

Company number 04672027

Minutes of Annual General Meeting
Tuesday May 24th 2022 at St Bonaventure's Church Hall, Egerton Rd, Bristol BS7 8HP

The Calling Notice and Agenda were circulated to all members by email or post prior to the meeting . Refreshments were not served this year due to continuing coronavirus concerns

Present: Neil Pirie (Chair) and Committee members Phil Hopkins, Steve Soffe, Sarah Newns, Tony Jones, Joe Baxter, Kirstin Whimster, Dominic O'Dwyer, Helen McCreadie, Jamie Darke, Debbie Bradley. 61 additional H&DAA members attended and two guest speakers.

1. Apologies: Committee members - Joe Mc Sorley, Steve Morgan, Pete Clee. Councillors - Phillipa Hulme, Emma Edwards and Tom Renhard. BCC Allotments Officer – Laura Weeks. Apologies were received from 31 H&DAA members.

2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM . Minutes of the 2021 AGM had been made available on the H&DAA website or sent by post. They were accepted on a proposal by Tony Jones, seconded by Steve Sheldon.

3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising from the 2021 Minutes.

4. Report from the Chairman on behalf of the Executive Committee: Written and presented by Neil Pirie.

- The Association manages 6 allotment fields situated on three sites. Current occupancy is 100%. The field representatives and Plot Manager work hard to ensure all plots that come vacant are relet quickly.
- There are currently 600 members. The membership is made up of single or joint tenants and Associate members, who assist on a specific plot.
- The Association is independent from Bristol City Council (BCC) to whom an annual rental is paid.
- There are 16 members on the Committee which is made up of officers and field representatives. The Committee meets monthly – meetings were largely held on Zoom through lockdown.
- Plot appraisals are made in June – primarily to identify award winning plots, but also providing an opportunity for Committee to visit each site.
- There is an active Facebook group with 250 users.
- Volunteer working parties help to maintain and develop each site, including a Hedging Team based primarily at Golden Hill
- The Community Garden, situated at Golden Hill, received £800 in donations from H&DAA members last year.
- In the past year 19 letters were sent concerning plots which did not reach the required level of cultivation – resulting in only 4 being given up.
- The Tenancy Agreement which all members are required to sign, has been revised this year and is subject to later discussion. An Equalities Policy has been introduced and a Health and Safety policy is in progress.
- Correspondence that has been received includes complaints about noise from strimmers, access to water, bonfires and barbecues and rubbish clearance.
- Drainage work has been carried out at Golden Hill to alleviate flooding. This work is very expensive.
- Additional water troughs have been installed in Baptist field and additional pipework to improve the water flow rate.
- Plot numbering has been addressed but is currently on hold due to unavailability of suitable numbering signs.
- The mural artist, Claudia, followed up her artwork at Golden Hill by painting a mural on a shed at Birchall Road site.
- The Bale House at Golden Hill had a much-needed facelift last September.

In response to a question concerning the status of the lease with BCC, and what guarantee there was that the H&DAA would continue as a self-managed organisation, the Chair noted that negotiations to renew the lease have not moved forward. The issue lies in simplifying the lease by reducing 6 field leases to one. The Association has this year made it clear to BCC that it will continue to operate under the terms of the existing lease, however there has been limited response from BCC.

5. Community Garden Report. Lucy Mitchell, Community Development Worker from the Community Garden (CG) at Golden Hill gave the report.

- Lucy has been working at the CG for 10 years - feels this is a very well attended garden.
- Volunteers attend through the year on a Wednesday and do not have to be local. Many are ploholders with a good knowledge base.
- Anyone can come and visit the garden for the first time between 12.00 and 3.30pm on a Wednesday, however children are not invited to come and play in the CG for safety reasons.
- The CG is self-funding, through Spring and Autumn fairs, a bonfire event and donations.
- There are preschool, afterschool and adult groups at the CG.
- Links have been made with Family Food Action and food is being grown specifically for them and is taken to the Ardagh Centre on Horfield Common on Tuesdays. Lucy welcomed any food donations to be brought to the CG - and for willing volunteers to take donations to the Ardagh.
- Lucy requested that no allotment rubbish is left in the car park by the Community Garden as this has to be moved by her. The good news is that over the past year the least amount of rubbish has been left!

