

Chairman's Report

I'd like to start tonight with one of the more pleasant tasks of the year, which is to thank all those people whose contributions make such a difference to the allotments. Two of the most enjoyable features of the allotments are the Sunday café and the social events. I'd like to thank Anne Wingrove and all the team of café volunteers who bring us superb home-made cakes, tea, coffee and a thriving venue for meeting other plotholders on nearly every Sunday of the year. And there are the social events – Seedy Sunday, the plant sale and the highlight of the year, the Autumn Social – which are organised by the Social Committee, driven by Jenny Bourne, Janet Baylis and Ruth Walker and a team of helpers, who really help to make the allotments a thriving and pleasant place.

There are also those people whose contributions keep the allotments functioning, often unnoticed because they are done so efficiently. On the subject of functions, there is Chris Pocock, backed up by Theo Christophers, who maintain the compost toilet, and the team of volunteers who keep it clean and pleasant. Ray Hulm looks after our pumps – which you could call the lifeblood of the allotments. Andrew and Susan Sounders maintain the fedge that screens the compost toilet, and Andrew puts in an enormous amount of work on the hedge of native species that has been planted along the southern side of the allotments. As well as being attractive and good for wildlife, the hedge has really improved our security by screening us from the walk from Church Grove to Bushy Park. There have been a couple of instances recently where some of the hedge has been cut down, possibly by a plotholder who didn't realise that this is a communal and important asset. The Plotholders' Committee would be grateful if everyone could keep an eye open and stop anyone who starts to cut down the hedge plants.

There's David Lainchbury and the inspections team, who inspect all plots three times a year and select the candidates for the Best Plot awards, while David Laughrin writes to the miscreants. David Lainchbury is handing over the reins next year to Karen Saywell, after several years of running inspections, and we are very grateful for all he has done. Martin Scotton takes care of the huge task of rent renewals, which takes up all of October and then much of November and December as he patiently chases those who have not renewed their tenancy. Nick Baylis looks after the maintenance of the seed store, doing a lot of the work himself. Gill Hiley does a great job on lettings and on keeping the plotholders information pack up-to-date, and has also put in a lot of work on organising more durable pump notices, which should be appearing next year. Jenny Bourne, not content with creating the superb pollinators flower bed by the entrance to the allotments, has created a second by the seed store. And of course there are the work mornings – and I'd like to thank David Boyd, John Greaves and everyone else who has helped with tasks like doing up the shed by the entrance gate and weeding and planting the second pollinators flower bed. I'd also like to thank Jon Anderson, who looks after the beehive area.

There are the two committees, the Plotholders' Committee and the Management Committee, and I'd like to thank everyone who gives up their time to serve on them. There's a new initiative, a community plot (plot 90) run our two friendly local policemen, Dave and Nick, which is doing really well and should provide a real benefit to the local community in the years to come. And there are the people who quietly contribute by doing things like mowing the communal areas and fixing the gate lock. To all these people and those I haven't mentioned – we have to be out before the deer cull – a big thank you.

One person I haven't mentioned yet is Ashley Catto who, along with his small team of helpers, is responsible for unlocking and locking the main gates each day, rain or shine. Ashley is stepping down from the Plotolders' Committee after years – decades – of service, and I'd like to thank Ashley for all he has done and continues to do for the allotments.

I'll stop now with a plea – if any of you currently don't take part in the communal events on the allotments, please consider getting involved. We always need new blood – some of the existing blood is getting rather old.

David Harnden November 2018