

ALSAGER GARDENS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 March 2019

Approved at AGM 11-02-20

PRESENT

Chairman – Adrian Ford

Pauline Hubbard (Vice Chair) David Pitt (Treasurer) David Spall (Trading Secretary)

Derek Hough (President)

Mike Smith, John Nixon, Mike Hubbard, Stuart Challinor, Bob Shaw, Jennifer Goldstraw, David Madeley, Martin Banks, Liz Pinkney, Pete Bolden, Marilyn Bolden, Keith Davies, Paul Campbell, Debbie Campbell, Neil Challinor, Helen Challinor, June Hulme, Anne Ankers, Rose Watts, Margaret Brooks, Mike Brooks, Lynn McCabe. (27 attendees)

Opening Remarks

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the AGM.

The AGM was supported by a Power Point Presentation that displayed all the key documents and outlined each of the various reports for the officers to speak to.

1. APOLOGIES

Lesley Quartermain, Hilary Robinson (Membership Secretary), Jane Smith (Council Representative) Judith Ford, Keith Johnson, Paul Willetts.

2. MINUTES of the meeting held on 13 February 2018 were proposed by Neil Challinor and seconded by Helen Challinor and agreed as a true record

3. MATTERS ARISING There were no matters arising

4. TREASURER'S REPORT - David Pitt

David reported that the accounts to year end 31st December 2018 have been audited by Macintosh and a letter detailing key issues has been provided.

A copy of the audited accounts was distributed to the meeting. The key points highlighted by the auditor are

- Overall loss of £2168 compared to £1082 last year
- Sales have decreased by 7% this year at £4609 compared to £4980 last year.
- Liquidity is satisfactory

David expanded on the accounts as follows:

- Last year Sales increased by 18% in 2017 therefore we have a levelling out position with the decrease in sales this year. In summary
 - Fertilisers £333 – 17%
 - Seeds and Plants £177 – 10%
 - Canes & pots £43 - 14% increase
 - Sundries £96 – 10% increase
- This year Gross Trading profit for 2018 is £1561 (compared to £1532 in 2017) which represents 33.9% of sales (compared to 30.8% in 2017) and is due to seed and plant sales: We would expect a 15-20% profit on seeds but as plants are generously donated by members, they command a 100% profit. Also, the figure is skewed by the manure profit of £200, again representing 100% pure profit. Both these factors significantly impact on Gross Trading Profit.
- Stock in hand is a 2.7 % increase at £1290 this year compared to £1255 last year

Profit and Loss Account

DP reported an overall loss of £2168 compared to £1082 last year. The accounts include a figure of £2497 depreciation for buildings included for this year (£15529-£13,032). If the accounts are viewed

without this depreciation, then we would have small profit. He stated we have had expenditure of £600 for the new metal Trading Hut door which was required for security and safety reasons and there is now an ongoing increase in respect of the honoraria to the 4 site managers at £25 each pa – total £100.

- Under Allotment Expenses, the accounts reflect that the Grant monies previously for the Accessibility Raised Beds, have now been partially spent. This money was ring fenced for the specific project use. The remaining funds held on account will be used for the works remaining at Cedar Avenue. The annual payment made to Alsager Town Council for plot rentals, is also under this heading.
- The Balance sheet shows a figure of £5305 for Grants and Donations, this includes capital which relates to Grants which been received from the following sponsors who we would like to formally acknowledge and to whom we are most grateful:
Persimmon Homes, Seddon Homes, David Wilson Homes and Stoke Football Club
- Overall the 2017 accounts show a net loss of £1082 compared to a loss of £1979 last year.
. However, capital items will require replacement at some time in the future

A question was raised about “a sinking fund” for the replacement of capital items. DP advised that given the limited monies available to the AGM that this was impractical. Should any large future cost be required, monies would need to be raised accordingly to cover costs.

Clarification was sought about the financial year for the Town Council billing and it was confirmed that the plot rental invoice is to be paid in advance as the ATC financial year runs from April to March. This means that the AGA have to pay the plot rental bill to the ATC before the income has been received from plot holders and can cause a temporary cash flow issue during the first quarter of the year. A comment was made that the AGA may benefit from operating the same financial year as the ATC.

5. TRADING SECRETARY’S REPORT – David Spall

David first thanked the school for providing the venue for the AGM and for the facilities for refreshments and then thanked all members for their support in not only buying stock from the Hut but also supporting the Open day last May. He also thanked members who placed their seed & potato orders in early October. He advised the meeting that the profit we make from these sales is what allows the Association to pay for the services members enjoy.

