



**Minutes of the Hart Allotments AGM on Saturday 16th January 2016
held at the Harlington Centre at 3pm**

1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The Chairman (Dave Bell) welcomed the 43 people (33 named members) attending the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. There were 8 apologies. Most of the committee were seated facing the meeting so that they could answer questions. (Dave introduced the committee and what role they took within the IPS). A mix of tenants and members only (no plot yet) attended the meeting. Paid up members were issued with voting slips on arrival.

2. Previous minutes and action points

The Secretary (Sylvia) mentioned that the previous minutes (and an update on actions) had been sent out prior to the meeting. There were also spare copies available. Stephen Bowring proposed that these were accepted as an accurate record and this was seconded by Penny Bradley. A vote was then taken with 26 votes recorded. There were no opposers. Item accepted.

3. Chairman's report

The Chairman read out his report of the year. Please see appendix attached to these minutes.

4. Treasurer's report and acceptance of unaudited accounts for year ending Nov 2014

The Treasurer (Alan) ran through the main parts of the accounts and mentioned that they had changed slightly from the summary that was sent out with the agenda. Copies of the full accounts were made available for those wishing to have the detail. In summary Alan explained that Hart Allotments had made a profit of £474.65. Alan and Sylvia explained some of the expenditure items listed on the accounts. (Full account details will be shown on the Hart Allotment website)

Joy Keith proposed that these accounts be accepted and Anthony Jones seconded the proposal. 27 members voted to accept the accounts and there were no opposers. Item accepted.

These accounts will now be submitted to the Financial Conduct Authority in line with their requirement for an annual return.

Action: Secretary/Treasurer

5. Election of Officers/Management Committee

Officers

The Chairman thanked the officers for their work on the Management Committee (viz: President – Cllr Sharyn Wheale, Treasurer – Alan Jones, Secretary – Sylvia Cresswell) and announced that he and the other officers were all prepared to stand again if acceptable to the members.

Management Committee

The Chairman wanted to thank **all** the committee members for their work throughout the year.

He advised that three members have now resigned from the committee. These are Nikki Topp-Walker, Hazel Maunders and Sally Martin. This has given rise to vacancies on the committee. Prior to the meeting Terry Collier volunteered to join the committee. There were no other volunteers to join the committee. The existing committeemen were prepared to stand for re-election: Martyn Garvey, Tim Buswell, Diane White, Barbara Doel.

Voting on the Election of Officers and Management Committee was all performed in one vote. The proposal to keep the current officers and committee members and to add Terry Collier on to the committee was put forward by Cllr Alan Oliver and seconded by Paul Heath. A vote was then taken with 30 votes for the proposal. There were no opposers.

6. Proposal for unaudited accounts for next year (as per this year) (annual vote required)

Tom Pryor proposed that we continue next year with unaudited accounts. This was seconded by Bill Jones. A vote was taken and 30 votes were in favour of this. There were no opposers. Penny Bradley mentioned that every 5 years we should get the accounts audited. Item to be brought forward for 5th year. In the meantime we need to look out to see if the membership can secure an accountant who would be prepared to undertake this.

Action: Secretary



7. Pilcot Farm allotment site issues

The tenants discussed the issues of lease, water logging and parking.

Lease

The Chairman reminded tenants that we had renewed the lease for a further two years. A number of tenants want to stay on Pilcot and wanted to remove the temporary status and go for a further lease. The Secretary advised that the style of lease with Hart District Council (HDC) (for the Edenbrook Allotments) will be for a plot of 'agricultural land' where we have to pay a fixed amount irrespective of whether we have let out plots. Consequently we therefore need to fill up the Edenbrook site first - so that the cost can be divided between as many people as possible thereby keeping the cost as low as possible to all the tenants. A show of hands at the meeting indicated that 15 tenants wanted to stay at Pilcot even when Edenbrook becomes available. A further 15 want to leave the decision until nearer the time when they can see the facilities available on site. It was discussed that in all probability with the amount of people on the waiting list (see later item) we will be able to fill both sites, however, until that is confirmed we will need to keep the status as is.

Parking

The Chairman invited Cllr Wheale to report on the parking issue. Cllr Wheale mentioned that she had managed to secure some money in the budget to get the lay-by cleared and secured for our use. She explained that the weather needs to be good to undertake the project and that she would be liaising with the committee on the design and details. It is hoped that by the autumn we may have an alternative place to park the cars. The Chairman mentioned that it was great news and thanked Cllr Wheale for all of her efforts with the project.

Drainage

The Chairman advised that the Secretary had recently checked all of the drainage pipes in the field and she reported that they were flowing freely, however, the site is still very waterlogged which has resulted in the loss of produce on plots.

Stephen Bowring advised that there was a build up in the ditch by the front gate that was causing a backlog of water. It was thought that even though the ditch was cleaned out last year, it needed to be deeper. It was thought that perhaps when the digger (used to prepare the parking area) is brought to the site it might be possible to dig the ditch a bit deeper (possibly by another 2'). John Bobbitt suggested that the 2 'pond' areas within the ditches also need to be checked out.

It was discussed that there was an estimated 6" drop in the level of the field which seems to result in puddling at the area near the wood chips. The committee agreed to talk to the farmers again to see what might be possible. (Possible solutions were further drainage pipes, new ditch in front of allotments (which could affect H&S and car access))

Action: Committee

In the meantime the issue of raised beds to attempt to lift the crops was discussed. This resulted in a discussion about bringing top soil on the site. The committee agreed to contact the farmers to see if they were OK with top soil being delivered and then to contact companies to obtain quotes for soil improvers. A request for more manure was also requested. It was noted that the farmers had been very good in delivering manure (and manure mixed with barley/straw) free of charge and that we should make sure that they were thanked for this.

Action: Committee

7. Edenbrook site update

The Chairman advised the meeting that he and the Secretary had attended a meeting with Adam Green and Carl Westby from Hart District Council earlier on in the week on the subject of the proposed Edenbrook allotments. This meeting was requested by HDC so that we could start again with the regular meetings to ensure that we are ready at the earliest opportunity to provide these allotments. Items to report were as follows:

Timescale. Possibly Autumn 2017. But dependent upon when the land is given over from Berkeley Homes to the Council and this in turn is dependent upon good sales of houses. Allotment provision is still planned for the next phase of development and should be one of the first facilities to be delivered.



Plans. Following our 'wish list' of facilities given to the landscape architects contracted to draw up plans for the allotments, a draft plan was developed. Another individual at Berkeley Homes has now to take these plans and translate them in to a more definite plan (expected within the next few months) and give this to HDC.

Soil – There was some confusion regarding the type of soil that will be on the new allotments. This will depend upon the exact location of the plots. Adam Green advised at the meeting that the soil was sandy and that the area would need to be tiered as currently the site is raised up and on a slope. This was at odds to our experience of the fields where they get water logged. However, once we get further in to the project and we do a site visit this will become apparent. Adam advised that he hoped to get the developers to create a composting area now where soil could be deposited to help us improve the soil when the site becomes operational.

Lease

HDC want to give us a lease for the rental of 'agricultural land' rather than 'allotments'. This is so that if the allotments fail and there are insufficient tenants to make it viable in the long term, they can use the land for other communal projects. The Chairman advised that when we have the draft lease we need to get it checked out by a solicitor to see what the implications are for us (such as the tenancy agreement with our tenants and the Allotments Act). Stephen Bowring (a retired solicitor – but in a different discipline) volunteered to be involved in the review.

Waiting List

The main waiting list (taken over from Hart District Council) some years ago had now reached over 200 people. The Secretary explained that the list was probably not accurate as some tenants may have now got allotments elsewhere, (such as Church Crookham, Elvetham Heath etc.) and tenants may not have thought to let us know when they wished to be removed from the list. She explained that it was not just a matter of e-mailing folk on the list to see if they are still interested because e-mails change and this needs to be followed up by a written communication – costing further time in cross referencing and postage. She also commented that until we had an idea of the definite costs involved and the sizes of plots it was still too early to try to update the list. An up-to-date list would, however, be needed for the future proposal document that Hart Allotments need to provide to HDC showing how we intend to run the allotments and demand can be demonstrated.

It was discussed that many people thought that they will have to wait years for an allotment and as such they might not bother to apply for one. It was mentioned that once the allotments are promoted, we might get many more people applying to go on to the list.

Cllr Alan Oliver confirmed that as a keen gardener he is keeping a watchful eye on developments.

Sharing resources

The Edenbrook site is to be shared with Hart Voluntary Action (6 plots) and HDC also want 2 plots. It was noted that HVA are very good at getting funding for projects and that having them as part of our site might have added benefits in that we may be able to share resources (such as potting sheds etc.). Details are yet to be worked out.

8. AOB

Three items were advised before the meeting and some other issues were brought up on the day.

- Plots allocated but are not being maintained. Joy Keith mentioned that it was disappointing to see so many plots that were not being maintained. She said that it didn't seem fair as there were a number of people on the waiting list who would be eager to get involved. The Chairman advised that we had a sub group to monitor the condition of plots and that several 'friendly' e-mails concerning giving plots a bit more TLC had been issued. The Secretary mentioned that these were 'unpopular', but on some occasions they had resulted in tenants admitting that they did not have the time, and relinquishing their plots. The Chairman commented that many people had not been able to get to work on their plots because of the water-logging issue. He advised that the sub group next year would try to be more 'on the case'.
- Water-logging – this was discussed at length in the meeting (see above).
- Information about local 'green events'. Helen Howard mentioned that she thought it would be a good idea if other events (such as horticultural shows) were promoted to the tenants as not many were not even aware of



the show organised by our local farmers. Tim Buswell (in charge of our website) agreed to have a look at how we could advertise events, (but this of course depends upon others giving us the information so that we can promote it.)

