

Dorrington Road Allotment Association AGM

Date of meeting: 16.3.11.

Present: 18 members and 7 committee members

Minutes by: Sharon Lewis

1. Apologies: Emilie, Val Morgan, Gary and Sue Bradshaw, Sarah Barber
2. Matters arising from previous minutes: Minutes were e-mailed out to all members and put on notice board and web-site. Minutes were approved.
3. Treasury Report: Robert went through figures – all members present were given a written copy. He explained the reason for the increase in insurance was due to the increase in liability insurance. There has been significant increase in water rates. Work on gate has been paid for, a new strimmer was purchased due to theft. There has been no increase in the rents this year. There were no questions on the accounts.
4. Membership secretary report: Sharon said that there were currently 2 vacant plots which would be let in the next couple of weeks. The waiting list currently stands at 28 and has been closed. This is in line with many other allotment sites in the area and due to the currently popularity of the allotmenting. The list will be re-opened when the list has got shorter.

Sharon asked that people inform us of their contact details in order to keep our records up-to-date.

5. Warning Notices etc.: Rob said that he had given 7 warning notices and notices to quit in the last year. He said that more people were working their plots well and fewer people giving up. He talked about his reasons for giving warning notices and its necessity.

He said that in the coming year there would be a need to clamp down on some of the general rules whereas in previous years there has been more of a focus on neglected plots. The committee will begin to look at some of the anti-social rules e.g. altering of boundaries, general use of site etc.

6. Review of previous 12 months: Angela gave a review of the significant events –
 - New gate has been completed and paid for by the council. Ian has done work on securing site by adding to the top of the gate..
 - Gabions have been put in to stop subsidence towards Frank and Sheila's plots. There has also been a handrail put on the slope. Again this work has been completed and paid for by the council.

- Water harvesting – large containers have been acquired and sold at £10 each. There is the intention to get more – Chris asked if people would let him know if they would like one (he can get 9 at a time).
- Volunteer days – there have been several. Angela said thank you to those people who came. Pruning the hedge, mending gaps in fencing and working on wildlife areas are just some of the tasks completed. Angela said that the next one would be in April (poss. 9th). Angela also gave thanks for those people who get on with jobs around site on general maintenance.
- There have continued to be acts of crime on site. Angela asked that people report any gaps in fencing etc. She re-iterated the need to keep the gate locked at all times and stressed the need for people to keep tools locked away.
- Angela said that there was an on-going issue with rabbits on site. She asked that people let the committee know of any small gaps in fencing, evidence of droppings etc. A member asked what are we actively doing about them. Angela said that it had not yet been decided. There are still various bits of rabbit proof fencing along the site to be addressed on next working day.

7. Progress of new lease and service level agreement: Rob explained that the new lease had arrived in August. All Lancaster City Allotment sites were given a new lease, similar to previous lease, although now there is only a peppercorn rent to pay of just £1 a year.

He said that also as part of new lease agreement, negotiated with ALMA, there would be £80,000 over 4 years over all allotment sites (approx. 16 sites). He said that all sites have different issues and that the money allocated to us so far was based on health & safety related items (we have also been given soak aways on the far track). Rob said that he was unsure what our allocation of money will be for next year.

Rob said that there was some issues with boundaries across all allotment sites. Some allotment sites were questioning whether to sign the lease based on what arrangements the council were suggesting for boundary maintenance. He said that ALMA were still negotiating this part of the lease and until the council have come up with a solution for boundaries we will not be signing the lease.

Rob gave approx cost of fencing at £50 a metre. For our fencing looking at approx £30,000.

We do now have funds in the account and the committee will have to look at how we start making a development plan for our boundaries.

Mr Lowman queried why we haven't signed lease when they have offered a peppercorn rent and asked whether we are at risk of losing this deal. Rob and Ian said that this would be very unlikely as it is the council's own development plans to have allotments.

Rob explained that there were also issues about the clarity of where our boundary lines are. This could be an important when new fencing is being put up.

8. Site Improvements: Rob said that there had been a lot of improvements on the site this year. However, so far these have all been

infrastructure. He said that there was now a need to look at what kind of things the association would like. He said that one intention was to put a large steel container for association tools, strimmers etc. on the site.

9. Committee Nominations: Sharon said that she would be standing down from the committee. Chris was nominated as the new membership secretary and this was voted on. There was a unanimous vote for Chris.

All other committee members said that they intended to stay on the committee. There was a unanimous vote for these committee members.

Rob encouraged people to join committee as there were other positions that could be filled.

10. New rules: Bees: Chris said that they now have 2 colonies of bees which have been divided from the original colony. He said that he was not aware that there had been any issues on site and there were no issues raised by members at the meeting. He said that he hoped that people would begin to see the benefits over the next season and again asked that people speak to Chris or Christina if there are any issues.

Chris went through the rules which he had drawn up for bee-keeping on site. He explained that they are strict but this is important. There was a majority vote for the bee-keeping rules.

Fruiting trees – Rob explained new rules on fruiting and non-fruiting trees. They were discussed in detail and again there was a majority vote on the rules.

11. Any other issues:

- Paul Arthur asked for people to be aware of leaving bundles of pea netting on the floor as he had recently found two dead hedgehogs in some netting found in a shed he had inherited on his plot.
- Chris talked about the idea of dividing up plots to make smaller plots and also the possibility of sub-letting. Rob clarified that they were not allowed to sub-let. Ian said that other allotment sites were actively dividing plots to reduce their waiting lists. It was agreed in the meeting that Chris could begin to do this were feasible.
- Linda asked about the plots at the far end of site. Rob said that this had been in discussion at recent committee meetings and they were beginning to make plans on how to reclaim this land.

12. Gate numbers: New gate numbers were given to those attending the meeting.

13. The meeting was closed.