

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 12th MARCH 2024 TESCO COMMUNITY ROOM. CROOKSFOOT

Present Penny Winston- Chairman and Bybrook Cemetery
Brian Stamp- Treasurer. Jo Perkin- Bulk Buying Manager
Lisa Harrison- Press and Publicity Jonathan Goodwin- Web Manager
Jill Fuggle- Repton Manor Gwen Protheroe - Christchurch/Jemmett
Brenda Raggett- Westrees Carol Ridings- Secretary

Also present- Annette Woodhouse, Mark Cole, David Woodhouse and Christine Harrison.

1. Apologies

Lesley Bonarius ex Orion Way, Heather Ahern- Musgrove Farm, Clare Pitt- A.B.C.

2. Elections

Mark Cole was elected as site rep for Henwood and Annette Woodhouse was elected as site rep for William Road.

Prior to electing the Committee members there was a general discussion on the way forward for the allotment committee and whether there should be a new chairperson.

Brenda was concerned that there was no Council representative at the meeting. She was also concerned that the trading store did not have any potatoes or onions for sale this year.

Penny explained that the Council used to send out order forms for potatoes and onions. This ceased some years ago. However sales of these items have been declining and a lot of money was wasted on unsold potatoes last year. See below.

Lisa felt that the Committee could do so much more to help allotment holders and the plots should be more family friendly.

Penny explained that the summer show only attracted 8 people last year, of which only 4 committee members turned up, despite lots of publicity. There is no help from the Council in promoting this.

Brenda recalled that the show used to attract far more people.

Jo felt that the show is considered a show case for perfect vegetables, but people don't grow perfect vegetables so they aren't prepared to take part.

Penny announced that she would resign as chairperson from 1 April. She had been thinking of stepping down from the post as her allotment is at Bybrook which is now under the control of Kennington Community Council.

Brian said that he would like to step down as Treasurer. Jill said that she was prepared to take this role over, and she has some experience having worked in the Treasurers department at the Council. There will be a period of handover as signatories for the bank accounts etc need sorting.

All other members were happy to continue in post.

Jonathan felt that non ashford allotment holders should be represented at these meetings- such as Great Chart.

There was a proposal by Annette that Brenda should be the new chair, seconded by Jo and Lisa. Everyone was in agreement.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed.

4. Chairman's Opening remarks

Welcome to this our first meeting of 2024 and hope this year brings successful produce in the growing season, despite the terrible wet February and it looks like March is the same. Thanks to Heather for organising this venue. There are many reasons to seriously look ahead to the future of this committee and its constitution. We have unfilled posts and although now have an appointed allotment officer for ABC, there is no one for the Kennington Community Council. Meanwhile rental fees increase and nothing seems to change regarding uncultivated plots/ re letting of plots and site improvements and maintenance. The seeming lack of interest at the AGM perhaps tells its own story, however it is good to see so many here tonight.

5. Bulk Buying Manager's Report

The membership of the trading store has declined. It is not clear why the store is not being used for business, though supermarkets now sell an increasing wide selection of gardening accessories/seeds.

Penny said that the door is in a very poor condition it is now very difficult to close. She asked for authority to spend money on a replacement door, around £1800. The container alongside is also in a very poor condition and a health hazard. Penny and Jo have been clearing it out. It will cost @ £300 to have it removed.

All members agreed on the expenditure for a new door and the removal of the container.

6. Treasure's report

Bank Account 1	£2911.42
Summer float	£202.89
Account 1 Total	£3114.31

Bank Account 2	£5756.52
Till(account 2)	£420.29
Treasurer's petty cash	£25.00
Account 2 Total	£6201.81

Total Cash Assets	£9316.12
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Trading store income £3430.52
Trading store expenditure 2023 1506.54
Loss of unsold potatoes £132.50

Brian also distributed a breakdown of the trading stores takings when it was open for trading for 2023. There is a problem over publicity for the trading store.

The membership cards run out this year. There was a question of whether new cards are appropriate as this is expensive, or should we look to auto renewing the subscriptions. This does not mean that the allotment association would hold details of allotment holders bank details.

7. Show secretary's report

The summer show was the first since 2019 and for the first time we made a considerable financial loss. There were only 8 entrants, so thank you to those who did support our endeavours to put on a successful show with the most publicity we have managed. There was a combined total of 100 separate classes. Clearly despite the date being agreed at an earlier committee meeting, that week in August was not a good one for supporting the event. It is a lot of work and I would like to re-iterate and thank Jo, Brian and Heather for their work, without whom it would not have been

possible to have any prizes or certificates or indeed much of the hard work that goes into the organisation of a show whether 8 or 80 people attend. We even made a loss of money on teas and coffees and refreshments with so few people coming along . So despite the very warm comments made on the day by some of those present I feel we will not be having a summer show this year.

8. Web manager's report

Jonathan has been updating the web site. He could do something for the membership on the site. The Council have always prevented us from moving forward with issues of privacy on the internet being cited. They do not want to share details of allotment holders with us.

The question was asked if the Council ever ask new allotment holders if they want to opt in to receive mailing from the allotment association or are they sending out information about the trading store.

Lisa wondered if site reps could help inputting peoples data into the system.

9. Membership secretary's report

There are only 28 members, last year there were 40. There have been 143 members over the last 4 years with 35 regulars who renew each year. Lisa would like to send out a questionnaire to members asking why they are not renewing their membership. This was agreed as a good idea.

There are 200 members on Facebook.

Perhaps promote the trading store on Ashford Radio ?

10. Report of the Allotment Officer.

No one present.

11. Site Representative's report

Musgrove- No issues

Christchurch/ Jemmett Road- OK apart from the large pile of rubbish by the gate. Jemmett- a few plots are not cultivated.

Repton Manor- Quite a lot of empty plots. Jill has tried to contact the Council as one of the water taps was broken without success. Her husband has fixed it.

Westrees- Lots of vacant plots/non cultivation. On one plot 6 bags of compost were stolen. The front gate is still open as there is no padlock.

New Musgrove/ William Road- Huge pile of fly tipping that BIFFA removed but within 2 days there were 3 bags of rubbish back again inside the site. Kevin has said that he will get it removed.

Annette wondered if they could have a lockable skip.

There is a parking problem as it is now difficult to park in William Road. Bark chipping has been put down for parking but it is degrading. The council do not plan to do this again. Annette has investigated getting aggregate which will cost £300 per lorry load. Plot holders could level this themselves giving them 4 parking spaces. First Annette will need permission from the Council.

Henwood- Again issues of fly tipping and also lack of grass cutting.

Kennington Community Council sites- No allotment officer, rents are higher than council plots, there are no concessionary rents and nothing gets done.

AOB- Date for the next meeting. This meeting maybe in June so please watch the What's app group page. An agenda will be sent out 2 weeks prior to any meeting.

Penny sent the following message through after receiving the flowers.

“I don't know who was responsible for sending the beautiful flowers which arrived yesterday with the message from the committee which I really appreciate. If you haven't sent the minutes could you include my thanks and wish the future committee well in the endeavour to get more change and support. “