

## SALTERSGILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PLOT-HOLDERS: 10:00 SUNDAY 7<sup>th</sup> MAY 2017

#### **Present:**

8 Committee members: Keith Lewis (Chair), Ian Ford (Treasurer), Marvin Adkin (General Secretary), Chris Allen, Billy Holdsworth, Sybil Taylor, Phil Gibson and Laurissa Pappill; along with 28 other Saltersgill plot-holders.

**Apologies:** John Appleby (Committee member).

#### **1. Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman**

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

#### **2. Minutes of Last AGM**

The Minutes of the 2016 AGM, which have been available on the Association's web-site, were accepted as a true record.

#### **3. Chairman's Report (Keith Lewis)**

KL began by explaining that he was chairing this year's AGM having taken over as Acting Chair of the Association following the resignation of Peter Whelan in September 2016. Keith personally thanked Peter for all of his efforts both in guiding Saltersgill into self-management in 2014, and in getting the SAA up and running over the past two years. He also thanked everyone else who had helped in any way in the running of the site over the past 12 months – by opening and closing the main gate, doing odd jobs on site, helping out in the shop and serving on the Committee.

In reviewing the site's development over the last year, the Chair felt that much progress had been made and that the experience of gardening at Saltersgill in 2016/17 was, in general, a good one.

The two main ongoing 'bug-bears' experienced on site remain (i) security and (ii) fly-tipping/rubbish;

- **Security:** whilst the number of security incidents are much less frequent than they used to be, they do still occur and when they do, they are not only very distressing to the member affected, they also indirectly affect us all. Discussions with the Council have been ongoing for some time about reinstating CCTV cameras at the site entrance, but the Committee has finally resolved to proceed, at our own expense, with a contractor to supply and install new cameras in the next two months. We are hopeful of getting some financial assistance from the Council but if we don't the work will still proceed.  
Members were reminded that any incident of theft or vandalism should be reported to the Committee and more importantly the police [Tel: 01642 326326];
- **Fly-tipping/Rubbish:** is a similar story – the situation has improved in the year but fly-tipping is still occurring. This in spite of the ongoing monthly rubbish collections, which we have supplemented by using Billy's trailer to take separate loads to the tip at Haverton Hill and a recent intensive 'tidy-up' by Scotts. In total the Association has spent £2,500 on rubbish removal in 2016/17.  
Members were urged to be vigilant and look out for suspicious activity or unfamiliar vehicles entering the site, and (i) challenging people as to what plot they are on or delivering to, and (ii) taking a note of registration numbers and reporting them. Discouraging people is the only way the problem can be resolved.

KL then briefly ran through a number of successes in the year, principally;

- **On-Site Roads:** work to the roads was carried out in June 2016 with a grant of £12,000 from the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme, with the SAA funding the VAT element of £2,400 from reserves. The works have been successful although there are a lot of loose chippings and the Committee will attempt to get the contractor to come back and address this issue under the warranty;
- **Shop:** the on-site shop has been very successful in its first year of operation. Financially it has done well (see below) but as a focal point for the site and a convenient place to buy bulky items it has been invaluable. Particular thanks were extended to Chris Allen and Sybil Taylor for organising the smooth operation of the shop;
- **Seed Scheme:** Chris Allen has also operated the discounted seed scheme from the shop this year. The switch from Dobies to Kings has proved a much simpler scheme to operate and will be repeated this coming year;

- **Vermin Control:** vermin is a problem which will never go away, but several members attended a Pest Control Workshop and Training Day in February. The event was organised by Middlesbrough Council in order to allow allotment gardeners to gain a qualification in the new national regulations and procedures brought in by the Government. Anyone with a vermin problem is urged to contact Billy Holdsworth in the first instance to discuss how the new regime applies and what needs to be done to avoid the Association being prosecuted for non-compliance;
- **On-site Barriers:** following a suggestion made at last year's AGM, the internal barriers and posts located around the site were duly removed, no longer causing an obstruction to 'delivery' vehicles and the like;
- **Finances:** financially it has been a good year for the Association, helped by our achieving a very high occupancy rate (over 95%). After three years of self-management our finances are on a sound footing and we are confident of our budgeting controls (see below);
- **Rent:** accordingly, whilst the annual rent for 2017/18 is to be maintained at £57 (£28 smaller plot), a discount is also to be offered to all members who pay before the end of June 2017. The discount will be £5 for a larger plot, making the rent only £52 (£25 for a smaller plot). This will compare with Council rents elsewhere in the town of £69. The annual rent letter will be sent out by the Council on behalf of the Association during the month of May, with payment due from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017.

