

## SALTERSGILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PLOT-HOLDERS: 10:00 SUNDAY 28<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2019

#### **Present:**

10 Committee members: Keith Lewis (Chair), Ian Ford (Treasurer), Marvin Adkin (General Secretary), Chris Allen, John Appleby, Phil Gibson, Craig Storey, Sybil Taylor, Eric Benson and Joe Fisher; plus 19 other Saltersgill plotholders.

**Apologies:** Billy Holdsworth (Committee member).

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

The Chairman welcomed all plot-holders to this the fifth Annual General Meeting of the Association and thanked them for attending. The level of attendance was noticeably down on previous years which was disappointing, although it could be a sign that people are generally happy with the way things are going.

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

The Minutes of the 2018AGM, which have been available on the Association's web-site, were accepted as a true record. A number of copies of the minutes were also available for inspection at the meeting.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

The Chair referred to two items from last year's minutes not covered by today's agenda, notably,

- (i) the fact that as well as being available on the Association's website, there is also a file of key documents available for reference purposes in the site shop. This file contains copies of the Rules and Regulations of Tenancy, the Association's Constitution, Livestock Guidance Policy, copy of SAA Insurance, etc; and
- (ii) that a double tap had been installed to replace a single tap on East Avenue in response to a request from a particular tenant.

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

KL began by thanking everyone who has helped in any way in the running of the Saltersgill 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 particular, he thanked John Appleby and Marvin Adkin for the seemingly never-ending job of keeping on top of the plot-letting at Saltersgill. It will always remain an ongoing activity.

In reviewing the site's development over the last year, the Chair felt that further progress had been made and that the experience of gardening at Saltersgill in 2018/19 was, in general, a good one. The main 'improvements' and progress achieved this year have been:

- completing the provision of **storage bays** in the community compound;
- providing **fencing and gates** to the two 'storage-plots' on South Avenue where rubbish is temporarily stored, so as to discourage fly-tipping;
- the ongoing development of **the shop** which, thanks to the sterling efforts of Sybil Taylor and Chris Allen and the volunteers who have manned the shop. It continues to be a useful focal point on site and provides an excellent service to members. [Joe Fisher has agreed to get further involved in the running of the shop, but a few more volunteers would be welcome to go on to the shop rota];
- the **King's Seeds Discount scheme** (also run by Chris Allen) continues to provide a useful service for tenants with discounts of up to 50% on offer;
- continuation of the **thorough hedge-cuts** on site in early spring and autumn, which greatly improves the appearance of the site (helped by the **new leaf-blower** to assist the tidy-up afterwards);
- even managed in the last week to get the Council to **repair the pot-holes at the site entrance** which were getting very bad;
- several members have attended **training courses** run by MEC regarding (i) the new Rules and Regulations regarding vermin control, and (ii) the use of power tools and their safe handling; and
- **plot-letting** continues to be going well with full occupancy being maintained throughout the year, such that all rents were collected in the year.

Plans for the year ahead include:

- repairing pot-holes on Central Avenue (which was not covered by the road-works undertaken 3 years ago). We have had a verbal quote in the region of £500 but are awaiting a written estimate; and
- possible purchase of a trailer to assist in the hedge-cutting activities, the collection of rubbish on site and the collection and delivery of items for the shop.

As in previous years, the two main problem areas remain **(i) rubbish/fly-tipping, and (ii) vandalism/security**. Sadly, they are both occupational hazards, being virtually impossible to eradicate completely. KL reiterated that the only way to try and keep on top of it was for **all members** to be vigilant and to report any 'suspicious' behaviour. A suggested 3-pronged approach was to, (i) engage in "polite" challenging of possible intruders, asking them which plot they were on, etc; (ii) taking registration numbers of any vehicles with loads of what looks like rubbish; and (iii) reporting malicious incidents in the first instance to a Committee member, but also to the police with the time of the incident, the plot number, etc. Key numbers are 01642 326326, or 101 or 999.

The Chair also reported that the Committee has engaged JWS, a private security firm on a 6 month trial period from March 2019 to carry out random patrols, mainly on a night, to also act as a deterrent. The cost is £150/month.

**Financially**, the Association has had another good year, with reserves remaining steady at £19,071.27 and cash in hand of £17,536.27 (down £101.03). In spite of again reducing rents last year, the rental income of £12,503.00 was only £41 down on the previous year because we collected rents from more plots than previously. In addition, we benefited from increased revenues from the shop's activities, with a £1,000 transfer from the shop to the main account.

Accordingly the Chair announced that whilst **rents for 2019/20** are officially being increased to £73 and £38 for a larger and smaller plot respectively (up from £57 and £28 last year), these rents will be **discounted to £45 and £23 respectively, if paid before the end of June**. This represents a discount of £28 and £15 on rents being charged by the Council elsewhere in the town. Rent demand letters will be sent out by the Council, on the Association's behalf by the end of May.

The reasoning behind the growing differential between official and discounted rents is not just to incentivise prompt payment by members but also to penalise persistent 'late payers' who put the Committee to significantly extra work in chasing them up, in some cases several times, for not paying on time.

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

IF presented an audited statement of the financial accounts of the Association for 2018/19. It indicated an opening balance on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 of £19,172.30 and a closing balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 of £19,071.27. This total consisted of £17,536.27 in the Bank, and assets of £295 in equipment and £1,240 in the form of containers.

The Income and Expenditure Account indicated rental income of £12,503.00 (net of £500 paid to the Council as site rent) and a members contribution from the Shop account of £1,000. Expenditure in the year consisted of £9,704.03 on general management and maintenance items, £3,900.00 on capital purchases/works and an income shortfall of £101.03. Whilst most spending heads were broadly similar to last year, water usage had more than doubled to £3,741.24 due to the really long, hot summer of 2018. The Association is confident there are no leaks in the system and the hike in costs was just due to heavy usage. The main things that tenants can do to help the situation is to make sure they use water butts on their plots and replace leaky hose-pipe connections. The cost of vermin control was also high just because of when in the year the poison was bought.

IF also tabled the verified accounts of the SAA Shop which revealed opening assets on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 of £2,896.51 and a closing balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 of £3,266.96. The Income and Expenditure Account showed income from sales of £12,082.14 (up £3,600), and other income of £300.21; against cost of purchases of £10,554.77 and other costs of £383.71. This led to a gross surplus of £1,443.87, but, after the transfer of £1,000 of members funds across to the SAA main account, there was a net surplus on the shop account of £443.87. IF emphasised that the continuing success of the shop played a big part in the Committee being able to continue reducing plot rents to members.

He went on to remind members that it was always a target of the Association to maintain reserves of approximately £15,000, in readiness for negotiating the new lease with Middlesbrough Council in 2023/24, which may require some legal support, and potential additional management liabilities such as the perimeter fencing and underground water pipes.

He also stressed that both of the SAA accounts had 7 nominated signatories, with any 3 being required to sign any cheques, etc - thus reducing the potential for fraudulent behaviour by Committee members.

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

MA confirmed that no plots were currently available to let and that the Association currently holds a waiting list of people wanting a plot and enquiries are regularly received via the website. He particularly thanked John Appleby for taking on the main role in plot-letting over the past 18 months and being dealing with non-cultivation of plots cases where eviction was required. This process will be employed over the next two months or so if rents are not paid by 1<sup>st</sup> July.

MA also explained that the Association has increased the extent of its insurance cover this year. In addition to Public Liability cover, which has always been held, cover has also been taken out in respect of damage caused by people undertaking work for the Committee.

## **7. Selection of Committee for 2018/19**

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.

KL reported that the Committee had started the year with 9 members and during the year had co-opted 2 new members – Joe Fisher and Craig Storey. He also announced that Ian Ford was stepping down from the Committee and as Treasurer, at least for the coming year, and that Craig Storey had kindly offered to take on the role of Treasurer.

**The remaining 10 Committee members are all happy to continue serving on the Committee and were all duly re-elected.** The current Committee therefore comprises, Marvin Adkin (144A), Chris Allen (32), John Appleby (100), Eric Benson (63A/64), Joe Fisher (28/29), Phil Gibson (121A), Billy Holdsworth (124/125), Keith Lewis (93), Craig Storey (55/56) and Sybil Taylor (19 & 99).

The Chair took the opportunity to formally thank Ian Ford for his excellent commitment to both the Association and to the role of Treasurer and Committee member over the past five years. His contribution will be sorely missed.

## **8. Member's Question/Any Other Business**

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

- The value and effectiveness of the **new CCTV camera** was again queried. It was explained that the decision to invest in the cameras was in response to tenants' concerns and that it was always the view that they were to be viewed as a deterrent and a deterrent rather than as a guarantee of eliminating vandalism and theft completely. MA also explained that to monitor effectively the recordings needed to be viewed in real time, such that accurate reporting of dates and times of incidents was essential.
- One tenant requested that the Committee consider holding a '**Community Action**' event(s) e.g to tidy up and improve the community compound. KL said that this was a possibility, but that such events hadn't been that well attended in the past and such interest as there was did tail off. He also suggested that any tenant was free to get involved in organising such an event themselves and it shouldn't be perceived as just a Committee responsibility.
- Ged Sloan **thanked the Committee**, on behalf of the membership, for all their efforts to date, particularly with regard to the shop which was proving a tremendous facility for tenants. He also thanked IF for all of his work as outgoing Treasurer.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at approximately 11:00am.

Keith Lewis  
May 2019