

Weston Favell Allotment Association

AGM

18 October 2022

Clive Leach, Vice-Chair of the Association opened the meeting.

Apologies from Wendy Nugent and Chris Osborne

Minutes of the 2021 AGM

None were available but all present confirmed they had no issues arising.

Vice-Chair's report

The growing season has been a disaster weather wise. We were either washed out or there was a drought. It has not been a good year for anyone but everyone is bound to continue on.

Lots of speed limit signs (5 mph) have been put up to try to limit road damage. Speeding throws up a trail of gravel and creates holes in the road. Clive asked that everyone keep to the speed limits and if they saw someone speeding then ask them to slow down.

The committee and others have done a lot of plot clearing. Unfortunately we have had to evict quite a few plot holders as the plots were not being worked on. If a plot is not worked on for some time then the weeds spread to neighbour's plots causing tensions.

To assist with clearing and boundary work a strimmer has been purchased with a heavy duty cable together with a brush clearer which is like a strimmer but with a circular saw to clear branches and saplings. We have also purchased an extending pruning saw which has a 16' reach for dealing with overhanging trees etc. Care needs to be taken in using it and this equipment is only for use by committee members trained to use it.

A few water tanks have been replaced. They are very expensive but fortunately last a long time. The secretary (Fran Woodley)'s husband has repaired the lids for many of them. If you see them left open, please close them up.

We are now in the process of replacing plot numbers on all plots. Lots of the plots have lost their numbers because they get removed or run over. The rules say that plot numbers must be displayed prominently and that each tenant is responsible for maintaining and replacing them. We intend to make sure that everyone has a number and then it will be up to you. We will provide stakes for those of you have no number and they need displaying where they can easily be seen. The numbering system is needed for plot inspections.

Clive wished everyone a happy growing season for 2023.

Treasurer's Report

Ron Fuller referred to the Treasurer's income and expenditure accounts that had been handed out prior to the start of the meeting. The statements covered the last 2 years and show an overall reduction in liquid funds over the previous year.

The liquid funds fell last year by £924 to £14,362. This includes a reserve of £3,600 to cover key deposits in the very unlikely event of a full site closure which leaves a clear balance of £10,762. Although the liquid funds fell overall, total funds including assets rose by £2,219.

There have been some large purchases this year of machinery and water tanks. The latter need to be purchased in advance as they must immediately be replaced in the event of a leak otherwise the whole site has to be turned off.

Rent collections went smoothly with an increase in numbers paying by bank transfer. We have not yet been advised by the Council of the increase in rent for next year but we assume that it is likely to be an increase of 20p per pole to £4.20 making the rent for a full 10 pole plot £42 or £21 for the over 60's. This year's rents still sit in our account awaiting the Council to send their invoice.

The growth of funds has allowed us to continue to cover repairs, stock the shop and replace water tanks leaving a healthy balance for larger scale projects such as road repairs.

Secretary's report

Fran Woodley confirmed she was in charge of the database and used that as a way to communicate easily and cheaply with most plot holders. Sometimes emails bounced back but the system in the main worked well and it enables her to send out the newsletters that Trevor Berry pulls together.

If anyone has articles for the newsletter then please let us have them as they will be much appreciated to add in. If anyone has any ideas as to other things to go into the newsletter we can put them in too.

The committee is currently thinking about sending rent invoices by email rather than post where possible.

Fran keeps the waiting list and currently there are 18 waiting for plots to become vacant.

Fran assists Clive in lettings. Some lettings are very successful but some less so. The eviction process is laborious with a cultivation letter having to be sent, then a wait of 4 weeks before an eviction letter can go. A further 4 week wait and eventually the plot can be reclaimed. The process can go on for months as a letter will often produce a flurry of work and then stop again. When a plot is eventually free, it is usually full of overgrown weeds to be cleared by the committee before re-letting.

If you have helpers on your plot who are not family members, please ensure their names are on the waiting list. Relatives can "inherit" a plot but general helpers cannot.

