

Royal Paddocks Allotments Virtual AGM Summary, November 2020

Introduction

1. 2020 was an exceptional year because of Covid and the impossibility of holding normal meetings. As an exceptional one-off measure, the Plotholders' Committee therefore sent last November a personal invitation to all Plotholders to take part in a virtual AGM so that key decisions could be made to allow the organisation to keep functioning for the next year.

Virtual AGM Business

2. Links were provided to enable plotholders to:
 - Review the minutes of the 2019 AGM
 - Scrutinise the Treasurer's report
 - Vote on nominations for the 2020/21 Plotholders' Committee
 - Review the Chairman's report and in particular give a view on the action that should be taken over the purchase of a new incinerator.

The full documents are available on the RPA website.

3. The required numbers of endorsements were received to sign off the 2019 AGM minutes.
4. Andrew Stanley's Treasurer's report was also endorsed. It was noted that while income was down some £4,000 because of restriction on the operation of the Seed Store café and other social events, expenditure was also restrained, leading to a surplus for the year of over £5,000 which had been added to the reserves.
5. Votes for those nominated for the Plotholders' Committee also met the required threshold and the following were duly elected:
Yasmin Allen, Jenny Bourne, Theo Christophers, Victoria Hands, David Harnden, Gill Hiley, Christine Knight, David Laughrin, Robert McIntyre, Karen Saywell, Martin Scotton, Andrew Stanley, Christine Thorpe, Anne Wingrove
6. In his Chairman's report, David Harnden reviewed the exceptional year that the Allotments had had to handle, and explained that while some traditional activities had had to be curtailed, other imaginative responses had resulted and most plotholders had been made even more conscious of the value of having an allotment.
7. David drew attention to the wide range of individual and collective contributions that kept the allotments working so well as a community. Huge thanks were due to:
 - Anne Wingrove and the café volunteers
 - The Social Committee led by Jenny Bourne
 - Organisers of alternative events like Rose Moss, Olivier Maurin, Martin Scotton, Jenny Bourne and others who ran the virtual plant sale;
 - Hilary Griffiths who planned a social distanced Xmas social;
 - Ashley Catto and volunteers who opened the gates every day;
 - David Lainchbury and Dylan Baxendale, who were standing down from the committee;
 - Ray Hulm and his team who looked after the pumps;
 - Karen Saywell and her inspectors;
 - Martin Scotton for his diligent rent collection;
 - Gill Hiley for all her work with the waiting list and plot allocations;
 - Andrew and Susan Saunders for their work on hedges;
 - Ben Wilkins and Chris Pocock for maintenance of the compost toilet;
 - Jon Anderson for oversight of the bee area;
 - Stuart Wisdom for providing pallets;
 - John Hourigan and Gray Rigge for help with further work on the tracks;
 - and a range of others who helped mow communal areas and took part in work party projects.
8. David also noted that a heartening feature of the year had been the efforts of many plotholders to help neighbours who had been unable to visit their plots regularly.

Incinerator

9. David went on to review the arguments for and against the installation of a new incinerator. These were finely balanced and although the Committee had in the end voted against the project, he recognised the strong arguments in favour and wanted to give all plotholders the chance to reverse this decision through a virtual version of the Extraordinary General Meeting procedure if a minimum of 40 members objected. (**Note:** This procedure duly resulted in a reversal of the decision.)

Centenary

10. Finally, David invited people to be involved in the range of celebrations for the centenary of the award of a Royal Warrant to the RPA from King George V. Planned contributions included commemorative bags and tea towels; the creation of a crab apple corner near the entrance; and a commemorative weathervane crafted by Plotholder Jem Negus.
11. Another important part of the celebration was the planned production of a history of the allotments, led by Susan Saunders and Janet Baylis, telling the story from the early struggle to obtain the site to the thriving community today.

Further Reviews of Café and Social Activities

12. A review by Anne Wingrove covered the forced Covid closure of the Seed Store Café, with plans by the volunteers to return as soon as government restrictions allowed. Jenny Bourne's survey described how even in the inevitable fallow year for the Social Committee a commendable range of social activities had still been possible in 2020 thanks to people's ingenuity in devising socially distanced events, and energies were being focused on 2021.

2020 Awards

The annual best plot awards were confirmed as follows:

Best Full plot:

First: Jon Tarlton, Plot D

Second: Ben Wilkins, Plot 101

Third: David and Jenny Gilbert, Plot 30

Best Half Plot

First: Olivier Maurin, Plot 147B

Second: Mary Downham, Plot 67B

Third: and David and Pamela Boyd, Plot 153F

Best Newcomer

First: Joanne McKenzie and Ian Fleming, Plot 40

Second: Stuart Prebble and Samantha Richards, Plot 125

Third: Rosey Blackmore, Plot 33B