Based on a current cash balance of over £15,000, the Committee is proposing to embark on a prudent **programme of capital expenditure** over the next two to three years, starting with the CCTV cameras referred to above at a cost of approximately £2,500. In addition quotes have been obtained for undertaking improvements to the shop and the community compound as follows:

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|---|--------------------|
| • painting shop containers:                               | approximately £300 |
| • scaffold boards and poles for 3 No. storage bays:       | approx £300        |
| • provide new vehicular base in central area of compound: | approx £2,250      |
| • improvements to Central Avenue:                         | quote awaited      |

The Committee is also pursuing plans to deal with **'long-term' problem plots**, namely;

- 55A/56: the former Eden project plots, which are badly overgrown and have a significant area of 'hardstanding', are being considered for sub-division into 3 plots and a car parking area; and
- 133/133A/167: the former Kemp plot is being considered for the creation of a community orchard and car parking area with assistance from Middlesbrough Environment City and their apprentices as part of a planned Community Action Day on 29<sup>th</sup> September.

In respect of the latter, one member expressed strong reservations to the proposal, suggesting encouraging outsiders on to the site to be able to gather fruit from an orchard was a recipe for attracting troubles on the wider site. The Committee was urged to think again about this proposal.

#### **4. Secretary's Report (Marvin Adkin)**

MA reported that over the past 3 years, 76 of the 264 plots at Saltersgill have changed hands and been re-let and that currently only 2 plots are 'officially available' (see above). In addition, there are also now 23 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. 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 1<sup>st</sup> July, people will be chased up by MA and JA and eviction procedures commenced where necessary.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report (Ian Ford)**

IF presented an audited statement of the financial accounts of the Association for 2016/17. It indicated an opening Bank balance plus surplus on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 of £12,306.44, and a closing balance plus surplus at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 of £15,928.34.

The Income and Expenditure Account indicated rental income of £13,170.50 (net of £500 paid to the Council as site rent). Expenditure in the year consisted of £6,956.61 on general management and maintenance items, £441.99 on minor capital purchases and a surplus of £3,621.90.

IF also tabled the verified accounts of the SAA Shop which revealed opening assets on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 of £884.57 and a closing balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 of £1,877.71. The Income and Expenditure Account showed income from sales of £4,850.78 and from raffles and coffee mornings of £575.83, against costs of £4,656.37. After a part repayment of £250 on the loan from the main SAA Account, a Members Surplus of £520.24 was generated in the year.

## **6. Selection of Committee for 2017/18**

It was explained that the notification letter to plot-holders had invited nominations from members for membership of the Committee, and KL confirmed that no new names had come forward. As a result, there had been no need for an election to take place.

8 members of the existing Committee were willing to continue as Committee members and were duly re-elected. The current Committee therefore comprises, Marvin Adkin (144A), Ian Ford (104), Keith Lewis (93), Billy Holdsworth (124/125), John Appleby (100), Chris Allen (32), Phil Gibson (121A) and Sybil Taylor (19 & 99). Laurissa Pappriell had decided to stand down for the year due to the fact that she was travelling to Singapore for much of the year, but hoped to return to the fold next year. Craig Axelson (89) has subsequently indicated his willingness to join the Committee and one or two other co-options will be considered as the year progresses.

## **7. Any Other Business**

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

- The Association website [www.saltersgillallotments.co.uk](http://www.saltersgillallotments.co.uk) remains in need of more regular revision, but the Chair explained that it was still proving difficult to find someone to take the job on. Volunteers welcomed!;
- 'Light' hedge-trimming will take place shortly but the main cut will have to wait until the bird nesting season is finished later in the summer;
- The Middlesbrough Town Meal will take place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 in Centre Square and contributions of produce from growers to enable the cooks to prepare the main Meal are invited; along with entries for the Produce Competition on the Day (more information and Entry Forms are available on the Middlesbrough Environment City web site).

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at approximately 11:40am.

Keith Lewis  
May 2017