

ABINGDON HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon on Thames on Tuesday, 21st January 2020 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Cheryl Briggs, Deputy Mayor of Abingdon on Thames in the Chair. Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Show Secretary, and 59 members of the Society.

The Chairman, David Bingley, welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished them a happy new year and said that he hoped it would be good for everyone and the society. We have received apologies from the Mayor, Cllr Charlie Birks, as he has had to attend a Finance Meeting, but was pleased that our Deputy Mayor Cllr Cheryl Briggs is able to chair the meeting this evening, David welcomed her and her escort Helena.

1 APOLOGIES: Apologies were received from Vera and Keith Wakefield, David Hastings, Ian Shepherd, Angie Edmondson, Margaret Abel, Sue and Ian Mullord, Jean and Guy Thomas, Pam Williams, Sue Phipps and Susan Hamesley

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: The Minutes of the AGM held on 15th January 2019 were approved by the meeting and signed by the Mayor.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES: There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4 SECRETARY'S REPORT: The Secretary, Angela Hughes said that 2019 was another good year for the society. We had talks on Seasonal Container Gardening, in Praise of Apples, Violas, with some wonderful plants for sale, A Labour of Love, again with Bulbs and Alpines for sale and finally Winter Colour, with many plants which our members could purchase. All the talks were very well attended. Angela thanked Pauline Dewhirst for organising these.

Our outings this year were to Coughton Court, RHS Hyde Hall and Hinton Ampner, unfortunately the planned outing to Bodenham Arboretum had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers although the first two outings were very well supported. We also had a short break to enable us to visit the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show, with visits to Barnsdale and the National Memorial Arboretum.

Angela reported that we had a change of venue for this year's Christmas Lunch with 62 members enjoying a very pleasant lunch at the new Hilton Garden Inn in Marcham Road which was a good opportunity for members to socialise in an informal atmosphere and was enjoyed by all.

We again provided judges for the Radley Garden Competition as we have done for many years and also the Radley Village Show. We also helped to raise funds for the Northcourt Centre at their Open Day.

Angela thanked the Officers and Committee Members for their continued support during 2019. Angela also thanked Sue Blake, Shirley Trafford and Maurice Tubb for providing the refreshments for our meetings and shows, also Ann Needham and Doreen Webb for running our raffle again, as they have done for many years, and to Barry and Diana Wiggins who have now taken over this role. Angela also thanked all the members who donate prizes and buy the tickets, without them there wouldn't be a raffle. Angela also thanked all the members who help prepare the room and clear up again for the meetings. Finally Angela expressed the Society's thanks to all the members who haven't been mentioned for their continued support of the Society.

5 SHOW SECRETARY'S REPORT: Barbara Bingley, Show Secretary, reported that the 2019 shows were very well supported by members and visitors. This was shown by increased entries and the show financial balance sheets.

Barbara said that holidays, family commitments and illness all mean that for any show some regular exhibitors are unable to participate, so it is always pleasing that so many members decide to enter one or a few classes, perhaps for the first time, or again. Every show is invariably preceded by inclement weather of some sort, drought, excessive rain, hail, or high winds. Barbara said that in the run up to a show she therefore finds herself worrying that growing conditions will prevent a good number of entries but then the emails, the phone calls, the post and hand delivered envelopes arrive and her concern evaporates. Barbara thanked everyone who contributes in any number of ways to the success of the shows.

Barbara added that members will all have received the new schedules. 2020 is the year of the cucumber and the rudbeckia. There is a new class for the latter so please pamper any existing plants or plant some seed. Rudbeckias are bee friendly and make wonderful cut flowers.

Barbara hoped that all crafters are whiling away the dark evenings working on their projects to enter in the Spring Show. Seville oranges are still available for fans of marmalade, and, as usual, there is a show class for this, and hopefully it will soon be time to get out and about to take a spring nature photograph.

Barbara said that she and the committee are looking forward to putting on the Spring Show on 28th March and asked members to look through the schedule as she is sure they will find classes to enter. Barbara said that if members have any queries or need exhibiting advice, then her phone number is on the schedule.

6 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT: Ian Shepherd sent his apologies as he was unable to attend tonight's meeting so Angela Hughes will read his report on his behalf.

Current membership stands at 176, of whom 79 are family members, 6 members joined after the end of June 2019 so the rules allow for them to be fully paid up for 2020.

21 members do not have email addresses, if they are able to set up addresses it would be very helpful, please let us know if there are any new ones, eventually we hope to send documents by email only. He added that members should not worry if it's a problem as they will get printed copies if they need them. He stated that members would probably have noticed that a number of items were sent out as attachments to the last Newsletter, if anyone had any problems with reading those we would like to know.

Ian advised the members that as an experiment with our next documents (membership cards, trip applications etc) we will provide addressed envelopes at the next talk on 18th February. Any visitors on that evening will be able to collect their own documents. This idea is a first attempt to reduce our postage costs. In the long term the paper will of course be minimised. Ian asked that members pay their subscriptions as soon as possible, ideally before the next meeting, and thanked the members who have already paid.