DS stated that he hoped that members find the twice-yearly newsletters interesting and that any copy or photo’s, for inclusion at any time, would be of interest and appreciated

He then went on to thank the volunteers who assisted with the very large delivery of over 120 bags of compost, several sacks of potatoes and other supplies for the shop. Once again, as a result of the valuable help on the day, the work was completed within a couple of hours rather than the several hours it would normally have taken.

DS outlined the current allotment rents and AGA subscription costs and reminded members that payment for plot rentals can be made at the Trading Hut. He outlined the season’s opening hours for the Trading Hut which reopened on Sunday 3rd March 2019. He reminded members that volunteers for the Hut are always required so anyone interested in helping should contact a member of the committee.

DS advised that the Trading Hut would be painted in ant graffiti paint at the end of March.

6. SECRETARY’S REPORT – Pauline Hubbard (Acting Secretary)

The Chairman introduced Pauline Hubbard who presented the Secretary’s report

PH outlined the various funding that had been received during the year and in particular the £3260 recently received from Tesco Bags of Help which will be used to create the two raised beds at Talke Road and the single raised bed at Coronation Avenue.

6.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

PH outlined the achievements of the AGA in 2018 and thanked all the volunteers for their help.

- Completion of Lawton Road raised beds and pathways
- Cedar Avenue three Raised Beds and Pathways

6.2 FUTURE PLANS

PH outlined the future plans and handed out the "Five-Year Plan" of works that we have prioritised which include:

- Enhance the Accessible Raised Beds area by providing appropriate shelters, water butts, composters, cloches and tool storage and a sitting area close to the raised beds
- Provide secure communal tool storage at Talke Road and Coronation Avenue.
- At Coronation Ave we would like to provide a central path from the gate and accessible raised beds to the toilet building and water stand pipe.
- At Lawton Road we would like to improve the Car Parking arrangements to enable people with mobility issues easy access to the Raised Beds
- At Cedar Avenue we would like to establish a communal building

6.3 NEW HOMES BONUS

PH outlined the opportunity we had to put forward a bid against the New Homes Bonus Funding in respect of a communal building at Cedar Avenue. Over 200 bids were put forward and we were not successful this time. We can resubmit our bid in the next round for 2019. We would need about £47k funding, we plan to resubmit our Bid and look elsewhere for funding opportunities

The building would provide a facility were:

- people can meet and socialise, a focal point for our allotment community
- group partners using the allotment, can assemble and socialise and carry out a range of activities.
- you can access a range of information new
- allotment holders can be brought for induction
- we can meet on Open Days as a resource and to provide a covered area for discussions and refreshments
- we can hold events using the skills and knowledge of our members

For example

Spring Event- "How to Grow your Own" - in an Allotment or Small Garden or in Containers"

Early Summer Event "Maximise Your Home Produce" – Freezing, preserves, recipes and ideas.

Late Summer Event "How to Stage and Show your Produce"

(ready for the September annual show held at Alsager Civic)

Winter Event "Christmas Decorations" Using your garden/allotment produce

6.4 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PH explained that as a modern organisation, accountable to our members and in seeking funding streams, that we need to ensure that we can demonstrate sound governance and that we have solid policies and procedures in place that underpin the working of the Association.

During the year we have introduced

- *A New Data Protection Privacy Statement*
- *A New Health and Safety Policy*
- *A New Allotment Site Risk Assessment*

- *A New Health and Safety Guide for Plot holders*
- *A New Equality and Diversity Policy*
- *Revised Allotment Rules including Code of Conduct*
- *A Revised Constitution - which is on the agenda today*
- And New Financial Procedures which are currently pending approval

We also have a Safeguarding Policy which will be reviewed this year.

6.5 DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

PH reported that we have been working with Alsager Town Council to formalise and agree the tasks we undertake on their behalf in maintaining and improving the standards on the four Allotment Sites. We have agreed our respective roles and responsibilities and have developed an agreement about who does what.

A Copy of the Agreement and all the Policies and Procedures can be viewed on our web site.

7. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT – Hilary Robinson

PH reported on behalf of HR

- We had a total membership of 190 in 2019 compared to 192 in 2017
- We are charged £3.00 per Member for NAS membership and its benefits
- The remaining 50P is used towards the running of the Association, including the publication, printing etc of the Newsletters we send out to members twice a year
- Where possible Newsletters are hand delivered otherwise, they are posted
- To reduce these overheads, and be more “Green”, reduce our carbon footprint and act in a more environmental and sustainable way, we would like to reduce our use of paper and move to sending the Newsletter out electronically by mail or by directing members to view a copy on the website where it can be read or printed on demand.
- A paper copy will still be available to those who request it

The NAS Membership benefits were outlined as follows:

The National Allotment Society offers membership to individuals, local allotment associations, schools, local authorities and land owners. Each type of membership offers a host of benefits and support services. Each named individual member of the AGA is registered with the NAS each year when you renew your membership.

