

Friends of Ascott Allotments

Minutes of Winter General Meeting

25th January 2020

Attendees

Richard Jones
Jean-Marc Callant
Geraldine Oudin
Patsy Dilleigh
Graham Dilleigh
Miranda Traeger
Safi Ferrah
Elisabetta Tenenti
Luisa Asirvatham
Sion Edwards
Jack Wright
Andre Harbert
Robin Bowden
Georgina King
David Johnson
Paul Carter

Jane Hodgkin
Steve Craik
Clive Herring
Debbie Fogarty
Lisa Hill
Maggie Mizzi
Nigel Sumner
Lynne Sumner
Gill Bottomley
John Usher
Alison Shaw
Donna Moore
Marina Cassimati
Helen Marriage

Apologies

Jackie Ward
Paula Ferrah

Elizabeth Adams
Ian Symonds

1. **Minutes from the AGM 26th October 2019** were agreed

2. **Reports and Projects**

2.1 **Financial Report**

Apologies from Jackie who was unable to attend the meeting.
Financial report at next meeting.

2.2 **Waiting list**

Helen reported that there remain around 120 people off the waiting list with an approximate 2 year wait time
13 people had been shown plots before and 5 plots after Christmas.
3 of the new starter beds out of 7 available had been let.

2.3 Jane reported that 3 meetings of the **Wildlife Group** had been held. It was hoped that a new wildlife area with some interpretation signage might be created during the coming year, together with some new dead hedges.

2.4 **Tools and equipment**

Safi reported that 2 electric strimmers had been purchased for general hire to plot

holders. The volunteer coordinators can be approached for access. A petrol driven shredder has been loaned to the friends. Training for use can be provided (on regular work party days).

A discussion followed on the subject of bonfires. Paul restated the council position that bonfires are allowed but there are guidelines on the Friends website about their use (there should be no bonfires between 8 am and 4 pm weekdays to avoid school times)

2.5 **Friends Shed and vineyard area**

David reported that work had commenced on the decoration of the interior of the shed to make it more attractive for users of the raised beds area in particular. In addition it is hoped that the greenhouse will be refurbished over the coming weeks to provide use for plot holders to start seedlings etc.

2.6 **Wise Owls**

Miranda introduced a new initiative for experienced gardeners to help mentor and provide guidance to new plot holders. In the same spirit of community development, it is hoped to arrange for the orchard site to be a regular weekly meeting point for plot holders based around providing simple facilities for tea making etc. Initially this might be tied in with the monthly work party arrangements.

It was also noted that a highly informative and impressive January Newsletter has been published on the Friends Facebook pages. A call was made for volunteers to help provide seasonal features for future editions. Please contact Miranda using the site email ascottfriends@gmail.com if you are able to contribute.

2.7 **Starter beds**

Sam, Helen and other volunteers have made a good start in developing the starter bed area adjacent to the Railway Path.

3. **Site inspections**

Paul outlined that plot inspections will start in March/ April. Plot holders experiencing any difficulty in maintaining their sites should contact the Friends volunteer coordinators on behalf of the council for advice.

The key issues regarding inspections are as always:

Aim to maintain a high level of cultivation and preparation
Removal of rubbish
Maintenance of good quality of paths

This year it is hoped to provide a focus on the repair and consolidation of shared paths and routes to help re-establish paths generally.

Lisa (Plot 135) offered the use of her garden roller in this connection. It was noted that there is also a roller in the orchard for communal use.

A query was raised regarding the level of support the Council are providing to allotments across the Borough generally. Paul outlined that there are 45 allotment sites across the Borough supervised by a Parks Manager (as part of the role), plus one assistant. In other words very limited resources for general administrative tasks. In

addition, a number of legal cases raised by dissatisfied plot holders in relation to their sites has resulted in a disproportionate amount of time being spent on these issues rather than on general administration.

A long term approach being considered by the Council for individual sites is to encourage allotment 'self management'.

4. **Community Development**

Miranda described a proposal to extend the existing Orchard shelter and incorporate simple tea making facilities to serve as a more established meeting and social focus and for use for classes and workshops. Volunteers are welcome to join the work party who would be organising this over the next few weeks.

5. **Information items**

Paul reported that a temporary scrap metal collection point has been established at the Queen Anne's Gate entrance which would be removed when a full load was available. Plot holders are encouraged to use it (to dispose of scrap metal only).

Helen reported that a number of trees across the site had been marked up with blue and yellow dots for either removal or pruning. This was being carried out at minimal cost by the tree surgeon who provides wood chip to the site.

Paul reported that following consultation with a specialist from the RHS, the Society have offered to visit the site again in the summer to give a talk and Q and A session, and have a walkabout. This would be on the basis that we could arrange for around 100 people to attend (the meeting would probably be held in the Polygon, if this could be arranged). The planned date is 25th July. There was unanimous support for this idea.

6. **AOB**

Graham gave a note of support and thanks to the volunteer coordinators for their commitment and hard work for the Friends.

7. **Dates for subsequent meetings:**

Spring General Meeting 18th April
Summer General Meeting 18th July
AGM 17th October
All at 4pm