

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Ealing Allotments Partnership

March 8th 2017

Polygon, St Mary's Church, Ealing, W5

Approximately thirty members attended the Ealing Allotment Partnership AGM along with Mr Chris Welsh from LBE.

1. Apologies for absence.

Tom Alley, Christian Fox had sent their apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of previous AGM.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8th March, 2016 were approved.

a. Matters arising.

Chris Welsh advised the meeting that the London Borough of Ealing had received a Silver-Gilt award for the Large City category in 'Britain in Bloom'.

3. Chair's report.

Joseph Manger reported that EAP/LBE had instituted a half-yearly site managers' meetings.

Bids for funding and works to be carried out by LBE were put forward at the last managers' meeting.

New terms and conditions for plot holders were being instituted this year. Hard copies were being distributed to managers and the new terms were on the EAP website. The main change was a tightening up of the procedures and timeframe for the eviction of tenants due to non-cultivation.

The chairman stressed the importance of allotments being involved in the wider community both in terms of 'good neighbourliness' and as a bonus when applying for funding from different bodies.

Lottery funding was being applied for, in co-ordination with LBE, for the purchase of self-composting toilets. Managers were urged to inform EAP of any requests. Hilary Jayne was thanked for progressing the lottery funding application.

A vineyard was being started at Horsenden allotment site.

4. Accounts.

Accounts were presented showing a balance of £707.76. EAP's bank account had been changed to Metro Bank.

5. London Borough of Ealing report.

Chris Welsh reported that there were now fifteen sites under self-management. Nine sites were currently closed, but there were plans to re-open two of these.

Cultivation guidelines had been issued to assist site managers on the vexed question of what constituted 'non-cultivation'. CW thanked High Lane and Ealing Dean site managers for providing guidelines upon which the borough wide guidelines were based.

The new database 'Colony' was now operational which should avoid double record-keeping and allow information to be shared between sites on the availability of plots.

Clusters of sites have been allocated to various Park Rangers. The meeting was advised that for most day-to-day issues the Park Rangers were their first port of call.

Plot holder numbers continued to increase which was a very positive development.

Gunnery Avenue site was to be opened with approximately 35-40 plots. The average size was 2 ½ rods as these 'half-size' plots were more popular.

6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members.

The following were elected by the meeting *nem. con.*: Joseph Mangar (chairman, Horsenden); John Bradley (secretary, Blondin); Simon Higginson (treasurer, High Lane) and as committee members: Andy Doyle (Braund Avenue); Christina Fox (Ealing Dean); Hilary Jayne (Framfield); Patrick Williams (Brentham) and Mike Bunyan (Jubilee).

7. Any other business.

At this point the Annual General Meeting was formally closed. It was followed by a presentation by Victoria Lawrence the National Citizens Scheme which promoted community engagement by young people. Attendees were encouraged to contact the NCS if they felt they might have something to offer or if they had a project that they might suit the involvement of young people. After the break, Paul Olding gave a talk on the setting up of urban vineyards based upon his own experiences of setting up a vineyard on his allotment in Lewisham.

EAP Chair Report

The twelve months since the last AGM have been very interesting with a number of new developments in the way the Council manages its allotments. Probably, the most important of these is that the Parks Department working through EAP has instituted a system of scheduled six-monthly meetings with Site Managers aimed at improving communication between

Council Officers and the allotment community. This has led to a number of significant changes. Three examples of these are:

Involvement of Park Rangers

Every allotment site now has a specific Park Ranger that the Site Manager can call on for help and/or advice. Those managers that have called on their Park Ranger for assistance have found this very helpful.

Updating of Allotment Tenancy Rules

An updated set of rules and regulations have recently been issued. The main change relates to a streamlining of the eviction process for non-cultivation – a topic for concern highlighted in the Site Managers meetings. More details will be published in the Spring EAP newsletter.

Maintenance and infrastructure

Again following on from the Site Managers Meeting, the Parks Department has instituted an annual call to Site Managers for necessary maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure. This has led to a drawing up a borough-wide list of priority projects to be carried out in the quieter winter months. Hopefully, Chris Welsh will be giving you more information on this in his report this evening.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the way ahead for allotments is to become part of the local community. If we are to retain our allotments as a going concern, the more we are prepared to become involved with the local community through open days, visits from school groups and local youth organizations, plant sale days etc., the more we are likely to get help if for any reason our sites come under threat..

