



Whitehill Allotment Society Ltd

Est. 1943

Register No 12585

Whitehill Allotment Society 2024 AGM Minutes

Cambridge United Supporters Club Hall, CB5 8LN
11 March 2024, 7.00-8.00pm

Supporting Documents:

- 2023 AGM minutes
- Treasurer's Report - Financial Summary
- Suggestions for site improvements

Members in Attendance:

Liz Anelli, Ruth Dunn, James Freeman, Louise Foster, Stephen Goodchild, Lorne Larson, Natalie Lofts, Christopher Morton, John Murray, Edward Njenje, Anna Reva, Mel Sanderson.

Caitlin Herman also in attendance as Abbey People representative.

Apologies: Jon Bridges, Gerla De Boer, June Hyde, Ryan King, Kirsten Lavers, Christoph Weber

Nomination and approval of AGM Chair (James Freeman) and AGM Minute-Taker (Louise Foster)

Approved

Approval of 2023 AGM Minutes

Approved

Treasurer's Report

Given by Ruth Dunn in Kirsten Lavers' absence

Approved

After the Treasurer's report, those present were asked for suggestions as to who we could use as a new supplier for our electricity. Given the low rates of consumption, the supplier that offered the lowest standing charge would be preferable. Agreed to approach British Gas.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Ruth Dunn and Kirsten Lavers for their contributions and help with compiling the Treasurer's Report.

Approval of Financial Accounts

Approved

Elfleda Site Secretary's Update

The Chairman read this out in the absence of Christoph Weber

On the Elfleda site we experienced once again a relatively large turnover of members over the past 12 months. This is likely attributable to the current lifestyle of Cambridge, with people moving homes or just staying for a couple of years in the city before their work takes them somewhere new.

Thankfully there is eager interest and we always have some people on the waiting list to be able to back-fill any vacant plots. The frequent changes do make it harder though to keep up with the plots and some may seem 'weedier' than others. The monthly plot inspections, which will start again end of this March, are intended to target the more severe cases, understand the personal circumstances and find a suitable solution together with the individuals. This is not always easy but we can only help if members do talk to us and have realistic expectations.

Since October there was a lot of continuous rain and a significant number of plots suffered badly from flooding, reflecting also the situation in the rest of the country. During this time there was understandably limited interest by new members to take on a plot. With the temperatures rising and spring ahead of us, interest has picked up again over the past few weeks and the last two vacant plots are expected to be let over the next fortnight. So we should have a full site again by April!

A big thank you here to all the volunteers on site that maintain the roads, shrubs, trees as well as the general areas; plus those that open and attend the shop for the benefit of all our members. A special thanks also to our neighbour Henry for repairing the gate free of charge.

Looking ahead we are planning to get for the Easter weekend once again a general waste skip to be filled with non-compostable and non-recycable material. Scrap metal should be placed in a pile beside the skip, for separate collection.

We will also order two skip loads of soil improver in the spring when the weather is more kind. We respectfully ask members to limit the use to maximum 4 wheelbarrows per member though. Please note that soil improver can also be picked up for free from the Waterbeach Waste Management Park (Amey) for those that are in need of larger quantities.

And last but not least, we would like to remind our members to lock the gate when entering or exiting the site. The exception is during the Shop opening hours to allow access for Associate Members.

Peverel Site Secretary's Update – Anna Reva

Peverel site is at 100% capacity and is being maintained well. We lost our longest standing member last autumn: Mr Victor Stirling, aged 97. He had moved to Sunnyside, the house development next to the allotment, in 1947, and got Plot no. 1 soon after, and looked after his plot right until the very end.

We are also losing Mike Weaver, another of our members, and a regular volunteer at the shop. He maintained the pond and compost heap, and inspired us to have flowers at the front of our plots. We wish Mike well in his next chapter.

The area at the entrance to the site has been planted with bulbs and flowers. It is a common area to

which everyone is welcome to contribute. Compared to its previous appearance, the whole site now looks a lot neater and hopefully will be more attractive to pollinators.

One incident that we did have this year was the damage to the fence by the strong winds during the winter. The repair was prompt, however no communication about it was available: some personal property was damaged during the repair and there is still an open question as to how entry was gained to the site. Combined with another incident of produce going missing, as well as several occurrences of unknown persons walking around the site, it is now proposed that we go back to a key lock.

I would also like to ask members of the Peverel site for any ideas, improvements or shared goods that they would like when surplus money is released for projects.

Finally, as the member of the Committee responsible for rent, membership fee and plant orders collection, I would also like to extend my thanks to the members for their prompt payments and their enthusiasm for the seed and potato scheme, which enables the shop to operate. The potato orders were up 19% and seed orders 14%. The new supplier, K.G. Loach, delivered the stock promptly and in good condition.

We look forward to another abundant year.

The Chairman thanked Anna for all her hard work.

Election of Chair – Nomination: James Freeman

Elected

Election of Treasurer – Nomination: Kirsten Lavers

Elected

Election of Committee Members – Nominations: Anna Reva, Christoph Weber, Edward Njenje, James Freeman, June Hyde, Kirsten Lavers, Louise Foster, Nathalie Lofts, Ruth Dunn, Ryan King

All elected

In addition, Liz Anelli / Minichiello, was proposed and voted in unanimously as an additional Committee Member.

Any Other Business:

1. Current name of our society with the Financial Conduct Authority Mutuals Public Register is 'White Hill Allotments Society Limited'. Proposal is to change to 'Whitehill Allotments Society Limited'

It was explained that the allotment was registered at the bank as 'Whitehill' but the official name at the FCA is 'White Hill', an inconsistency that has caused some administrative problems / confusion. It is suggested that the name registered with the FCA be changed to 'Whitehill', in line with our bank and building society accounts and all Society documentation (byelaws etc).

Approved (without any objections)

2. Peat-based compost in the Shop. Proposal to stop stocking it from 2025 onwards

Discussion of current stock levels of peat-based compost, its appeal to members as a core product line, and the profit it generates for the shop – and thus the financial implications of ceasing to stock it.

For: 6

Against: 2

Abstain: 5

Approved

3. Suggestions for site improvement and priorities (eg. improve drainage, electricity supply shop, new water trough, replace side gate, tools, etc.).

A hand-out listing suggestions for site improvements and priorities was circulated to all those present.

The following items were discussed:

a) *Drainage*

Lengthy discussion regarding the recent problems of flooding on the site, historic interventions to improve drainage, and the possibility that these may be in need of repair.

Estimates of cost are currently prohibitive without either support from the Council or an external grant.

Proposed that the Committee prepare some guidance for low-cost interventions or strategies that may be adopted by ploholders, for publication on the website.

b) *Shop lights*

LED lights suggested as first improvement needed.

c) *Tracks*

The tracks on the Elfleda site are now well-worn and in need of repair. Historically, the tracks were all grass, but had been renovated by the addition of hardcore / rubble along the wheel paths. It was proposed that a programme of rolling repairs be pursued: addressing those parts of the tracks that are most badly worn (esp. the middle track) during 2024-25, with further yearly maintenance to other parts thereafter, the budget to be allocated at the discretion of the Committee.

d) *Peverel Road Gate-Lock*

It was agreed a new lock and keys would be provided to all allotment holders on Peverel Road site.

e) *Fencing*

The Committee was reminded of the need to address the damage to the chain-link fencing along the eastern boundary and make the current, interim solution more safe for the adjacent householder.

f) *Soil Improver*

The Committee was asked to explore options for the most economical supply of soil improver.

The Chairman thanked all those for attending and individually thanked the members of the Committee for their work and support.