

BUXTED HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

Meeting held Wednesday 6th March 2024 at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Buxted.
7 00 pm

PRESENT: Linda Churnside (Chair) (LC), Stephen Povey (Treasurer) (SP), Lisa Ayling (Membership/Show Secretary) (LA), Kirsten Brown (Secretary) (KB), Sheila Bartholomew (SB), Sarah Ferguson (SF), Karin Freer (KF), Victoria Taberman-Pichler (VTP)

8 visitors/members

APOLOGIES: Susan Pearson

AGENDA

Welcome by Chair following which:

1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting 2023 had previously been circulated to the Committee members and were available on request. There were no matters arising and the Minutes, having been agreed, were signed by Linda Churnside (LC) Chair.
2. CHAIR'S REPORT: In her Report (LC) Chair looked back over the past year, during which she admitted she had been very largely absent from Horticultural Society Shows and Events due to her work commitments. She had nevertheless followed with interest reports of the Society's various undertakings online and via their Face Book page, commenting that she felt the Committee having grown in number was working together as a team enabling the smooth running of the Society as a whole. The Spring Show had obviously been a very lively and successful event with which to start the year. There would seem to have been a larger number of entries than in previous years, thanks in part to the endeavours of LA, who as Show Secretary had encouraged members and visitors alike to participate. The poster drop had proved a well worth endeavour.
In addition, LC had seen photos of the Plant Stall at St Mary's Craft Fair in May, which had obviously proved very popular and had allowed the Society to raise its profile in the village, which had augured well for the Autumn Show. The latter had also been well supported with an encouraging number of entries in all classes. The summer visit to 'Hollymount', despite the wet weather, had also proved a popular event and thanks must go to the owner Jonathan Hughes-Morgan for welcoming Buxted Horticultural Society to his fascinating garden.
LC congratulated the Committee on the very successful Christmas Table Decoration session in December. This had been led by SF, whom LC thanked for all her hard work, planning and preparation, which had made this the high point of a busy year. She thanked all members of the Committee for their input over the last successful year which had left the Society in a stronger position going forward.

LC informed those present that as she herself had now returned to full-time employment she would not be standing for re-election. She further enquired if anyone else was prepared to stand for election to the Office of Chair. There were no volunteers.

The Chair's Report was approved by all those present.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT: In his Report Stephen Povey (SP) Treasurer referred to the Financial Statements 2023 – Comparatives 2022 and 2021

Financial Statements 2023 - Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet copies of which had been circulated to those present.

In summary SP commented that while membership subscriptions and donations had generated income of £190, the Surplus (Deficit) of income over expenditure of £306 reflected profits made at the Plant Stall in May of £195, and at the Christmas Table Decoration Making workshop led by SF, which after costs had raised £177. The summer visit like the Spring show had incurred a small loss, while storage costs had however been covered by a grant from Buxted Parish Council which had been reapplied for, to cover the same in 2024.

SP further commented that the Total Reserves of £6,708 as reflected in the Financial Statements showed current assets of Cash at bank Current Account of £6,6634 with £105 cash in hand. This left the Society on a firm financial footing at Financial Year End 31/12/2023, with the hope that members would renew their subscriptions which would encourage the Committee to build on last year's success with Shows and Events planned for 2024.

There were no questions from those present.

Sheila Bartholomew proposed adoption of the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Karin Freer, and approved by all those present.

4. ELECTION of:

Chair: Office of Chair to remain vacant with the afore-mentioned resignation of Linda Churnside and hereto being un-contested.

Vice Chair: Office of Vice-Chair currently vacant and un-contested

Treasurer: Stephen Povey proposed Sheila Bartholomew and seconded Karin Freer.

Auditor: (non-Society member) LA suggested that her daughter might be able to take this on, however KF offered to ask her husband David Freer, if he would be willing to do this for BHS, Year End 31/12/24. To await confirmation.

Secretary: Kirsten Brown proposed Lisa Ayling and seconded Sarah Ferguson

Membership Secretary: Victoria Taberman-Pichler proposed Sheila Bartholomew and seconded Lisa Ayling

Show Secretary: Lisa Ayling indicated that she would give consideration to standing for re-election to this potentially shared office, with the proviso that thought might be given as to how the role might be further split. For general information, LA gave an explanation of what the current role entailed. KF suggested that she would be willing to offer her assistance, subject to availability.

Position to remain currently vacant subject to further discussion in Committee.

Committee Members currently vacant: the following agreed to stand for election/re-election:

Lisa Ayling
Sheila Bartholomew
Sarah Ferguson
Karin Freer
Susan Pearson
Julie Taylor

Linda Churnside proposed the election of all those willing to stand for election/re-election en-bloc, seconded by Stephen Povey

5. Proposal to raise Annual Membership Fee to £5 single, £7 for couples in 2025. Doreen Forster (Member) queried the necessity for a different rate for couples, which led to discussion from the floor on the need for equality at this point in time, rather than continuing to use the historical split between singles and couples. The latter could be seen as prejudicial to singles, and the suggestion of a flat rate for all would therefore seem far more appropriate in today's world. The proposal from the floor to keep the membership fee at a flat rate of £5 per person as of 2025 was passed unanimously and hereto minuted.

6. Plans for This Year:

Spring Show – Saturday 6th April from 2 00 pm to 4 30 pm at St Mary's Church Hall. SB confirmed that the Show Schedule had already been circulated to members and had been uploaded to the website

Autumn Show – Saturday 14th September from 2 00 pm to 4 30 pm at St Mary's Church Hall

St Mary's Craft Fair – This would not be held in 2024

SB informed the meeting that a summer visit to Pelham Plants was proving difficult to organise and that she was investigating a private visit under the NGS Scheme to either Town Place or Clinton Lodge in Fletching.

Plans for the summer visit in 2025 were also in hand with, it was hoped, a possible trip to Wisley. This was subject to finding a Coach, which SB was also making enquiries about on behalf of BHS.

Buxted Village Fete – to be organised by Buxted Bonfire Society was to be held on the Football pitch on Saturday 22nd June (Please note revised date). KB had notified the Chairperson of the Bonfire Society that BHS would like to hold a Plant Stall.

Christmas Event – it was hoped to hold some form of workshop as previously, but further discussion was needed in Committee before any details would be made available.

Questions from the floor introduced a discussion on whether BHS had ever considered an Open Gardens. In reply SB/KB spoke of past Open Gardens, sponsored by St Margaret's Church. This would be very difficult to organise and would need a lot of input from the general membership. Suggestion duly noted for further discussion in Committee, and potential canvassing of membership regarding level of interest in such a community event.

7. Any Other Business:

Ron Welsh tabled a question from the floor about the possibility of a community shared skills event. For example, he himself could offer a demonstration/talk on how to prune apples, or perhaps show those interested how to grow Alpines in old sinks. Such topics might appeal to a smaller audience and would be suitable to offer from member's own gardens on a learning new skills programme or as a community activity perhaps called 'Buxted on your Doorstep'.

KF thanked Ron Welsh for this idea and suggested it might be useful to find out what specific interest each member had, if this scheme was to be taken further. There were certainly many talented gardeners among our members who might be prepared to share their knowledge and skill. To be further discussed in Committee.

There being no further business and the Annual General Meeting 2024 closed at 7 50 pm.