

**Minutes of the Hart Allotments AGM on Saturday 14th January 2017
held at the Harlington Centre at 2.30pm**

1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The Chairman (Dave Bell) welcomed the attendees to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. The Secretary advised that she would provide a list of apologies and attendees with the minutes (included in Appendix 1) Most of the committee members were seated facing the meeting so that they could answer questions. Dave introduced the committee; Treasurer – Alan Jones, Secretary – Sylvia Cresswell, Committee members Terry Collier, Barbara Doel and Diane White. Two other committee members (Martyn Garvey and Tim Buswell sent their apologies. 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. In relation to outstanding action points not covered by the agenda, since Tim was not at the meeting Sylvia read out his response to the action regarding promoting events on the website. Tim advised: "Any events (and also other allotment-related things of interest) of which we have been notified were posted on both the Pilcot Tenants Facebook Group and as news articles on <http://hart-allotments.org.uk/wp/news> . We will continue to do this. Please let us know of any further events." He also reiterated the invite for any plot holders to join the Facebook Group - search for it on Facebook and request to join. Please also email to enquiries@hart-allotments.org.uk including the Facebook name and plot number (so that we can verify they are ok to join the (private) group. "

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting (proposed by Joy Keith and seconded by John Bobbitt).

3. Chairman's report

The Chairman read out his report of the year. Please see Appendix 2 attached to these minutes.

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

The Treasurer (Alan) referred to the summary of the accounts that he had distributed around the room. This showed that the profit for the year was slightly down on last year to £291. This was mainly due to Hart Allotments purchasing topsoil for tenants to use on their plots to make raised beds. He mentioned that even though the farmers had provided the first 2 loads for free, we were currently subsidising the purchase of the topsoil from funds to help tenants. Tenants currently pay 50p per barrow load, however, this is not covering the cost of the loads – hence the reduction in the profits for the year. He also mentioned the bank balances and reminded attendees that (as at 30 Nov 16) we have 2 bank accounts; in the current account we have £2161 and in the savings account (£2429 – the latter being tenants' plot/key deposits. When cheque adjustments are taken in to account we have £2101 cash in hand.

A question was asked as to why the rents to the farmers were slightly lower than last year and the Secretary responded that this was due to the fact that we had fewer turnover of tenants that the previous year. Rent is collected from tenants and passed (on 2 occasions) to the farmers. Since rents to the farmers are not refundable if a tenant leaves and a new person comes on to the plot, the rent charged for the remainder of the year to the new tenant also goes to the farmers (as well as the previous tenant) – thereby increasing the rent figure if we have a higher turnover of tenants.

These accounts were accepted by the meeting. (Proposed by Penny Bradley and seconded by Tom Pryor). 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. The current 'officers' were accepted by the meeting and proposed and seconded as follows:

<i>Job</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Secunder</i>
President	Sharyn Wheale	John Bobbitt	Antony Jones
Chairman	Dave Bell	Diane White	Paul Heath
Treasurer	Alan Jones	Terry Collier	Barbara Doel
Secretary	Sylvia Cresswell	Antony Jones	Bill Jones

Management Committee

The Chairman wanted to thank **all** the committee members for their work throughout the year. He mentioned that during the year Graeme Wood and John Condon had attended the committee meetings as guests, however, they have decided that they do not wish to become permanent committee members. Dave thanked them for their attendance and willingness to undertake tasks that had been for the benefit of all tenants.

Barbara Doel advised that she was now unable to stay as part of the committee and this has given rise to vacancies on the committee. The existing committeemen were prepared to stand for re-election: Martyn Garvey, Tim Buswell, Terry Collier and Diane White,

The Chairman asked for volunteers and Antony Jones and Penny Bradley volunteered to join the committee. The committee members (new & existing) were accepted by the group (Proposed by Gavin Branch and seconded by Seong Tuson).

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

Penny Bradley raised the question regarding getting the accounts audited after 5 years. Since it has not yet been 5 years, this item was put on hold for future discussions. Attendees were happy that the accounts would be unaudited for a further year (proposed by Penny Bradley and seconded by Kevin Messe).

