

SALTERSGILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PLOT-HOLDERS: 10:00 SUNDAY 13th MAY 2018

Present:

8 Committee members: Keith Lewis (Chair), Ian Ford (Treasurer), Marvin Adkin (General Secretary), Chris Allen, John Appleby, Phil Gibson, Billy Holdsworth and Sybil Taylor; along with 27 other Saltersgill plot-holders.

Apologies: Eric Benson (Committee member).

1. Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed all plot-holders to this the fourth Annual General Meeting of the Association and thanked them for attending. The level of attendance was pretty much in line with that the previous year.

2. Minutes of Last AGM

The Minutes of the 2017AGM, 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 one item from last year's minutes not covered by the agenda, which related to plots 133, 133A (former Kenp's plot). Last year it was reported that the Committee was considering developing a 'community orchard' on the plot – a proposal which led to some strong objections. Taking these comments on board, the Committee amended their plans and the plot has now been successfully let following an intensive tidy-up courtesy of some volunteers and MEC apprentices.

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 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 2017/18 was, in general, a good one.

The main improvements carried out this year have been:

- installing two **CCTV cameras** at the site entrance, one covering the main gate and one providing a 360 degrees coverage of much of the site. The total cost was £2,500 incl VAT, but we did receive an £850 grant from Middlesbrough Environment City. Although there have been some teething problems, the cameras are now operational. Whilst the cameras won't stop all vandalism/theft, hopefully they will help and act as a deterrent;
- consolidating the **central area of the community compound** in front of the shop, making deliveries by vans and collection of compost bags, etc by car much easier. This work cost approximately £2,700;
- undertaking a very **thorough hedge-cut** on site in the early spring, along with the acquisition of a leaf-blower to assist the tidy-up afterwards, which greatly improved the appearance of the site;
- 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, continues to provide an excellent service to members;
- the **King's Seeds Discount scheme** (also run by Chris Allen) continues to provide a useful service with over 30 orders placed this year, and with discounts of 50%;
- plans are also afoot to erect some **new storage bays** in the community compound for planings, chippings, sand and possibly manure.

As in previous years, the two main problem areas remain (i) security and (ii) fly-tipping/rubbish;

- **Fly-tipping/rubbish:** the Chair urged all tenants not to use the site as a dumping-ground/free waste disposal service, i.e bringing rubbish from home to the site and allowing the Association and its members to pay to dispose of it. The committee has changed a number of different approaches this year without great success, and the cost to dispose of rubbish is still in excess of £2,000 a year.
- **Security/vandalism:** the situation has improved a little in the year, but it remains an issue as witnessed by the incident a few weeks previously when a number of members were badly affected. Hopefully the CCTV will

help in the future, but the Chair urged all responsible members to be vigilant and if they spot anything suspicious to challenge people, take car registration numbers, etc and report incidents to the Committee in the first place and also to the police [Tel: 01642 326326].

Plot-letting has been very successful during the year such that in December 2017, after three years of trying, we finally cleared the back-log of voids/difficult-to-let plots and achieved a fully-let position. The task now is to keep on top of managing the letting voids as they become vacant. This will probably amount to some 15 plots per annum as people give up plots for a variety of reasons. See also item 6 below.

Financially, the Association has had another good year, with reserves increasing by £1,708.96 such that the cash in hand stands at £17,637.30. In spite of reducing rents last year, the reduction in rental income was only £626 because we collected rents from more plots than previously.

The Association's finances are in a very stable position, therefore. Our fixed running costs are known and have remained pretty constant at around £6,500, which has allowed us to spend over £5,000 on major capital works.

Accordingly the Chair announced that **rents for 2018/19** are being kept the same as last year, i.e officially £57 for a larger plot and £28 for a smaller plot, but **discounted** to £52 and £25 respectively **if paid before the end of June**. Rent demand letters will be sent out by the Council, on the Association's behalf by the end of May.

He also announced that further capital works will be commissioned over the next two to three years with priority given to (i) storage bays in the community compound, (ii) repairs to Central Avenue (which wasn't treated in 2017 when the other roads were done), and (iii) further improvements to the shop (through separate shop account and surpluses).

