

COMAS AGM Chair's Report

Tuesday 20th October 2020, 19:00hrs,
Virtual Meeting via Zoom Conference App

It's been a memorable year for a variety of reasons at COMAS. To review this year, I would first do a tour of sites.

The Sites

At Hartfield Close we had a good response from plot holders this year, spending many hours tending to their plants, even though three plots were managed by COMAS because of illness and self-isolation. We were able to offer compost to plot holders via a one-off deal with Mersey Bank Community Association. Surplus produce of COMAS this summer and autumn was shared with people who go to the Brunswick Beestro. The Open Saturdays has been a way of sharing this small area of countryside with the neighbourhood and letting them see the wonderful work of the plot holders

Unfortunately, the Electricity Project has taken a long time to deliver. We are sad over the death of Rebecca from the University of Manchester who has worked as liaison between us and Electricity North West and miss her company. There is still no trench dug for the cables, partly due to Covid. We are getting quotes for the redesign of the Portacabin with new door, ramp and pergola.

On the positive side, a new lean-to tool storage shed was bought and the metal shed from Elizabeth Yarwood Court has been rebuilt at the allotments for gardening in the neighbourhood.

There was a good harvest this year at Elizabeth Yarwood Court, especially raspberries, potatoes and brassicas. Sadly, all gardening is winding down as the site will be redeveloped next year. COMAS is working with S4B to ensure some of the court's bushes can be used elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

At Cray Walk COMAS finally got official agreement from the Council to manage an area and has since got a strimmer and lawn mower to keep it tidy. Elsewhere, the society has offered a metal raised bed to a resident with difficulty bending.

Relations with Other Groups

Sow the City has been offering its support. COMAS has received the services of a 'Growing Ambassador', Fran, from the University of Manchester. Also, the society has worked with Kieron on funding and site improvements. Some members have been following the training webcasts offered by Growing Manchester which can still be viewed on Vimeo.

Unfortunately, it has not been convenient to visit other gardening groups in the pandemic. However, COMAS has worked with *Good to Grow* and *Let's Keep Growing*, distributing to neighbours bags of seeds, compost and plant pots to encourage them to grow their own food.

The society regrets not joining in annual events like Vegetarian Week, Volunteers Week, *The Big Dig* (now called *Good to Grow*), Medlock School Fair or Brunswick Fun Day due to Covid restrictions.

A Word of Thanks

COMAS works closely with S4B and is very grateful for the many occasions of support given, such as passing on used scaffolding planks to be turned into raised beds. The staff in the Housing Office have been a great help and various officials from the consortium have lent their support.

The Council have given approval for changes to use of sites and its Ardwick Neighbourhood Team have been supportive of all things green in the neighbourhood. Brunswick Church has facilitated meetings and shown support in different ways. FOGGGS worked with us to acquire the strimmer.

So the City have been constantly checking up on the society and offering its support and supplying us with useful ideas and contacts. The volunteer umbrella groups MACC and GMCVO have given training and other support.

Many plot holders have shown commitment to gardening and have made a great show of produce that has both helped themselves and delighted the passers-by. They have created a friendly, supportive community.

It has been a pleasure to work with a small team of Committee members who have given many hours of work, advice and encouragement to make the allotments and other sites work for both plot holders and the community. We have come to decisions in a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.

Martin Toal
Monday, 19th October 2020