

**MINUTES OF UNITY GROVE ALLOTMENTS AGM**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2019 – 7:30 P.M.**

**28 Members Present**

**APOLOGIES:** Dave Wolveridge, John & Sheelagh Mann, Ben Grant.

**MINUTES OF 2018 AGM:** Read and Agreed by all present. Proposed by Nick Milner. Seconded by David Smith.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** The Chairman began by thanking Alan Connell, David and Margaret Smith on helping with the running of the site over the past year. The Chair also gave special thanks to those who had contributed on working parties and the volunteers who have ensured that the grass areas have been mowed this year.

The Chair gave special mention to Wendy Hudson, the allotments previous secretary, who had unfortunately needed to step down earlier in the year, due to health issues and to Jean Jarvis, who had kindly stepped in to fill the role. The Chair wished Wendy a full recovery.

On the horticultural side, the Chair informed the meeting that 2019 had been a difficult year due to the weather but said that most plots had produced a reasonable crop. The Chair hoped that the wet weather would improve over the autumn and winter months so that winter crops could be gathered, and the soil turned.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Due to the unforeseen ill health of Wendy Hudson, Secretary, Jean Jarvis has been Acting Secretary since the end of July 2019. Initially I offered to put myself forward in a supporting role to Wendy; however unfortunately Wendy felt unable to continue. It is worth stating that Wendy was a diligent and committed member of the Committee. Wendy responsible for formulating the systems that are now in place and she is a hard act to follow. It is also important to acknowledge the support and assistance that I have received from every committee member.

Since attempting to step into Wendy's shoes, I have enjoyed the role and would like to develop the system further to become paperless where possible, whilst also acknowledging that not every plot holder prefers email or has access to the internet.

The four months since becoming Acting Secretary have been a real learning curve for me as I learn more about the unseen issues that the committee need to manage and exactly what it takes to run a successful allotment. I have also learned how hard the committee work on our behalf and what a difficult task it is at times managing a community allotment site.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Alan informed the meeting that he had completed this year's cost analysis and accounts and that overall it had not been an unreasonable year. Shop takings were reported to have increased and Alan thanked Wendy Ridgway and the shop team for their hard work. The Treasurer informed the AGM that over the winter and the coming year, Wendy and the team would be making improvements to the shop and the stock to meet allotment and community needs for the coming year; including stocking more compost.

The Treasurer informed the meeting that Unity had received a grant of £860 from the Council's Commuted Sums budget. This had funded further work to improve the site drainage system. Capital expenditure also included electrical work to the shop as well as the drainage works. Unity Grove

Allotments will not be able to apply for further grants from the Commuted Sums Fund for a period of five years now.

The Treasurer informed the AGM that there is a large amount of costly site maintenance still required. This included the maintenance of the hedges, which is very expensive. Over the past year a stretch of land on the southern border had been strimmed with the intention of cultivating wild flowers. The Treasurer reminded the meeting that the Committee and members are obliged to maintain the allotment site under their agreement with the Council.

The Treasurer informed the meeting that it had been necessary to service and purchase new equipment, including a self-propelled mower and petrol strimmer.

The Treasurer noted that the accounts currently show £16,000 in the bank account. Some of this is made up of plot-holders deposits, currently set at £25 for each plot. Less deposits the allotment's usable account balance is £13, 559.

The Treasurer reported that in respect to the drainage, the south side of the site had now been completed and was considered successful. Frank Newburn agreed with this assessment. However, the Committee acknowledged that there remained issues of poor drainage to other areas of the site. A continuing issue is the state of the ditch below the bottom hedge which the school will not allow us to access. The Council drainage surveyor had been invited to visit the allotments to discuss the drainage concerns and to explore possible remedies. Mike Norton expressed the view that drainage had become worse now than ever before. He is of the view that the drain under the main path was never completed properly. Others stated that there were also drainage issues on the chicken plot and on John Mann's plot. Mike also informed the meeting that there are natural springs on the playing fields owned by the neighbouring school.

**SHOP REPORT:** The Treasurer informed the AGM that the shop is run by two ladies, with Wendy Ridgway heading up the team. The plan next year is to review the opening times as the shop currently only opens on Saturday mornings during the growing season and this compared to other allotments in the area indicates that Unity Grove is losing revenue opportunities. The AGM was encouraged to let others know that they can request items to be stocked by the shop. Wendy Ridgway had also sent an email asking that plot-holders be made aware at the AGM that the shop would be opened on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November for an hour in order to collect their Kings Seeds orders and that further orders could be posted to her address until 26<sup>th</sup> November.

