Haslemere Allotments Association

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 13 April 2025

Present:

Vinka Reeves H43 (Chair)
Stuart Alexander H42B (Treasurer)
Debbie Anjorin H06B,
Johan Ditmar H36A
Kay Dudman H44B
Dagmar Gauweiler H19A
Lisa Hammond H46A
Ian Hayes H23B
Colin Hewson H42A
Nigel Carn H58A
John Usher H64B
Sue James H63B
Helen Jimenez H28B
John McArthur H14A
Cornelia Perquin H07A
Julia Sarson H62A
Thom Stanbury H67A (Vice Chair)
Ann Tierney H58A
Lara Mepham H01B
Mike Reeves H44A
Gail Freeman H45A
Rachel Walkoviak H62B
Tyrone Hodges H46B
Letizia Tiley H50B
Irena Sawyer H11B,
Gillian Brown H34B,
David Goodship H68A
Mike Scott H39B

and others who arrived after the start of the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 16:04.

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM

1.1 The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting had not been circulated prior to the meeting and so could not be considered as part of the present meeting.

Action: to defer consideration of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, until the next General Meeting of the Association.

2 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

2.1 The Chair thanked the Committee for their invaluable ongoing support. There had been challenges during the year, including: climate change affecting the ways in which we

garden; the rising cost of water; developing legislation especially around pest control. The challenges present opportunities for us to innovate as we aim to grow a thriving allotment community.

2.2 The Chair noted the contribution of Wendy Nayyar to the Association, with witty clear communications over the last year.

2.3 The relationship with the Association's landlord, Pathways, had been challenging as Pathways had suffered large staff turnover with little or no handover. HAA was a low priority for Pathways. At present 16 plotholders had not been invoiced for their annual rent.

2.4 Pathways was considering options around outsourcing the management of the site.

2.5 The Committee had been notified that officers of Ealing Council had given in-principle approval for the renewal of Asset of Community Value status for the site, which now awaited final approval by Pathways.

2.6 Events and outreach had continued. The May plant sale had made £502 in sales; surplus produce was donated to soup kitchens and other homeless charities; members had also been donating clothes and toiletries. The summer barbecue had benefited from the expertise of Jenny Parker 63A. The Macmillan Coffee Morning, moved to the Searchlight Trading Hut, had raised £1,000 in cash and a further £700 in donations.

2.7 HAA won 3rd prize in the Large Site category of Cultivate Ealing, with judges commending "lovely site, openness, wonderful communal greenhouse". There were individual awards in the small plots category for Michael Horn 4A (Highly Commended) and Cornelia Perquin 7A (3rd prize).

2.8 Letizia Tiley gave an account of plot lettings over the last year. There were two additional plots, since two full plots had been vacated and divided into half-plots. There were currently 136 plot holders, and 11 members of the Gardening Club. The waiting list stood at 55 - the person at the top of the list had applied in 2022. The list and waiting time were reducing again as the "lockdown gardeners" surrendered their plots, and others moved away from the area.

2.9 The Chair reported that 2 full plot inspections had been made during the year.

2.10 Mike Scott gave an overview of site maintenance. He thanked especially John McArthur, Ian Hayes for their work, and Steve and Nick for undertaking background tasks. Two skips had been rented over the year.

2.11 The trolleys, despite constant reminders,and tireless repair by Ian Hayes, having been regularly overloaded to breaking point. The Committee had decided not to support this facility any further.

2.12 With regard to the communal paths, while HAA oversaw the three main W-E paths, the others paths were the responsibility of the plot-holders on either side; plot inspections now included these.

2.13 Water tanks had been upgraded, including adding a second tank to most points. It remained the responsibility of all members to avoid overflows by turning off unattended taps whenever seen.

2.14 Planned maintenance had been done to the communal greenhouse.

2.15 Regarding the communal composting toilet, it was clear that the door code had been communicated beyond the rota of users who had agreed to assist in cleaning and maintenance. The code would be changed and the list refreshed. It would be the responsibility of users to set rotas for cleaning and so on, and to request consumables as required from the Committee.

2.16 The stipulated 2.5m maximum height for trees was site-wide and in line with peer sites nationally. Where pruning was beyond the capacity of a plotholder then the Committee would introduce plot holders to trusted contractors. The guidelines did not stipulate acceptable species of tree.

2.17 Mike Scott voiced thanks to the outgoing Chair for her tireless work.

3 PRESENTATION OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2024

3.1 The Treasurer spoke to the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024 which had been published on the HAA website, noting also that Pathways operated to the "standard" accounting year ending 31 March.

3.2 The year ended with a balance of £12k.

3.3 The income from Pathways arrives after the end of Pathways' financial year, and was generally around £5,488/year. It was not clear how this figure had been arrived at in this or in previous years.

3.4 Pathways' accountant had left the organisation in March 2024, and the function subsequently outsourced. The most recent draft financial statement offered by Pathways had been challenged as being very far removed from reasonable expectations, and HAA's own records.

3.5 Additional income in 2024 was from a large charitable donation.

3.6 The Treasurer had confidence that the outturn for 2025 would be satisfactory,

3.7 Pathways had not been able to provide accurate figures for the balance of the sinking fund. The sinking fund had been established to meet the cost of large capital outlay - for example, replacing fencing. HAA had provided a copy of the last reliable statement made by PAthways (this had been in early 2024); two relevant bills had been received since then, and almost certainly paid. This would indicate a balance of around £10k; however it was harder to justify HAA requiring contributions to a sinking fund if the need could not be demonstrated.

3.8 The largest expenditure in 2024 had been for fencing, especially the Midhurst Gate which had been renewed in a sympathetic style and colour, and looked splendid. HAA had also paid for all Members to join the Searchlight Trading Hut, adding value to the tenancy agreements and supporting our neighbour charity and resource at the same time.

3.9 Pathways was looking to delegate more functions to HAA. Currently they return 40-50% of rents to HAA. It was not clear what services are funded by the retention.

3.10 Future expenditure would include work on the paths, and further replacement of

fencing.

3.11 The Treasurer noted that the issues around Pathways record-keeping had been raised since April 2024 when they first came to light.

3.12 He advised against seeking the return of sinking fund contributions; a major water leak, for example, would require significant outlay. He noted also the challenges for volunteer Committee members if HAA took over certain landlord responsibilities, for example rent collection.

4 MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS FOR DISCUSSION

No motions had been submitted by members for discussion.

5 PLANS FOR 2025-26

5.1 The Chair noted that the Association's priorities for 2025-26 should include work on making safe the communal pathways; continuing to upgrade taps and water supply; and establishing a semi-independent subgroup to manage the composting toilet.

The Vice-Chair of the Association took the chair for the next item.

6 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FOR 2025-26

6.1 Of the 2024-25 Committee, Wendy Nayyar, Cornelia Perquin, Julia Sarson, Letizia Tiley (elected at the 2024 General Meeting), Debbie Anjorin, and Mike Scott (co-opted during the year) were standing for re-election (6).

6.2 Sara Constable, Dagmar Gauweiler, Colin Hewson and Lara Ward, were standing for election (4).

6.3 This would be the maximum number (10) permitted by the Constitution.

6.4 The election of all 10 was proposed by Gillian Brown, seconded by Stuart Alexander, and adopted by a majority of members present.

Resolved: that Debbie Anjorin, Sara Constable, Dagmar Gauweiler, Colin Hewson, Wendy Nayyar, Cornelia Perquin, Julia Sarson, Mike Scott, Letizia Tiley, and Lara Ward, be elected as Committee members for 2025-26.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 17:45.