Ordering Kings Seeds is getting easier. They can be ordered online so if you want to do this contact Fran who will tell Kings and they will contact you direct. You can buy anything you like at 40% off the price in the catalogue. There is still an online form to print off if you prefer to order hard copy. The catalogue is also available online. We did receive a few hard copy catalogues which please re-cycle and put back in the summerhouse if you have finished with your copy but Kings are not providing as many as they have in the past. We appreciate that not everyone has access to a computer. Kings have additions besides what is shown in the catalogues, again with 40% off. We get commission for seeds ordered.

Fran also ensures the insurance is paid and that we remain members of the National Allotments Association. There was a claim this year on the insurance due to a burglary and equipment being stolen from the store.

Committee

Clive informed all that Ron was stepping down from the role of Treasurer and thanked him on behalf of us all for his work over the years. Clive said that Ron has been a brilliant treasurer and presented Ron with a present for his retirement.

Ron expressed his thanks.

The remainder of the committee, Clive Leach, Trevor Berry, David Walpole, Fran Woodley, Mike Kirkland, Deborah Cuthbertson, Sue Wray, Ed Taylor and Chris and Carol Hill confirmed they were willing to stand again.

Clare Herbert is willing to become the new treasurer.

All were proposed to the members present and all elected/re-elected for a further 12 months.

Future projects

The roadways need looking at again as well as the back gate road as the latest rain has made things difficult there.

2023 is the centenary of the allotments so we are giving thought as to a display or event as 100 is quite something.

Tree planting was suggested from the floor. This would need to be approved by the Council with soil tests to be done and a suitable tree purchased. All attendees thought this was a good idea. Size needs to be considered – a crab apple or silver birch of smaller variety. Possibly an old variety of apple. Mr Beswick at plot 145 is the man to talk to as he is a very knowledgeable authority on apple varieties. He has given apples away in the summerhouse and to the Hope Centre for juicing.

A vacant plot could be used for the community planted with varieties to celebrate 100 years.

It is a lovely idea for people to be able to use fruit and we could sell off trees for a certain sum of money. Renting out cherry trees and using them was an

idea too. Contributors could mark out their section of the plot and keep it tidy. A centenary orchard was a good idea to pursue with lots to think about.

Any other Business

A question was raised concerning road signs that had not been seen at the bottom end of the allotments. All agreed that it was the slope down to the bottom where speeding most occurred. The committee has not yet finished putting up all the signs but they will appear.

Allotment holders can be evicted if caught speeding and this is in the allotment regulations although difficult to supervise and enforce. The Council will not repair the damaged roads and the committee are constantly considering what can be done and what the potholes can be filled with to ensure a good lasting repair.

Sue Wray's village show was hugely successful and wonderful despite the terrible weather conditions.

There is a Christmas event on 11 December 2022 – drinks and mince pies and we are considering the monthly coffee mornings being started again. A Hog road or BBQ in the summer is another possible event.

Rachel Jones (plots 271-3) wrote a piece in the recent newsletter about the ripple effect and twinning your allotment with farmers in Kenya who suffer a permanent drought. She is a member of the United Reform Church in Abington Avenue Northampton [Abington Avenue URC \(aaurc.co.uk\)](http://aaurc.co.uk) who helps with the community allotment. This is supplied rent free and they grow and supply fruit and vegetables for the lunch club for isolated elderly people. They grow a variety of crops – onions, leeks, carrots, cabbage, rhubarb and soft fruit and the surplus goes to the Hope Centre <https://www.northamptonhopecentre.org.uk>.

Currently they have butternut squash and kale. Rachel's helpers are mainly from the church and they encourage people who may not have a garden themselves. The Scout Leader helps with the heavy stuff and Bridgewater Primary School come in the summer to assist.

Clive gave a plug for food banks to receive surplus growings. The Cathedral food bank will take fresh produce although a lot will only take cans. Enquiries need to be made of each individual food bank first before produce can be delivered.

Clive's closing comments were "help others" and that the beans will survive in 2023.

Everyone was thanked for coming and the committee look forward to seeing everyone on their plots over the next year.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.