

# **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Roehampton Garden Society held at the Roehampton Cricket Club on Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 7.00pm**

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Helen Finch (“HF”) welcomed everyone to the RGS Annual General Meeting. HF mentioned that our President, The Rt Hon Justine Greening was hoping to join the meeting later as was our local Councillor, Steffi Sutters. She said that we were fortunate to have our Vice President, Sheila Konig present at the meeting. Sadly, Derrick Ratcliffe, who jointly held the Vice Presidency with Sheila, had died earlier this year but he would be present in spirit.

A sign-in sheet was passed around for the purpose of recording the names of those in attendance. HF advised that Catherine Maunsell-Bower would be taking the minutes of the meeting and they would be available on the RGS website and in the Bulletin in draft form. There was to be no recording of this meeting and she asked that members please turn off their phones if this had not been done already.

HF said that, once the business of the meeting had finished, members were invited to stay for refreshments and for the video of the 2007 TV programme about the allotments.

## **1. Apologies**

Mike and Siop Cooper  
Julia Descroizilles  
Alan and Linda Strowger  
Aneal Patpatia  
John Mathewman  
Lindley Maitland  
David Savage  
Patricia and Jean Crawford  
Emma Blackwell  
Charles and Shirley Gillbe

## **Present**

Robert Aveling	Helen Finch	Sheila Konig
Elaine Barnwell	Vivian Fowler	Brenna Lattimore
Ruth Barnwell	Anne Harding	A. Linton
Michael Bower	C. Harvey	R. Linton
Susan Clark	P. Harvey	Sue MacDonald
Vince Cottam	S. Harvey	David MacDonald
Pat Dark	Charles Held	Carol Martinez
Rob Dark	Janis Humberstone	C. Maunsell-Bower
Laura Davis	Shan Karwatowski	Bruce May
Artan Deliallisi	Joe Karwatowski	Pip Melotte

G. O'Reilly  
Pam Partridge  
Raj Patel  
Bill Pencharz  
M. Renshaw  
Gary Rose

Mary Rothwell  
Jackie Savage  
Graham Scott  
Elizabeth Smart  
Gill Tamsett  
Stewart Tamsett

Florence Terry  
Greg Willcox  
Silvia Willcox  
Christine Wolski  
Clare Wright

## **2. Minutes of the AGM of 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

The minutes were agreed as a true record. These have been published on our website in draft form for members to read They are available at:

<http://www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk/agm-minutes-2018/>

## **3. Chair's report – Helen Finch**

HF delivered the Chair's report as follows:

This is my first report at the AGM as Chair. I have found the role interesting and sometimes challenging but am fortunate to have inherited a very strong and supportive team. Jackie not only gave me a very thorough handover but as the Vice Chair also has been an ongoing source of help both practical and advisory.

Another stalwart member of the Committee has been Patrick Crawford who unfortunately is not able to be here tonight. The old roof on the store was leaking badly and let in very little natural light but thanks to Patrick's assiduousness, the Council have replaced it. He is now working on getting the water system replaced on Site 3. Site 2 had theirs replaced about 11 years ago by the Council and since the water system on Site 3 periodically leaks to the point of causing a flood and is a mish-mash of entry points, aging materials and inadequate standpipes, we hope to get it replaced within the next year.

Patrick's other role has been to lead our efforts to renew the lease we have with Wandsworth Council. The present lease we have has expired and negotiations to have a new 35 year lease with a peppercorn rent are ongoing. Patrick is driving these negotiations with legal help from Alan Strowger so many thanks to them. Also thanks to Cllr. Steffi Sutters of Wandsworth Council who has been both supportive and helpful. Hopefully we will be able to resolve outstanding matters within a year. Associated with the lease is our application to become a Charity. This has been put on hold until the lease issue is more certain.

Another hugely important and challenging role is looking after the allotment sites. Many thanks to Mariangela Renshaw and Liz Smart who are the site secretaries for site 2 and Vivien Fowler and Alison Linton on site 3. It is not an easy job particularly as there are a few plot holders that make the role especially difficult and sometime onerous. However, the vast majority of plot holders are cooperative, totally reasonable and look after their plots which helps to mitigate some of the difficulties.

There is a general impression that the standard of cultivation on both sites has improved and that the plot inspection process has been working well now we have a written process for dealing with those in breach of their letting agreement. The objective is to enhance the plot holders' enjoyment of their plots by ensuring neighbourly behaviour and cultivation and

protecting the land and site in general from longer term problems. We are not aiming to have perfection but reasonable standards, so we have continued to develop Policies and Procedures and review our rules in order to give a firm framework and understanding of what is expected. Two new documents have been developed - The Behaviour Policy to enhance Social Cohesion and The Complaints Procedure. We also have added a new rule to the Letting Agreement. These have been on the website in draft form for the membership to comment on and I will be asking for comments/questions and hopefully for agreement to adopt these documents after this report.

