

Camberwell and District Allotment Society, Gunsite Section
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held in the Ismay Room, Scout Centre, Grange Lane

On 19th November 2023 at 10.00 am

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Richard Davey, Mike Jordan, Clare Lloyd, Marc Meryon, Jane McLaughlin, William Marshall, Martina Rapaggi, Ann Revel, Nelly Tee, David Whiting

There were 33 attendees: Liz Brunton (Site Officer), Linda Craig (Secretary), Paul Craig, Rosemary Danielian, Tyrrell Evans (Grange), Wanda Gorecki, David Gospel, Gavin Hamilton, Alex Hamilton, Stewart Harris, Chris Heighes, Kathy Heeps, Phil Heeps, Carrol Henry, Melissa de Halvedang, Chris Hyde, Maggie Jarman (Chair), Marjorie Londt, Jennifer Milner, Philip Milner, Anne McGeoch, Lorna Mills, Eugene O'Donnell, Mike Patrick, Judith Patrick, Jackie Pearce, Tony Robertson Jones, Anne Stanesby, David Stacey, Tina Steiner, Jane Taylor, Bill Wood.

2. Approval of Minutes of AGM 2022

These were approved.

3. Matters arising:

None this time.

4. Chair's Report

Maggie Jarman added to her report, which was circulated before the meeting. She amplified her thanks to the site officers, and all volunteers - mowers, skip handing etc. This is Maggie's last meeting as chair, having taken over during COVID; she had initially offered to chair meetings but the role turned out to be much more complicated, with several coinciding controversial issues.

Two matters relating to the Camberwell and District Allotment Society (CDAS):

- 1) Lease. The form of the leases was settled in the summer but a new Dulwich Estate (DE) solicitor proposed changes, which set the process back. CDAS's lawyer is unpacking the detail.
Action: CDAS / DE
- 2) Cooperative status - Kathy Heeps and Martin Beard (Grange) have been working on the rules, which are now with the National Allotment Association for approval, before submission to FCA. Chris Hyde asked for it to be minuted that there has been insufficient information from CDAS about the indemnity falling on the allotment plot holders. This matter has to be referred to CDAS, as it is not within the scope of this AGM.

MJ will conduct a survey of plot holders regarding structures on site. Gunsite is at liberty to make its own rules within the framework set by Dulwich Estate.

Action: M Jarman

CH queried who is on the appeals panel. JT advised that the panel is independent of committee, with personnel dependent on availability.

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was circulated before the meeting. Of note are the increased shop sales. Kathy Heeps said that there may be additional costs when the new lease is signed. The rent may have to go up – it has not been put up within the last 10 years.

CH queried whether the rent to DE would be exempt from VAT. This is at the landlord's discretion. KH said that the most recent indication was that it would be exempt. The existing lease finishes in 2026, but new lease will come in earlier, since all the leases have to be signed together. (Action: CDAS)

6. Site Officers' Report

The report was circulated with the agenda. DG noted that some Japanese knotweed has been reported and the site officers will pick up on this. Action L Brunton

JM noted serious potholes near the main car park. JT will ask Dulwich Estate for more repair material. Action J Taylor

7. Health and Safety Report

Mike Patrick emphasized that the risk evaluation has been updated this year to include hazardous chemicals. Boundary trees are periodically inspected but plot holders have been warned to stay clear of poplar trees during high winds. Health and safety issues are now highlighted in the updated website.

8. Shop Report

No additional information to the report presented – the shop is functioning well under Mike Gavin and Rosemary Danielian.