7. Pilcot Farm allotment site issues

The tenants discussed the following issues.

Parking

The Chairman remarked that the parking issue had been much improved by the new car park outside the allotments and he thanked Cllr Wheale who had managed to organise this. It will be a great improvement to the site. The question as to whether a height restriction is part of the project was raised (in an effort to restrict possible caravans). Cllr Wheale volunteered to meet with the person responsible.

Action: Cllr Wheale

Drainage

The Chairman invited the drainage sub group to advise on the investigations that they had undertaken to try to improve the drainage on site. Sylvia, assisted by Bill, Graeme & John advised that they had met with 2 'consultants' (one a professional drainage expert) and the other another farmer who has had similar problems (and employed the drainage expert) to get guidance. Both meetings resulted in the consultants advising that there was no easy fix for the problem. A ditch along the central path would only help those on either side of the path, a herring bone pattern across the site was considered the optimum option, however, the internal access ways would be too tight to get a mini digger in and there would also be nowhere to put the spoils) and the last suggestion of a 'V' shaped ditch (as recommended by the professional) cutting $\frac{3}{4}$ across the field to stop water flowing from the area above the field has also considered. But at £880 it was considered too much as we had no guarantee of success. It was therefore concluded that 'the only way is up!' (see item on raised beds below). It was recognised that some plots suffer more than others and that we should try and help those people who have it the worst.

Cllr Wheale volunteered to make contact with a person who has given charity support to projects that she has been involved in, regarding drainage expertise to see if she can help.

Action: Cllr Wheale

Suggestions regarding putting rubble on the central path along with letting the central path be grass (rather than wood chips) were suggestions put forward and these will be considered by the committee.

Action: Secretary

Woodchips

Sylvia mentioned that the farmers had suggested that, as we had a fair amount of wood chips that they be used to help fill in the raised beds. The farmers had also advised that they did not want any more wood chips being delivered to the gate area and wanted them moved. The Chairman mentioned that during the summer social (not well attended due to the weather) a number of us had attempted to move the wood chips nearer the plots, however, it had proved to be time consuming. Sylvia has asked the farmers if they able to help with their tractor, however, no transfer has yet taken place. Sylvia has currently stopped the delivery of wood chips until the spring. It was discussed that in previous years the pile of chippings might have stopped water flowing off the plot area.

Raised beds

The Chairman advised that we would continue to purchase topsoil for the site for tenants to make raised beds. However, he mentioned the problems with the current supplier in that the driver was unwilling to drive in to the field with the size of vehicle – with the consequence that the load gets dumped on the track and the farmers therefore need to move the load in to the field. The last time they did this the soil was so heavy that it bent one of the brackets of the 'bucket' on the tractor. Sylvia advised that she had been in contact with an alternative supplier but these are more expensive (we get the farmer's discounted rate currently) and she needed to establish whether the farmers need to soil to be 'BS' standard (which is more expensive)

Action: Sylvia

The Chairman commented that the farmers had been very good in delivering manure (and manure mixed with barley/straw) free of charge and that we continue to thank them for this.

The Chairman also mentioned that he was a trade member at B&Q and that if a number of tenants wanted to make raised beds he could get an order together. Prices of scaffold boards and rough sawn wood was given. Dave mentioned that we would e-mail all tenants to see if there was interest.

Action: Secretary

Alec Grant mentioned that e-bay was a good source of scaffold boards.

Sylvia mentioned that the farmers had given her the name of a handyman who would be willing to make raised beds. Dave also mentioned that he would give guidance also if tenants wanted this.

Fly tipping

John Condon and Graeme Wood had cleared the old pallet dump area along with the rubbish dumped there from a fly tipping episode (thanks). We were going to erect a sign to say 'no rubbish' and/or 'keep clear', however, the farmers advise that they do not want further notices and that this just attracts unscrupulous people. The area will also be kept clear of pallets. (See item above about getting 'good' wood rather than pallet wood). Members on a previous e-mail requested to keep the internal gates closed as a deterrent.