6. Short Talks on H&DAA and the environment

BS6 Wildlife Group. Nicky Hodges gave a short presentation. The group is part of a network encouraging local biodiversity and awareness of wildlife. A group in S Bristol started an audit of green spaces across the City, looking at what spaces exist – such as parks and gardens and allotments, what is in place to encourage wildlife, and future planning. Birchall field falls into the BS6 wildlife group and Golden Hill and Grahams (Wessex) into BS7.

Activities include site exchange visits to see what is in place – such as bat boxes, planting for bees. There is a bat survey at Redland Green.

Allotments are important because wildlife travels; allotments provide good habitats, such as 'scruffy' areas and under matting.

Tips for encouraging wildlife and biodiversity include: using peat free compost and growing without pesticides; incorporating a pond; making a compost heap; leaving a 'messy' area; using green manures which flower early.

The BS6 group is doing an audit and is looking for someone to do the same for BS7. Also looking for Wildlife champions. Anyone interested can email BS6wildlife@gmail.com. Website is

<https://bristolwildlifegroups.wordpress.com/bs6-wildlife/>

Bishopston Seed Library. Presented by Jess - one of a small group of volunteers who launched the seed library in Bishopston Library in March 2022. The idea is to engage people in the vital practice of saving seed and growing from seed. Anyone can come and 'borrow' seed from the Library, take it away and grow fruit, flowers, vegetables and herbs, collect the seeds produced and return some of these to the Library. There has been a lot of interest since opening. Members are encouraged to come and bring seeds to share. The seed library is open whenever the Library is open.

<https://bristolgreencapital.org/bristols-first-seed-library-launched/>

7. Resolutions. Three resolutions had been previously circulated to members alongside the AGM agenda. In response to a question the Chair clarified that resolutions could be passed on a majority vote.

Resolution One - Bonfires, incinerators and barbecues. The Chair gave a brief background and rationale for the resolution. A resolution to stop bonfires on individual plots because of environmental concerns and the nuisance caused to local residents and other ploholders, had been proposed two years ago. It was referred back to the Committee as the vote totals had been very close.

Summary of discussion – concern was expressed that if bonfires were banned, what alternatives would be available to dispose of large tree prunings and other non - compostable waste. Large, organised site bonfires could still be held. The possibility of shredders can still be considered - Graham's site recently hired a shredder which successfully managed a large quantity of waste materials. Support was expressed by

members keen to use shreddings for mulch. Other alternatives have been explored by the Committee – these include collection by Bristol Waste - a quote is awaited.

A suggestion was made that Resolution One lacks transparency as it has been worded to allow for exemptions – specifically community bonfires and community group activities. Exemptions should be upfront and clearly explained.

The rationale for banning barbecues was questioned as research was cited that suggests that the amount of particulates from a barbecue is negligible - and that it is not the fire but what is cooked that is the problem. The amount of smoke produced does not present a significant problem and that pleasure gained from a barbecue as a social celebration of growing and harvesting food outweighs any potential nuisance. It was however noted that the primary purpose of allotments is for growing and cultivating food and flowers, not for social activity.

A suggestion was made that the resolution could be voted on but with a commitment to present a further resolution allowing barbecues, and to ensure that no member having a barbecue in the meantime would be faulted. This was not accepted as proxy voters would not have the opportunity to vote today on that change. Similarly a suggestion that an informal show of hands to establish interest in that possibility was not accepted.

Tellers were appointed and votes were counted including the proxy votes which had been accepted prior to the meeting.

In favour of Resolution One – 41 votes (of which 9 were proxy votes) and against Resolution One – 44 votes (of which 19 were proxy votes)

Resolution One thus did not pass and it was clarified that the existing policy guideline remains in force - that bonfires can be lit on individual plots only between 1st November and 28th/29th February.

