**Highbury South Allotment Association**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Royal British Legion Club, Jesmond on 24th January 2019**

The meeting was chaired by Edmund Smith.

**Apologies** received from Michael White, Jenny Wigston, Angela Bolam, Nicola Sugden and Lou Robinson.

The **Minutes** of the 2018 AGM, as presented to the Meeting, were adopted without amendment. There were no matters arising.

**Chair’s Opening Remarks** The Association had won four prizes in the City Allotment Show, for best allotment site, most improved site (joint winner), best community plot and second best half plot, won by Michael White. The Chair paid tribute to Keith Foggan, who sadly had died unexpectedly at the beginning of August. Keith’s two plots were among the best on our site, regularly winning prizes, and he was a leading fuchsia specialist. He had initiated and contributed to major improvements to Highbury South, including repair of the toilet block and numerous practical projects which had improved the appearance of the site.

With regard to attendance at working parties, he Chair emphasised that it was a requirement of our Rules and Constitution that each member attend at least one working party each year, or make a contribution to site maintenance in other recognised ways. In future, attendance records will be kept. The Committee continues to function well but a plea was made for further members to be involved.

Last year the Chair announced that this would be the last year that Bob Heyman would continue in the role of Secretary as he had served the maximum five years in this role allowed by our Rules and Constitution. Edmund said that he had written to all members asking if anyone was interested in filling this position, but without success. Under the circumstances, Bob has agreed to pur himself forward for the position of Secretary for a further year providing that some of the workload could be redistributed. Mark Homer, the Membership Secretary, has kindly offered to take on the main role in recruiting new members; and the Chair has agreed to take responsibility for the Annual Barbecue and Show.

The highlight of the past year, our annual Show, included a higher quantity of exhibits despite the attendance being rather smaller than usual, perhaps because it was held over the bank holiday weekend.

The Chair thanked all who had contributed to the Association over the past year, in particular members of the Committee plus Phil Leonard (mowing main tracks and machinery repairs), David Robinson, Brian O'Doherty and Brian Dawson (mowing orchards), Fiona Clarke (orchard maintenance), Yvonne Hall (auditor), David Joe and Jane Callan (catering), Chris Sutcliffe (machinery maintenance), Jenny Wigston, Gavin and Joan Aarvold and other helpers (for the success of the West Jesmond Community Garden) and Glenn Davy (water supply).

**Secretary’s Report** Bob Heyman told the Meeting that his decision to continue as Secretary was made possible by Mark Homer's and Edmund Smith’s kind agreement to take responsibility for recruitment and the show respectively. Bob would meet all new members after Mark had recruited them. He thanked those with plots close to the new Highbury gate (now named Hugh's Gate after Hugh Smith following enlargement of the area and a ceremony in September) for making this entrance to our site look so attractive. Mary Robinson was thanked for buying hedge shrubs for the allotment perimeter and organising this project. A new storage hut was to be erected close to the existing shed. This would allow the main hut to be cleared and used for meetings etc. The West Jesmond School and Community Garden group were working with a local councillor and dementia charities on a scheme which would allow people with this condition to visit our site and garden in suitable conditions, with the hut available as a shelter during inclement weather.

Edmund had referred to the Charitable Trust that had been formed to manage parks and allotments in Newcastle. However, the Freemen of Newcastle have the right to take back management of about 12 ‘wartime’ sites, including ours. The Trust will take temporary responsibility for these sites during 2019-20. If our site does subsequently come under Freemen control, it will mean a lower rent for the site but the Association will become responsible for managing the external boundaries of the site.

**Treasurer’s Report** Anne Paton informed the Meeting that the finances of the Association were satisfactory. The current cash balance was around £10,000 in surplus. She therefore proposed that the 2019 rents should remain at the 2018 level and this was agreed by the Meeting. The rents are as follows (concessionary rates in brackets):

Full Plot £68 (£64)

Half Plot £34 (£32)

Quarter Plot £17 (£16)

**Membership Secretary Report** Mark Homer stated that there were 180 plots let out to individuals in addition to the West Jesmond School and Community, and that, of these, two were currently vacant and due to be occupied via the waiting list. He and Committee members had undertaken regular inspections. A small number of members had had their membership terminated after repeated warnings. There had been one appeal against termination but the original decision in this case was confirmed after the appeal had been considered, the first time this had met. Mark communicates to members by e-mail and holds the addresses of members.

**Bulk Supplies** Stephen Tyrer explained that he was responsible for deliveries of manure and woodchip. He obtained regular supplies of manure during the autumn, winter and spring and woodchip when available. Members who wanted further deliveries could contact him or the Secretary. He asked that members should avoid obstructing the Jesmond Dene Road gate with parked cars as deliveries of woodchip usually arrived unannounced, provided by suppliers who had their own gate keys. If they could not gain access they could not deliver and, furthermore, became disinclined to return.

**Website Manager** Bob Heyman reported on behalf of Steve Doggett who could not be present. The Website was important both for our members and for recruitment as it linked with the Council website. Steve Doggett was standing down, and new web managers were needed.

**Grasscutting and Equipment** Meryl Wakeman explained that, although the main paths were cut by designated members using the sit-on mower, the smaller paths between plots were the responsibility of the plot-holders themselves. Those wishing to borrow mowers and strimmers were requested to contact key-holders to the metal hut; a list of key-holders was kept on the notice boards. Members who borrowed equipment must sign in when using this, and it was vital that any breakages or problems were noted if these occurred. Strimmer training sessions were regularly offered at the working parties.

**West Jesmond Community Garden** Joan and Gavin Aarvold reported that 2018 had been a good year. Produce from the gardens had sold well from stalls in the school yard despite lack of parental involvement with the garden. In addition to children from West Jesmond School, Childsplay Preschool made visits weekly, and now had their own raised beds. When possible they take produce back to nursery and cook and eat it, or sell it on their own produce stalls to parents. A local dementia group had been approached who would like to visit the garden on a regular basis. One of the brick flower beds is proposed for their use. The hut clearance and the replacement gate, which allows wheelchair access, were very helpful for this project. The enthusiastic volunteers, including Newcastle University student volunteers from many different countries were thanked for their help.

**Election of Officers and Committee** Edmund Smith asked for nominations for Officers and membership of Committees. The following were re-elected:-

 Chair Edmund Smith

 Secretary Bob Heyman

 Treasurer Anne Paton

Mary Robinson, David Callan, Meryl Wakeman, Stephen Tyrer, Chris Sutcliffe, and Pete Wilkinson. Three new members were elected to the Committee, Heather Mundill, Jo McSwain and Tim Parsons.

**Any Other Business**

1. A member was concerned because a tree on her plot had been lopped at her request but without informing her when the work would be undertaken. The Secretary expressed the regret of the Association for this omission.
2. Another member asked if a rubbish bin could be placed close to the Jesmond Dene gate. After some discussion it was felt that this would be impractical.
3. In response to a question about rabbits, the Secretary told the meeting that Steve Doggett had humane traps and these could be borrowed by members.
4. Bob Heyman informed the meeting that the calendar for 2019-2020 would be available shortly.

At the end of the Meeting a Vote of Thanks was expressed to Bob Heyman for all his hard work.

 Spt 28/01/19