Keeping Tidy

One of our new members (Asa Harvey) had suggested that tenants meet up on certain days to do a site tidy/maintenance for the benefit of the entire site. This was considered a good idea. The chairman suggested the following dates: Sat/Sun 8th/9th April, Sat 15th April (Easter Sat), Sun 23rd April. It was also suggested that regular dates (e.g. once a quarter or every first Sat/Sun in the month) also be proposed and it was everyone's social responsibility to attend some of these. It was also discussed that a plan of work also need to be constructed so that tenants knew what needed doing. Secretary to b/f next committee meeting.

Action: Sylvia

8. Edenbrook site update

The Chairman reported that we had not recently met with the Council regarding when the site would be available. Last January it was mentioned that we would start to have regular meetings, however, since there seems to be little movement of the proposed site, there seemed little point.

Stephen Bowring advised that he had quizzed the manager of the site at an Xmas party and he was particularly vague as to when the land would be handed over to the council.

Cllr Wheale advised that it was still in the plan and that she would investigate progress

Action: Cllr Wheale

9. AOB

Maintenance of plots

Once again the issue of tenants not maintaining their plots was put forward as an issue. It was commented that it was disappointing that tenants are not maintaining plots. Sylvia explained that our policies do mention cultivation, and that we do have a sub group responsible for monitoring plots. In the past growing year a number of plot holders had been contacted to ask them to give their plot a bit of TLC, some had taken heed but others not. Some members of the attendees thought that we should be firmer. Item b/f for next committee meeting. Sylvia mentioned that tenants should let the committee know if there are any mitigating circumstances that prevent them from working their plots (like family bereavement/health etc) so that others can help.

Action: Secretary

Straw Bale gardening

Sylvia and some of the other tenants reported on the results of their straw bale gardening undertaken as a trial last growing year.

Members of the group expressed an interest and Sylvia agreed to contact the suppliers, establish a price and e-mail tenants to see if a further bulk order would be possible.

Action: Secretary

Grass cutting

A request was put in that the whole field gets cut next year rather than the immediate area around the plots to lessen the chance of grass seeds drifting on to the plots. Sylvia agreed to request this from the farmers when appropriate.

Action: Secretary

Padlock.

Dave advised that he had padlock keys for those who had ordered them but not yet picked them up,

Plot renewal

The Chairman mentioned that renewal forms to secure the plots for next year were available at the meeting and the Secretary agreed to e-mail all tenants to remind them and provide forms and details. Payments need to be received by 15th Feb 2017.

10. Date of next meeting

The next AGM would be held in January 2018.

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

See appendices for attendee lists & Chairman's report

Appendix 1 - Attendance/apologies list. 2016 Members with Plots

Title	First name	Surname	Y- Attended AGM A - Apology
Mrs	Marion	Abel	A
Mr	Richard	Berry	Y
Mr	John	Bobbitt	Y
Mr	Stephen	Bowering	Y
Mr & Mrs	Martin & Penny	Bradley	Y
Mr	Gavin	Branch	Y
Mrs	Amanda/Tim	Buswell	A
Mr	Terry & Svetlana	Collier	Y
Mr&Mrs	J & V	Condon	Y
Ms	Sylvia	Cresswell	Y
Ms	Janet	Dodsworth	Y x2
Mrs	Pauline	Earwicker	Y
Mr	Barrie	England	A
Mr	Martyn	Garvey	A
Mr & Mrs	Alec & Sue	Grant	Y
Mr	Derek R	Graves	A
Mr	Paul & Dave	Heath/Bell	Y
Ms	Nicola	Hope	A
Mr	William	Jones	Y
Mr	Alan	Jones	Y
Mr	Teifiow	Jones	Y
Mr	Antony	Jones	Y
Mrs	Joy	Keith	Y
Mr & Mrs	Chris & Asa	Harvey	A
Mr	Kevin	Meese	Y
Dr	Alan	Oliver	Y
Mr	Tom	Pryor	Y
Miss	Caroline	Skey	A
Mr/Mrs	Stuart/Avril	Skidmore	A
Ms	Bridget	Stevens	A
Mrs	Seong	Tuson	Y x2
Mrs	Jane	Westoby	Y
Ms	Diane	White	Y
Mr	Graeme	Wood	Y
Ms	Barbara	Doel	Y member only no plot
Mrs	Sally	Mullen	A member only no plot