9. Bee policy and procedure

The meeting received three motions as follows:

A) From Philip Milner, proposer, and Nellie Tee, seconder

i) The Gunsite Bee/Apiary Policy, written by David Gopsill and accepted at the 2020/2021 AGM should be replaced by the 2023 Bee/Apiary Policy amended by David Gopsill to include comments by Judith Patrick and input from Gunsite beekeepers and approved by William Wood, Wanda Gorecki, Philip Milner and Nelly Tee (Gunsite's original Beekeeper) to conform with the new CDAS Lease with Dulwich Estate; this specifies that honey cannot be sold in any capacity and that all beekeeping should be in accordance with their tenancy agreement, the British Beekeeping Association Rules and Best Practice which include Government Policy,

ii) That the new Policy should be administered by a new Gunsite Beekeepers' Committee, who will be responsible to the AGM, for ensuring that Gunsite Beekeepers conform to their tenancy and the CDAS Lease with Dulwich Estate. The new Beekeeping Committee should be independent of the Gunsite Committee and to include Nelly Tee, one committee representative, one beekeeper and a plotholder. The new Beekeepers' Committee will hold regular meetings which will be minuted, carry out the counting of hives with a Gunsite Beekeeper present, liaise with the National Bee Unit /DEFRA S.E. London and N.Kent Bee Inspector, and with Gunsite plot-holders. Nelly Tee will be its Liaison Officer

- B) From Judith Patrick, proposer and Kathy Heeps, seconder, on behalf of the Committee.

The existing Gunsite Beekeeping Policy ratified at AGM Jan 2021 should be replaced by the revised Beekeeping Policy dated 30 Oct 2023 attached. This document has been prepared by Judith Patrick, following discussions with PM & NT, together with Gunsite Committee. The Gunsite Committee is responsible for the whole site and so it must have the power to determine how the whole site, including the apiary, is run. The beekeepers are encouraged to reach a consensus amongst themselves regarding the running of the apiary and to appoint a Beekeeping Representative to liaise with the Gunsite Committee. The document further calls for a reduction of the current number of hives per beekeeper.

In each case, proposed policies were circulated. JP noted that several changes that she had proposed to the existing policy text have been agreed with the beekeepers. The main divergence between the two proposed policies is the number of hives, together with the management of the apiary.

There followed a 1.5 hour discussion, summarised as follows:

PM stated that the Beekeepers propose under motion A ii) that a beekeeping committee be formed independent of the main committee, to ensure compliance with the requirements of the tenancy agreement and CDAS' new lease with Dulwich Estate.

Beekeepers PM and DG maintain that Gunsite Committee has not been implementing the requirements of the Beekeeping Policy, that there is a standoff between the Beekeepers and Gunsite Committee and that the establishment of a beekeeping committee would allow for these issues to be discussed. A key issue relates to the number of hives kept by individual beekeepers and the assertion by DG and PM that two of the beekeepers have been selling their Gunsite honey for commercial gain, contrary to Dulwich Estate rules. They repeated their contention that the hives' counts commissioned by Committee have been inadequate and that Committee has failed to take action. Committee Chair advised the meeting that this

allegation of commercial sale has been investigated but not substantiated; the complaint against Gunsite Committee was considered and rejected by a meeting of CDAS on 15 Nov 2023.

Commenting on the Beekeepers' proposal for an independent beekeeping committee, Chair responded that she has been advised that this proposal would entail a change of the constitution. Under the existing constitution, the Gunsite committee is responsible to CDAS for the management of the whole site. If there were to be a new committee it would have to be a subcommittee. The Gunsite committee must have a right of veto and a right to examine the beekeepers' insurance. Gunsite Committee proposes a Beekeeper Representative to assist with hive counts and to act as liaison - but not an independent Beekeeping Committee. Beekeepers would be asked to attend when their occupied hives are counted.

MP noted that the current beekeeping situation had evolved over 40 years, with the number of Gunsite beekeepers increasing under successive committees. Complaints from plot holders in 2020 had led to beehives being consolidated in a dedicated apiary in the south woodland margin.

The current Beekeeping Policy, drafted by David Gopsill, was ratified at the Jan 2021 AGM. The policy allows 5 hives & 2 nuclei per beekeeper, with a further increase allowed over summer months.

In Summer 2022 plot holders close to the apiary were stung and harassed by bees and the committee was asked to reduce the number of hives. Committee had sought independent advice from LBKA beekeepers. They advised that Gunsite has too many hives.

MP reminded the meeting that at the Nov 2022 AGM, Committee proposed a rewording of two policy clauses to reduce the numbers of hives and to restrict inspection of hives at weekends. Beekeepers were not happy to reduce hives and so the Nov 2022 AGM decided there should be a dedicated beekeeping Extraordinary Meeting (EGM).

