

## MINUTES OF UNITY GROVE ALLOTMENTS AGM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2017 – 7.45pm

### 35 Members Present

**APOLOGIES:** Gill Owen (Plot 5b), Alan Day (Plot 13a), Susan Walton (Plot 77) Geoff Senior (Plot 67)

**MINUTES OF 2016 AGM:** Agreed by all present. Proposed by David Smith, Seconded by John McLeod

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** After a challenging year, with the resignation of the Secretary and the sad passing of the Treasurer, both problems have been overcome, Wendy Hudson stepped in as Secretary and Alan Connell held the purse strings for the last couple of months. It was a cold start to the growing season, but most plots produced a good crop and most ploholders kept the plots pretty well. Unfortunately, there have been some issues with staff etc., so inspection of the plots has not been done as much as normal. It has been noticed ploholders have been doing watering with hosepipes, is this necessary and to be used sensibly.

Through Committee Meetings we have put up a new Notice board at the bottom of the site and also a letterbox at the side of the shop, not in view of the street, for any members who wish to correspond with the Secretary or Committee.

There is still an issue with the resident along the boundary side, wall falling down, we had to remove the soil, this was done as a temporary measure to keep the resident quiet and what Harrogate Council had required us to do. This will still have to be dug out, and once done, we will have to give access to the resident to repair the wall. There is also asbestos still to be removed – this will be wrapped and disposed of. We hope, in the next 12 months, to remove the portacabin by the shop.

Regarding the tracks running between the plots, we are hoping to try and get the ruts levelled out at some point, the smaller rubble on the far side of the allotments can be used for filling in these ruts. This is going to be put in the Website and Newsletter, with the hope that maybe we can get some volunteers to help the Committee do this. We are again asking the ploholders to keep the areas around their plots tidy. We are trying to get the work done on the site when not spending time on our plots. Plot 40b made us aware of the state of next plot. We explained we are trying to get through jobs without spending a lot of money. There was also comment that Plot 99 is like a tip – has not been dug over. If there is a Waiting List, why has it not been taken? We replied that the Plot Manager let us down, but this will be changed this Autumn.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** The Secretary confirmed that although she had only taken over part way through the year, there had been no real issues. The Annual Allotment Show raised £725 .,

for Open Country, the designated Charity. Unity raised £170., on the Produce stall and she thanked everyone who contributed and helped in any way. Unity was awarded Silver in the Harrogate in Bloom judging for the site. She once again reminded plot holders to keep her informed of all changes of address, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in order to keep the records up to date. Also confirmed there was now a letterbox on the side of the shop for anyone without e-mail.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** When I took this over, the first thing I did was to try and balance the accounts. Have to say I did successfully balance the accounts, so David didn't take any with him. The accounts are constructed on the basis of money received or paid out – this makes it more straight forward. The works on the drainage included a grant from the Council, some of the money in grants etc., cover increase in drainage, removal of glass and skip and small bits and bats. The shop had a better year.

The Balance Sheet consists of profit from site, together with profit from shop. Overall, we have made a profit of £1,151.62, this year. This varies as to how many unlet plots there are. The number is very similar to previous years.

Next year I haven't included costs for removal of asbestos/drainage. Hopefully the shop income with increase as much as this year. The Water bill was lower than last year. I don't think our costs will rise substantially in the next year. We have quite a nice cushion, but we need to keep this in case of any disasters, i.e. tree falling on somebody etc., even though we are a non-profit making organization. The chemical bill is higher, due to having a lot of it left in the shop.

The question of the chemical toilet was brought up by a member, this needs mending. Are we going to replace/repair this? The hut around the toilet needs mending too.

**GATE AND SECURITY:** Following the resignation of Mrs. Thorpe, who locked and unlocked the gate 365 days a year, we tried various options, with Committee members and plot holders to open and shut the gate. This worked to some degree. Have asked for someone to open and shut gate 365 days but no-one volunteered. In the end came to conclusion to leave the gate open. We had a couple of quotes in for mechanical gates (£3,500.,) too expensive. Most of the Allotments use padlock and key with deposit system. The Committee came up with this solution and wanted to put it in place in the summer. There were some objections and therefore we are putting it now to the members who are here tonight. The system is that one key operates all three gates. If you already have a key for side gates, the deposit for this will be refunded, when you return the key. The deposit for the new key will be £10., and this will be kept in a separate deposit account. It also means we can keep track of the keys, which are all numbered separately.

We have had combination padlocks on site before, lasted very short term. We have had 2/3 instances of plots being vandalized, nothing taken.

Any objections: keys can end up in wrong hands, what if taken ill and need someone to come, what if you lose key? One other way would be to leave open all day, but last person to leave at certain time locks the gate – keep same system but on a rota – have tried this but it doesn't work that easily.

Rachel, a plotholder, confirmed that putting padlock on the gate, and having it locked all the time,

would be making allotments more secure, particularly for the number of ladies on the site, sometimes on their own.

