

Pitshanger Allotments and Conservation Association

Minutes of AGM held on Tuesday 23rd September 2014 at 7.30pm at The Brentham Club.

The Meeting was chaired by David Housego (DH). Proceedings opened at 7.36pm. 29 members attended.

1) Apologies for Absence: J Kane, M Simpson, D Hatherall, P Ng, E Cave, A Bishop, C Ludski, R Reynolds, K Clutterbuck, C Miles, R Wheatman, L & Culhane.

2) Minutes of AGM held 26th September 2013: These were approved as an accurate record

3) Annual Report: DH referred to his annual letter published in The Digger in August. He also referred to the death of active member Judy Harris and donations made by PACA in her memory to her nominated charities. He also mentioned continuing problems of rats, the need for clearer policy on bonfires and the recent and very successful flower and produce show organised by C Ludski. **Chair's report accepted.**

4) Accounts and Accountants' Report: Presented by Roger Davies. He recommended that the contingency fund and the accruals from the non collection of rent by LBE be brought together and used to fund planned infrastructure projects. It was not advisable to maintain a large contingency fund. His resolution to this effect was put to the floor. In response to queries from E Atkinson, S Charlton and D Simmonds, RD stated that the main project would be to upgrade the roadway by its raising level by several inches and providing contoured edges. The need for speed humps was briefly discussed. RD stated that a certain amount of ready funds needed to be held and £15,000 could be released for the project and that a matched grant from City Bridge fund would be sought on the basis of estimates. **This was agreed.** A Mawani asked about the costs of locks and keys. RD replied £2,200 which covers 250 keys and two sets of locks per year. He proposed that after one more new set the process of recycling locks and keys would start thus reducing the annual costs. **The Accountants' Report was accepted.** RD invited phone queries where appropriate.

5) Elections of Officers: DH was re-elected Chair, RD as Treasurer and Kathy Clutterbuck as Membership Secretary. CL and Anne Bishop no longer wished to remain as Events organiser and Secretary respectively although AB would serve on Committee. All proposed by DS and seconded by A Mawani.

6) Management Committee Members: In addition to the above, AB, Anne Harrison, Malcolm Paice & Robert Reynolds were re-elected.

7) Appointment of Independent Inspectors. DS proposed Merchant & Co, seconded by DH - **approved.**

8) Rental Subscription Changes: from 1 October 2015 to be raised to £18 per rod. Proposed by RD to keep PACA rents in line with LBE ones and to enable improvements to the site to be made. B Coveney: a pity if plots no longer affordable to those on low incomes. Many reluctant to ask for concession. M Goodall: Reasonable to keep in line with Borough. Could donations be sought to fund those struggling to pay? What about Charitable status? RD : This has been looked at and in view of recent changes could be looked at again but many technicalities to surmount. M Darvill: Option of half plots always available. AM: Plotholders should do more to volunteer their services. We should build our own fences as we want them and "let Borough take them down!" RD stressed that at any time LBE could increase our rent for "this prime land" DH : we can't guarantee all improvements within a year. D Connolly: should have more sub committees for specific areas of management and also do another questionnaire to assess what plotholders can offer the Association. **This suggestion was broadly supported.** SC stressed importance of having up to date contact details for all members. DH said this would be done at rent collection. Emails don't get through and people don't read notices. DC proposed a vote of thanks to Committee. Cathy Cox suggested requesting auto response every time email sent. **The proposed rent increase was approved**

9) Rental for Raised Beds: it was proposed **and agreed** that the rent from 2015 should be £15 per bed

10) Associate Members: The annual payment of £10 for Associate Members **was also agreed**

11/12) Lease with LBE: RD explained that LBE were reluctant to draw up a new lease but PACA should “cover itself” by approving this item at each AGM. As we no longer receive grant (stopped in 2006) or pay for services, the current non payment of lease is therefore effectively a payment in kind. **Approved.**

13) Business Plan for 2014/2015: This was presented by RD who stressed it was necessary in order to acquire loans. Costs were guesstimates in the absence of official estimates from contractors. The following questions/ comments were put: DS : Are drainage plans included? RD : A grant should be sought to cover both road and drainage works. DS : drainage is also an individual plot holder’s responsibility. DH: contractor input still needed to deal with blocked outflows on eastern side. Works on football pitch have added to problems. RD: longer term solution would be to line main ditches with concrete AM; What about the porous pipes installed by LBE but incomplete? RD: Would be good idea to complete this project
The Business plan was accepted.

14) Resolutions:

a) Dogs on leads should be allowed on Site from 1st November till last day of February every year. Proposed MP, seconded DH. MP: trial had worked well with no complaints being received. AM: Guide dogs should be allowed all the year round. SC: On grounds of “accessibility” working dogs should be allowed.
Motion Agreed with proviso that approval for guide and other working dogs to be given at all times of year on application to committee.

b) The Motion to merge the Accrued Maintenance fee with the Contingency Fund had already been discussed and approved See Item 4

c) That the Committee will allocate plots about to be vacated only to people on waiting list or to an active cultivator of said plot who has been an Associate Member for at least 2 years. Proposed RD, seconded DH MP: This is a confirmation of existing policy for which AGM approval sought. **Agreed**

d) Resolution submitted by P Ng had been discussed in Committee and ruled “ultra vires” therefore would not be put to meeting. However, the issue of non cultivated plots was raised under this item. BC: How many people have 5 or more plots? MP: 1 has 5, 3 have 4, 4 have 3 and 20 have 2 plots. Those with large holdings in most cases acquired them when supply exceeded demand. MP confirmed that there were currently 90 on waiting list though not all appeared to have an active interest. Those actively wanting a plot were probably only 40 therefore waiting time likely to be around 18 to 15 months. Problems arise when plots which appear to be unworked are the subject of personal problems or disputes . Several such cases being dealt with. Need for regular inspections and clear understanding of cultivation rules stressed.

15) Date of next AGM. 22 September 2015.

16) AOB

Tree Clippings: BC : some clippings appear to be poisonous. How many companies allowed on site? RD: 4 companies. Clippings probably not poisonous just rotting. If in doubt, don’t use around crops.

Trading Hut: BC : proposed vote of thanks to RReynolds for work in the Hut and around site. **Approved** RD: Hut a separate organisation but needs our support also in need of a revamp. More volunteers needed. KC runs rota for this. DH: Business has been poor in last weeks. Hut will close during winter months.

Feral Cats: Suggested by AB as solution to continuing rat problem. Following points made in response: Already a cat on site, feral cats require shelter and feeding, not appropriate in a conservation area, threat to birds, feeding current cat attracts rats, cat faeces dangerous to pregnant women difficult to introduce cats as an experiment. Issue of balance of nature and role of pest control requires more study. Poison not an option.

Bonfires on Site: M Booth: Summer rule must end before end of September .**Agreed** that after 1st September bonfires can in theory be lit at any time but ploholders must check wind direction, consult neighbours and ensure safety. Clearer publicity needed on bonfire policy.

One way Road: It was suggested by C Cox that the road around the site should be made one way only. **This was agreed.**

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm