

Company number 04672027

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Wednesday April 19th 2023 at St Bonaventure's Church Hall, Egerton Rd, Bristol BS7 8HP

The Calling Notice, agenda and discussion papers were circulated to all members by email or post prior to the meeting.

Present: Neil Pirie (Chair) and Committee members Phil Hopkins, Steve Soffe, Tony Jones, Joe Baxter, Kirstin Whimster, Dominic O'Dwyer, Jamie Darke, Pete Bill, Debbie Bradley. 40 additional H&DAA members attended, also guest speaker, Lorraine Smith (Allotments and Smallholdings Manager) from Bristol City Council

Introduction Neil Pirie outlined the format of the meeting which was in two parts. The first gave members the opportunity to discuss the H&DAA forward financial strategy and planning, then the issue of disposal of waste from allotment sites. The second part concerned formal business.

Neil (Chair) made the AGM aware that the meeting is being recorded to facilitate minuting. The recording is available to members by request to the H&DAA Secretary.

Tony Jones (Field rep, Birchall field) referred to the **financial strategy** discussion paper which was sent out with the AGM Calling notice. Tony acknowledged the H&DAA's relatively large financial reserve and focused on plans to best use this. An important issue is to ensure sites are kept well for the future.

The first suggestion is that the reserve is split into four parts: a fund in case the H&DAA had to wind up; a reserve for the unexpected; a reserve in case membership declined and along with it the H&DAA income; what is left could then be added to the annual income to improve the allotment sites over a period of time, which means that over time that part of the reserve would gradually decline.

The second suggestion is that each site develops a five- year plan to decide what major improvements are needed to keep it up to date - eg fencing and haulingway upkeep.

The final part is to ensure H&DAA has enough money for routine maintenance and expenditure, such as water rates and insurance.

Tony asked members to consider what big expenditure they feel could benefit their field and reminded members that each field has one or more Field Representative who can also bring ideas for their field to the Committee.

Summary of comments and discussion:

The objectives are spot- on but the narrative is complex in parts.

The first proposal should refer to a cash reserve rather than financial reserve to avoid confusion.

It is more likely there are 2 areas rather than four. There may be some overlap around reserve for unexpected events and contingency for reduced income. It is important to have contingency for reduced funding.

A fund to support an expenditure programme is key to the whole exercise.

The suggestion that members from individual fields work together to raise proposals is good and there will be common themes. But fields may have individual needs - assume there is no budget for individual fields.

What has been done in previous years? How is this projected expenditure plan different? Is H&DAA planning to spend an additional amount over and above what has been spent on an annual basis?

Tony Jones clarified that over the past few years not much was spent on capital improvements for various reasons, so the Association is playing catch-up – we should be spending more in future to improve all the sites.

Phil Hopkins (Treasurer) noted that expenditure each year is different. In the last 5 years there was only one year when the Association spent more than income, so this is the rationale for a five year strategy. He suggests the plan is to spend £20k in each of the next five years, which is a bit more than expected revenue.

Phil encouraged members to come forward with ideas that will benefit members, for consideration - in particular those for which there are no other sources of funding, such as charitable grants.

It was noted that some things cost a lot of money – so who makes the ultimate decision about who gets what?

Tony clarified the process by which decisions can be made. Ideas can go to the field representatives who are members of the Committee. If each field draws up a plan, possibly by Autumn 2023, they can be brought to the subsequent Committee meeting. The plans would then be put together to see which is the priority for each field. Tony recognised that each field is different, but the Committee needs to ensure equity. He noted that the Treasurer takes a careful approach so that there is no overspend. Tony emphasised that the route for ideas and plans is through the field reps.

Neil Pirie asked members to consider that investment in one field can benefit other fields, for example the solar panels on Golden Hill site have saved £1000k a year in water bills, and that saving ultimately benefits all three sites.

Where did the £118k accumulate from, and where is it invested now, to maximise benefit? Phil Hopkins noted £51k came from the sale of Oakley Hall about 20 yrs ago. Bristol City Council gave £10k in early 2000's as a one-off when H&DAA took over management of the sites. Over the last 8 years the Association has built up funds which are invested in 2 accounts – Lloyds and Nationwide current and savings accounts. Over the last two years these have not accrued much interest.

In the event of winding up, where do the remaining funds go? Phil noted that the Association would need to restore things back to how they were before. Hard to know what that might entail – for example treework and haulingway maintenance. By law, all remaining monies cannot be redistributed to members as the Association is a not-for-profit organization; surplus monies must be given to an appropriate charitable organization. It was requested that the Memorandum and Articles of Association, which make up the company constitution, make appropriate provision clear in the event of winding up. Neil clarified that H&DAA Constitution is currently being revised; the H&DAA unsuccessfully attempted to become a charity some years ago, therefore the current Memorandum and Articles are not correct.

Steve Soffe (Plot manager and Davies field rep) referred to the **waste disposal** discussion paper which had also been circulated previously. The summary differentiates organic waste (other than timber) and inorganic waste such as plastic and hard core.

Guiding principles are that minimising accumulation minimises disposal requirements, and the primary responsibility for disposal lies with tenants. The meeting was invited to consider what the Association can do to help individual members achieve this and what the Association do to facilitate disposal at a communal level.

Summary of comments and discussion

If a tenant gives up a plot after a considerable period of inattention, what can the Association do to assist the new tenant in disposing of accumulated waste that has built up? Can there be a responsibility built into the departure process to dispose of waste? Whilst recognising the problem, it is very difficult to manage it. Steve noted that the possibility of a financial deposit has been considered but in view of the demographic of the Association, it would be uncomfortable to ask for a deposit in addition to the plot rental, also deposits would need to be kept in a separate account. However, Lorraine Smith (BCC) suggested a deposit scheme used in some places can be helpful as the possibility of losing it acts as a deterrent.

Steve noted that Field reps and the Association would be prepared to assist the incoming tenant as far as possible.

Lorraine noted that under the new BCC tenancy agreement, materials brought onto the allotment site must be used in that season, or they can be moved off. In addition, photographs are taken of a plot at the start of a tenancy, so when it is handed back there is a record of the original condition.

A 'tidy as you go' reminder to tenants was suggested, as a preventative measure. Also having 'bays' where recyclable material such as plastic can be deposited or materials composted. Steve recognised the value of this approach but also noted that creating a communal area tends to pass the disposal issue on to someone else – he emphasised that taking personal responsibility was the best option.

It was noted that people's situations can change and tenants may wish to return to managing their plot, but subsequently find they cannot – which can explain why some are left in a poor state.

It was noted that organic waste is being dumped by tenants, by the hedge on Longs field, which amounts to fly-tipping. It is clear in the tenancy agreement that this is not acceptable. It is important that tenants highlight situations to the field reps where a plot or communal area is being used as a dumping ground.

Moving on to considering communal resources for disposing of waste, it was suggested that hiring a shredder would be helpful, on a publicised date, possibly with volunteers to help shred materials.

It would be helpful to have a place where large quantities of compost could be delivered on Grahams field as currently everything has to be brought in in bags. It would also help to have a skip delivered once a year to save taking waste materials to the tip or recycling centre.

There are piles of wood and vegetative waste on Baptist Field at Golden Hill – can these be accessed by tenants?

Steve confirmed these are materials primarily from hedging and site maintenance. This is burned once a year. It is an experiment which may be developed and expanded to all the sites. There is no process for being given permission to add to the piles as yet. It was noted that if tenants do add to the piles, stacking it neatly would enable a lot more to be added.

A request was made, and accepted, for more guidance on composting, and added to the H&DAA website. There is a lot of information generally available on composting but it was recognised that we could do it in a more targeted way, as every plot should compost.

What happens to people when they do dump rubbish? Stuff is dumped in Community Garden weekly.

Unfortunately, people get away with it as it is not known who they are. If they are members, there would be grounds for eviction. As members, all need to take responsibility for what happens on site and field reps are the conduit for expressing concerns.

Steve acknowledged that there is a strong appetite for developing communal areas and asked for further ideas to be passed on through field reps.

Formal H&DAA Business

1. Apologies: Committee members - Joe Mc Sorley, Steve Morgan, Pete Clee, Sarah Newns, Kath Sadler, Helen McCreadie, Rachel Sharvell Smith, Councillors - Phillipa Hulme, Emma Edwards and Tom Renhard. Apologies were received from 7 further H&DAA members.

2. Minutes of the 2022 AGM. Minutes of the 2022 AGM had been made available on the H&DAA website or sent by post. These were accepted on a proposal by Tony Jones, seconded by Susan Carter. They were accepted unanimously by the meeting.

3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising from the 2022 Minutes.

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

- Historical documents demonstrate that this Allotment Association initiated the first Bristol Flower Show which was subsequently taken over by Bristol City Council. They have subsequently relinquished it- but did not ask us to take it up again.
- There were then many more Allotment fields – for example the playing fields off Bishop Road. H&DAA also had Oakley Hall in Oak Road which was subsequently sold for £51,000 as it was too expensive to maintain. The Association has looked after that sum since and today the meeting has proposed to spend the money in a way which benefits the Association now and in the future.
- Aware that tenants on one field may not be familiar with the other fields – so every summer the Committee ‘tours’ all the Allotment fields.
- **Birchall field** has three Field reps, Tony, Kirstin and Joe who are very dynamic and motivate people to take part in working parties. Birchall field has an informal public right of way through. There are 106 plots with 100% occupancy.
- **Wessex avenue** (Graham’s) has two fields, Highbury where Jamie is the field rep and Telecoms where Helen and Rachel are the field reps – they are unable to be here tonight. Both fields have approx. 20 plots with 100% occupancy.
- **Longs** field is right next to the Gloucester Old Spot pub on Kellaway Avenue, though there is no access to the pub from the field! Longs field has the best view in the world. There are 32 plots all fully occupied.
- Golden Hill comprises **St Agnes field** where the field reps are Neil and Pete Clee, **Davies field** with Steve and Sarah and **Baptist field** with Pete Bill, Kath and Joe. There is 100% occupation on the whole of Golden Hill, which is a big change over the years...there was a time when the Committee had to clear grass from some of the plots!

