

Minutes of the 35th AGM of Diss & District Allotment Holders' Association

(26th October 2019)

Present: J. Ecclestone (chairman), Carol Kirkup (membership secretary), Gina Peliti (treasurer), Caroline Walker (committee member), Sharon Everett (committee member) and about 20 members.

Apologies for absence were received from Lynette Seaman, Maggie Nylk, Alan Crowest, Shirley and John Farrow.

Chairman's Welcome: The chair opened the meeting by thanking all those who attended and offered two apologies: first, for calling the meeting on a day when England were playing New Zealand in the semi-finals of the rugby world cup (which may have accounted for the smaller than usual attendance), but – more seriously – for his failure to ensure that minutes of the 2018 annual meeting were available. The chairman reported that since no member of the committee could find a copy of the minutes, it seemed likely that they had never been produced.

On behalf of all members, the chair thanked Roger Green for his work in organising the rota of volunteers who kept the main paths mowed and ensured that the plot as a whole appeared neat and tidy. The chair also thanked Graham Buck for his skill in sorting out various problems with the water system. The chair also thanked all other members of the committee and welcomed a new member, Sharon Everett.

Finally, the chair paid special tribute to Jackie Gooch, who - because of ill health – had had to step down as membership secretary. The meeting agreed to a suggestion that a bouquet of flowers should be sent to Mrs Gooch as a token of members' appreciation.

Other members expressed thanks to Paul Dubroeuq for cutting the Leylandii hedge on the north boundary and to South Norfolk Council for cutting the border hedge by the playground on the south boundary.

Treasurer's report: The treasurer, Gina Peliti presented her financial report for the year 2018-19. The accounts showed a similarly healthy position as last year. Old stock in the shop has been reduced and the water bill paid. The committee had once again decided that rents did not need to be increased. The report was accepted.

Secretary's report: Carol Kirkup introduced herself to the meeting as the new Membership Secretary as of April 2019. She thanked Jackie Gooch for all the work she had done on behalf of the Association over several years, and stated she was pleased to learn the Association would be sending thank you flowers which were extremely well deserved.

Originally the job of secretary had been taken on jointly by Carol & Caroline Walker, but this had not proved feasible in practice. Therefore it had been decided she would be membership secretary and Caroline Walker would be the Meeting and Social Secretary.

She reported that since April the plots had been largely fully occupied, but more recently, following plot inspections, there had been a spate of leavers, largely due to ill health/family circumstances, and one baby due! There are 100 half plots tenanted, 20 quarter plots and 18 full size plots. There remain 8 half plots vacant. These have been advertised on Diss Community Noticeboard FaceBook

Page, and recently on Park Radio by Jacob. She asked members to spread the word to family, friends and acquaintances to help us return to full occupancy.

She further reported that all sheds were tenanted, and that if anyone wants a shed to ask to be put on the shed waiting list which she holds.

Identifying plots is a current problem, but this is being addressed, and with the agreement of the committee funds are being used to make plot number posts, which will be installed over the coming months.

The secretary reported that the East of England Allotment Association had asked if the Diss and District Association would host a meeting in Spring or Summer 2020. Several attendees of the meeting were positive about this opportunity, so after discussion of possible venues for such a meeting it was agreed that Caroline Walker would organise the event.

Members discussed the problem of abandoned plots and it was agreed that, rather than taking action themselves, members who were concerned should raise the matter with the committee. The secretary told the meeting that plans were well under way for all plots to be prominently numbered which would help with reporting difficulties. A member suggested indicating which plots were vacant by putting a 'to let' sign on abandoned plots, so that members knew which plots they could help tend. This idea was agreed, and will be actioned.

It was suggested by a member that surplus produce from vacant plots could be sent to charity.

Election of Officers: The chair confirmed that he was standing down as chairman but was ready to remain on the committee. It was agreed to re-elect all existing members of the committee with the addition of David Taupe.

The outgoing chair thanked Graham Buck for producing a detailed record of rainfall over recent years and it was suggested that this should be published on the association's website.

Matters Arising: In order to help members of the grasscutting rota to gain access to the mowers, it was agreed that a secure key box be installed which would allow volunteers to gain access to the machinery shed. Roger Green agreed to organise this.

The issue of smoke from bonfires was raised again and it was agreed to ask South Norfolk District Council what it would cost for them to make regular collections of green waste. Members also agreed that the rules regarding bonfires should be more strictly enforced. The chair said that any unattended fires should be reported to the committee and the member responsible would be given a warning that the tenancy would be terminated if there was any further complaint.

It is hoped to open the shop on a regular basis after Easter with coffee and cake as an incentive.

John Curtis proposed a vote of thanks to Jacob for his services as chairman and this was supported unanimously.

The meeting closed at 10.40am