**SITE MAINTANENCE:** The AGM was informed that Unity Grove Allotments had been donated a metal shed. A base had been laid on the land behind the toilet and it is intended that the shed be used to store site machinery. The machinery will be stored in the shed over the summer months and in the shop over winter. Volunteers who cut the grass will be issued with a key to the shed. More volunteers were asked to step forward. A log was suggested to keep a record of who has taken machinery out to use on site.

Bob, Gary and Nick put themselves forward. Nick will provide instructions on using strimming equipment safely. Margaret and David also said that they would continue to be available for working parties.

The AGM was informed that the boundary hedge needs cutting. This had cost £600 last year. The quote for this year had risen to £1000. Volunteers were needed to cut the hedge and to gather up the cuttings. The hedge needs cutting back annually. The local authority does sections of the hedge where accessible on Roberts Crescent and the boundary to the school but are not responsible for

cutting the hedge inside the allotment site. The volunteers who put themselves forward for hedge cutting were: Gary, Neil, Phil, John, Bob, Helena and Lindsay.

Phil Jarvis suggested purchasing a hedge cutter. This was agreed as a good idea. Alan Connell suggested hiring the equipment, but Gary raised concern that the weather might prevent hedge trimming. Ian Seaward suggested that this was a decision for the next committee.

**BEES:** The Chair informed that there had been a issues regarding the bees this and previous years. This year the bees had stung several plot-holders. The Bee keepers had suggested moving the bees to a new site for six months. The Bee keepers have informed us that the bees have settled and that they are happy with their new home and do not wish to return to Unity Grove Allotment site. Bob Sheldon suggested that the bee plot would be good for wildlife and this was agreed by Rachael. Sue informed the meeting that bees will still come onto our site as they travel up to three miles.

**RENTS:** The Treasurer informed the AGM that it was important to safeguard our account surplus and therefore it was necessary to increase rents as of February 2020. It was proposed that rent for full plots is increased by £4 per annum and that half plots be increased by £2 per annum. Although this was met with protest by Mike Norton, the Treasurer explained that the rent increase had been considered using the Harrogate Borough Council Rent Review Formula and it was important that the Committee adopt a prudent view. The £650 overall increase in revenue per annum could meet the costs of skip hire and other expenditure that needs to be covered.

All members present at the AGM approved the proposed rent increase as of February 2020.

**BEST NEWCOMER AWARD:** The Best Newcomer Award cup was presented to plot-holder 76B, Ali and Phil Standen. Competitions this year also included: **BEST SCARECROW:** First prize – The Golightly family (38a) Second prize – Heather and Neil Craig and grandchildren (25b)

**MOST ATTRACTIVE PLOT NUMBER DESIGN:** First prize- (adult)Geoff Hudson (35b) Second prize- (adult) Alan Connell (48b) Joint winners- (children) Oliver and Uma Middleton (108a) and Joseph Smith(22a) and

**TALLEST SUNFLOWER:** First Prize – Oliver and Uma Middleton (108a) 8ft 8ins. Second prize – Alan Connell (53a) 8ft 4ins.

**A.O.B:** A Plot-holder raised concern that they had received an inspection letter, advising them of the need to improve their plot. They were of the view that this letter had been sent in error. They commented that there is a plot close to them which has not been cultivated in a long while and has been allowed to go to seed. They asked whether this plot-holder had received a letter. David Smith explained that care is taken to ensure that errors like this are not made; however, if plot-holders have not numbered their plots or their number is not visible, then errors can occur. David offered to speak to the plot-holder after the meeting.

All plot-holders are reminded to ensure that their plot is clearly numbered.

**ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Alan Connell was re-elected as Treasurer. Proposed and Seconded nomination forms were returned for the role of Chairperson and Secretary, by Philip and Jean Jarvis respectively. Two proposed and seconded nominations forms were returned for the role of Plot Lettings Manager, by Mike Norton and Lindsay Mitchell.

All nominees were voted in onto the Committee:

The new committee therefore consists of:

Phil Jarvis, Chair

Alan Connell, Treasurer

Jean Jarvis, Secretary

Mike Norton and Lindsay Mitchell, Joint Plot Lettings Managers

In the absence of any nominations, Frank Newburn has kindly offered to continue maintaining the Unity Grove Allotment website.

Immediately following the AGM, Sue and Michael Shimwell very kindly put themselves forward to take over responsibility for the Unity Grove New Letter from Margaret and David Smith.