

**Hotwells & District Allotments Association Ltd**

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

Registered No: 6359R

*Registered address: 2 Kennel Lodge Road, Bower Ashton, Bristol BS3 2JT*

[www.hwdaa.co.uk](http://www.hwdaa.co.uk)

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**Hotwells and District Allotment Association**

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019**

**Present:** David Thornley (President), Roger Coffin (Chair), Bob Corfield (Treasurer), Jenny Hendy (Secretary), Tom Ward, Richard Bartelot, Cheryl Bartelot, Lesley Woodward, Dorothy Bowles, Duncan Bowles, Chris Crook, Kineta Hill, Jer Fitzgerald, Sarah Ogden, Caroline and Teddy Fox (for Mike Fox), Jan Chesher, John Parke, Rita Ignate, Jennifer Rollason, Oliver Skilman-Wilson, Charlie Bolton, Kean Lamb, John Lansdall, Paul Finch, Phil Cass, Roy Davis, Peter Tucker.

**1. Welcome**

Roger Coffin opened the meeting and welcomed everyone

**2. Apologies:**

Chris Hanmer, Terry Hoskins, Jane Stevenson.

**3. In Memoriam**

Roger noted the death of Sarah Walters, a long-standing tenant who died on 8th Jan 18

**4. Minutes of 2018 AGM**

Acceptance of the minutes of AGM of 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018 was proposed by John Lansdall, seconded by John Park and approved by the meeting.

**5. Matters arising from Minutes**

No matters arising not dealt with elsewhere in these minutes

**6. Chair's Report - January 2019**

This report is intended to provide an overview of the main activities of our allotment association during the year from 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2018

Growing conditions this year have been difficult to say the least with the Beast from the East in March followed by record drought conditions lasting many weeks of the growing season. Most tenants have had mixed fortunes this year with some successes and some failures. Overall a tricky year for the gardener to test our growing skills. You will see later our water costs went up substantially this year.

**Membership**

We currently have 511 tenants on 551 plots with 31 tenants holding more than one plot. During 2017/18 we issued 82 new tenancy agreements which is pretty much in line with the previous year. Our overall waiting list currently stands at 14, much reduced on last year as a result of good management by our Membership Secretary who has tried to ensure no one is on the list for more than a few months. The combination of the Membership Secretary and the active stance of our site reps has meant re-lettings are taking place quickly thus ensuring a constant flow of income and plots in use.

Waiting lists for AM, BA & WC are open but those for KL1&2, MD remain closed. In reality those people applying for a plot at BA generally are looking for KL1&2, MD or BA.

*My very grateful thanks to Peter Tucker, our Plots/Membership Secretary who manages the letting process for the Association in a very capable manner.*

The demographic of our tenants remains much as before, over 90% living in the surrounding areas, predominantly BS3 and BS8 (Hotwells, Clifton, Southville, Bedminster, Ashton and Ashton Vale) Most of our tenants have Internet access and we hold email addresses for in excess of 95% of our total membership. This enables us to use email almost exclusively for messages about a range of topics or updates which we deem relevant. This includes annual rent invoices wherever we can. We are now processing new tenancy agreements by electronic means. From 2019 Notices to Remedy chasers will be sent by email.

We are very aware of our responsibilities concerning protection of the data we hold for all tenants and we are registered under the General Data Protection Regulation. Bob Corfield is the custodian of this data which is only shared with other committee members where there is a specific need.

*My sincere thanks to Bob Corfield for his considerable work in ensuring we remain compliant under the GDPR Act*

### **Capital Works and Other Improvements**

The Association relies on funds from its annual tenancy payments supplemented by income from the shop, to undertake all improvements to our 6 sites, as well as carrying out all necessary repairs and maintenance. Our spending policy continues to focus on those projects which will deliver maximum benefit to the majority of our tenants.

During the past business year we have carried major improvement works:-

- Creation of hard standing carpark at Bower Ashton
- Replacement of compost toilet at White City
- Shed replacement programme at Alderman Moore's
- New plot numbers for all sites
- Security improvements at Alderman Moore's and White City

The Treasurer will give much more detail around our overall income and expenditure but it is fair to say site management is our biggest expense across our 6 sites amounting to c £17000 including security enhancement costs.

The spending programme for 2018/19 is every bit as ambitious involving improvement of our assets - we look to replace further sheds this year, repair those sheds which are worthy, possible

installation of electricity to Alderman Moore's shop or enhancements to the solar energy system, installation of compost toilet at Bower Ashton, covers for our water tanks, creation of hard standing parking area at north end of WC. Following the break-in at AM late 2017 we managed to replace all lost equipment through our insurers and all new kit is security marked and registered. The latest break-in has seen the theft of our trailer and as this asset is only in the balance sheet at a nominal figure we will not claim through insurers as we risk substantially increasing our premiums. Whether we replace the trailer is the subject of debate at committee.

Due to these break-ins we had hoped to install improved security lights and solar cameras but we have been unable to find suitably robust equipment which will do the job. Electricity to the shop or a beefed up solar energy system would enable us to set up cameras and a security system subject to cost. Current estimates for installing electricity to the shop are c £12k - a large chunk of our income.

I mentioned last year proposed expenditure on an accessible plot for wheelchair/motability user - this did not take place due to the very specific needs of individuals and our policy will be to set up a usable plot as and when we are approached and it will then be bespoke. This is in line with Bristol City Council policy and we have taken note of the pitfalls the Council encountered. They set up 5 accessible plots and have only let one as the others do not suit the needs of people who have approached them.

### **The Allotment Sites**

Numbers of plots

AM	242
BA	60
KL1	73
KL2	56
MD	40
WC	80

This gives a total of 551 which is the highest figure for many years - a reflection of our policy to split large plots as they become vacant into 2 or 3 units.

All 6 sites we manage are in a good state, the majority of plots well tended with many outstanding examples of allotment gardening. Whilst it is a last resort, we do ask tenants to leave where plots are not tended and this year we have asked 10 tenants to leave following the usual series of reminders and warnings.

The general maintenance of the 6 sites is an ongoing battle with management of trees, shed repairs, improving security, removal of waste/debris, maintenance of haulingways and paths, maintenance of external walls and fences - the list is endless. *I am very grateful to Phil Cass, Site Rep at AM who oversees this process across all sites - his expertise and advice is invaluable to me and the other site reps.*

Our site reps continue to give us outstanding service in keeping their sites in good shape ably assisted by a number of assistant reps. They meet prospective tenants, they are the first point of contact for all site related matters, keep their sites in good order, mow communal grassed areas, monitor the security of their sites etc. They give of their time and expertise freely and without their

support both I as Chair and the Association would struggle to function. *Phil Cass at AM, John Lansdall at WC, Roy Davis at BA, Terry Hoskins at KL2, Jenny Hendy at KL1 and Chris Crook at MD all do a sterling job and my thanks go to them and the assistants.*

Plot inspections will take place from March to August this year and the process of warning letters or emails leading to eviction has been refined to speed up the process where it is clear the tenant is showing no sign of reacting. The system still allows us to give latitude where circumstances dictate.

### **Plot Rents**

The last increase in rents was 2016/17, they were frozen last year and we propose to freeze them again for 2018/19 - this was announced at the last AGM. We continue to charge below Bristol City Council allotment rates and following an increase this year by the council of £5 the comparable figures are:-

Very small plot	£20 (£30)
Small plot	£36 (£50)
Medium plot	£49 (£70)
Large plot	£62 (£85)

The Treasurer will talk about our proposal for 2019/2020.

### **The Shop**

Shop has again provided the Association with a healthy profit this last year - an increase to c £6000. We continue to see a good level of sales with basic gardening products, seeds and seasonal products (potatoes, shallots, garlic and onion sets). Second hand tools are now a regular feature on our shelves and we encourage everyone to bring along their unwanted tools for resale as long as they are usable. We have a good team of volunteers who run the shop during opening hours. *There are a number of people to thank for the way the shop runs like clockwork - Steve Fay who manages the stock, collects supplies and oversees the operation, Lesley Woodward for her unstinting efforts in keeping our range of seeds current, setting up the military operation which is Potato Day, ordering and bagging up onions, shallots and garlic - full marks to her husband for putting up with a basement full of smelly bulbs. Angie Tonge who manages the volunteer rota very capably and of course all our volunteers.*

### **Water Supplies**

As mentioned our water bills this last 12 months have been high - up to 40% higher than the previous year due to the unprecedented hot spell - we need to consider this may be a feature going forward in the light of climate change. Part of our plot inspection schedule going forward will highlight the need for water collection systems on all sheds and greenhouses - we need to be a bit smarter than perhaps we have been. The site reps have again done a great job in monitoring water levels and restricting usage where appropriate. As mentioned we will be looking to source covers for our water tanks to preserve the quality of the water and to stop foreign matter falling in.