We have had a change of Site Manager. This role involves disciplinary issues on our sites and liaising with Enable who manage all other allotments in Wandsworth. Shirley Gillbe has stood down but Charles Gillbe has kindly taken on the role and is proving to be a valued member of the team.

Another aspect of keeping the allotments a good place to be is maintenance. We are very fortunate in having Greg who does a lot for us. I think he regards the RGS as his gym membership as I often see him hauling bags of compost into the store on site 2 as well as on site 3. Also Artan does a lot for the society as does Raj who is always so welcoming and helpful to newcomers on site 3. Vivien organises a rota to ensure the toilet on site 3 is kept clean and Pip Melotte looks after the one on site 2 single handed.

I know that several plot holders have been disappointed that we have disallowed bonfires. Unfortunately, our insurers do not allow them and since the consequences of an out of control fire could be catastrophic, the committee decided unanimously to stop the practice. We have had plot holders not being responsible about their fires and one year the fire brigade was called out twice.

We continue to have a healthy waiting list for allotments – currently about 250 people on the list and they probably will need to wait about 4 years to be offered a plot. Thank you to Jackie for all the meticulous work involved in keeping the waiting list.

The store continues to be something of a social hub for plot holders and other RGS members. Thanks to Gill, Greg and Jackie who keep the store stocked and running. It's a nice little business they have got going and the RGS benefits from both in having stock conveniently available but also generating a small profit which helps to fund the niceties of life. The Sunday morning volunteers who man the store and provide homemade cakes for members need a 'thank you' as well as Carol for making sure the Rota for the volunteers is done.

This is not Carol's only role, she also edits and produces the Bulletins. They are a real pleasure to read and to look at as they increasingly have lots of pictures. They are now primarily viewed online, but Carol still does have some printed for those who 'don't do computers'.

We are fortunate in having some committee members who very much do 'do computers'. I have mentioned that the Bulletin is mostly viewed online. We have a very splendid website which is managed by Jean Crawford so many thanks to her. We also have Elaine Barnwell who has got the RGS email very well organised and has been the chief sender of emails out to various groups and sub-groups ensuring a timely delivery of information to the right recipients. Another computer doer is Robert Linton who keeps our Membership database and

sends out the invoices at rent time. He can be totally relied upon to do the job exactly right and at the right time.

We also need to thank Pat Dark for auditing our storage of members' data using our Privacy Policy as the standard. I am glad to say that we have not had any serious breaches of data protection but she did highlight some difficulties in the deletion process of data on which we have taken action.

The Shows are highlights of the RGS calendar and offer good community events as well as offering an opportunity for gardeners to show off the results of their horticultural skill, or was it luck? Carol and Mariangela jointly run these with help from the show sub-committee. This year we decided to hold the Summer Show on site 2 and to make it more of a social event by having lunch. Many members enjoyed it but this format is under review. Elaine put together a survey to get feedback on the new style Summer Show which will help guide the sub-committee on whether we trust the weather again or not. The Autumn Show was in the usual format and as usual went very well indeed with lots of produce to be proud of and lots of cake. The shows are hard work but good fun and they do generate some funds for the RGS.

In summary, this report is intended to give the membership some insight into the running of RGS and the commitment of all the members who make our Society and allotments work. It is all done with donated time so we owe a huge thanks to all who give so much to the RGS.

### **Policies ratification process**

HF mentioned that two new documents had been developed and a new rule had been added to the Letting Agreement. She asked the floor for their comments/questions/complaints on these documents as listed below:

**(a)** Behaviour Policy: a code for social cohesion  
There were no complaints and the Policy was agreed;

**(b)** Complaints Procedure  
There were no complaints and the Procedure was agreed;

**(c)** Letting Agreement Rule 32  
There were no complaints and Rule 32 was agreed.  
*(The Rule sets out that allotments are not to be used for the display of commercial advertisements, political or religious slogans or symbols.)*

Accordingly, it was agreed that items (a), (b) and (c) above would now be adopted into the RGS protocol.

## **4. Treasurer's Report**

Janis Humberstone presented the accounts for the last financial year which were approved. She pointed out that at the time of closing the accounts, the RGS had not paid about £13,000 to Enable for allotment rents. However, there has been an accumulation of RGS funds over the years as well as a legacy so there is some money to spend on projects but we are mindful

that we are likely to assume additional liabilities once we become a charity and take on a lease.

