

# **Annual General Meeting of Exmouth and District Allotments Association**

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 14:30pm  
St John the Evangelist Church, Withycombe Village Road, EX8 3AE

## **Minutes**

Apologies: Mayor Olly Davey, Matt Taylor, Jean Petit, Julia Jacobs, Gill Wyatt

Attending:

- Committee members: Mike Hawkins (MH President ), John Patrick (JP Vice President ), Cheryl Chessum (CC Chair/Secretary ), Carolyn Priest (CP PL Site Coordinator), Jan Wells (JW membership management), Janet Cuff (JC Treasurer), Stuart Shram (SS IT Manager ), Annie Goodman (AG Pound Lane )
- 11 EDAA members

### **1. Presidents Welcome.**

Mike Hawkins welcomed the members and thanked them for attending this AGM. He thanked the members of the committee for their sterling work this year, and also John Singleton and his team for running the Beginners Veg Course and turning out competent gardeners ready to take on allotment plots.

### **2. Chairpersons Welcome**

CC introduced each member of the committee and briefly explained the roles they perform within the EDAA. Attendance apologies were accepted from Julia Jacobs and Mayor Olly Davey.

It was explained that a second AGM was being held this year due to the change in the timing of the accounting period. Previously the accounting year had run from 1st January, but with rent renewals also due in January it put too much pressure on the treasurer. Going forwards the account period now runs from 1st July to 30<sup>th</sup> June and the AGM will be held in October.

It was explained that the meeting would be conducted in two parts. The first part (Business section) would deal with agenda items, followed by an open discussion section, where members would be able to ask questions.

### **3. Approval of the minutes from AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

Minutes of the previous AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were approved without correction. Minutes were proposed as accurate by Catherine Cowper and seconded by Annie Goodman.

### **4. Chair/Secretary Report**

***Matters arising***

Rents will be held at £7 per rod for the forthcoming rental year as the EDAA accounts are in a sound financial position at the moment.

The Association retains the support of the Town Council with Mayor Olly Davey an active member of the committee.

After further investigation, the plan to move the rent book to QuickBooks has been found to be unfeasible due to the volume and structure of the data. The rent book will remain on Excel for the foreseeable future.

## **5. President – Honoraria proposal**

MH praised the work of the Management Committee and commented on the massive improvements to the sites that have been undertaken in the last few years. He noted the dedication of Committee Members as they strive to make Exmouth Allotments a safer and more attractive place in which to garden. He drew particular attention to the site clearance work undertaken by Committee Members in their own time and in their own vehicles.

MH explained that the honoraria paid to committee members as a ‘thank you’ for the work they undertake on behalf of the Association have not been reassessed for many years. In that time, roles have expanded significantly, and more posts have been created. Exmouth allotments are among the largest in the country with over 600 members: administering two large sites takes a lot of work.

He stressed that the Town Council were very supportive of the committee’s work and asked the membership to vote in favour of the new honoraria positions and awards.

JP added his voice of thanks to those of the President, and again stressed the amount of work the Committee Members undertake to keep Exmouth Allotments a safe and thriving community. He stressed the importance of financial awards both for the retention of current Committee Members but also to encourage others to step up into these positions of responsibility in the future.

## **6. Treasurer’s report – Financial position**

JC presented the EDAA accounts for the period. The EDAA is in a sound financial position going into the new accounting year.

The Management Account for 2022/2023 showed an overall deficit of £95.

The budget forecast for coming year (2023/2024) projects an overall net credit of £929.

Just under £9000 is forecast to be spent on a small number of projects. These include some work at the Kingston Road end of Hamilton Lane (HL) where the old adaptive beds will be replaced with car parking. The old slabs will be re-purposed to build a retaining wall at Pound Lane (PL).

The Club Account shows a shop trading profit of £3464, less expenses of £2284, leaving an overall surplus of £1180.

Total Bank and Cash at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 stood at £58,141.

Total stock (across both sites) on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 stood at £8653.

Questions taken:

- John Singleton (JS) asked why the expected rental income for 2023/2024 was significantly lower than the actual rental income for 2022/2023. JC explained that the forecast is based solely on a rodage calculation for the year ahead. Actual income will be higher due to plot turnover. In addition, last year's figure contained other income elements and not just rental income, for example income from the veg course and deposits.
- Elaine Lamble enquired whether interest was being paid on the money held in the deposit account. CC explained that the unusual nature of the EDAA as an organization meant it did not qualify for accounts that pay a high rate of interest. The maximum the TSB will pay for this type of account is 1.15%. It is not feasible to change banks as the costs of setting up/running an account at a different institution would be significantly more than the costs we currently pay at the TSB.
- William Cowper asked if advice could be sought from the NAS regarding the best accounts for Allotment Associations. He mentioned the Skipton and Monmouthshire building societies may also be able to offer a suitable account. This will be tabled for discussion at the next EDAA Committee meeting.
- JS queried why the veg course income was not shown on the accounts for 2022/2023. JC explained that it had been included in with the rents received total. JC explained that going forward income would be separated out into different streams to give better transparency.

Proposal of the Management and Club accounts for approval – the accounts were voted on collectively and agreed by majority.

