



Western Wards Allotment Association

wwaa.org.uk

Minutes of 2019 Annual General Meeting

Held on 21 November 2019 at St John's Church Hall, Locks Heath, commencing 1930 hours.

Quorum established in accordance with article 9.5 of the constitution:

Bob Hughes (Chairman)

Phil Pike (Treasurer), arrived 2020, apology noted due to prior commitment.

Site Managers: Sandra Milam, Gill Rock, Keith Johnson, Alastair Burnett, Martin Barnett, Robin Green, David Whitlock, John Parsons.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed 31 members to the 47th AGM of the Western Wards Allotment Association (WWAA).

1. APOLOGIES:
Lawrence and Annie Gander, Warsash (Gill Rock).
2. MINUTES OF THE 2018 AGM:
Proposed by Bob Hughes – Chairman.
Seconded by Sandra Milam – Lodge Road.
Accepted.
3. MATTERS ARISING: None.
4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

INTRODUCTION

Another busy year for allotment holders facing the varied challenges of weather extremes, climate change and the many pests that feast on our veg. Though not frequently mentioned, loss of local wildlife habitat through development also impacts our efforts. Deer and badgers often damage our produce despite best efforts to keep them at bay. Occasionally, tech savvy plot holders, infuriated by the destruction, set camera traps, including me in my garden, to record the assault and then better defend our prize sweetcorn. The ultimate challenge is for us all to get on and share the wonderful space we have to look after and enjoy together.

COMMITTEE

Committee Site Managers have been very busy maintaining and improving our sites, clearing overgrown plots, maintaining boundaries and ensuring they are as secure as practically possible. Examples of previous initiatives to improve our sites include HPR drainage system which I believe continues to work well provided the perimeter drainage ditch is maintained clear. Most sites are now using the very competitively priced hedge cutting services of FBC and, generally, feedback on the quality of work is positive and gives our sites a very smart appearance. In the last year, there have been improvements to the manure delivery areas and storage at HPR and this service is looked upon enviously by sites without a manure heap.

Sites have been making use the Community Pay Back Scheme (CPBS), first introduced by Robin Green at Sarisbury, for clearance and hedge cutting and followed by HPR, benefiting the participants and our sites. These efforts have, for example, transformed the corner plot at Sarisbury. In addition, charitable individuals such as Ben Spraggon have worked wonders on works, again at Sarisbury corner plot and Warsash access way boundary. Most of all, though, it is your Site Managers who knuckle down to the hard work, repairing water leaks, tidying up after people and of course attending committee meetings.

Unfortunately, Pam Beecroft had to stand down as Hon. Secretary for family reasons in July and we wish her and her family the very best wishes for the future. The position has been covered by the Chairman and Gill Rock. Tonight, Mike Roberts from Warsash site has agreed to stand (unopposed) for the position. He brings with him a wealth of professional skills and we warmly welcome him to the committee.

Plot Occupancy levels have remained good, as a result of healthy waiting lists supported by the marketing initiatives of the Site Managers, particularly Robin and Martin, with the teams that support them. The final impact on occupancy by the recent rent increase is yet to be established, but early indications are positive, although there may be a possible reduction in the total number rods held by individuals.

FUTURE RENT RISES

While on the subject of rent increase, in following up on a question from Lucy Swanbrow, I made enquiries to Matt Wakefield at Fareham Borough Council (FBC) about next year's rent cost. FBC has not looked into this yet, but will do so early next year and it will be as mentioned in the lease 'thereafter the sum per rod shall be agreed as part of the council's annual review of fees and charges process'. It will most likely be the same across the three associations of the current lease and will therefore need to be agreed, with budget input from all three associations. The likely outcome would be RPI plus and reasonable agreed percentage increase and certainly not like the hefty increases seen during the past three years. To remind you again of the reason for the rent increases in the 2016 lease, it was FBC's requirement that our Associations become self-funding to cover the cost of all our maintenance requirements and also cover the cost of our own water consumption. To give you an idea of this cost, water is now approaching £2/rod and that is ultimately why there are restrictions in the tenancy agreement on how we use water.

Lucy also asked about the possibility of rent concessions. We have no plans to do so.

BUDGETING

The lease requires annual maintenance plans be in place. In April this year an additional meeting was held and attended by all the committee to develop and action. Each site budget details their estimated income less overheads such as hall hire, chairman and secretary honorarium, and managers, assisted by the treasurer, estimate their expenditure based on historical information. Much historical expenditure information is available and makes it easy to estimate items such as fuel, machinery maintenance and honorariums, etc. For items like hedge cutting, costs are turning out to be less than expected. However, water costs are an ever-increasing concern and feature as our largest expenditure as previously mentioned. At present the difference between income and expenditure results in a surplus for each site which managers may allocate for small improvements whilst being mindful of maintaining a contingency for unforeseen repairs which may crop up. Income not spent by your Site Manager remains allocated to that site and may accumulate to save for a future larger project. Therefore, your Managers know how much they have to spend from the income paid by plot holders to improve and maintain your site. Help them make the best use of this money by submitting ideas and needs and, dare I say... saving water!

TRUSTEES

Last year we came down to one trustee, Richard Bastow, after Vera Flynn stood down after many years' exemplary service, for which we thank her. For those who know a little about governance and the role of a trustee I'm sure you will agree that this was not a healthy situation. In response to my request, Site Managers looked for volunteers to step forward and, after a couple of meetings with candidates, Richard and I, and with the committee's agreement, we now have four new trustees, Julia Moffatt from Sarisbury, David Doran and Edward Weager, both from HPR and myself from Warsash site. Together with Richard we signed the Charities' Commission trustee eligibility declaration form. Richard Bastow will be chair of the trustees and meetings will be held at least once a year.

The trustees' first official meeting was held in October with the minutes posted on WWAA website, wwaa.org.uk/new/.

As well as supporting the committee the trustees' six main duties are:-

- To ensure we are carrying out its purposes for the public benefit;
- Comply with our governing document and the law;
- Act in your charity's best interest;
- Ensure your charity is accountable;
- Manage your charity's resources responsibly;
- Act with reasonable care and skill.

Our current constitution does not cover the role or tenure of trustees and requires an update to bring it in line with modern Charity Commission models which detail the role of trustees and how they work with the committee.

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION (CIO)

At the last AGM you approved WWAA taking on charitable organisation status. During the last year progress has been slow because the first big step was to have a suitable number of trustees. We now have five trustees distributed across our sites and the membership also have the opportunity to ask to become a trustee. An association model constitution has been drafted and reviewed by the committee and trustees and has been amended to reflect WWAA day-to-day operation. There still remains much work to finalise the document and subsequently convince the committee and membership of the benefits which would ensue from gaining external sources of funding to improve our sites. The timeline to complete consultation realistically targets the 2020 AGM for members voting on a new CIO constitution.

For information, the draft constitution proposes an initial three-year trustee tenure before the longest serving stand down in turn, for possible re-election in a similar way to current committee members.

MARKETING

Marketing is a very important activity that helps keep our sites full and maintains healthy waiting lists.

Ref. Martin and Robin meeting minutes.

Committee approved an increase in the Marketing budget to cover the £150 cost of a second-hand gazebo for Marketing and site use. It can be used at Open Days, local shows and seed swops.

This year got off to a slow start with the cancellation of Sarisbury Show, due to inclement weather. The weather also featured, when we had to postpone our stall at the Locks Heath Shopping Village on 10 August and move it to 24 August. Although the conditions were not to blame for the date switch, had it gone ahead on that day it would have been a wash out. 24 August was a glorious day, by contrast and although there was not much direct interest from the public, hundreds of people will have seen our stall and know a little more about us. Many thanks to the stalwarts who manned the stall on a Bank Holiday, especially Robin Green who set up the stall and spoke to the chap who sets out the gazebos.

This year with a change of management, there were no organised events and we had to pay for our stall. The stall represented better value for money than advertising in the local press, who wanted more than the cost of the stall for a quarter of a page advert.

Warsash Parish News is publishing a monthly feature for us and they reach more than 500 readers.

Sarisbury managers undertook a marketing display to school parents on Monday 15 July, when an open afternoon was held. This was a 'limited opening' of just four hours but extremely successful with in excess of 100 people visiting the site. The school plot was the main interest, but two people asked to be added to the waiting list.

Last year Martin fostered a relationship with some other allotments outside the borough of Fareham resulting in Keith Johnson and Martin Barnett being asked to help with the judging at the Albany Road Allotments in

Bishop's Waltham for the Best Kept Plot competition. It turned out to be a beautiful morning and we were treated to coffee and cake at the conclusion and are thinking about doing something similar in the future. This kind of cooperation and active collaboration are crucial to our marketing strategy as it gets people talking and gets our name 'out there' as a proactive and thriving association.

Following the success of Allotment Road's Facebook page, Warsash now has one and, although currently small in member number, it's still early days so please join. Special thanks to Abigail Harrison for her supporting help and contributions to build links between Sarisbury and Warsash via FB.

WEBSITE

Our website continues to be one of the most important tools for communicating with members and the receptacle of a great deal of information. Maintained by Rona Neilson, many thanks to Rona and Keith Taylor for hosting technical support.

BEEES

Still going strong at Sarisbury (3 positions, 3 hives) and a recent poll on Warsash site resulted in near unanimous support for bees on the site. We have a couple of beekeepers there and I look forward to working with them to bring a buzz to the site.

FAREHAM IN BLOOM

Congratulations and well done to all entrants of this year's Fareham in Bloom competition, with a haul of 7 gold and 2 silver gilt awards for plot holders.

Site Gold Award goes to Sarisbury (Allotment Road) and Silver Gilt to Warsash, Hunts Pond Road and Lodge Road.

