



**Humber Avenue Community Allotments Community Interest Company  
Committee Meeting  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2024 10.30am – 12.30pm  
Durrington Community Centre**

**Present:**

Terry Smith (TS) Chair  
Peter Davey (PD)  
Christine Busfield (CB)  
Malcolm Hedger (MH)  
Ruth Allen (RA)  
Linda Head (LH)  
Ros Knight (RK)

**Guests:**

Katie Jeswani (KJ) (SAND Project) and Kim Bowen-Wood (KBW) (plot holder)

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

TS welcomed the committee to the meeting and extended a warm welcome Katie Jeswani, Job Coach from the SAND Project and Kim Bowen-Wood, guest plot holder. Apologies were noted from Andrew Scoon (AS).

**2. Minutes from the last meeting**

The minutes from 28<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were approved as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

**3. Matters arising from the last meeting not covered by the agenda**

There were no matters arising.



## **4. Reports**

### **4.1 Chair's Report**

TS proceeded to thank the committee for their work during the last year; to CB for carrying out plot inspections and also letting plots promptly; to PD for managing the finances so well, to RA for her work on the website and Facebook page; to KJ and KBW for their work in creating a healthier culture; to RK for her work as company secretary and producing the newsletter; to LH for her work on health and safety and to MH for his work on projects, in particular his support and sharing of his skills and knowledge with the trainees from the SAND Project. In acknowledgement of his work during the last year, TS presented MH with an award from the committee. MH thanked the committee.

TS informed the committee that he had been interviewed by a journalist on behalf of the National Allotment Society on HACA's work on inclusivity, accessibility and diversity, the article would be published as a lead article. He circulated an email from Councillor Vicki Wells, Cabinet Member for the Environment, providing a quote for the article in support of HACA's work on accessibility and inclusivity. KBW commented that HACA provided a bridge to the community for MIND, providing a safe place for people to enjoy gardening and mix with other plot holders.

TS informed the committee that the SAND Project had been a big success, explaining that initially one trainee was given work experience on site and now HACA had three trainees doing work experience. He commented that the work experience team had helped clear several plots on site, with more work planned next year to assist plot holders.

From his report TS also highlighted the new social room due to arrive in February 2025, another accessible plot in development and some maintenance work to be done on site in the Spring. He added that although the polytunnel was in use in the summer months, it was not being utilised during the winter.

TS updated the committee on the progress of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the council, which was still awaited.

He highlighted the removal of rubbish on site as the biggest area of expenditure to HACA in the last year, currently not covered in the SLA. He added that due to the hiring of a couple of skips in the last year, the site was currently looking tidy.

MH thanked TS for all his hard work during the last year.

### **4.2 Treasurer's Report**

PD handed out the Income and Expenditure Report for 2024-2025. He reported that all plot holders had paid for their plots and all plots were currently let. He highlighted the £15,000 received from the CIL fund and the expenditure of £7862.06 to Hortons for the new social room. He explained that over £100 had been donated to West Sussex MIND from the manure donations box and KBW thanked the committee for this.



Going forward, PD stressed the need to keep close control of the accounts due to the new social room which would need to be painted and work done on guttering. KBW informed the committee that she was hoping to acquire funding for the inside of the social hub. PD highlighted other expenditure going forward included the water bill and providing wheelchair ramps. The hiring of two skips in the Spring and further clearance work provided by SAND trainees is estimated to cost in the region of £1500. PD also reiterated the high cost to HACA in clearing plots of plot holders who have either left or been evicted, quoting an example of £368 to clear a plot recently. PD proposed that instead of the deposit system currently in use, HACA charged a joining fee for new plot holders, in the region of £80-£100 which would be 50% refundable if the plot holder relinquishes their plot in the first year and leaves it in good condition. After the year, the funds become usable for instances where HACA has to get a plot cleared.

RA expressed concern that the joining fee may not be affordable to some potential plot holders. KBW suggested that money from donations for manure be ringfenced so that plot holders could apply for this in the form of a bursary to help with membership fees.

TS informed the committee that the proposal to charge a joining fee instead of a deposit would need council approval and the committee will discuss this further at the next meeting.

#### **4.3 Membership Secretary's Report**

CB informed the committee that HACA had three new tenants since the last meeting. She added that 12 people on the waiting list were also on WAM's waiting list and following contact with them, she was able to remove 11 from the HACA waiting list, which currently stands at 79 with a wait time of approximately 3 years for a plot.

#### **4.4 Company Secretary's Report**

RK thanked TS for stepping in to help while she had a busy few months. As there had been no plot inspections since the last meeting, RK had nothing to report on these.