Resolution Two - Tenancy Agreement

Summary of discussion A question was raised whether another panel could consider situations where a plot was considered to be inadequately cultivated. Clarification was given that there is an appeals process in place. A suggestion was made that this could be incorporated into the new tenancy agreement. The response was that not all processes and guidelines can be included in the TA which would become very lengthy but details are available to members on the website.

Clarification was given that hosepipes could not be used to fill water butts but could be used to move water that had been collected in butts or other containers on individual plots.

Votes were counted, again including proxy votes and **Resolution Two was carried by 81 votes in favour (of which 24 were proxy votes) and 4 votes against (all of which were proxy votes)**

Resolution Three - Rental Increase

Summary of discussion Rationale for the increase include the increasing charges for maintaining the allotment fields. These include fencing, access to water, tree surgeons, maintenance of haulingways. The Association also tries to keep rentals close to those of BCC but a bit cheaper. Capital spends are necessary.

Comment was made that over the last 6 years the cash balance has increased, and that the Association is cash rich. Some contingency exists but a spending plan is required – the Association should not commit to something 4 years hence - the Resolution refers to a rental increase in 2026. Any surplus cannot be returned to members but could be spent on members' plots.

In response – decisions to adjust rentals have to be made in advance – decisions for the current year were made in 2018/19. The current process has been in place for the last 20 years and the Association has been spending large amounts of money on site maintenance. The proposed increases represent an annual average increase of 5% which is considered modest.

It was noted that the Association needs to maintain a certain amount of money in the event that the Company has to be wound up – however this could be considered unlikely.

Votes were counted, again including proxy votes and **Resolution Three was carried by 56 votes in favour (of which 25 were proxy votes) and 25 votes against (of which 2 were proxy votes)**

7. Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer noted that the membership no longer needed to vote on the accounts, which are now filed in Companies House. There is now 100% plot occupancy and there was higher expenditure in the last year than in previous years. Copies of the Accounts are available to members through the H&DAA website and have also been circulated by post to members who do not access the Internet.

Clarification was given that H&DAA assets remain as H&DAA assets. Work done to communal areas such as the decking repairs on St Agnes field and the communal area where events are held benefit the Community Garden but are or can be used by the Association as well.

8. Election of Directors: There are currently nine Directors with 3 year tenure. Three Directors' tenure requires renewal – Dominic O'Dwyer, Joe McSorley and Deborah Bradley – which the meeting approved.

11. Presentation of prizes: The Chair introduced Phyllis Brooks who presented the prizes. Prizes were awarded as follows:

Ted Hill Challenge Cup for the plot holder making the most progress in the 1st year of tenancy across the sites was awarded to Rob Hollinrake of Graham's field.

The Phyllis Brooks Award for outstanding service to the Association was awarded to the Hedging Team and accepted by Roger Hake on behalf of the Team – Sarah Newns, Colin Skeen and Steve Soffe, as well as others who have assisted in recent years.

Best in Field prizes for progress within their first year of tenancy were awarded to Debs Baker on Baptist field, Linda Kuusik on Birchall field, Chris Sheppard on Graham's field, David Goldblatt on Davies field, and Steve and Susan Morgan on Longs field.

12. Any Other Business

It was noted that what happens at the Golden Hill site is not the same as for other sites within the Association. A shredder was recently hired on Graham's field and was paid for by some tenants who used it. **

Security was discussed. A recent incident where a polytunnel was damaged most likely resulted from a breach of security. A more frequent change of padlock numbers was requested. A suggestion that most problems are caused by children of tenants being given the padlock numbers was challenged – recent shed break-in on Graham's was not the fault of tenants' children.

A vote of thanks was offered to the Committee for their work on behalf of Association members over the past year.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Committee and members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.45pm.

** NB The Association has subsequently reimbursed the field representative and tenants for the cost of the shredder hire.