

SALTERSGILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING OF PLOT-HOLDERS: 10:00 SUNDAY 26th OCTOBER 2014

Present

11 Committee members: Peter Whelan (Chair), Ian Ford (Treasurer), Marvin Adkin (General Secretary), Keith Lewis (Minute Secretary), John Appleby, Laurissa Papprell, Billy Holdsworth, Guy Wilson, Chris Allen, Rosalind Waugh and Nigel Reid; and approximately 30 other Saltersgill plot-holders.

Purpose of Meeting: To explain to members what has happened since the initial meeting was held on 15th June 2014 and what it is hoped will happen up to the end of our first year in existence.

1. Chairman's Report (Peter Whelan)

PW began by welcoming everyone to the meeting, which effectively was the first meeting of the new Association since it formally came into existence, and asking them to complete the attendance sheet that was circulated.

PW confirmed that both the Lease of the Saltersgill site to the Association and the Association's Constitution have now been signed by the relevant parties and are fully operative.

He went on to thank everyone who had helped in any way with establishing the Association, the Committee, and in supporting the efforts of the Committee in beginning the task of improving the general appearance and operation of the Saltersgill site.

PW asked for ongoing help from members in the following areas:

(i) Plot numbers: all plots should be numbered as this would greatly assist in management of the site;

(ii) Fly Tipping: although improving slowly, rubbish continues to be dumped on site, and all members need to be vigilant and report any instances of fly-tipping. It is clear that in addition to fly-tipping by non-members, plot-holders themselves are also bringing rubbish to the site from outside, which is costing all members to have cleared away. Every rubbish collection by the 'Get Rid' contractors costs approximately 75p per member;

(iii) Fires: whilst the Committee is willing to be more flexible regarding having fires on site than the Council was, people must use common sense – fires must be controlled, only be lit when the wind is not strong or blowing towards nearby houses, must not interfere with neighbours and not include plastics, etc. Preferably they should be contained within burning bins;

(iv) Dogs: members bringing dogs to site are requested to keep them on leads when not on the members' own plots, and all dog faeces must be cleaned up by the owners.

(v) Plot Inspections: there is an obligation on the Association for regular inspections to take place to ensure plots are used in accordance with the Tenancy Agreements. To that end, letters will be sent out to all tenants and arrangements made to inspect. The co-operation of members is requested.

Work that has already taken place in an attempt to improve the running of the site includes the following:

(i) Pot-holes: a contractor was appointed at a cost of just under £800 to repair the pot-holes on site which it is hoped members have noticed and appreciated. The Committee has an aspiration to re-

surface the major roads on site on a phased basis over say the next 6 years, once we have established costs and seen how the first full year's budget works out;

(ii) Security: because of the spate of vandalism incidents, the Committee felt obliged to take action to improve site security, especially during the hours of darkness. As a result, the main gate is to be locked at dusk from 26th October with actual closing times being posted by the site entrance. Although vehicular access will thus be prevented, those members requiring access after dark will be able to use the pedestrian side-gate which has been renewed and fitted with a self-closing mechanism. A limited number of keys are available from the Secretary, Marv Adkin. A small number of members have volunteered to lock and open the main gate as required. Whilst acknowledging that these arrangements may not suit everybody, the majority view was that something had to be done to improve security. The Committee is also looking into other measures including CCTV but this is not a cheap solution;

(iii) Livestock: to comply with Tenancy Regulations, a review of procedures relating to the keeping of livestock is being undertaken and Billy Holdsworth will be visiting all plot-holders who keep livestock to complete a Livestock Registration Form;

(iv) Fund-Raising: in addition to any surplus funds that might accrue at year-end, the Committee is also applying to various bodies who are known to offer grants to community groups. The main area requiring funding is the development of a communal plot with a new meeting hut and storage container which could house communal equipment for hire and perhaps a site shop. The former Watson Plots (136/137) have been earmarked for such communal use.

2. Secretary's Report (Marvin Adkin)

MA reported that there were currently 24 known vacant plots that were being cleared prior to letting and there were a similar number of people on the waiting list. In addition, there were some 30 plots that appeared to be uncultivated, a number which could increase following plot inspections and further clarification from the Council who are still chasing up those tenants who had not formally renewed by paying their rent for the current year.

On the evidence of the above therefore, the Association needs to consider advertising for anyone interested in taking an allotment to apply to go on to a waiting list.

3. Treasurer's Report (Ian Ford)

IF reported that a new Account had been opened for the new Association with Yorkshire Bank. The sum of £1,657 has been received from the account of the old Committee which has acted as a very useful 'float' to deal with immediate expenses. In addition rental income for 2014/15 of some £12,500 was received from the Council in September. As indicated above, some 'non-payers' are still being chased by the Council.

The Council has also offered to collect future rents on our behalf - which would be a more flexible system than the Association doing it itself, and would also offer a financial saving to the Association. To date, expenditure of approximately £3,000 has been incurred on rubbish collection (£300 for two regular monthly collections and £1,250 for an initial blitz), £420 on security measures (mostly a one-off payment on padlocks, etc), £321 on vermin control and £792 on pot-hole repairs. The current balance was reported as £10,380.

IF confirmed that an initial budget had been prepared for the first full-year which indicated a potential surplus of some £2,000, although this included a number of provisional sums. It was also pointed out that in order to strengthen accounting practices, the Association had designated 5 named

signatories any 3 of whom being needed to sign cheques as required. IF also suggested that any member was welcome to inspect the accounts at any time.

4. Any Other Business

There was a short period of general discussion in which one or two dissenting voices were raised regarding the new security arrangements, but the majority of members present were supportive of the Committee's actions.

The suggestion was also made that a probationary period (of between 3 and 6 months) should be introduced as a new clause into the **Tenancy Agreement** that new tenants would sign up to. PW confirmed that this was something that the Committee had already discussed and it was intended to review the Tenancy Agreement in the near future.

The question of **improved communications** was raised and it was reported that a fledgling **web-site** had been established and that Laurissa Papprell and Catherine Howell were leading on looking at the structure and content of this and hoped to be in a position to 'go live' by January. Minutes of the General Meetings would certainly be something which would be available on the web-site.

PW concluded by saying that the current thinking was to hold 4 General Plot-holder Meetings a year, one of which would be an AGM possibly in June.

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

Keith Lewis
04.10.2014