5. Treasurer's Report (Ian Ford)

IF presented an audited statement of the financial accounts of the Association for 2017/18. It indicated an opening balance on 31st March 2017 of £17,713.34 and a closing balance at 31st March 2018 of £19,172.30. This total consisted of £17,637.30 in the Bank, and assets of £295 in equipment and £1,240 in the form of containers. It should be noted that the valuation of equipment at £295 is a very conservative estimate of assets held by the Association.

The Income and Expenditure Account indicated rental income of £12,544.00 (net of £500 paid to the Council as site rent), a final loan repayment from the shop account of £250, and a grant from MEC of £850. Expenditure in the year consisted of £6,735.04 on general management and maintenance items, £5,200 on capital purchases/works and a surplus of £1,708.96. The figure of £4,582.71 for repairs, labour etc, includes the £2,700 paid for works to the community compound hard-standing, as well as other goods purchased as small items of capital expenditure, e.g the leaf blower.

IF also tabled the verified accounts of the SAA Shop which revealed opening assets on 31st March 2017 of £1,877.71 and a closing balance at 31st March 2018 of £2,896.51. The Income and Expenditure Account showed income from sales of £8,451.49 and from raffles and coffee mornings of £208.24; against cost of purchases of £7,402.25 and other costs of £250.87 - totalling £7,653.12. After a final repayment of £250 on the loan from the main SAA Account, a Members Surplus of £756.61 was generated in the year.

He went on to remind members that it was always a target of the Association to maintain reserves of £15 -£20k to prepare 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.

6. Secretary's Report (Marvin Adkin)

MA confirmed that no plots were currently available to let. Over the past 3 years, a third of the 264 plots at Saltersgill have changed hands, some several times over. There have been 170 plot name changes in that period although the rate of change has slowed down of late as the success rate of re-letting had improved. The Association currently holds a waiting list of people wanting a plot and enquiries are regularly received via the website..

The Committee has been successful during the year in evicting some tenants for non-cultivation of plots and a further number of letters are due to be issued in May/June. In addition, if rents are not paid by 1st July, people will be chased up by MA and JA and eviction procedures commenced where necessary.

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.

9 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), Chris Allen (32), John Appleby (100), Eric Benson (63A/64), Ian Ford (104), Phil Gibson (121A), Billy Holdsworth (124/125), Keith Lewis (93) and Sybil Taylor (19 & 99).

In addition, one or two co-options are being considered to bring some new blood on to the Committee.

8. Member's Question/Any Other Business

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

- The effectiveness of the **new CCTV camera** was queried as a result of the recent break-ins on site when 4 or 5 people were affected – the incident was reported and got coverage in the Evening Gazette. Concern was also expressed that Marvin was the only person with access to view the images recorded. MA explained that installation of the cameras had been seriously delayed by obtaining consent from the Council to use their pole and power supply at the site entrance. Also at the time of the break-ins MA was on holiday and had not received the briefing from the installation engineer as to how the system could be monitored. This has now taken place and MA agreed to work closely with a small group of tenants who were keen to be involved in a CCTV Monitoring Group. These volunteers included Paul Bartaby(79), Ged Sloan(120) and Rebecca Munsey (76). **Marvin Adkin to arrange.**
- One tenant was having difficulty in **sourcing manure** for his plot, and whilst committee members explained that this was not an Association issue, he was informed that James Bainbridge and Bullocks of Lazenby were still two known suppliers to pursue.
- One tenant commented on the **lack of publicity** on-site for the AGM, and on Association matters in general. KL accepted that communication could be improved and the Committee would look into this further to see how things could be improved. The Association website www.saltersgillallotments.co.uk remains in need of more regular revision, and it was suggested that the shop could be used more as a means of disseminating information, e.g. contact lists, copies of key documents, Rules and Regulations of Tenancy, etc.
- Regarding **Rules and Regulations of Tenancy**, it was noted that all new plot-holders should be made aware of their obligations by receiving a copy of the relevant document and/or being referred to the web-site and a copy which would be available in the future in the site shop. '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;
- It was also suggested that greater use could be made of the **notice boards** on site to communicate with members.
- The use of plots 167 and 68 as '**rubbish/bonfire**' plots was queried and the Committee agreed to look into gating one or other of the plots to discourage fly-tipping and at how rubbish is dealt with, to avoid compromising adjoining plots.
- One tenant requested that consideration be given to providing a **double tap** (rather than a single) next to plots 78 and 130. **BH agreed to look into this** and implement if possible.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at approximately 11:25am.

Keith Lewis
May 2018