Special recognition under Schools' Gardening Projects saw Gold go to Sarisbury Junior School, Allotment Road.

Please begin planning now for Warsash Village Show on September 5, 2020, an appeal for participants to 'get growing, get sowing'.

THE FUTURE

The coming year will be my eighth year as chairman. I thoroughly enjoy the role at times. Of course, there are ups and downs as with everything, but in the end it's good to give time to a worthwhile cause. It gives me great satisfaction to support the committee as a whole and as individuals.

During my time, I've helped bring bees to our sites, work through the transfer to the new lease and recently of course to bring in new trustees and work toward CIO status. There is still much to do to with this and to develop our association to equip it for future modernisation. Also, there is much to progress with wider engagement amongst our community, demonstrated by the popularity of Facebook and other social media platforms, which we need to make the most of. The association also needs to be digitally better equipped for the future with use of platforms such as SharePoint.

But to do so as well as the role of chairman is not compatible. Therefore, at the next AGM I will not be standing for re-election and, subject to handover to a new chairman, may stand down beforehand. I will continue as a trustee, supporting the trustee chairman and help progress CIO status along with coordinating a SharePoint project for the association. In addition, I will support Gill at Warsash site, potentially as a Site Manager.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your kindness, patience and support. If I do not appear in front of you as chairman again, I wish you all the best under the leadership of whoever succeeds me and repeat I will always be around to support any of our members.

No questions re Chairman's report.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT:

The Treasurer presented the Accounts for the year ending 30 September 2019.

This year's surplus is virtually the same as last year at £2900, compared to £3029.

The greatest expense has been water which has been commented on by a number of tenants. This last year the total outgoing was in excess of £5760. As requested, a breakdown of the cost per site:

Hunts Pond Road water costs were £3750.57, 65% of the total.

Sarisbury Green water was £588.11, 10% of the total

Warsash water was £1059.72, 18% of the total.

Locks Road water was £228.74, 4% of the total.

Posbrook was £140.12 as shown in the Accounts, 2% of the total.

The total rods under cultivation are approximately 3200 which varies slightly depending on tenant occupation. Using this figure and the total water costs, it can be shown that the cost per rod is £1.80.

With the Rent for 2019/2020 at £7.50 per rod, the water cost represents 24% of rent (almost a quarter of the rent). Re cost per cubic metre; there is a fixed water charge of £45.33 per annum. The cost per cubic metre increased during the last year and now stands at £1.3797. We do not pay waste water or surface water drainage charges.

No questions re Treasurer's report.

6. HONORARIUMS:

These are awarded retrospectively. Last year's amounts are shown in brackets in the agenda.

This year the discussion was led by chair of trustees Richard Bastow. The following increases were agreed by the floor.

Hon. Chairman (£300) – to be increased to £320.

Hon. Treasurer (£300) – to be increased to £320.

Trading Hut Secretary (£300) – to be increased to £320.

Equipment Officer (£300) position shared by Norman Hatch and Stewart Wheeler. – to be increased to £320.

Site Managers (£175 each) – to be increased to £200.

Richard asked that it be recorded that these are 'token payments' and added 'everyone is grateful for the time and effort put in because it leaves the Association stronger and better for the future'.

7. ELECTIONS:

The following stood for re-election and election.

| | Position | Standing for re election | Standing for election |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Trading Hut Manager | John Parsons | |
| 2 | Site Manager Warsash | Gill Rock | |

| | Position | Standing for re election | Standing for election |
|---|--------------------------|---|--|
| 3 | Site Manager Sarisbury | Robin Green David Whitlock | |
| 4 | Site Manager Posbrook | John Parsons | |
| 5 | Site Manager Lodge Rd. | Sandra Milam | |
| 6 | Site Managers Hunts Pond | Martin Barnett Alistair Burnett Keith Johnson | |
| 8 | Treasurer | Phil Pike | |
| 9 | Chairman | Bob Hughes | |
| 7 | Hon. Secretary | Vacant | Mike Roberts, proposed by John Adey, seconded Gill Rock. |

Trustees - Richard Bastow, Julia Moffatt, Edward Weager, David Doran, Bob Hughes.

Auditor – John Francis.

The Chairman proposed that, as all persons are standing unopposed for positions of office, they be re-elected or elected en-bloc.

Floor approved.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following matters were raised.

(AOB questions/issues taken prior to Treasurer's report.)

Low turnout for AGM (Roy Deal, Sarisbury).

Cost of water across all sites (Richard Bastow, Warsash).

Water meters (Mike Falcon, Hunts Pond Road).

(AOB questions/issues after Elections.)

FBC's strategy document (Roy Deal, Sarisbury).

Payment queries from tenants, due to 'cheques' going through slowly (Phil, Treasurer).

Unlettable site at Warsash, due to badger damage/possibility of a clean up (Derek Jarman, Warsash).

The Chairman thanked all attendees.

The meeting closed at 2050 hours.

Ends