Action: Tim Buswell

Other issues discussed during the meeting

Padlock. A number of tenants were still having problems accessing the field. It was discussed that the new padlock was easier to open, but that it had smaller numbers to dial up (which some found hard to read and difficult to operate) Some tenants requested going to a key style padlock (for those that wanted it) and suggested that we could have a third padlock as part of the daisy chain. The Chairman advised that the committee would look in to getting an additional key lock and investigate getting keys cut. The existing key deposit scheme would be continued with the key deposit being withheld if the key was not returned. Nine tenants at the meeting expressed an interest in having a key. The Chairman advised that we would contact all members to establish who wanted a key.

Action: Committee

Plot renewal

The Chairman mentioned that renewal forms to secure the plots for next year had been sent out by the Secretary. Payments need to be received by 15th Feb 2017. Renewal forms were also available at the meeting.

9. Date of next meeting

The next AGM would be held in January 2017.

The chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and wished everyone a good growing season. He invited folk to use the seed swap box.

See appendix for Chairman's report

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AGM 2016.

Thank you everyone for coming.

Please may I ask that whenever someone from the floor wishes to make a comment please start by saying who you are so we can minute it.

To remind you who everyone on the Committee is...Alan Jones, Sylvia Cresswell, Martyn Garvey, Tim Buswell, Diane White, Barbara Doel, Nikki Topp-Walker and Hazel Maunders.(Sally Martin has had to stand down owing to work commitments). I understand that both Nikki and Hazel are also standing down which leaves us with vacancies. We will come back to that in item 5.

The committee has met on several occasions this year to discuss matters of concern and issues raised by the Membership to help members get the most out of their allotment plots.

We have :

- Undertaken a shed survey of members' views to find out what the policy on the location of sheds should be.
- Contracted with the farmers for a further 2 years, and plot rental remains the same.
- Liaised with the farmers who have provided the 2nd watering trough (and with tenants' help the pipe for this was successfully dug in the central path).
- Liaised with the council to clear the ditch alongside the road to help improve drainage.
- Arranged for delivery of pallets and woodchips for tenants' use.
- Purchased equipment for communal use by tenants (pallet breaker, wheel barrow, shears).
- Provided a box for swapping excess produce with others
- Planned 3 social events and run one!
- Signed up and produced tenancy agreements, invoices etc. for new tenants
- Processed tenants who have relinquished their plots (returning deposits, removing from databases).
- Created a separate waiting list for the Pilcot site and continue to hold and add names to the central waiting list for an allotment (on behalf of Hart District Council and Fleet Council).
- Met with Adam Green regarding progress with the Edenbrook site. (More on that later).

The year began well with a drier start than the previous year so people were able to get planting quite early. The summer proved dry and the second water trough was very useful although at peak times there was an issue of how fast the 2 troughs could fill.

As a result of the dry and sunny June and July many plots were very successful. However, school holidays arrived and the weather changed and a soggy August meant some plots suffered.

We planned 2 social events that did not run- the first was cancelled through an apparent lack of interest , and the second suffered from a wet October after which the site was again very wet and we felt too dangerous for the planned bonfire of broken pallets.

Several people have expressed disappointment at the shortness of the season but from what I gather those plot holders on the Church Crookham site were also disappointed by the soggy conditions (Be thankful we are not in the North of England where even your home floods). I am told the Edenbrook site will be much drier – more on that later.

Some plots do definitely suffer more from water problems than others, but those with raised beds have, I believe, been more successful. Hopefully now we have had a full season on the site after the slightly shorter first year we will have learned what to expect and will do better in 2016.

I am very grateful to everyone who helped with the pipe laying to the second trough and for keeping the paths weed and grass free. It is the plotholder's responsibility to keep weeds down on their plots and I thank you for your efforts here.

No "break ins" this year! I am sure I don't need to remind you not to keep anything in your shed that you don't want to lose. Please remember to have a good look around when you leave the site and if you are the last, please lock the gate. We listened to those tenants who were unhappy with the lock and have replaced it with one that we hope will last a long time.

What were the biggest successes of 2015 on the site? Certainly there were many plots with a bountiful crop of fruits, vegetables and flowers.

Appendix

What are the biggest challenges for 2016? Drainage and parking.

Re. Drainage – All we can do is to continue to check drainage pipes... consider raised beds? Sylvia checked the pipes recently and they were working well.

Parking – Summer is ok but winter is difficult. Cllr. Wheale is trying to get some money put into the Council Budget for the lay-by to be converted for our use.

What is the situation regarding the proposed Edenbrook allotment? We continue to liaise with Hart District Council and their officers responsible for the provision. More on that under item 9.

Payments for next year are due by Feb.15. Please reply promptly to secure your plot. Alan will accept cheques today or you can pay by bank transfer. I have some forms here or you can download them.

I would like to thank all the committee for the time they have put into meetings and especially to Alan for the accounts which I know from last year can be a very time consuming job. I thank Tim for all his input into the web site.

Mostly we should thank Sylvia who never seems to tire and no sooner than we have had a meeting, notes are sent round and actions carried out. Without Sylvia I doubt very much the allotments would have run so successfully and probably would never even have got off the ground.

Shortly we as a Membership need to -

1. Formally endorse the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts.
2. Agree to the Accounts being unaudited again as was the case last year.
3. Elect/re-elect the Management committee.

Before we come to these matters we will hear the Treasurer's Report from Alan.