

Friends of Ascott Allotments

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 26th October 2019

Attendees:

Safi Ferrah
Tom Challenor
Jane Challenor
Judith Cannon
Jean- Marc Callant
Tom Alley
David Johnson
Elizabeth Adams
Jill Hurtley
Sue Burr
Jean Newson
Kevin Newson
Andre Harbert
Jackie Ward
Ben Willey
Paul Carter

Joanne Smith
Viktor Gyebrovsky
Charlie Sale
Miranda Harvie
Julia, Teresa and Mia Winter
David Parsons
Paul and Krysia Doig
Ian Symonds
Louise Buchanan
Emilie Capulet
Lisa Hill
Clive Herring
Steve Craik
Anita Jones
Lynne Carpenter

Apologies:

Richard Jones
John Kenton
Helen Marriage
Paula Weeks

1. Minutes of summer meeting August 2019 agreed

2. The previous year and achievements:

Paul reported that we achieved an 'Outstanding' rating in the RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' campaign and a Gold in the London in Bloom 'Our Community' awards. In the Cultivating Ealing Allotment competition, Ascott received First Prize in the Large Allotment Site category.

3. Coordinators Reports

3.1 Finance: Ian reported on some of the major items of expenditure over the year:

The new composting toilet (VAT element paid by Ealing Council)
Raised beds adjacent to Queen Anne's Gate entrance had been completed by a contractor
An apple press had been purchased. This is being managed by Paul Doig.
Waste collection had been organised by the Friends, which had been paid for by the Council.

A trial of payment by bank transfer of plot rents had been carried out this year and would be extended next year if successful. (This had meant that the number of October weekend rent collections had been reduced to 3)

Jennifer Woodhouse and Lynne Carpenter had both given generous donations to the Friends

It was noted that approximately 40% of plot holders had attended a work party during the year. The remaining 60% had paid the council's proposed fee of £10 which would be used to assist with ongoing maintenance tasks. There had been some resistance to paying the fee by some plot holders but no non payers had been recorded.

3.2 Waiting list

There are current 134 people on the waiting list with an average waiting time of up to 2 1/2 years. The waiting period is likely to increase.

26 plots have been let during the year 2018- 2019.

There is uncertainty over how many plots can be let over the next year as there have been delays in the Council sending out warning letters following plot inspections and a subsequent delay in notices to quit and appeals. Additionally, a large number of people have still not paid rent for the coming year.

To address the long waiting list problem, starter plots are to be established to allow newcomers to understand the commitment required to manage a plot before moving on to larger plots (this has worked successfully on the Northfields site)

Secondly larger plots are to be divided into smaller ones as they become available

Thirdly, local residents will be prioritised

Finally, those people with mobility or health issues are to be offered raised beds as a means of continuing gardening

Specifically, a large area has become available adjacent to the railway entrance which will be subdivided into smaller plots and starter beds (Sam has agreed to construct these but has requested help)

The **Wildlife Group** had been established.

A signboard had been erected at the Ranelagh Road gate to report on events. A bat walk had been well attended.

Tools and equipment

Safi reported that there is a proposal to purchase 1 or 2 garden strimmers for hire by plot holders for personal use (training by one of the coordinators would be required to allow hire). An additional grass mower is also being purchased for site maintenance.

Vineyard/Friends Hut and Raised Beds

David reported that the Friends Hut and adjacent greenhouse would be tidied up and made available for plot holders as a community space over the coming winter.

Wildlife area

Work is continuing on the extension of the pond and will soon be available as a community and green classroom. A question was raised regarding child safeguarding and health and safety, and it was noted that children's groups are only permitted on site with their teachers.

Eastern boundary

Paul reported that work was continuing to open up the boundary to reestablish a maintenance path along the eastern edge of the site

Survey results and discussion about next steps

Miranda reported that there had been around 100 respondents to the survey. The full results would be published on the Friends web site, but of the single issue question which had been asked, a number of key concerns had been raised including rubbish collection and disposal of large redundant items; security at the gates (raising again the issue of the padlock change); car parking on the site (currently not allowed); and community development and a request for more social gatherings.

With regard to car parking Jean Marc reminded everyone that parking was available for plot holders around the site for 60p per hour and £4.50 per day if they register as resident visitors as part of the Council parking scheme administered by PaybyPhone.

Coordinators Roles

At the previous general meeting we had identified the potential for redefining the roles of the coordinators to more accurately reflect the tasks which were being undertaken which covered projects, site tools and maintenance, working parties etc.

Currently there are 6 named coordinators defined by the Friends Constitution.

The proposal is to maintain this but to extend the number of coordinator general roles as more people volunteer their skills. Currently there are 9 people volunteering in this way. Furthermore, the role of the coordinators as volunteers (not managers) will be adopted.

Formally Paul and Safi (communications) Helen and David (meetings), and Jackie and Elizabeth (finance) were proposed by Safi and seconded by Tom as volunteer coordinators for the year to October 2020

Next meeting to be held in Rose and Crown, date and time to be confirmed