### **Store**

We made a very healthy profit this year from the Store, which is open on Sundays, even though we had to close for 3 weeks in the summer while the roof was being repaired. £1,920 last year. £2,120 this year.

### **Show**

The profit from our two shows was only £402 last year, but that was because of exceptional expenditure. This year we held a lower key event in June, but in spite of this we made £889 from the 2 events.

### **Rents**

We made a surplus on rents this year of £1,125. To put things in perspective, in the year ended 2017 we made a loss on rent collection. The amount we receive from the Council to maintain the allotments ie 20% of the annual rent they charge us, just about covers the cost of maintenance such as grass cutting and the locks. Therefore, any other expenditure has to be met out of other funds. We have raised this as an issue with the Council (Enable).

### **Subscriptions**

£1,661 from subs this year compared with £1556 last year, so membership is increasing.

Janis confirmed that she would now be standing down from her position as treasurer as from the date of this meeting.

## **5. Introduction of members of the current Committee 2018/2019**

HF explained that normally some members of the committee, such as the site secretaries or trading secretary, would give an oral report at the meeting but this year the reports were published on the website. She added that, in her report, she had skimmed off general information but more details of activity were available from the full reports.

(Reports from the Trading Secretary, Site Secretaries, Waiting List Secretary, Show Chair, Buildings & Facilities are available at:

<http://www.rohamptonallotments.co.uk/2019-AGM-minutes-and-reports/>

She invited the members of the Committee to introduce themselves so those present could put a face to the name and the role they play on the committee. Each member of the committee then introduced themselves giving a brief description of their respective roles.

HF stated that the current committee would now stand down. There were just two resignations from the committee: Janis Humberstone and Mariangela Renshaw. She explained that Janis had been the Treasurer for three years but was glad to say we would still see her on her allotment. Therefore, this was not to be seen as a final 'goodbye'. She thanked Janis for all her hard work.

Turning to Mariangela, HF said that she would be missed as site secretary on site 2 as well as her input with the shows. However, although Mariangela would no longer be on the

committee, HF hoped she would be able to find the time to continue to help out adding that we would still see her on site.

Tokens of gratitude were presented by HF to Mariangela and Janis on behalf of the RGS.

## 6. Questions from the floor

Charles Held (“CH”) (Site 3) referred to the fact that there was no place on Site 3 to have a cup of tea and a chat with other allotmenters like our ‘country cousins’ on Site 2. He asked if the committee would consider constructing a stall/hut on site 3 for this purpose. Carol Martinez mentioned that she was wondering if site 2 could have pub like benches which she had seen at Bishop’s Park allotments. HF said that it was on our radar and that we would like a store on Site 3. CH asked as to when this might take place, HF suggested that maybe we could do it after the water system is replaced which hopefully would take place next year. Rob Dark suggested setting up a small sub-committee to discuss and investigate the matter further.

## 7. Election of the 2019/2020 Committee

Name	Position	Nominator	Secunder
Helen Finch	Chair	JS	GO’R
Jackie Savage	Vice Chair, Waiting list Secretary, RGS email account, store seeds	CM	SK
Carol Martinez	Bulletin Editor and Chair of Shows	HF	V F
Elizabeth Smart	Site 2 Secretary	VF	MR
Vivien Fowler	Site 3 Secretary (outer area)	ES	GW
Alison Linton	Site 3 Secretary (inner area)	GW	SK
Elaine Barnwell	Treasurer	JS	JH
Gill Tamsett	Trading Secretary	CM-B	SK
Greg Willcox	Store Manager	GT	JH
Patrick Crawford	Buildings & Facilities	HF	MR
Mike Cooper	Security Manager	CM-B	EB
Brenna Lattimore	Events	VF	JH
Catherine Maunsell-Bower	Minutes Sec. and Legal	EB	SK

### Officers of the Committee – non voting

Jean Crawford	Website Manager	CM	DMcD
Robert Linton	Membership Sec	EB	AD
Charles Gillbe	Site Manager for Enable (WBC)	N/A	N/A

## 8. Any Other Business

Vivien Fowler announced that over the winter, new plot labels would be placed on all plots. She explained that the site secretaries spent more time looking for the plots than should be necessary. The new signs are made from galvanized steel which should be more durable than the current plastic signs and the lettering was more long-lasting.

## 9. Presentation of Cups and Prizes

The prize giving was coordinated by Carol Martinez and the trophies were presented by Vice President, Sheila Konig. Prizes were awarded to winners of their respective categories in the summer and autumn shows.

**10. Raffle Draw**

HF offered thanks to Laura Davis for making and donating a wonderful Christmas cake for the raffle prize.

- 11.** The meeting concluded with refreshments and a viewing of the 2007 TV programme of RGS allotments featuring some long standing allotmenters.