

SALTERSGILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PLOT-HOLDERS: 10:30 SUNDAY 8th MAY 2016

Present

10 Committee members: Peter Whelan (Chair), Ian Ford (Treasurer), Marvin Adkin (General Secretary), Keith Lewis (Minute Secretary), John Appleby, Laurissa Papprell, Billy Holdsworth, Chris Allen, Sybil Taylor and Phil Gibson; along with 41 other Saltersgill plot-holders.

Apologies: None were received.

1. Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed all plot-holders to this the second Annual General Meeting of the Association and thanked them for such a good turn-out.

2. Minutes of Last AGM

The Minutes of the 2015 AGM, which have been available on the Association's web-site, were accepted as a true record.

3. Chairman's Report (Peter Whelan)

PW began by thanking everyone who had helped in any way to progress the Saltersgill site and the Association over the past year, not just the Committee but also the many plot-holders who had helped to move the site forward. He went on to review progress in a number of key areas as follows;

- **Security:** levels of theft and vandalism are well down on previously, and the Committee continue to press the Council hard for CCTV on site. People need to be vigilant and report any incidents to the Committee and the police [Tel: 01642 326326];
- **Waste/Rubbish:** plot-holders were thanked for their cooperation in reducing the amount of waste generated and working to the '2 bags of rubbish' rule, which has reduced our collection costs. **Fly-tipping** remains an issue, however, and vigilance by all is required to eliminate this problem. Any evidence of culprits should be reported to the Committee and action will be taken, including eviction if it is an existing plot-holder who is fly-tipping;
- **Water:** no major problems, but remains an expensive item. The upgrade of taps is an ongoing project and the need to remove any unauthorised connections to the on-site mains is very important as we would not be covered for repairs by Northumbrian Water. Members were also asked to ensure all hosepipe fittings are in good order and do not leak to keep water wastage to a minimum;
- **Vermin:** this is a problem which will never go away, but much progress has been made thanks to the great work of Billy Holdsworth. New legislation is being introduced in June which requires risk assessments to be carried out and poison to be allocated to specific plots as necessary. Failure to comply could lead to the Association being prosecuted. Billy will remain as the main contact in the first instance.;
- **Plot-letting:** another area where good progress has been achieved – more in the later report from the Secretary;
- **Rent:** a further reduction in annual rent has been approved for the second year running – the new rent for 2016/17 being £57 for a larger plot and £28 for a smaller plot. The Council will be charging at least £67 for plots on sites they still run. Members were reminded that the Council has agreed to continue collecting rents on our behalf, as previously, and that rents must be paid by 1st July at the latest;
- **Pot-holes/Tesco grant:** the Association has been successful in obtaining a £12,000 grant from Tesco to specifically carry out essential repairs to the on-site roads. A contractor has been appointed to repair all the roads for £12,000 plus VAT, requiring the Association to take £2,400 from reserves to cover the VAT element. The contractor is to use a 'Tar & Chip' process and will provide a 5 year guarantee. The site will need to be vehicle-free for a 48 hour period when the work is carried out, but pedestrian access will still be possible;
- **Web-site:** the Association's web-site is now well established and members were urged to use it as a source of information and update of current issues - the address is www.saltersgillallotments.co.uk;
- **Plot numbering:** members were again asked to cooperate and comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement by ensuring their plot numbers were clearly displayed outside their plots;
- **Shop:** members should be aware that the shop is now up-and-running following a successful launch at Easter. It is located on the Community Plot at 136/137, Central Avenue. At present a basic range of products is available for purchase including compost, grow-bags, fish and bone-meal, etc, but

suggestions for other products to stock will always be considered. The shop is open every Saturday and Sunday between 10:00am and 12:00 noon;

- **Community Plot:** creation of the community plot on Central Avenue during the past 12 months has been another success. Although the opening of the shop has been a great boost, work on reclaiming the site is progressing quite slowly and the Committee would welcome any offers of help from members, especially on the 'work-days' which take place on the first Saturday of each month.
- **Raising Finance:** the Committee has been encouraged by the award of the grant from Tesco to repair the on-site roads, and hopes to attract more grant support in the future to help the Association to realise some of its aspirations for the site.