Appendix 2 – Chairman’s report 2016

Thank you everyone for coming. First, we have apologies from..... (see list)

Please may I remind you who the Committee are. Sylvia Cresswell, Secretary, Alan Jones, Treasurer, myself, David Bell, Chairman, and Diane White, Martyn Garvey, Tim Buswell, who looks after the web site, and Barbara Doel. Barbara has said that she is stepping down from the Committee this year (thanks to Barbara for her input) and so we would welcome some new faces on the committee if anyone is interested. John and Graeme guested this year but also have said they don’t wish to continue attending the meetings. They have been very active in helping with the Pilcot site this year- especially with the arrivals of the top soil and their input into the research of how we could improve the drainage. More on that later.

The Committee has continued to meet approximately every 2 months to discuss issues affecting plot holders. Much discussion has been around drainage and other issues raised by the membership. The farmers helped set up the contact for topsoil but we are looking into finding an alternative supplier as the present one does not like to enter the field so dumps the soil at the entrance which means it needs transporting further down.

The farmers have also continued to supply compost and which has been well used. Sylvia arranged for wood chippings to be delivered regularly but the farmers have requested that these do not remain by the gate and we have tried to barrow them further down the field. We had a work party/ social with the aim of moving the pile and at the same time weeding the central path. Unfortunately the weather was not kind to us and we lacked the hoped for numbers of willing hands so there is still work to be done. One of our new members Asa Harvey has suggested that we have a day when we all do our bit for cleaning/tidying up. We thought that two Saturdays and two Sundays during April would be put in the diary. We will be sorting out the dates soon, but please do try and attend one of them and do your bit for the site as a whole.

This year the weather generally has been kinder than the previous 2 years. There is still an issue of poor drainage which affects some more than others and many plot holders have used the top soil deliveries to make raised beds. We charged 50p a barrow load to help cover the cost. We have asked that this is left in an “honesty box” in the centre of the plots and this money is then regularly collected by a member of the committee and passed to our Treasurer, Alan. We realise 50p a barrow is not enough to cover the cost of the loads delivered but as we have funds this has been used to cover the shortfall. We intend to continue to get deliveries for as long as they are required and if funds allow.

Drainage has been much discussed and meetings arranged with others who have experience in dealing with similar problems. Mainly Graeme Wood and Bill Jones and Sylvia have been much involved with this. I would like to thank the drainage sub group for their time and effort investigating the issue. A number of alternatives have been put forward and I’ll ask members of the drainage sub group (who are present today) to give a brief account of their discussions under item 8 of the agenda. But to summarise the issue, there is no easy fix to the problem and no guarantee that any of the measures that have been proposed would guarantee success.

Parking – A drier summer meant we were able to drive onto the site earlier than last year and as the autumn was also kinder access was less of an issue. However, thanks to Cllr Sharyn Wheale the promised lay by conversion has been done and we now have somewhere off the road to park. Time will tell how many cars it will take but hopefully it will be adequate for the numbers at any one time. Certainly it will be a big improvement on having to park on the verge and risk crossing the road armed with tools, etc. So, thank you Sharon for arranging that for us.

Payments for next year are due by 15 February. We have forms here and Alan will accept cheques today.

I would like to thank all the Committee for time given to meetings and their work. We would welcome new faces. Several have had to give up and others are happy to step aside if there are willing replacements.

We now need to vote to formally endorse the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, agree the accounts to be unaudited again as they were this year, and elect the committee for the year ahead.

Before we do this we have the Treasurer’s Report.