

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS, HAMPTON WICK

Minutes of the annual meeting of the Management Committee (MC), held on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 8pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors: Robin Brown, Jim Millard and Monica Saunders
Plotholder representatives: David Harnden (Plotholders' Committee chair); Karen Saywell (Plotholders' Committee vice-chair and MC secretary), Andrew Stanley (Plotholders' Committee treasurer), Christine Knight, Susan Saunders

1. Apologies: None

Welcome: Chris Knight welcomed all and noted the full attendance

2. Election of officers:

Chair: Karen Saywell proposed Chris Knight, seconded by David Harnden.

Vice-chair: Robin Brown proposed Jim Millard, seconded by David Harnden.

Karen Saywell took the role of Secretary.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2019: The minutes were confirmed as a true record.

4. Actions arising from the minutes:

ACTION Andrew Stanley to check and advise back the liability of the committee and its members as an unincorporated association.

Andrew confirmed RPA's unincorporated status, advising it is an affiliated associate of the RHS and that RPA pays an RHS membership fee, taking up the RHS Public and Employer Liability insurance (£75) and Equipment insurance (£70). He advised that nothing absolutely insures against negligence, but RPA has policies, procedures and committees in place, including for COVID19, thus minimising exposure to risk.

ACTION Monica Saunders to check what plans the Council have re taking any action or implementing policy and any timelines that would adversely impact the decision to spend £4000 on upgrading the incinerator.

It was agreed that the incinerator project would be covered under agenda item 5.

ACTION: Monica Saunders to contact Kathryn Thomas to ask for a replacement for Kate Howard for the RPA MC.

COVID19 had led to delay in finalising this action.

NEW ACTION: Monica to pursue, starting with confirmation of councillor Howard's position, a check with Kathryn Thomas with regard to the rules and then to seek a replacement if needed. The replacement may be Martin Elengorn.

ACTION: Karen and Martin to work with the RPA secretary to action this decision (to proceed to 7 day eviction notice for non-payment of rent)

Karen Saywell advised that all 4 of the identified non-payers had handed back their plots. The Councillors asked what the position for this year was and Andrew and Karen confirmed that it was a similar number and the same action would be pursued if payment not made by mid-December, following a final chasing-up.

5. Plotholders' Committee chairman's annual report: David Harnden had provided a written report in advance and presented a summary at the meeting:

- The RPA Committee is at its maximum membership of 14, with 2 new members appointed for the current year
- The café has been closed due to COVID19 restrictions
- Work on maintaining pumps, managing the gates has continued
- Inspections have continued in a gentle way, ensuring that those unable to attend their plots due to COVID19 issues were not unduly penalised.
Karen advised that only 2 inspections took place this year with the usual first inspection in April being replaced by walk-rounds to identify plots not being visited, followed by contact with those plot-holders to understand any help they might need. David confirmed how well plot-holders had responded to help those in need, showing true community spirit.
- Further work on the road had taken place, following up on the major project of 2019
- The workload of the Committee had increased during 2020, but the committee was able to manage decisions in a virtual way.
- Preparation for the Centenary celebrations in 2021 continues. A new tree has been planted near the entrance, replacing the one that was planted for the Silver Jubilee
- The RPA committee voted to overturn the decision to replace the old chimney incinerator with a modern, smoke-free one. As members were likely under the impression that a new incinerator would be purchased, provision has been made, via the AGM Chairman's report, to advise if they still would like a new incinerator. Applying the provisions for an EGM to be called, if 20 requests are received, then the equivalent of an EGM vote on the item will take place.

Robin asked if the Kings Field would also celebrate a centenary in 2021.

Susan advised that she had read history which demonstrated that the allotments were in place since 1918, but could not advise on the Kings Field position re their centenary (celebrations).

Robin asked about plans for the Platinum celebrations in 2022.

David advised that RPA was for now concentrating on the Centenary of the royal charter being awarded.

6. Plotholders' Committee treasurer's annual report: Andrew Stanley, Treasurer of the Plotholders' Committee had already shared his report with all. He highlighted:

Income for year ending 30th September 2020 was down with the closure of the café (£1000 takings as opposed to expected £3000) and cancellation of social events.

Nevertheless, there was a resulting surplus of some £5k which goes into reserves. There was reduced expenditure in the year (e.g. incinerator not purchased).

Reserves stand at £29k and the defined 'emergency fund' of £10k is easily met

The accounts have been subject to an independent inspection by a competent person, one of the plot holders who has relevant professional experience

7. Date of next annual meeting: The next annual meeting will be held at 8 pm on Wednesday 24 November 2021, location to be decided nearer the time.

8. AOB

Monica asked if RPA had links to local schools for the purposes of education on growing produce. David advised that there had been 2 visits arranged from the local nursery school. Karen advised that some plot holders who were teachers had invited their pupils onto their plots and that 2020 new lettings have been largely to families with younger children, impacting the age profile of the allotment. Andrew supported this and advised that during lockdown there had been more children on site, helping on their parents' plots.

Robin asked about the RPA book that had been mentioned. Susan advised it was a history book of the RPA, being published to celebrate the centenary. Robin put his name down to buy a copy.

Andrew advised that he had read that one of the tasks of the Management Committee was to fix the rent. He advised and it was agreed that the current rents of £24 for a full plot and £12 for a half plot were adequate.

ACTION: Karen to ensure that the item 'fixing rents' be on the standard agenda for the Management Committee going forward.

There being no further business, Chris Knight thanked all attendees and closed the meeting.