

SALTERSGILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PLOT-HOLDERS: 10:00 SUNDAY 10th MAY 2015

Present

9 Committee members: Peter Whelan (Chair), Ian Ford (Treasurer), Marvin Adkin (General Secretary), Keith Lewis (Minute Secretary), John Appleby, Laurissa Papprell, Billy Holdsworth, Chris Allen and Guy Wilson; along with 32 other Saltersgill plot-holders.

Apologies were received from Rosalind Waugh and Catherine Howell (existing Committee members).

1. Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed all plot-holders to this the first Annual General Meeting of the Saltersgill Allotment Association since it was formed in June 2014.

2. Chairman's Report (Peter Whelan)

PW began by thanking everyone who had helped in any way to progress the Saltersgill site and the new Association in its first year of self-management. He then briefly reviewed how the site was being operated concentrating on where progress had been achieved and where more needed to be done to effect further improvement.

- **Security:** by changing locks, restricting the number of new keys and ensuring the main gate was locked at set times, the Committee has achieved a significant improvement in site security. Where incidents of theft and vandalism or arson do occur, it is essential that such incidents are reported to the Committee and the police [Tel: 01642 326326];
- **Water:** has proved an expensive item in the first year and, whilst it is planned to upgrade all taps in 2015, members were asked to ensure all hosepipe fittings are in good order and do not leak to keep water wastage to a minimum;
- **Waste/Rubbish:** the removal of rubbish has been the biggest expense in the first year. The Committee had provisionally budgeted for one collection per month (at a cost of £150) but the average has been two per month (£300). Such expense is reducing our ability to reduce annual rents further. Items such as soil and green waste should be composted and re-used and wood should be burnt. It would also help if genuine, non-recyclable waste was bagged up to assist collection;
- **Fly-tipping:** is also contributing to rubbish collection costs, with plot-holders among those bringing domestic items from off-site to dump - another problem we need to eradicate as it costs us all to remove. Members are urged to be vigilant and report any incidents of fly-tipping they notice;
- **Vermin:** this is an area where much progress has been made thanks to the great work of Billy Holdsworth;
- **Plot-letting:** another area where progress has been achieved since the Committee took over responsibility for lettings, but it is an ongoing process which will take a couple of years or more to get fully on top of;
- **Livestock:** when we took over the site there were no rules for the keeping of livestock, but a set of guidelines has been produced and a register of plots with livestock introduced;
- **Rent:** the aim of the Committee is to gradually reduce rents whilst retaining a good level of service for running the site. Accordingly, the rent for 2015/16 is being reduced from £63 to £59, which, given that the rents on Council-run plots are likely to go up, will make the Saltersgill site more attractive to new plot-holders. Future rent reductions will be dependent on making savings on water charges and/or rubbish collection. Rents are, however, to continue to be collected by Middlesbrough Council at no cost to the Association, which will remain more convenient for members.
- **Pot-holes:** in October 2014, some £800 was spent repairing pot-holes in on-site roads, but again this is an ongoing issue which it is planned to tackle on a regular basis – the Committee having recently purchased several tons of planings to effect essential repairs;
- **Web-site:** one or two Committee members have recently established an Association web-site which is now up-and-running. It is still early days, but members are urged to use the site and provide any ideas or contributions in the first instance to Laurissa Papprell. The address is www.saltersgillallotments.co.uk
- **Plot numbering:** all members were asked to cooperate and comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement by ensuring their plot numbers were clearly displayed outside their plots;
- **Community Plot:** the Committee has been keen to establish such a plot near to the centre of the site, and work has progressed slowly on doing so on Central Avenue at plots 136, 136A and 137. The plots

have been partially reclaimed and new gates recently installed. Long-term plans are to have an Association shop and have “communal” stores, composting, etc. Any offers of help would be appreciated on this project, particularly anyone who has contacts to obtain a container or two!

- **Raising Finance:** the Committee has been applying for grants, 15 applications having been made in the first year - sadly all unsuccessful. As a new organisation this is to be expected, but we hope to achieve charitable status, which would extend our possibilities and improve our chances of being successful..

The Chairman concluded by stating his vision for the Saltersgill site:

“My vision is for a site with all plots having a tenant, all plots being cultivated and having a healthy waiting list for plots. I would like to see the Saltersgill site as the standard for allotments in the town. I would hope that we have a community plot with a purpose-built hut, storage bins containing top-soil, sand, wood and other items useful to plot-holders. I would hope that we have a shop selling items not just to Saltersgill tenants, but also to tenants from other sites in the town. This would mean we would be bringing money in to the site which in turn would be ploughed back into the Association and hopefully help to keep rent levels down.”