### **Site Security**

The development of the land adjacent to AM has left us vulnerable to break in and on top of the serious thefts in December 2017 there was another break-in November last when the trailer was stolen. Upwards of 20 sheds were rifled during that break-in with the loss to tenants of strimmers, mowers and other motorised kit. The construction company working on the land are now erecting fencing along the metro side of the land which we hope will protect us. In addition they will put in security lights and a loud speaker system to monitor the site remotely once they have materials and equipment on site - expect Feb/March 2019. I had hoped the builders would help us to bolster our own fencing but they will do little more than create an eco exclusion zone of 5/6 meters up to our fence which will be allowed to grow wild - but in a managed way. We may need to consider planting hawthorn or something similar along our side of the fence. I obtained an estimate to replace our fencing along that edge with palisade fencing - £11k +vat - again a big slice of our income and probably too much to consider now. White City saw the total destruction of the second composting loo in April. A third version has now been erected in a different part of the site at a much reduced cost - several hundred pounds - due to the good offices and hard work of John Nolan, John Lansdall and Kean Lamb - thank you guys. WC has also seen break-ins over the year and we have beefed up the security around the perimeter. Our other sites have, thankfully remained free from vandalism and theft this last year.

### **Accidents - Health & Safety**

Pleased to say no reports of serious injury or incident during the past year. As already advised we are required to maintain a log of incidents for our insurers - the reporting system is on the website.

### **Local Developments**

AM - Land under development and subject of much discussion and debate.

BA - Railway line upgrade by Network Rail still no nearer.

KL 1 - Tree fall on Ashton Court land caused the destruction of a tenants greenhouse and after some pressure from ourselves the council persuaded their insurers to make an ex-gratia payment towards replacement.

KL2 - Nothing to report.

WC - The Old Stoneworks land now to be developed though we understand the developers have recently pulled out so the way forward is unclear. We have, however, clear assurances from the managing agents that our tenants access to WC will not be impaired by any building work.

MD - the serious deterioration of the external face of the west wall was made good by the council and we have contracted to start repair work on our side of the wall. The overhanging ash tree continue to be a nuisance though the council has now agreed to reduce some of the overhang.

### **Events held during the year**

Cream Tea in September - hugely successful again raising c£200 on the day enabling us to make a contribution to child.org (seeds for africa)

Kings Seeds in March - this was a highlight this year, well supported and very informative - how we ever got seeds to grow before this event I will never know!

Potato Day - Great success - will take place again a week tomorrow - Sunday 13 January 2019

No Dig workshop - another well attended event run by our friend Tim Foster

New Tenant get together - an opportunity for new tenants to meet committee members and ask general gardening questions - not well attended but worthwhile to those who did attend.

*My sincere thanks go to Lesley Woodward for the military precision with which she runs potato day and her considerable efforts in organising the Kings Seeds talk. My thanks to Anneke Van Ejken for*

*organising the Cream Tea, the No Dig workshop and the New Tenant get together - Anneke has relinquished the Events Roll due to work/study/family pressures. A big thank you to Anneke for her time and efforts.*

We are not looking to immediately replace the Events Co-ordinator roll but if anyone has an inclination to get involved in organising an event please let me know. As we decide upon events we will create a small working party to allocate jobs and run them ad-hoc.

### **Website**

Our website continues to evolve and develop and we encourage all tenants to make full use of it and note our many policies on a wide range of topics. It is a secure site.

*My grateful thanks to Bob Corfield for his continued efforts in managing the website and his constant innovation. As most of you will know Bob is handing over the Treasurer roll to Tom Ward but Bob will continue to be our IT Manager looking after Data Protection, website, message controller etc.etc.*

### **Awards**

Once I have completed my report I will hand over to David, our President, to present the awards:-

The Harry Green Shield - Best Plot 2018

The Eric Grimes Cup - Best First Year Allotment

In addition to these awards there were a number of commendations for the high standard of plots across the estate.