Regarding the question of lost keys etc., the Treasurer came up with a suggestion – have a key safe with combination on the side of the shop, if a problem phone one of the Committee, from list on Notice board, and they will give plotholder the combination to get spare key. This was proposed by Mr. Roach and seconded by Mr. McLeod.

To operate to have gate locked everyone has a key. All keys are numbered, so we know who has that key. If you want 2 keys this will cost 2 deposits. They are all secure keys.

After a vote this was passed – in favor 31

Against – 4.

When and How - We will be issuing keys on Saturday mornings – 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December between 10am and 12noon in the shop. The padlock will be in operation on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December. If you have old key, we will refund deposit and issue a new key on payment of deposit.

**NEW RULES:** To be added into the Agreements for Plotholders – New Plotholders – we are proposing to charge a deposit of £25., refunded to the plotholder when the plot is vacated in a reasonable condition. If not, the £25., will go towards clearing the plot into a reasonable condition for the new plotholder.

After a vote this was unanimously passed.

Plot holders may face losing their plot through leaving the gate open. They will be given the usual 3 letters warning. This is a deterrent to keep plotholders from not leaving it open.

After a vote – 26 in favor

2 against

Definition of a plot – this subject has come up two or three times. The proposal is that a plot is defined as a numbered parcel of land, irrespective of size. The Constitution states no more than 2 plots. This can be interpreted as 4 x half plots or 2 x full plots. For rent purposes we will have full or half plots.

After a vote – 26 in favor

2 against.

New plotholders to have maintained their existing plot for a period of 12 months, before putting their name down for a second plot.

This was unanimously passed.

## **RENTS FOR 2018**

The Committee had a long discussion about these and decided, as a matter of principle, because costs keep rising, we are putting the rents up by £1., across the board. This will be put on the Notice board. Someone asked if this meant 50p for a half plot, but it will not!!  
Passed unanimously.

## **UNITY CUP**

This is given to a new Plot holder who has tended his plot over the last year. This year it goes to Donna and Clive Jones, Plot 42b, who unfortunately were not at the meeting. Ian will make sure the cup gets to them.

## **HARROGATE OPEN SPACES**

There was some good news about this – Harrogate Council have, at the moment, designated Allotments as green spaces. This, however, still has to go before the full Council on 15<sup>th</sup> November and then the Planning Expectorate next year. We still need to have the support and to lobby the Councilors on the 15<sup>th</sup> November, so they don't overturn what Council has decided to do. The Treasurer drafted 2 letters to the Councilors which he handed out to plot holders for signature and return. He has also written to Andrew Jones, MP, for his support. No doubt that public pressure has changed the Council's view on this matter. It's absolute vital to get the support and keep the pressure up.

## **LETTING OF PLOTS**

Vacant plots will be relet after the AGM, so the plot holders will be getting 14 months use for 12 months rent. There are 2 or 3 plots which will be relet if the plot holders don't do anything with them.

## **PRESENTATION TO JOHN WHARTON**

The Committee realise that John has struggled for the past 2/3 years and wanted to show our appreciation for what he has done for the past 27/28 years. As tokens of this we presented him with:

Honorary Membership of the Association;

Plot 88 rent free while you are still there;

Margaret presented him with framed photo of him on Allotment;

Ian presented him with a hamper of groceries.

## **ELECTIONS**

There has been one nomination for each position – these are: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Letting Manager, Site Manager, Newsletter Editor, Shop Manager. The Secretary will hold the Waiting List. The Letting Manager will deal with letting the Plots and Plotholders. Frank is doing very well with the website.

Chairman – Ian Seaward  
Vice Chairman – John Melanaphy  
Secretary – Wendy Hudson  
Treasurer - Alan Connell  
Shop Manager – Terry Crosland  
Letting Manager – David Smith  
Site Manager – Phil Jarvis  
Newsletter Editor – Margaret Smith  
All duly elected.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Bonfires were held on two dates, and we had a complaint from the Council. We responded to them and have heard nothing further. There was a suggestion for bonfires on a Saturday and Sunday, but we pick a day during the week for those unable to get down as weekends, and also neighbours would complain. We have, in the past, had a day in the year, March, and had complaints from the Council.

The Chairman hoped that the new Committee would enjoy their roles and looked forward to working with them.

Would like to try and get more involvement from Plotholders, maybe scarecrow competition for the kids, dressed sheds competition etc.. All this goes towards the green spaces.

One plotholder commented that there was still a problem with the water on the site. We have a couple of issues and the Committee will look into it and try to rectify it, whether this time round the Committee will supply the materials for the plotholders to deal with their plots.

Polytunnels – we are getting a few on the plots. The maximum size and where to be positioned on the plots is on the website.

The water will be turned off this weekend until end of March. Water butts are full and site is wet.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm.