other unplanned expenditure can result from vandalism or theft, for example the arson on White City and the break in on KL1. Budgeting for expected maintenance and contingency for unplanned expenditure is an important task for the treasurer and he will say more about this.

Environmental Concerns

We have an Environment Officer, **Paul Finch**, who is committed to reducing our waste, improving our capture of water, reducing our water bills and improving our environmental practices. He is organising water butts for tenants at low or no cost and the association as whole is working to reduce water usage. We hope to run a beginners' workshop in Spring which as well as previously well received sessions (e.g. seed sowing) will include a session on water capture and usage.

We have withdrawn some chemicals from the shop.

We are also talking with a local charity about using gluts donated by tenants in local food projects.

Health and Safety

This is a standing item on our monthly committee meeting agenda. We record incidents, both the problem and the action. We have one report for this year, a trip in the shop door way. As a result we put bollards and Betsy, a child sized model, outside the shop to slow traffic when it's open.

Improving Access

Last year Roger reported that we were looking at improving access where possible, by meeting the particular needs for new tenants or responding to the changed circumstances of existing tenants. Examples of this work include reducing the size of plots for people no longer wanting to work a full (or even a half) plot, making provision for tenants with limited mobility and cutting grass or covering a plot for tenants temporarily incapacitated. Much of this work is done informally by site reps and neighbours "helping out". It helps hugely if tenants let us know if they are experiencing any difficulty managing their plots.

External developments affecting the Allotment sites

Those of you who read the newsletter will know that HwDAA is trying to keep up to date with any local development which might affect our sites.

Ashton Railway Sidings The company developing the site which runs alongside Festival Way, close to HwDAA's site White City, ran a public information session and plans to submit a planning application soon. The boundary for the site to be developed runs alongside White City and the re-routing of Festival Way could benefit the site.

Ashton Court Mansion House. The council commissioned and made public the Purcell Report in June 2019. The report includes mention of "under used allotments" which could be sold for development, contributing to the development of the Mansion House. HwDAA made it clear that the allotments were well used and demand for allotments is high. It now seems as if BCC are seeking a single buyer on a long lease rather than the Trust recommended by the Purcell Report. Bids will apparently be invited in the New Year and the feeling is that this makes the future of the allotments safer.

Weston Harbour. BCC is considering options for the future of the Plimsoll Swing Bridge and a large area of land around the feed-in roads. So far, proposals do not appear to include land currently used as allotments. However, BCC hopes for "transformative" plans and the impact on the whole area will be extensive.

As I've said, we will monitor all local developments, particularly any threat to any of our allotment sites. Many of our tenants have additional knowledge and it is really helpful when they contact us with information about meetings, consultations, plans etc.

Events

Again, we had an extremely successful Cream Tea smoothly organised by Angie, Chris and another group of volunteers. The scones were excellent, the sun shone and a significant sum was raised for charity.

Rent Increases

As you know, rents were frozen for two years. We then decided on a small increase for this year. Next year (2020/2021) the committee has agreed a **MAXIMUM** increase as follows:

- Large - £75
- Medium - £56
- Small - £44
- V small - £22
- Mini - £10

The actual rent levels, below those listed above, will be decided in the summer. Rents are still significantly below those of the City Council

Further Thanks

In addition to all those thanked above I'd like particularly to thank

- **Chris Hanmer**, who took over as secretary at short notice and has continued supporting the work of the Association even when limited by a broken wrist.
- **Tom Ward**, who has been our treasurer for the last year, kept our books and accounts with scrupulous efficiency and is now moving on.
- **Bob Corfield**, who has been on the committee for at least 10 years and knows more than anyone about the running of the Association. He currently runs the website, keeps our data and use of data safe and legal, and has been a huge support to me while taking over from Roger.