### **The Rules of the Association**

As previously advised Bob Corfield has been working on these for some time and Jenny Hendy has now taken over the unenviable task of trying to align our rules to those of the National Allotment Society. We have been updating our rules to bring them into the twenty first century and take out many of the misogynistic references. We are close to finalising this piece of work at long last and as soon as our amendments are ratified by NAS then we will publish the Rules on the website. Suffice to say we are compliant and in line with the requirements of the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 which governs organisations like ours. *My grateful thanks to Bob for his perseverance here and to Jenny for putting her hand up to take this on.*

### **The Committee**

Your committee continues to meet monthly to look at pressing issues and items of importance to tenants. We continually look to expand or put in place policies which will create clarity for tenants. Your committee also decides how the Associations money should be spent. Whilst we no longer have a Newsletter Editor we continue to provide newsletters as and when and urgent messages are relayed by our IT Manager - Bob Corfield. If anyone is interested in becoming involved in the running of the Association please let me, Bob or Jenny have your details.

*All committee members give freely of their time and without them the Association could not function - I have been particularly grateful to each and every one of the committee in my first year as Chair for keeping me on the straight and narrow. I would ask you to show your appreciation for the committee acknowledging the hard work they do.*

### **And finally....**

We will shortly hear from Bob Corfield with his final report as Treasurer of the Association after 12 years of outstanding service. There was a film which came out a few years ago which was titled in Bob's honour - 'Twelve Years A Slave'. Bob will of course still be around as our IT Manager but will after today hand the Treasurers mantle to Tom Ward. Bob has been brilliant in guiding me this last 12 months, watching my back, correcting my cock-ups etc. etc. I am really pleased he will still be an integral part of the committee and its operations but would like you all to show your appreciation for his fantastic service to each and every tenant. I have a token of my appreciation for your considerable efforts. Thank you.

### **7. Awards**

David Thornley (President) presented the awards as follows:

Harry Green shield for best plot went to Mike Fox of White City (award received by Caroline and Teddy Fox).

Eric Grimes cup went to Kineta Hill.

7 certificates of commendation were also awarded (not handed out at meeting).

### **8. Treasurer's Report (attached)**

Bob Corfield thanked Iggy Fung for auditing the accounts again.

Bob presented the accounts (see separate document) to the meeting. Items highlighted included the increasing and important profit made by the shop.

Bob explained the importance of managing and allocating the surplus in the light of HwDAA's status as a Mutual organisation.

There were no questions raised.

Because of the importance of the role, Roger Coffin asked that the change of Treasurer be put to the meeting before the election of other committee members. The meeting agreed unanimously that Tom Ward would become the new Treasurer. Roger thanked him for taking on the post.

### **9. Vote on Audit**

The meeting agreed unanimously to continue to ask Iggy Fung to audit the accounts. Roger Coffin asked to record thanks to Iggy Fung for his valuable service to HwDAA.

### **10. Approval of 2017 / 18 Accounts**

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

## **11. Notice of plot rents from 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2019**

Bob explained that the meeting sets the maximum increases for plots for the following year (2019 – 2020). The committee recommendations for these are: Large £70.00, Medium £53, Small £40. Very Small £22.00 Mini £10.00

**NB these are maximum potential increases**

## **12. Election of President**

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

## **13. Election of Committee Officers**

David Thornley presented the option of re-electing current committee members, separately nominated and seconded, en bloc.

This was proposed by Charlie Bolton (AM 146), seconded by Jan Chesher (AM 68) and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

## **14. AOB**

Roger asked for the feeling of the meeting about supply of electricity to the shop.

Members commented as follows:

- Solar panels could be added incrementally as demand and budget allowed.
- Wind generation could also be considered.
- HwDAA could look at local start up companies.

Richard Bartelot raised the question of mentoring for new tenants. Members commented as follows:

- Site reps offer support to new tenants
- Lesley offers advice and support from the shop
- Beginners' workshops will be offered again.

**Proposed date for next AGM – Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020**