3. Secretary's Report (Marvin Adkin)

MA reported that 46 plots had been let or re-let since the Association had gone self-managed, which although very pleasing, did not mean that we were close to achieving 100% occupancy. Because of the inaccuracy of the information available from the Council on hand-over in 2014, it has been difficult to build up an accurate picture of tenancy arrangements. 9 plots are known to be vacant, but MA is confident that the rent-collection process due to take place in June will reveal where tenants are not intending to continue and highlight other potential vacant plots. If rents are not paid by 1st July, people will be chased up by MA and JA.

We now have a waiting list of 16 people and it is hoped to increase this number over the coming months.

During the year, the Committee successfully applied for membership of the Allotments and Gardens Council of UK and with membership came public liability and 3rd party insurance cover via Hiscox Commercial Insurance. A copy of the Insurance certificate is on the Association's web-site. Another benefit of membership of the AGCUK is a discount scheme with garden suppliers Dobies which offers discounts of up to 50% on seeds, etc. Chris Allen (plot 32) is administering this scheme for any one who is interested. In addition, water butts can be obtained from the Committee at a cost of £5 each.

At this point of the meeting an existing Committee member (GW) made a 'minor outburst' concerning security and insurance issues and left the meeting.

3. Treasurer's Report (Ian Ford)

IF presented an audited statement of the financial accounts of the Association for 2014/15, copies being made available to all present at the meeting.

This statement indicated a formation balance at formation on 1st August 2014 of £1,757.19, consisting of £1,657.19 being monies held by the Council from the previous Association, and a nominal £100 worth of equipment held.

Members of the Committee are in the process of renovating this equipment to enable it to be a resource that members can utilise in the future.

The Balance Sheet as of 31st March 2015 showed a positive balance of £8,155.33, being £8,055.33 in the bank plus the £100 of equipment held. However this is somewhat misleading in that it includes a sum of £6,398.14 shown as 'surplus'. As revealed by the Income and Expenditure Account, the accounts show 12 months of income, but only 8 months of expenditure - from 1st August 2014 to 31st March 2015. The surplus of £6,398.14 includes a known balance to spend of approx £3,225 on water charges (heaviest 4months of usage to come), £1,400 on rubbish collection, £128 on vermin control, plus other minor items.

IF predicts that the year-end surplus of income over expenditure will be approximately £720, which is slightly less than originally forecast, in large part due to the additional costs on rubbish collection mentioned previously by the Chair.

In answer to a query from the floor, it was confirmed that the cost of hedge-cutting undertaken by the Committee to date was only £40.

4. Selection of Committee for 2015/16

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.

PW also confirmed that of the initial Committee membership of 12, 9 people were happy to stand again as Committee members, with 3 electing to stand down, namely Nigel Reed, Ros Waugh and Catherine Howell.

The existing 9 members, namely Peter Whelan(146), Marvin Adkin(144A), Ian Ford(104), Laurissa Pappri(86/87), Billy Holdsworth(124/125), John Appleby(100), Chris Allen(32), Keith Lewis(93) and Guy Wilson(43) were duly re-elected for 2015/16.

A suggestion was made from the floor that since two of those who had stood down were women, leaving only one female on the Committee, it would be good to seek co-options of one or two women.

Note: Subsequent to the AGM, two volunteers came forward and were duly co-opted on to the Committee, these being Sybil Taylor(19 & 99) and Phil Gibson (121A).

5. Any Other Business

The following points were raised from the floor:

- **Where is the Community Plot?**
Plots 136/137 on Central Avenue is to be the location of the community plot.
- **What can be done about the first corner on-site - it's an 'accident waiting to happen'?**
The suggestion of a 1-way system was felt to be unrealistic and impossible to police/enforce; but a suggestion that a combination of erecting mirrors outside plots 6 and 7 and/or reducing the height of the hedge of plot 93 was worthy of further consideration and action.
- **Can a CCTV camera be installed on site to help security?**
This issue has been looked into already and is an expensive solution. Although the cost to buy and set up is only £2,000, the cost of it being linked into the Council's monitoring system is c. £5,000 per annum. If the camera is not linked up and viewed regularly it is not much use. In addition, the range of accurate cover from one camera is not that great and it is difficult to know where to erect on such a large site as Saltersgill. PW indicated that he was considering an approach to all Middlesbrough councillors seeking financial assistance to help with security issues .
- **What is the Association's web-site address?**
The address is www.saltersgillallotments.co.uk
PW took the opportunity to thank Committee members Laurissa Pappri and Keith Lewis for working to get the web-site up and running, and for Graham Clark in managing the domain.

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

Keith Lewis
June 2015