

Weston Favell Allotment Association

AGM

24 October 2023

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

Apologies from Fran Woodley, Mike Kirkland and Glen Bowen.

Minutes of the 2021 AGM

Amendment was agreed to minutes to refer to Plot 146 in Future Projects and not Plot 145 as incorrectly stated. Minutes were approved by Christopher Hill.

Vice-Chair's report

It has been a momentous year for the allotment association. It was the 100th anniversary of our founding on 23 October 2023 and we are still going strong.

Fran, our secretary, cannot be here this evening, but she deals with the lettings and keeps all the details; the Data Protection Act only allowing one person to retain such information. Did you know that the average waiting time for an allotment is 15 years? Edgbaston and other sites have closed their books. Lots of Councils are trying to close allotments despite a statutory requirement to provide them. There can be a healthy turn over due to retirement, ill health or job moves.

Unfortunately, there has been quite a lot of vandalism recently. The composting loo was left with the door wide open, the seat up and composting soil everywhere.

There have been allegations of theft of produce from plots and vandalism to a greenhouse with the door damaged at a cost of £50 to repair.

The police need to be notified if there is a theft and a crime reference number obtained.

Plots get into a bad state when they are not taken care of particularly when someone is ill or in hospital. Please let us know and we will help out where we can.

Lots of people think that the Council run the allotments – they don't. We have a committee to do so. If the gate breaks, Clive fixes it, David deals with equipment and the shop. An article will go into the next newsletter concerning the running of the site and who does what. David pointed out that we are the only site in Northampton that is not Council run. The committee get things done whereas you will wait if the Council have to deal with it. They are less approachable and if a plot holder fails to care for their plot adequately, they are evicted.

Treasurer's report

Clare Herbert has been treasurer for the last 12 months and gave thanks to our previous treasurer Ron Fuller for all his support in the first year. She provided a copy of the Income & Expenditure Accounts for the year ending 30 September 2023.

The accounts are pretty stable for the last year. We currently have £10,762 available funds with Clare managing to keep the committee in check where the purchase of power tools is concerned.

We do include a reserve of £3600 to cover key deposits in the unlikely event of a full site closure.

Rent collection was a learning curve with more people paying by bank transfer although a few pay by cash or cheque.

There has been no mention of rent increases from the Council for next year but we must assume a likely increase of a further 20p per pole to £4.20 making the rent for a full 10 pole £42 or £21 for the over 60s.

The available funds allow us to cover repairs, maintenance and stock the shop as well as replacing water tanks. Large scale project such as road repairs when needed will soon diminish the funds.

Secretary's report (read by Carol Hill in Fran Woodley's absence)

Fran keeps the database using it to improve communications. She hopes that most members are receiving the emails which are regularly sent out. Let Fran know if you change your email address or do not appear to be getting them.

Fran uses email to send out the excellent Newsletter organised by Trevor. Thank you to all those who have contributed. Please contact us if you would like to contribute too.

Fran increasingly uses email to send out non-cultivation letters and eviction notices to avoid spiralling postage costs.

Fran keeps the waiting list and we currently have 30 approximately on the list. She organises new lettings of which there has been 18 this year so far. Clive Leach and Fran conduct regular plot inspections and contact those whose plots are not being cultivated properly.

Fran deals with the Kings Seeds link. There are fewer catalogues this year as all the information is on line. If you are not already taking advantage of the 40% discount offered by Kings then please contact Fran and see our recent newsletter for more information on this subject.

Fran deals with the insurance for the allotment site and the National Allotment Society membership.

As she is the person whose contact details are known by most people, is often the first receiver of complaints. Accordingly to our policy, these are dealt with by the committee.

Please note that all complaints of theft from plots should be reported to the police.

Clive said that Fran does a fantastic job and she will be resigning next year. We need someone to step into her place. We will get an article into the newsletter for someone to take over. We need a secretary.

Committee

All the committee, Clive Leach, Trevor Berry, David Walpole, Fran Woodley, Clare Herbert, Mike Kirkland, Deborah Cuthbertson, Sue Wray, Ed Taylor and Chris and Carol Hill confirmed that they were willing to stand again for another 12 months. Janet Kirkland propose and Chris Hill seconded and all were re-elected for a further 12 months.

Future projects

The time capsule still needs burying with ongoing discussions as to what to put into it and how to preserve it for the next 99 years.

The bottom gate needs repairs. It floods and repairs to the roads or speed bumps due to speeding need considering.

Any suggestions as to improvements are welcome.

Deborah Cuthbertson had hoped for a centenary tree which proved difficult due to soil/care/lots planted in the country which subsequently died. She still hopes for one.

AOB

Ron pointed out that pressure was applied to get people to pay rents by 1 April each year but the Council do not take the rent for months. Could there be some leeway for payment?

Bonfires are a problem already. Complaints have been received from residents in Ridgeway of bonfire smoke spoiling their weekend

enjoyment of their gardens, particularly in the recent very warm weather.

Discussions took place on shortening the burning season so that it did not start until 31 October and finished at the end of February. A comment was validly put forward that waiting another month would mean wetter waste and to get a bonfire without smoke would be almost impossible.

Bonfires should be discouraged as much as possible with more stuff being composted and that which can't, being taken away to put in home bins or taken to the tip.

The committee will find out from the Council what other sites do.

Clive mentioned safeguarding. There are reports of children wandering down the roads, cycling round the allotments and children need to be kept on their parents' plot and not allowed to roam.

A query was raised as to why the shop was selling compost with peat in it. The ban has not come into place as yet, the wholesaler needs to get rid of the stock and we will continue to purchase whilst they have it.

Mince pies and a Christmas festive drink will be served at the summerhouse on Sunday 17 December 2023. A notice will be put on the allotment gates to remind everyone to come.

The meeting closed at 8.3pm and everyone was thanked for their attendance.