**Rowhedge Allotment Association**

**Annual General Meeting Minutes**

**Sunday 27th April 2014**

| **Attendees:**  Paddy Adams  Dave (the Shorts)  Debs Antinou  Clare Bush  Diane Collyer (Associate Member)  Carol Durrell  Sophie Gascoyne (non-member)  Zoe Gibson-Hart  Laura Harvey (non-member)  David Head  Vicky Helliwell  Sue Houghton  Anne Jones (Treasurer)  Sally Jowers (Secretary)  Christian Langlois  Jake Murrells  Andy Randall  Sharon Sainty  Martin Sainty  Tina Sainty  Paul Warner  Yvette Wetton (Chair) | **Apologies:**  Barbara Chaplain  Carole Heddle  Maria Jackson (Membership Secretary)  Una Jones  Joy Magna  Rob Watson  **Guests from Colchester Allotment Society:**  Jackie Briggs  Sally Young |
| --- | --- |
|  | | |

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

YW welcomed everyone to the 3rd Annual General Meeting and went through the agenda. Apologies were recorded.

**2. Agree Minutes from last AGM – 9th June 2013**

The minutes from the previous AGM had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting. They were agreed as a true record.

**3. Any outstanding matters arising from previous AGM**

The only outstanding matter from last year’s AGM was the Thistlethwayte’s Cup which had been donated to the previous committee to award as they saw fit to a member of the Allotment Association. Many discussions have taken place at Committee Meetings and it had finally been agreed that the Allotment Association would donate it to Friends of St Lawrence to award to ‘Best in Show’ at the Craft and Produce Show that they are organising. AR had contacted the Thistlethwayte’s to tell them of our decision, to be told that they had already engraved the cup with ‘Rowhedge Allotment Association’. Therefore the decision has come back to the Committee. YW suggested that rather than spend time now discussing it, that the item should go back to the next Committee Meeting. Diane Collyer suggested that the award could be something different each year depending on what had happened in the growing year for instance outstanding effort and that it could be assessed by the Committee in the final 2 months of the growing season, but allotment holders would be unaware of what it would be awarded for to avoid any competition element, eg: The Chair’s Cup and could be awarded at the AGM. This seemed to be a popular idea and therefore YW said that she would award it to the person who had gone above and beyond the call of duty with the amount of work that he puts into the Allotment Association including the hours he has spent strimming. He had also identified a water leak in the water butts and therefore had saved us all money on the water bill. The cup was awarded to Paul Warner.

**4. Outstanding Committee Matter – Management of Allotment Waiting List**

At the last Allotment Association Committee meeting on the 2nd March there were some queries raised about how the waiting list for allotments was being managed.  These allegations were taken very seriously and YW undertook to fully look into the issues raised and to come back to the Committee.   An immediate hold was put on two recent allocations until the full picture could be ascertained.

The first query was that there had been an occasion where someone had not come to the top of the waiting list before being allocated a plot.  From checking the list and other supporting documentation YW can confirm that this was not the case.  If any allotment member wishes to examine this then YW is more than happy to arrange for this.

The second query related to someone being on the waiting list longer than the two people who had recently been allocated plots.

On checking there was no record of this individual on the waiting list and the Membership Secretary was unable to find any emails or documentation relating to him. On contacting the individual (DS) he confirmed that he had asked another existing Member to arrange for him to be put on the waiting list for a plot.  It has not been possible to source any supporting documentation from either DS or the Allotment Member who had undertaken to have their friend added to the list which makes putting a date to his ‘application’ difficult but in conversation it would appear to have been over 12 months ago.

Also taken into consideration during the investigation was that applications to go on the waiting list had not always resulted in a formal process being followed and an application form being completed as was the original intention when the association was set up.  By tightening up this process hopefully there will be less room for confusion and misunderstandings.  That said we do have a clear and dated trail for everyone else currently on the waiting list.

**Proposals for discussion/agreement at AGM 27thApril 2014 (sent out via email on 31st March 2014).**

1.      The two allocations made prior to the meeting go ahead, as both were made in good faith before the Association Committee Meeting on the 2nd March where queries were initially raised. **(Majority Agreed)**

2.      That DS goes at the top of the waiting list after this as a one-off goodwill gesture as ‘anecdotal’ evidence seems to support that he requested to be added to the waiting list over 12 months ago and would be near/at the top of the list by now. **(Majority agreed)**

3.      That a redacted version (name, dates joined list and whether a full or half plot is requested) of the waiting list for plots is a standing item at each Committee Meeting. **(Majority agreed)**

4.      From now, all enquiries about membership and joining the waiting list are to be referred to the Allotment Association website where the applicant can complete a short form and forward to the Membership Secretary.   On receipt of the form the Membership Secretary will get back to them to confirm that they have been added to the list, give the date that they were added and what position they are on the list.  Each year the Membership Secretary will contact everyone on the waiting list to confirm whether they still want a plot and where they are on the list (see Appendix 1: Process of applying for an allotment). **(Majority agreed)**

5.      The process for applying to go on the waiting list for a plot will be added to the information on the website as well as on a poster for Allotment Members to refer to when approached on site. **(Majority agreed)**

YW reported that when her email with this proposal had been sent out, that responses back were in the main positive. SS and MS produced an email from MJ which they felt proved that DS was on the waiting list, but it stated that he was not next on the list. This email had not been presented to the committee prior to the AGM, but it was felt by members present that this did not change any point of the proposal being put forward and therefore a vote took place on each of the points of the proposal. A majority agreed each point of the proposal.

