

# Dorrington Road Allotment Association

## A.G.M. 2013 – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013 Minutes of Meeting

Present – Six [2012/3] Committee members and ten plot-holders

Committee [outgoing] present consisted of – Angela, Rob, Ian, Peter, Catherine and Sean

Apologies from - Chris Duxbury

1. Angela opened the meeting and welcomed those attending.
2. Ian updated the meeting on security matters
  - There is a need to maintain security at the site and plot-holders were reminded that the gate lock **must** be scrambled on entry to and exit from site, no matter how short the person's visit. On a significant number of occasions the gate has been left open compromising security.
  - Codes would be changed on a periodic basis
  - In response to a question – Ian confirmed the code needs to be set in order to close the lock.
3. Rob provided a Treasurer's Report
  - Gross Income was £2,216
  - Expenses were £755
    - i. Water rates were nearly half of 2011/12; whilst a big saving the poor weather was probably the root cause (and hopefully was a one-off!)
    - ii. Insurance had gone down slightly
      1. however fire damage is now excluded which means there is no cover for members for this – plot-holders be clearly aware.
      2. Liability cover is now provided for plot-holders on site as part of the policy, provided this is in the normal course of allotmenting.
    - iii. The land registry charge was a 'one off' item
  - The Seed Scheme has changed and is now online, not a paper based scheme. This continues to provide benefits for seed purchase and plot-holders should ask for details.
  - In answer to a question – Rob advised membership information for the NSALG is available from April each year.

- [Rob was stepping down as Treasurer] Sean proposed a vote of thanks to Rob for his several years as Treasurer and completing the 2013 accounts for the meeting.

#### 4. Follow on matters from finance

- Fees & membership
  - i. Plot not worked by mid May will be considered vacant (whether paid for or not).
  - ii. As always, all plot holders were asked to keep their contact details up to date with the secretary [or alternatively a committee member].
  - iii. Discussion had taken place regarding rent structures to make the system fairer, to clear up accumulated anomalies in plot sizes and also recognise the fact that fees had not increased in recent years despite costs increasing. The Committee were not proposing to change rents from last year's rates for this year but would have to recognise the need to create a sustainable future income and iron out discrepancies in the current charges. This would be done in the next year based on measuring the plots and setting rents related to area.
- Ian – grass Cutting; for several years this has been done by members – but, regrettably, only ever by one or two people. The people who had carried out this work were no longer in a position to do so.
  - i. The options were
    1. No cutting !
    2. A rota – and enforcement
    3. Contractors as a solution
  - ii. The Committee were recommending that a contractor be appointed and if possible this be a charitable organisation or one complimentary to the Allotment ethos (Piccadilly Gardens had been invited to tender and were expected to offer by far the best price based on experience by a local church)
  - iii. A proposal from the floor was for payment of a plot-holder to do the work. This had been considered previously by the committee and consideration of insurance [employers and public liability] was an issue and would have to be considered.
  - iv. There was also a suggestion from the floor to only have grass cutting for essential areas, as part of an environmental management plan.
  - v. A member asked if the financial position was sustainable [in view of the lack of volunteers and need to out-source], the Committee believed it can be accommodated in this year's income/reserves, however future rents would need to consider this and inflation

- Ian identified the need for a large influx of volunteers to be able to adequately sustain a non external solution. Experience over a number of years suggested this was not sustainable.
- Ian also identified to the meeting that the SLA with the Council commits the Association to maintain the site to an adequate standard. This covers a large area and therefore forces us to consider a paid service solution.
- A member from the floor ventured the opinion that the choice was a 'no-brainer'
- The Committee were to validate the contractor choice and progress

5. Working days – a question from the floor as to why there had only been one working day.

- i. The continued lack of volunteers
- ii. Poor weather
- iii. And, alternatives of the anytime task list were noted as relevant factors.
- Sean asked if there was agreement to the days? - support for working days was agreed by those who were present.
- Catherine noted that these days are compulsory – but unfortunately this requirement is not adhered to by the majority of members.
  - i. A question posed as to whether there should be a financial incentive to stop avoidance? – this met with some limited support.
- Plot-holders were asked to contact Chris (Secretary) to log details of 'anytime tasks' completed.

6. Site maintenance

- Angela advised there will be at least 1 rubbish skip per year, following the success in clearing site rubbish
  - i. Ian reinforced the note that there are weight limits on skips when collected, please bear these in mind when filling skips
  - ii. In response to a question from the floor – Angela said the dates were still 'tbc' but holiday periods would be avoided and a notice will be put up on site prior to any skip.
- Rabbits – a question from the floor as to whether the rabbit problem could be dealt with?
  - i. Ian said, we have no definite solution but plot-holders should consider perimeter security [rabbit fencing] and if the problem continues we could contact the council to see if anything could be done. Use of shooting will not be permitted, among other considerations this is contrary to the rules preventing firearms on site.

- Plot Inspections – Chris will continue with these – the Committee noted the need to reinforce these this year, as areas of the site are substandard
  - i. An issue raised from the floor regarding impact on adjacent plots – it was agreed this is an issue for some plots; it was agreed to include these in the inspection regime
  - ii. Issue reiterated that it is plot-holder responsibility to maintain plots, their perimeter hedges and consider fellow plot-holders.
- Water – this would go back on before Easter

#### 7. Future site plans

- Perimeter - Ian/Angela reported that the fence was, apart from the 'railway fence' in poor shape. A long term plan needed to be established and several points were frequently 'break-in' areas.
- Ian noted that the hedges are supplementary defences to the fences – it is plot-holder's responsibility for their own hedging sections to be maintained adequately. If individual plot-holders need help – they must ensure a member of the Committee is aware, and this will be included in a working day task [if there are sufficient people actually attend!]
- Track – this is deteriorating – the aim is to maintain access to the centre of the site, but this cannot be guaranteed in the longer term [currently]
- Comments from the meeting requested: – consider use of road planning or virgin quarry materials ?
  - i. Noted – need for a licence for any significant quantities of rework material; pollution risk ?;
  - ii. Views from the meeting requests –
    - 1. Cost?
    - 2. Work needed?
  - iii. Committee to consider as longer term issue.
- Water Supply – this may need attention in future. (noted for long term consideration)

8. As Angela was retiring from the Committee Ian proposed a vote of thanks for her contribution to the Association over the years – all agreed.

Apart from Rob & Angela who retired, all committee members re-elected to the committee. One plot holder (Claire) also volunteered to join the Committee, the meeting approved this.

*Secretary and Committee*  
for Dorrington Road Allotment Association