## 7. Vote on Honoraria

The following Honoraria positions and awards were proposed:

To be paid from the management account:

- Administrator £500
- Treasurer £500
- Chairperson £500
- IT Support manager £350
- Site coordinator PL £350
- Site coordinator HL £350
- Site maintenance PL £200
- Site maintenance HL £200

To be paid from the club account:

- Shop manager HL and stock controller £250
- Shop manager PL £100

The honoraria were voted on collectively and agreed unanimously. The first payment will be in March 2024

## 8. Site Reports

*Site coordinator's report for PL*

- CP summarised the work the plot coordinators do in allocating plots, welcoming new tenants and offering advice.
- The community orchard project is progressing well with eight trees due to be planted in November. CP thanked Kev Hockings for building the beautiful noticeboard which keeps tenants informed on how the project is developing.
- The chippings bay has proved a brilliant resource, making path maintenance easier, improving soil health and reducing the need for plastic ground cover.
- The site has been participating in the Butterfly Conservation Count throughout the year and aims to continue with the project next year.

### ***Site coordinator's report for HL***

JJ's report was read out by CC.

- JJ summarised the role of the site coordinator and talked of the pleasure she gets from regularly walking the site and talking to tenants. There have been over 65 plot changes, polytunnel/green house applications, new sheds and other enquiries that have been dealt with this year. Some vacant plots have been very challenging to clear and make lettable to new tenants.
- In terms of ongoing projects, water taps are in the process of being changed across the site. JJ thanked Chris and Dawn Witkiss for their work in progressing this and responding to water emergencies. There are still a few jobs to complete on the raised beds and a small group of volunteers are booked to undertake some further site clearance work over the winter. More volunteers would be most welcome.
- This year's veg course students have completed the 8 month course and have now all been allocated plots. We look forward to them becoming valuable members of the allotment community.
- JJ summed up by thanking Kate Wilcox for organising various on-site activities and also mentioned the shop as an important hub at the centre of the community.

### ***Jesse Collings room coordinator's report***

Kate Wilcox's report was read by CC.

- Four events have been held this year to promote the availability of the Jesse Collings room and to provide the opportunity for members to get to know other allotment holders. These included a composting workshop, a highly successful plant swap event, a big lunch and a 'humble brags and horror stories' session.
- KW thanked CC for her support and encouragement, JS for advertising the events and club members for taking part.

## **9. Any other business**

- JS asked if someone could be employed to do a number of monthly maintenance tasks around the site including the strimming of banks and roadsides to improve safety on the site and when leaving the site (particularly around Arthur's pass and Gate 2). CC explained that Trees and Scenes would be cutting back the bank along the roadside and that signs had been ordered to

warn drivers of pedestrians around Arthur's pass. A further discussion will be tabled at the next committee meeting.

## **Part 2 – Discussion and Questions**

### **Chair/Secretary's report**

Veg course members will be graduating this month and have already made a good start on their own allotments. Recruitment is already underway for next year's course participants.

CC stated that chippings bays must not be used to dump garden compost or rubble.

The Jesse Collings room continues to be used by a number of groups including the Committee for regular meetings, a book club and a sewing club. Members can book the room for groups and events as part of their membership benefits.

Representatives will be attending the 'In Your Neighbourhood' Awards on 26<sup>th</sup> October to find out the results of the judging from entries across both sites.

CC thanked a number of individuals for their continued help and support in the running of the EDAA:

- John Singleton for his work as website manager and Veg course leader and Polytunnel Manager
- Annie Goodman and David Smith for their rodent control roles
- Kevin Hocking and Keith Richards for their practical help with site maintenance jobs
- Dawn and Chris Witkiss for providing pallets and plumbing skills
- Dave Matthews for helping with odd jobs
- Working party volunteers and those who help with stock deliveries at the HL shop
- Kate Wilcox for organising social activities

CC reminded members that rent renewals will be on-line from Mid-December and are due by 1<sup>st</sup> January. Failure to pay will result in termination of tenancy. Dates for payment in person will be posted in due course. Please inform the committee if you are not renewing.

Finally, members can help by driving carefully on site, adhering to the rules, having responsible bonfires, and treating each other with courtesy and respect. Please pay your rent on time and continue to volunteer or participate in the community if you can.

## **Questions and Answers**

- Richard Broom (PL69) explained that he was a new tenant at PL and had only had his plot for 6 weeks. The plot was in a dreadful state when he took it over and it had taken him hours of work and five trips to the tip to clean it up. He wanted to know what the policy was on returning deposits to plot holders who leave their plots in a poor state. CC explained that this was an ongoing battle but that the following action is being taken to try and prevent this from happening going forward:
  - Deposits are withheld if the plot is in a poor state
  - Deposits were doubled last year to £12 per rod to try and deter poor stewardship
  - Warning letters and termination of tenancy issued if problems become apparent
  - Regular site visits, inspections and advice

- Christine Iliffe (HL236) asked what action the committee take if a tenant is neglecting their plot. CC explained that personal circumstances are always taken into account, but as a rule 3 warning letters are sent followed by a termination of contract. Sometimes this process can take longer than we would like.

The meeting closed at 15:46.