The Chairman reminded members of the vision for the Saltersgill site that he presented at last year's AGM and concluded that in the past year we have gone a long way towards realising that vision:

"We have almost achieved full occupancy of plots and have a growing waiting list, we have significantly increased the number of plots being cultivated, we have a community plot with a shop, storage bays containing top-soil, bark and other items, we have managed to further reduce plot rents for tenants, and we are rapidly becoming the model for allotment provision and management in Middlesbrough."

4. Secretary's Report (Marvin Adkin)

MA reported that over the past 2 years, 70 of the 264 plots at Saltersgill have changed hands and been re-let and that currently only 3 plots are 'officially available.' In addition, there are also now 26 people on a waiting list for plots.

Some members queried how there could be such a high occupancy rate when there were clearly some plots that did not appear to be being cultivated. MA explained that the re-letting of plots is a long-winded and complicated process with some people paying their rents but not then cultivating the plot, whilst others suffer an illness which interrupts their ability to cultivate their plot for an indefinite period. It is also very difficult to maintain contact with a number of people who are unwilling to give their telephone numbers and/or don't have email addresses. However, the April to July period is always going to be the best time of the year to make progress as rents are due to be paid and it is easier to assess whether cultivation is taking place or not. If rents are not paid by 1st July, people will be chased up by MA and JA and MA is confident that further significant progress will be made towards full occupancy and cultivation over the next few months.

It was agreed, however, that where plots do sit uncultivated for any length of time and weeds begin to develop, the Committee will arrange for spraying to take place in an attempt to reduce the spread of weed seeds to adjoining plots.

5. Treasurer's Report (Ian Ford)

IF presented an audited statement of the financial accounts of the Association for 2015/16. It indicated an opening balance on 31st March 2015 of £8,055.33, and a closing balance at 31st March 2016 of £13,806.44. This total consisted of £12,306.44 in the Bank, a £500 loan to the newly created Shop Account, and assets of £100 in equipment and £900 in the form of a container.

The Income and Expenditure Account indicated rental income of £14,322.35 which included late payment of £1,232.85 from the Council of rents from 2014/15. Expenditure in the year consisted of £8,603.89 on general management and maintenance items including water, vermin, rubbish clearance, repairs, etc; £900 purchase of the container, £500 loan to the Shop Account and a surplus of £4,251.11.

IF also tabled an opening Balance Sheet for the SAA Shop Account for the period January 2016 to 31st March 2016 which indicated that the shop has started very positively in terms of providing a valuable service to tenants whilst producing a modest profit of £110.10 on sales and £251.40 from raffles and coffee mornings. Such income will be recycled into replenishing stock and into facilitating other activities for the benefit of the Association generally.

In answer to a query from the floor, it was confirmed that the Tesco grant of £12,000 can only be spent on road improvements and will be paid in two tranches – 75% up-front and 25% upon completion of the works.

6. Selection of Committee for 2016/17

It was explained that the notification letter to plot-holders had invited nominations from members for membership of the Committee, and PW confirmed that no new names had come forward. As a result, there had been no need for an election to take place. 10 members of the existing Committee were willing to continue as Committee members and were duly re-elected. The current Committee therefore comprises, Peter Whelan (146), Marvin Adkin (144A), Ian Ford

(104), Laurissa Pappriell (86/87), Billy Holdsworth (124/125), John Appleby (100), Chris Allen (32), Keith Lewis (93), Phil Gibson (121A) and Sybil Taylor (19 & 99).

7. Any Other Business

The following points were raised as a result of discussion from the floor:

- Any donations of seeds, excess produce grown, etc would be welcome for sale in the on-site shop;
- The Committee will again look into the issue of removing the on-site barriers and posts which are no longer used or required, although the cost of removal was previously felt to be excessive;
- Render alarms are currently looking at the site with a view to providing an estimate to get the CCTV camera adjacent to the main gate working again;
- Following a discussion on the preferred time to start future meetings, a small majority favoured 10:00am as opposed to 10:30am. N.B. As a compromise it may be worth considering 10:15am.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at approximately 12:00pm.

Keith Lewis
May 2016