

Weston Favell Allotment Association

AGM

08 October 2024

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

Apologies from Mike Kirkland, Ed Taylor, Wendy Nugent

Vice-Chair's report

Clive welcomed all attendees saying it was brave of them to turn out in such inclement weather. He felt that this year the weather had been atrocious and it had badly affected most plot holders one way or another in what produce had grown.

Weeds were an issue because of the banning of insecticides and weed killers and he believed that polytunnels were the way forward in the future. If a plot holder wanted to cover the whole of his/her plot with a polytunnel then he hoped that the Council would not object.

Chickens were also a current issue. Anyone keeping 50 or less chickens had to register them no later than 1 October 2024 or face a £2000 fine. Few were kept on the allotment and all keepers had been made aware of the new rule. It is the owner's responsibility to register their birds.

This year there had also been a problem with the composting loo with a plastic bag full of plastic pots having been put down it and far too much shavings being used. It was only necessary to use one scoop rather than half a bucket.

There was a nice wildlife area being developed on one site of the site which was being abused with dumped carpet and old wood from raised beds. It is the committee's intention to erect a fencing panel in front to try to prevent dumping.

This led to a query from the floor as to whether a sign stating nature reserve could be added to the fence. This will be raised at the next committee meeting.

Minutes of the 2023 AGM

The 2023 AGM minutes had been sent out to everyone in advance of this meeting. Those present confirmed they were happy with the content.

Fran Woodley, our secretary had indicated in 2023 that she would resign her position but confirmed tonight that she does not intend doing so.

Bonfires had been raised at the 2023 meeting and the committee confirmed that a decision had been made to restrict the burning period to between 1 November and 31 January each year.

Clive told the meeting that local residents had complained about bonfires sending smoke into their gardens during September/October 2023 when the weather was fine, hence the decision. David Walpole felt that the decision might have been rather hasty given the weather in 2024 but the restricted burning period will remain in place with Clive confirming that the Council are likely to make it a rule for all allotments.

Treasurer's Report

Clare Herbert provided copies of the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended September 2024 and confirmed that the bank account was being moved from Barclays to Natwest; the latter allowing her to use their online banking service and to see credits/debits instantly rather than having to wait 6 weeks for a hard copy statement as is the case currently.

All rents have been collected for the year and it is anticipated that the annual invoices will be digitalised and send out in 2025 because the cost of postage is now prohibitive. The rent had yet to be paid to the Council who will invoice in due course.

The Council has confirmed that there will be a rent increase for 2025 of 40p per pole - £4 for a 10 pole allotment, £2 for 10 pole for the over 60s.

There had been no large expenditure this year as could be seen from operating expenses.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Fran Woodley and seconded by Clive Leach.

Secretary's report

Fran reported that Clive and she dealt with plot inspections and would be doing one very soon. There are 25 on the waiting list although the Town Council get in touch frequently with names to add to the list and so the numbers increase.

There are two half plots and 1 whole plot available and Fran indicated that she likes to get them rented as quickly as possible after they are given up so that they do not get overgrown.

In relation to Kings Seeds, 59 plot holders are signed up to get seeds this way out of 200+ plot holders. Fran would encourage everyone to sign up for the seeds as they are 40% cheaper than in the garden centres and are of good quality. Fran asked that anyone wanting to be signed up to purchase seeds from Kings, to email her and she would set them up on the system.

Fran made the meeting aware of Id Verde, the contractors appointed by the Council to administer the allotments. The contract with Id Verde ends in 2028 and there are likely to be implications for all allotments in the area whether self-managed or otherwise. The Council has insufficient funds and would prefer all sites to become self-managed, as we are.

We have a good relationship with the Town Clerk and the committee has forged good relations with NAN, Northampton Allotment Association. NAN has a new secretary and their meeting are very interesting. Attendance by Fran has resulted in a site meeting with Ide Verde and Ben, (the tree man), who is to take down 2 trees and cut back a very large hedge as soon as the weather improves.

It is the committee's intention to carry these good relations on using the link to improve access to Id Verde and the Town Council to get more assistance from them.

Election of Officers

Clive Leach (Vice-Chair), Fran Woodley (Secretary) and Clare Herbert (Treasurer) all indicated that they were prepared to stand for re-election. Sarah Rennie (plot 22) proposed and Keith Sproxton (plot 274) seconded.