7 TREASURER'S REPORT: Karen hoped that everybody had a copy of the accounts. She added that we started the year with £3,213.93 in our current account, which included £1,000 of Muriel's legacy. We also have £6,516.41 in the NSI savings account, these total £9,730. At the end of our financial year 30th November 2019 the current account was £2,514, a loss of £651.80. We have spent approx. £170 of Muriel's legacy on a new printer.

Karen reported that the subscriptions, which have not increased since 2012, provide us an income of £1,447. The major outings of £2,267 are printing, postage and meetings. The coach trips made a profit of £352 which helped offset the shortfall. Raffles and teas also helped so keep buying the raffle tickets and drinking tea. Obviously we cannot continue with a shortfall yearly and we shouldn't rely on coach trips to make a profit.

Karen added that this year she proposed to transfer £1,000 or £1,500 from the National Savings to our current account to boost our balance but the £6,516 we have there will not last long if we continue to do this. Therefore Karen said that she proposed that we increase our subscriptions next year or we will have to make drastic savings on our outgoings.

Karen said that the subscriptions are coming in fast and thanked all those who have paid. She is able to take any payments this evening and would like to have all subscriptions in by the end of March. This year we are trialling a bank online payment system within the committee and hope to roll this out to members who wish to use it next year, although cheques or cash are preferred.

Karen gave her grateful thanks to Robin Carter for helping her so much this year.

8 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS: David Bingley, Chairman, advised that reflecting on the last 12 months he would like to acknowledge the hard work of the committee, our regular helpers and the support of the membership. He added that it has been a privilege to represent the society and be part of a welcoming Abingdon group who share a common interest. He added that the committee's work and support continues to embrace the inevitable changes and challenges of our society, updating our literature, developing the website and other technologies.

He thanked our new treasurer, Karen, with Robin's help, for their first year as treasurer/treasurers, and said that he was pleased Angela has the energy to organise days out and sleepovers for members, alongside her other secretarial duties. Our speakers have extended our horticultural knowledge and he felt that they have broadened our gardening interests and the two 2019 shows have been a credit to the organisers and the exhibitors.

9 ELECTION OF OFFICERS: The Officers, David Bingley, Chairman, Angela Hughes, Secretary and Karen Fisher, Treasurer, were re-elected. They were proposed by John Elflett and seconded by Peter Girling and re-elected by a unanimous vote of the members.

10 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Current committee members Ian Shepherd and Robin Carter were prepared to stand for another term, proposed by David Bingley, seconded by David Wadham and were re-elected. We currently have vacancies for two committee members and David Bingley asked if any member was prepared to stand. No one put themselves forward so David said if anyone felt they could help to come forward later.

11 APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINER: The Examiner, Mr Geoffrey Bailey has agreed to continue.

12 SUBSCRIPTIONS: As we are running at a loss at the moment it is proposed to increase the subscriptions for 2021 to £11 for single membership and £15 for family membership. One member did not agree that we needed to do this but Robin Carter, on Karen's behalf, explained that we need to put the fees up before we run out of money. The coach trips made a profit but we cannot rely on this and we may end up in the red. There has been no increase in subscriptions since 2012. Taking into consideration the rise in postage and the cost of quality speakers it is necessary to make this increase, which amounts to about 10p per week. The raffle and tea do not make enough. One member added that this rise would only cover the cost of two Costa Coffees. Several members added that compared to other clubs they belong to our subs are very small and we have quality speakers. Robin added we can continue as we are but we won't have a buffer to fall back on. The acceptance of the increase was proposed by Chris Waite and Seconded by Ann Smith. It was accepted unanimously by the meeting.

13 CHANGES TO RULE 5

David Bingley reported that as the shows are becoming more popular we are running out of space for the exhibits, especially for the Autumn Show. In the past we have received entries from members living far away as it is a popular show. We are therefore proposing an alteration to the rules, whereby members can only exhibit if they live within 10 miles of the event so that we can keep it as an Abingdon Show. It was suggested that perhaps we could use post codes. We wouldn't want to exclude current members who exhibit. David added that we need to review the ideas given and alter the rules accordingly. It was agreed that we need to limit the area and the committee are to agree the way forward.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS: It was suggested that perhaps we could go through the RHS handbook to see if we can include any ideas. Pauline Dewhirst has been organising the speakers but has now left the committee. David and Barbara Bingley will organise the speakers for 2021. David added that we will need to do some reorganising within the committee to take on other jobs. It is better each member does a little bit, not one person doing it all.

David said that they had been thinking about holding a members evening whereby members could join in with a topic, ie how did we get interested in gardening? He asked whether the members were interested. Hilary Kell thought it was a good idea as it would also reduce the cost of speakers. Chris Waite added that this is something the Flower Club does. Members could be given a certain amount of time each and this could include a competition and social time. A Gardener's Question Time was also suggested and this was accepted as a possibility.

David Bingley then thanked Ann Needham and Pauline Dewhirst for their support of the society and presented them with flowers.

14 CLOSURE BY THE DEPUTY MAYOR OF ABINGDON ON THAMES: Councillor Cheryl Briggs, thanked the society for their invitation to the evening. She stated that she has lived in Abingdon for 10 years and only found out how many clubs and societies there were in Abingdon when she was elected. She has been trying to grow some vegetables, not very successfully, and will look at joining us in the future.

The evening concluded with a fun quiz, enjoyed by all.