Two beekeepers, PM and DG, had subsequently insisted that Committee seek alternative independent advice, with the matter to return to the next AGM. Committee obtained further advice from Wimbledon Beekeepers in July 2023. Their report advised there was sufficient forage for 30 hives. However, the author had advised that it was up to Gunsite to decide on appropriate numbers of hives.

A member of the audience asked what any beekeeper would do with the large amount of honey even five hives produce, if beekeepers are not selling honey. Another attendee suggested that Committee ask the Dulwich Estate to give permission to sell honey in the shop. PM responded that sales of produce is against the national rules for allotments and also that raising this with the Dulwich Estate would slow down the signing of the lease. We should not disturb anything in the current negotiations.

One observer noted that the easiest thing to resolve these ongoing issues, including the perception of selling honey, would be to have no apiary. There are plenty of other pollinators, not just bees, and there would still be pollination.

It was stated that there should be an agreed limit of hives that should be maintained and kept to. Why is there any objection to reducing to three, which would be enough for personal use?

An attendee asked why each beekeeper requires 5+2 hives for private consumption. The Beekeepers argued that beekeepers should be allowed some surplus of hives to allow for colony collapse. PM also referred to advice he has that there is enough forage for the current 30 maximum hives on the site.

The meeting was reminded that there are two issues: the number of bees the whole site can support, and what is the correct number of hives per person for honey for personal use. The amount of forage is not the only consideration when looking at the number of hives for the whole site, as the perceptions of the other 200+ plot holders, and issues of health and safety also must be considered. The Committee have to consider the needs of plot holders as a whole not just the beekeepers. The Committee have the welfare of the whole plot at their heart and cannot manage disputes between beekeepers.

An attendee observed that there is no specific information on the site about what to do if there is a swarm. It was noted that 'emergency' beekeepers' contact details are displayed near the apiary and on the shop noticeboard.

A beekeeper plot holder that does not keep bees at Gunsite noted that the Asian Hornet has arrived in the UK and that this may have a significant effect on the future of beekeeping. Beekeepers may have to group colonies and honey may become a restricted commodity. Committee noted that any cap on hives numbers would be kept under review.

Committee members argued that if the number of hives is reduced to 3 hives + 2 nuclei (with allowance for additional summer increase), this would allow the protection against colony collapse and yet head off the issue of selling honey.

The AGM moved to a vote:

Vote 1. Beekeepers' motion Aii) (Gunsite having an independent bee committee, as proposed by PM and NT). The motion was rejected by a substantial majority.

Vote 2. Beekeepers' motion A(i) (Policy keeping the limit of 30 hives total and 5 hives per beekeeper). The motion was rejected by a substantial majority.

Vote 3. Committee motion B (to adopt the revised Beekeeping Policy 30 Oct 2023 requiring a Beekeeper Representative to liaise with the Committee. The proposed new number of beehives per beekeeper: 3 beehives and 2 nuclei at the start of the season and 2 inspections per year). The motion was carried by a substantial majority.

With the motion carried, Committee agreed that the reduction of hives will be a gradual process over the four months up to a first inspection in March 2024.

10. Election of committee 2023-2024

The currently serving committee members¹ were re-elected for 2024. John Hodges had resigned from the committee during the year, and the meeting thanked him for his work for the site over the years.

Maggie Jarman has stepped back from role of chair following this AGM, and the meeting thanks her for her diligent service. In the committee meeting following this AGM, Mike Patrick was appointed replacement chair, with Maggie Jarman as vice chair. Other officer roles are unchanged.

11. Any Other Business

None on this occasion.

12. Date of next AGM

Sunday 17th November 2024 at Scout Hut, 10:00 am.

¹ Liz Brunton (Site Officer), Linda Craig (Secretary), Gavin Hamilton, Kathy Heeps (Treasurer), Carrol Henry, , Maggie Jarman (Chair), Lorna Mills, William Marshall (shop), Mike Patrick (Health and Safety), Judith Patrick (Vice Chair and Site Officer), Jane Taylor (Site Officer)