**Action: The three members on the waiting list will be contacted with the outcome. New procedures outlined will be put in place by the new Membership Secretary.**

A further suggestion was made by Clare Bush that other organisations within the village pay a fee to join a waiting list eg: £10 is paid to the Mooring Association. YW confirmed that this was also the initial intention of the Allotment Association to pay a yearly membership fee, however this had lapsed. Diane Collyer commented that as a person on the Allotment Association List she is happy to pay £10 each year to remain on the list and be part of the Allotment Group email and does so as an Associate Member. Sharon Sainty suggested that a donation be made to stay on the list. Diane Collyer reminded the Committee that we pay £2/member to the National Allotment Association, therefore the donation should be at least £2 to cover this. Christian Langlois suggested that these were all valid points and that further discussion should take place at Committee rather than decisions being made at the AGM.

**Action: Membership Secretary to produce a proposal to present to the next Committee for paying a yearly membership fee to join and remain on the Waiting List and to consider if the current people on the Waiting List are asked to also pay this.**

**5. Treasurer’s report**

AJ went through the accounts. The main change this year is that as that the Membership Fees and Rents have been collected to reflect the growing year (see Appendix 2: New Payment Proposal). This means that the accounts show two lots of rent/membership fees being paid this year, therefore showing our finances to be in a better position in comparison to 2012-2013, but we shall have to pay rent to the Parish Council in January 2015, before we collect our next lot of fees. AJ confirmed that we have 52 paid up members and there will be additional members when the free plots have been allocated. Presently we have 15 x half plots and 22 x full plots. The costs in Site Maintenance increased this year as we purchased a strimmer, but this will save us money in the long term as it will reduce hire costs in the future. The money spent on ‘Topping the Margins’ in the adjacent field have also increased, as we organised for this to be done earlier to stop the seeds forming ad Blister Weed getting a firm hold. Cash in bank is just under £3,000. Our terms of the lease are that we pay annually in January each year, but this cheque was not cashed until April. Presently we have a healthy ‘buffer’ so AJ is not concerned that the payment to the Parish Council is January (prior to our payments of rent/membership fees), but she will investigate if the timing can be altered.

**Action: AJ will check the reason why the Parish Council cashed the cheque in April and potentially arrange for us either to pay later or in two payments, so that this falls in better with our new payment system.**

**6. Chair’s report**

6.1 YW went through her report (Appendix 3). Thanks were given to all who have been active in the association over the last year.

**7. Resignation of officers and election of new committee**

7.1 All officers stood down to make way for the election of officers and committee members. Yvette Wetton (Chair) explained that Maria Jackson (Membership Secretary) and herself would be permanently stepping down as they were both moving from the village.

Three people were nominated for Chair and therefore YW suggested that a Vice Chair position could be introduced which was currently written within the Constitution and Rules. The three were asked to leave whilst voting took place by a show of hands of members only (see numbers in brackets).

The following elections took place after the formal resignations:

* **Chair:** Paddy Adams nominated by Sally Jowers (9), Dave the Shorts nominated by Sue Houghton (5) and Sharon Sainty nominated by Martin Sainty (1).
* **Vice Chair:** Dave the Shorts nominated by Sue Houghton (14) and Sharon Sainty nominated by Martin Sainty (1).

Thanks were given to Sharon Sainty for putting herself forward.

* **Secretary:** Yvette nominated Sally Jowers as Secretary, Paddy Adams seconded, this was carried unanimously.
* **Treasurer:** Zoe Gibson-Hart nominated Anne Jones as Treasurer, Dave the Shorts seconded, this was carried unanimously.
* **Membership Secretary:** Christian Langlois was proposed by Carol Durrell and Jake Murrells seconded, this was carried unanimously.

The new committee were asked to volunteer:

Zoe Gibson-Hart

Vicky Helliwell

Jake Murrells

Andy Randall

Paul Warner

They were agreed by the group on block.

**8. Any Other Business**

8.1 ***Strimming***

Paul Warner informed the Committee that he would be away on holiday during May and June and therefore a rota for strimming would be needed.

**Action: The Strimming Team - Paul Warner, Jake Murrells, Rob Watson and Paddy Adams to discuss via email.**

8.2 ***Colchester Allotment Association***

Sally Young and Jackie Briggs had contacted the Rowhedge Allotment Association to discuss the benefits of their Association. They have been running for 10 years and are a voluntary organisation for anyone who had an allotment in the Colchester area. They do the following:

* Liaise with the council/other plot holders when disputes occur and support their members
* Produce a newsletter quarterly
* Run trips and talks (members get a discount)
* Provide discounts with local companies locally
* Provide a 50% discount with Kings Seeds (They issue a catalogue and order the seeds centrally. There are ‘reps’ that organise this on a local level).
* Help write grants eg: compost toilet on one of their sites

Membership is per plot and is £3.50/year or £10 for 3 years.

We shall provide a link to them on our website. Sally Young will send application forms through to SJ for anyone who is interested in joining. Their website details are: [www.colchester-allotments.org.uk](http://www.colchester-allotments.org.uk)

**9. Date and time of next meeting**: To be confirmed. Meeting Closed at 20:05

**Appendix 1: Process of Applying for an Allotment**

**Appendix 2: New Payment Proposal**

**Appendix 3: Chair’s Report**