The benefits from the NAS are :

Quarterly magazine and e-news

Discounted quality seeds (Kings seeds/potatoes etc)

Gardening advice

Individual Allotmenters Liability Insurance, provided by SHIELD, which is included in the membership for association.

Full details of all member benefits are available at the NAS web site.

Go to <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/join-us/membership/>

A question was raised by Martin Banks about the individual insurance and implications for plot holders who have more than one person, or their family working on the allotment. PH advised that guidance will be sought and will feedback to MB.

The need to ensure members details are up to date and accurate was explained along with the process of annually updating member information via “The Red Book” undertaken by our Hut volunteers when members make purchases/pay plot rentals/subs etc.

Members were reminded that changes to their information, name, address etc can be

- Made in person at the Trading Hut
- By contacting the Membership Secretary
- By contacting the Secretary

Contact details are available from the website.

8. PRESIDENTS ADDRESS – Derek Hough

8.1 The Continued Success of the Association.

DH referred to the raised beds project and stated that

- Funds have been raised externally.
- Key Work has been done professionally and to a high standard.
- Project is Inclusive of all sites with Talke Road site and Coronation avenue scheduled for completion early this year

He also asked for any support for the Lawton Road site Community Allotment plot where help is needed

8.2 The Partnership and Role of the Town Council.

Cheshire East was established in 2009 and the allotments were transferred into the management of the Alsager Town Council in 2013 with no supporting budget on a 125-year lease

Under the lease, Alsager Town Council have responsibility for the land within the boundary of the allotments and Cheshire East as the landowner have responsibility for all the land outside of our allotment boundaries. Cheshire East are also the landowner for the Cedar Avenue Car park. DH stated that

- Being at local level we have developed a strong relationship with the Town Council who are able to support and work with us to ensure we have transparent rent costs.
- Since taking responsibility in 2013, the Town Council has made considerable improvements to all sites using capital and revenue monies on fencing, paving and towards the accessibility raised beds in support of the AGA “5-year plan”
- The Town Council has battled with Cheshire East over tree removal and pollarding and was Instrumental in achieving the tree removal on the “Cedar Avenue Car Park”
- Our car park used for our Trading Hut and for access to Cedar Avenue Allotments - is in serious dis-repair
- We have raised the matter with the Town Council, and they are battling with Cheshire East to get a resolution
- The Initial response from Cheshire East is that there is no money to repair this unadopted car park and they threatened to fence off access, which they cannot do!
- The Town Council have asked for costs and options to resolve this matter including options to purchase the land
- We are examining our legal position regarding the Trading Hut and our entitlement to access and car parking

DH thanked the Officers of the Association and all our volunteers for their hard work throughout the year.

DH stated that the Milton Park Steering Group need support if anyone can give any help with general maintenance, sowing or planting please contact Derek Hough or Hilary Robinson.

9. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Derek Hough confirmed that all current officers were willing to stand. He sought any further nominations from the floor for all the positions and those of Secretary and Show Secretary.

The following were elected

President	Derek Hough
Chairman	Adrian Ford
Vice Chair	Pauline Hubbard
Treasurer	David Pitt
Secretary	Pauline Hubbard
Trading Secretary	David Spall
Membership Secretary	Hilary Robinson

The position of show secretary remains vacant. Derek requested that anyone wishing to take up the roll please contact the Secretary.

Members were reminded that any member can attend the Executive Meetings and become a member of the committee. We need support in a variety of roles. For example, show secretary, managing the web site, help with grant and funding applications. Anyone able to offer any support just come along to a meeting or contact the secretary.

10.1 Change to AGA Constitution

PH introduced this item and explained that the Executive Committee has the responsibility to

- Make sure the association is doing what it was set up to do.
- Provide checks and balances and oversight of the association's performance, ethics, finances and risks.
- Ensure that the association has the money it needs, spends its money sensibly and on the activities, it was raised for and that it complies with our governing document - our Constitution.

The constitution has been amended accordingly and was presented to the AGM for approval

The document was approved by all present.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS - NONE

11. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Members were invited to partake in the excellent refreshments provided by David Spall and his wife and a range of homemade cakes from Judith Ford.

A variety of seed and potatoes were on sale.

A power point presentation was continually screening showing the Allotment Open Days, The Gardens Competition and the Annual Show and how you can support the Association.