

Smitham Allotment society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on 6 June 2021 at the Communal Area at 11am

Present: Ann Shore, Fiona and Andy Sparkes, Pauline Ben Ari, Kate Flint, Simon Little, Heather and Graham Lovegrove, Mary Mohanathasan, Dave Warren, John Horngold, Eddie Nash, Colin Derrick, Barbara Broggio, Ayube Mohamed, Selene Carraro, Lucas Ginak

Apologies: Jan Jordan & Julie Myatt, Alain Broggio, Ramon Farooki, Tony Stevens

The meeting was chaired by Andy Sparkes (Secretary) in the absence of the Chairman.

2020 Minutes

The minutes of the 2020 AGM previously circulated were agreed as a true record of the proceedings.

Matters Arising

The guidance issued during the year to members to limit bonfires to within 30 minutes of dusk had been well respected and no further complaints had been received from neighbouring houses.

The strimmer had been purchased.

The matter of the Lease remains outstanding.

Chairman's Report

The chairman was unable to attend due to other commitments and had sent his apologies. The Secretary read out the Chairman's report.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer, Ann, and the Secretary, Andy, for their hard work and support throughout the year. He also thanked the other members of the Society for the support they had shown to him since he took up the role and in particular thanked those members who had helped with the tidying and remedial work in the communal area recently. It was hoped that the further work in this area would be completed soon.

The Chairman's report finished by reminding members of the need to keep paths between plots clear to help with mowing and to pick up any litter they saw on site. He noted that the Allotments had been of real value to members during the recent Coronavirus pandemic and it was the responsibility of all to ensure that they were maintained and protected.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer distributed the accounts for 2020, audited by Jan and Julie, and advised that due to the overall sound financial health of the accounts there would again be no increase in rental fees this year.

There had been an overall loss of around £300 in year due to the one-off purchase of a new mower & strimmer which had increased costs. However, this had been partially offset by the fact that the Society had not held its usual social event (a BBQ) due to the pandemic restrictions. Some overdue rental payments from 2019 had also been received in 2020. The Treasurer thanked members for their prompt payment of fees in 2021.

Water was noted as the most significant recurring cost for the Society and the meeting discussed whether a limit should be placed on the use of hose pipes outside of the peak summer months in

order to reduce costs. In the end it was concluded that it would be better to provide guidance to members to encourage more responsible use of hoses rather than impose restrictions.

Action: Secretary to provide written guidance to members of responsible use of hoses on the site.

The accounts were proposed and accepted as a true record of the financial position of the Society. The Treasurer noted that new auditors would be needed next year and Pauline Ben-Ari agreed to undertake the role.

Election of the committee

All of the existing committee members agreed to stand again and were unanimously re-elected.

AOB

Bonfires – as noted above the guidance to limit bonfires to after dusk had been well respected by members. However, given the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions more people were at home at present and it was suggested and unanimously agreed by members that there should be no bonfires on the site during the summer month. Barbeques were also discussed and the secretary stated that BBQs with charcoal would be fine but that they should make no more smoke than our neighbours would make having a BBQ.

Action: Secretary to circulate proposed change to Society rules

Use of shed – it was noted that any items stored in the Society shed were stored there at the owner's risk as they would not be covered by the Society's insurance policy.

Action: Secretary to make all members aware of this position

Croydon Federation of Allotments – There was a query about whether the Society should continue with its membership of the Federation.

The Federation had not been fully effective in 2020 due to the pandemic restrictions but was now operating again with virtual meetings scheduled for 2021. The cost was only around 30p per plot holder and there were several advantages of membership including:

- Advice to members
- Representation at Local Council meetings
- Access to the Federation shop for members.
- Annual allotment competition

It was agreed that the Society would remain a member of the Federation and Barbara agreed to attend meetings when possible.

Action: Secretary to forward meeting details to Barbara and Treasurer to pay Federation membership fee.

Ash tree – Heather asked whether anything could be done about the large ash tree which overhang Mary's plot. It was suffering from Ash die-back and posed a danger to members with plots nearby. It wasn't clear whose land the tree grew on but Heather agreed to speak to Croydon Council to see if they could take action.

Action: Heather to speak to Croydon council Environment department.

Petrol costs for the mower – the Treasurer noted that the responsibility for refilling the petrol can for the mower & strimmer should be shared by all members who used it but was more often than not picked up by one member in particular. Any costs can be recouped from the Treasurer by providing a valid receipt.

Action: Secretary to remind members to refill the petrol can for the mower and provide instructions inside shed.

Unusual plants/animals – Simon encouraged members to share pictures of any unusual or rare plants or animals found on the site which might help in case of any future threat to develop the site. It was noted that the existing covenant provided the main protection for the site but that it would be good to share any interesting pictures of flora or fauna with Graham or Heather to add to the Society's website or Facebook pages respectively.

Waiting List – The Secretary noted that the Society's waiting list of prospective members was currently 35 all of whom were new this year as offers had been made to all those previously waiting (many of whom had already got sites, moved away or were no longer interested). New members during the year were Selene, Lisa, Jo and Lucas.

BBQ – the date of the annual Society social event had been circulated and is (weather permitting) to take place on Sunday 4 July at lunchtime. Exact details would be provided by the Secretary nearer to the time.

The Secretary thanked members for attending and the meeting closed at 11.45am.