Election of Committee

All the committee, Clive Leach, CFran Woodley, David Walpole, Trevor Berry, Clare Herbert, Mike Kirkland, Sue Way, Ed Taylor and Chris and Carol Hill were willing to stand again for another 12 months. Mike Brown (plot 64) proposed and Geny Foster (plot 84) seconded.

Adoption of Constitution

Fran indicated that the constitution was in need of amendment as the one we had was very old. It had been hoped that this would have been finalised in time for it to be adopted at tonight's meeting but a little more work is required on it. It will be forwarded to all plot holders just as soon as it is finalised.

Future Projects

Ed Taylor is in charge of working parties which take place on the first Saturday of each month. The working party clears plots that are left, if necessary, before they are let again. They also deal with general maintenance of the site. The party mainly consists of Ed, Chris and Clive and they do need some more help on the odd Saturday. Fran asked that

people let the committee know if they can assist. The weather has been against the working party recently and it can be dangerous to operate equipment in very wet weather.

Chris Osborne (plot 56) expressed his thanks to the committee for assistance with his plot whilst he had been in hospital recently.

More help is also needed in the shop on Sunday morning.

Various comments came from the floor particularly with difficulty in being available for Saturdays only. Ed Taylor works so is not available in the working week. An email will be sent round to plot holders asking if they can assist with particular jobs.

Trevor Berry mentioned that the bottom gate floods in very wet weather and an approach will be made to the plot holder builders (of whom there are several) for advice and assistance. A large pile of tarmac was delivered to site several years ago to deal with a taper from the roadway to the pavement but the work was never carried out. A man hole cover and stream were also found several years ago when extra water tanks were being installed so a tree is likely to have grown into the culvert and blocked it off. It does need sorting out and is on the Committee's list to deal with.

The Council were approached who responded saying they were not sure who owned the land. The allotment is Council land.

The state of the roads on the allotment were the subject of discussion. People drive too fast and with the amount of

rain that we now have, the roads need work doing and proper maintenance. When the Council changes take place things may improve although they are responsible for them now. The committee will continue to press the Council about roads and flooding and repairs so see if work can be done.

Trevor Berry and Ed Taylor are re-designing the website which is very much a work in progress but they hope to be able launch the new site sometime in the New Year.

There will be a Christmas mince pie and mulled wine event in December with date to be announced.

Any other Business

The committee asked for ideas on future projects or anything else concerning the allotments.

It was confirmed that we will not be having a cage to dispose of rubbish. We have had them in the past which has caused issues as people bring things dump things in the case which are not allowed – asbestos on one occasion.

Other allotments have cage trucks with a combination lock but again this was not felt appropriate and stuff is dumped by the side of locked cages and the committee has to get rid of it.

A scrap metal man who is very helpful dies visit the site on a regular basis. An email is sent out when it is known that he is coming so that metal can be left at the top of plots for collection. This seems to work well.

Rats have been seen regularly recently which are always a problem when there are chickens on site. It was recommended to wash all vegetables if on the ground before use and any poison should only be put down in appropriate containers.

There was mention of the structure on plot 57 which has recently been approved by the Council and Id Verde. Lots of structures on the allotments are not classed as permanent structures like sheds and greenhouses which have their own rules as to size. This led to a discussion on all structures having gutters, etc to harvest rainwater wherever possible. This was unanimously agreed by all who attended the meeting.

A question was asked about getting plot holders off a plot if it was not being worked. It was explained that our secretary sends out a non-cultivation notice, usually by email giving the plot holder 28 days to do something about the plot. Sometimes this results in the plot holder doing some work and then neglecting the plot again so a further notice needs sending out. If nothing is done after 28 days, an eviction notice can be served and the plot is then taken back. However, as is so often the case, by the time the plot is vacant the weeds are waist high and there is always some rubbish to be disposed of. £250 was recently spent on a skip to clear one plot that was full of rubbish and badly overgrown.

The announcement that Wendy Nugent has won an award for her community plot of Weston Favell Allotments led to a

discussion on food banks and surplus produce with lots of food banks not accepting fresh produce. Clive Leach works with a food bank at his church in Northampton. They do accept fresh vegetables and if anyone has spare, please leave them in the summerhouse and let Clive know and he will collect.

Shop Zero obtains quite a lot of food from supermarkets but it was not known if they accepted fresh produce. Enquiries will be made and something will go into the next newsletter.

The meeting concluded at 8.30pm with the floor expressing thanks to the Committee for their yard work during the previous year.