### **5. Projects**

MH informed the committee that the new social room had been ordered and delivery expected in February. He added that a quote had been received in the region of £8500 for eight solar panels. TS commented that WAGA had offered to loan HACA some fold up tables for the inside of the social room and HACA already had enough chairs. In the longer term, KBW is hopeful to achieve funding to provide new furniture for the social room.

He explained that plots 15 and 85 would eventually become accessible plots. The SAND work experience trainees will be helping plot holders on both these plots.

Regarding the new allotments and building work, MH explained this was due to start in March 2025.

MH explained he had contacted the council regarding cutting the hedge and was waiting to hear back from them.

MH thanked KJ for her hard work in helping with the clearance and strimming of plots.



## **6. Website and Facebook**

RA reported there were no issues with the website or Facebook and that currently there were around 70 people on Facebook with mainly external people accessing the website.

## **7. Newsletter**

As there was not much to relay to plot holders during the winter months, RK explained she had compiled one newsletter since September but planned to issue these on a monthly/six-weekly basis again in the main growing season. KJ offered for SAND Project trainees to write something for the newsletter and the committee welcomed this. TS congratulated RK on the newsletter and added that Councillor Vicki Wells had been very impressed with it.

## **8. Health and Safety**

LH circulated her site risk assessment carried out with MH on 10 December 2024 following Storm Darragh which found two hazards – a shed in danger of collapse onto the road; one on plot 93 and one on plot 95. All other areas were in good order. LH reported that the smoke detector and the defibrillator had both been checked and were in working order.

Due to the potential risk of the sheds on plots 93 and 95 collapsing into the road, the committee agreed to contact the plot holders involved to ask them to dismantle the sheds as a matter of urgency. RK and MH will liaise on this (*post meeting note: plots 93 and 95 contacted via to dismantle their respective sheds*).

## **9. AGM 2025**

TS explained that the AGM had traditionally been in the Autumn but had been moved to April a few years ago but this now presented problems for PD needing to produce two sets of accounts. Therefore TS proposed the AGM is moved to May and the committee agreed. The committee discussed whether the AGM should be moved from an evening to a weekend going forward to attract more plot holders. RA suggested conducting a poll on Facebook to see what plot holders preferred and the committee agreed this was a good idea.

For 2025, the committee agreed to the date of 22<sup>nd</sup> May for the AGM in the evening.



## **10. Complaint to WBC from a plot holder**

TS advised the committee that following the unanimous decision at the last meeting as to the appropriate action to be taken, the plot holder had made direct contact with the council. TS and PD accepted the advice of Steve McKenna (SM) to hold taking any action until the council had reviewed the plot holder's communication. Subsequently RK & TS were invited to a meeting to review all of the correspondence and seek an agreed way forward. The outcome of this meeting was that SM would respond to the plot holder's communication and suggest a meeting to seek clarification on what the plot holder was seeking to achieve. TS advised that the committee's agreed action would remain on file indefinitely. Any future contact from this plot holder should be politely acknowledged and passed to TS or, in his absence, PD for action.

## **11. Work Experience and SAND Project**

KJ thanked TS and MH for supporting the SAND Project. She explained that trainees have learnt valuable skills being involved with HACA including time management and interview techniques as well as the skills learnt whilst working on plots. She added that this has been life changing for some trainees and stressed the value the trainees have found in earning their own money. KJ explained that, as a job coach for the SAND Project, this has been extremely rewarding for her as well, with the SAND Project gardening gateway pathway being very popular. She thanked the committee for embracing the SAND Project.

## **12. Review of Policies and Procedures**

TS had circulated the revised Cultivation Standards document prior to the meeting. He explained he had received some feedback from AS and would make the necessary amendments with a view to issuing the revised Cultivation Standards in the New Year. TS explained that he will review further policies and procedures in January and a further update will be provided at the next meeting.

## **13. Social Activities 2025**

TS informed the committee that WAGA would like to hold their Chilli Festival on the Humber Avenue site in 2025 and the committee welcomed this.

PD suggested the committee consider a "grand opening" for the new social hub. RA suggested this is arranged for March/April at the beginning of the growing season and the committee agreed. The committee discussed using the social room for coffee mornings and workshops in the New Year. A Party on the Plot would be arranged following this year's successful event.



#### **14. Any Other Business**

TS suggested that a plot holder satisfaction survey should be carried out. KBW advised that this type of information was of great support when seeking funding. There was no further business and the meeting closed.

#### **15. Date of next meeting**

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February at 10.30am. PD will book the room.