Allotments are changing, speaking from my own perspective, I see lots of younger families with children and many more ladies joining working on allotments To encourage both them, and the general community, scouts and voluntary organisations to visit, we need to have basic services such as decent toilets in place. EAP, working with the Council are currently attempting to get lottery funding for ten or more composting toilets. These toilets supplied by Dunster House are stand- alone units made from a plastic and wood composite which means it's virtually maintenance free. They need no permanent water and no major sewage just a soak away. They come with a solar panel, solar light and pump. We just need to purchase a car battery and water container. Site managers interested in making a bid for such a toilet should contact Hilary Jayne at EAP as soon as possible as the grant proposal is currently in preparation.

Finally, it has been 100 years (so I'm told) since Ealing has had a vineyard producing wine. At Horsenden Allotments, we have an area of derelict allotment land completely overgrown which we have started to clear with help from the Parks Department. It's south facing, sloped and hopefully an ideal place for a vineyard. Which leads me to why, I for one, will be intently listening to our invited speakers; the National Challenge Service (NCS) – prominent in project work – and Paul Olding – an expert on allotment viticulture

Joseph Mangar,

EAP Chair

Accounts

Ealing Allotment Partnership accounts

For period Oct 2014 – Oct 2015 and preliminary accounts for Oct 2015 - Oct 2016.

		2014/15	2015/16
Opening balance		£768.76	£667.76
Income	General Donations	£35.00	£40.00
	Council Donation		£104.50
Total		£803.76	£812.26
Expenditure	AGM	£136.00	£104.50
Total		£136.00	£104.50
Closing Balance		£ 667.76	£707.76

The Treasurer also reported that EAP had transferred its account from the Co-operative Bank to the Metro Bank.

Ealing Council's Update

Site Management

The past year has seen quite a lot of collaboration between the council and the various site managers and local associations to maximise the use and increase the percentage of tenanted sites. Since last year, we have seen another site enter into a local management agreement and 2 smaller sites taken on by a volunteer site manager. We now have 15 sites that are under local management, 21 sites under volunteer site managers and only 3 sites now directly managed by the council. There are 9 others that are currently unoccupied /closed for a variety of reasons; however, there are plans for a few of these to be prepared for cultivation in 2017.

Updated Rules and Cultivation Guidelines

In partnership with the EAP committee we have updated the Ealing Allotment Rules. The hard copies that have been produced are starting to make their way out to local associations and site managers, with copies planned to be sign posted on sites before Easter Holidays. As such, a hard copy has not been printed for each existing tenant, but will be presented to new tenants and any that require information in failing to sufficiently cultivate their plot. The most notable change to the rules is the period of time tenants will have to address any concerns of non-cultivation, which has been reduce from 1 month to 3 weeks. The same applies for the

appeal process. By reducing the time for action and appeals, this will allow local associations or site managers to let the plots sooner so less time is lost in the growing season. In addition to this, we have also introduced cultivation guidelines with a view to deliver a more consistent message for all tenants across Ealing of what is expected on their plots. Thank you to Christina Fox and Simon Higginson for sharing the guidelines they have in place for their sites, which were used as the template for the new guidelines that have been created. It is intended that the updated rules and the cultivation guidelines will be available on the council and EAP websites.

Database

After a few technicalities, we are now operating with a new database for allotments called Colony Enterprise. This will host all the information for council sites across the borough and can also provide access to local associations and site managers who can edit and update information as required to minimise double handling. Training sessions have already been completed and although this will have no direct effect for tenants, it will go a long way to potentially improving the efficiency of managing allotments and waiting lists.

Cluster models

Further discussions with the EAP committee, local associations and site managers have suggested that the idea of cluster partnership would be beneficial to be aligned with the ward allocations of our Park Rangers. This will allow the Park Rangers to be the resource available to help build bridges and help coordinate relationships between sites.

The Future

While we head into the growing season of 2017, I feel it's fair to say that allotments in Ealing are headed in a positive direction. With an increase in the number of tenants over last year, we're hopeful the number will continue to increase with more plots becoming available thanks to the work the many volunteers have been delivering in partnership with the resource at the council and our contractors. There is a strengthening sense of community in allotments in this borough and it will be our focus to help develop this over the next year and beyond. Similar to other community engagement programmes in Ealing, such as Transform Your Space where residents are becoming responsible for the management and maintenance of their local spaces, allotments are essentially a blank canvas every Spring for you all to create your own oasis to share with your community. The social and physical benefits of allotments are well documented and we will continue to help work and build our relationship with the EAP so you all get much more from your plots than the crops you nurture.

Kind regards,

Chris Welsh,
Parks Operations Manager