5. Annual accounts and Treasurers Report (previously circulated) Phil Hopkins introduced the report which he acknowledged to be brief as much had been covered in the earlier financial strategy discussion.

In the 12 months Sept 2021- Sept 2022 our income has gone up to £16,800k. All H&DAA income comes from rent. The rent for next year will be the same as this year as agreed at last year’s AGM. £800 was given, by

members, as voluntary donation to the Community Garden in addition to annual rentals. Expenditure was low, mainly estate management and admin which totalled about £7.5k. Water costs were low due to an overpayment in previous years. Capital expenditure was particularly low, though that is going to change as discussed earlier. As a result, our net assets went up. H&DAA are keeping our accountants, Stone and Co, for another year.

Neil introduced Lorraine Smith and invited her to give an **update from Bristol City Council Allotments and Smallholding management**. BCC has one allotments manager and one allotments officer, 4000 tenants, 97 sites and about 8000 people on the waiting list, so the Council is looking to identify new sites and consider strategies such as splitting allotment plots, to address the issues. Lorraine is writing a 15 year Allotments Strategy and a new Tenancy Agreement which will be a lot more robust. It will address rule violations and aims to give Bristol tenants a pleasant allotment experience. BCC rentals will be going up. They are also looking at promoting nature, sustainable growing, climate change and ways to produce more local food for individuals and commercial growers in the area.

The Council used to put on a one term course which provided free initial training for new allotment tenants, which was very helpful – are further courses planned? Lorraine noted there are no courses at present but there is education planned in the form of growing groups spread across Bristol where people can come along and participate. There is also a new Tenants handbook written by volunteers from Bristol Allotments Forum which will incorporate information about starting on a plot, planning and different growing methods. A suggestion was made that people on the waiting list could be directed to Community growing groups to learn about the realities of running an allotment plot.

In response to a request to explain the rationale for the current BCC hosepipe ban, Lorraine responded that this is an ongoing issue for BCC. Risk assessment and water hygiene checks by health and safety suggest that there is a risk of Legionnaires disease that justifies a complete hosepipe ban. This causes issues for tenants. BCC supports tenants with strategies such as water harvesting.

Lorraine confirmed that Bristol has only two self managed Allotment Associations. There are three letting- only Associations, but these manage membership, not the sites, so they receive only one third of the rentals. BCC supports self- managed sites in principle. Lorraine confirmed there are no current Allotment sites at risk – in fact they are looking for more sites.

6. Election of Directors: There are currently nine Directors with 3 year tenure. Two Directors' tenure requires renewal, Pete Clee and Jamie Darke - which the meeting approved.

7. Presentation of prizes: The Chair introduced Phyllis Brooks who served as H&DAA secretary for many years to present the prizes. Prizes were awarded as follows:

Best in Field prizes for best progress within their first year of tenancy were awarded to Susanne Fraedrich from Birchall field; Mike Lowe from Davies field; Esther Blake and Sam Drowley from Grahams (Highbury) field; Helen Appleton, Adam Platt and Linda Kerley from Longs field and Chris Stutchfield from St Agnes field. Congratulations to all!

Phyllis Brooks expressed her pleasure that the Association is continuing after many years. She remembered the pioneering work of William Pain who also worked for BCC, and Mr Pike the Allotments officer at the time.

8. Any Other Business.

Lucy Mitchell from the Golden Hill Community Garden reminded members of the Tuesday food collection scheme for Family Food Action. A substantial amount is taken to the Ardagh every week. Collection is currently at the bottom gate by the Community Garden at Golden Hill, but new collection points are planned by the top gate. Lucy asked that if anyone from other sites would like to co-ordinate collection and bring it to Golden Hill, they will deliver it. However, as food is only accepted by FFA from 9.30-11.00am on Tuesdays, it must be brought to Golden Hill on a Sunday or Monday.

The Chair noted that more copies of AGM pre- information will be made available at future H&DAA AGMs.

There being no further business, Neil thanked the Committee and members for attending, and closed the meeting at 9.30pm.