**ICKLETON ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**

**CHAIRMAN’S ANNUAL REPORT – 22 January 2018**

Welcome to the tenth Annual General Meeting of the Ickleton Allotment Association.

At the end of 2017 we only had four whole and three half plots vacant, which is the highest occupancy level since shortly after the allotments were established. However, although we are still attracting new members we do still have vacancies, so if anybody knows somebody who would like an allotment please contact any of the committee members who will be happy to help them with their requirements.

The majority of new plotholders are newcomers to the village who have contacted us via the village website. The website has been a useful aid to recruiting new members and we intend to enter the 21st century this year by linking it to an Instagram account.

During the year we dismantled the old water harvesters and Ray has re-erected a number of the butts at the bottom of the site furthest from the standpipes which anyone is welcome to use. On behalf of the committee I'd like to express our thanks to Ray. The ongoing cost of piped water is working out at less than £2 per month so we are able to absorb the cost without increasing the annual subscription. However, every little helps, so please continue to use your water butts as much as possible to minimise the cost and note, standpipes are only for filling containers and hoses may not be used.

As we did last year we asked our landlord Lewis Duke if he would choose the Allotment of The Year. You can see if you agree with his choice later in the meeting. He has asked to be relieved of this heavy responsibility and I am pleased to be able to announce that we are lucky enough to have acquired the services of Catherine Cocks, a member of Chesterford Gardening Society who is very qualified and is currently the head gardener at Hormead Hall.

We continue to pay Lucasz for mowing the lanes between allotments, but we have taken over the strimming of vacant plots ourselves. In late 2016, through a South Cambridgeshire Community Chest Grant, we were able to purchase our own strimmer and at a number of well attended working days throughout the year we have kept the vacant plots under control. As well as minimising the spread of weeds this had saved us a significant amount of money.

After a couple of years without break ins we did have an incident last year when a number of sheds were entered although, with one exception, nothing significant appears to have been taken. The exception was the communal wheelbarrow which was kept in the communal shed. Ray has acquired another which instead of storing in the shed we will keep lightly disguised in one of the plots at the bottom of the site. We will send out a note advising members where they can find it. As always our ongoing advice is to take home with you any valuable tools and shut, but do not lock, your own shed to indicate it contains nothing worth stealing.

One innovation we introduced last year was a seed/plant swap immediately before the regular committee meetings. This has proved very successful and towards the end of the year produce was added to the swap items. As well as encouraging more interaction between members it has raised a modest additional income for the society from voluntary donations. We intend to continue this year, so long as the Ickleton Lion doesn't mind it's restaurant being turned into passable impression of Kew gardens every month.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work over the year. To Chris, our treasurer for keeping us in the black. To Ros for taking the time to show prospective plotholders around the site and letting everyone know what was going on. To Kathleen, for liaising with The National Allotment Society and Lorraine for co-ordinating the seed orders. I'd also like to thank Tim, for being our link to the Parish Council, Terry for auditing the books and Ray for various voluntary actions, culminating with him joining the committee at the end of the year.

In conclusion may I wish you all a very productive year ahead.