

Royal Paddock Allotment Committee meeting minutes

16 October 2018, 7.30 pm, The Lion, Hampton Wick

Present:

Karen Saywell – Vice Chair (in the Chair)	Dylan Baxendale	Theo Christophers
Nick Baylis	Martin Scotton	Anne Wingrove
Gill Hiley		David Laughrin - Secretary

Apologies: David Harnden, Jenny Bourne, Ashley Catto, David Lainchbury, Christine Thorpe, Dan Read

1.	<p>Minutes of Last Committee Meeting and Matters Arising.</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were approved. The following matters arising were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) The Daily Mail had paid the due fee for the fashion shoot;(b) No further progress had been made on sinking new pumps due to the drought. The possibility of a survey of the water table was raised, but it was suggested that a similar survey around five years ago had not been helpful. Unless technology had improved since then the expenditure was unlikely to be worthwhile.(c) Updating allotments information on the website was an ongoing action with Gill in the lead.(d) The Secretary had written to those concerned about commercial activity on site and some assurances had been secured. Further clarification was being sought.(e) Watering arrangements for use of cafe wastewater had been made.
2	<p>Five Year Financial Plan</p> <p>The financial plan prepared to respond to queries at the last AGM was discussed. It was agreed that the plan suggested that the Allotments finances were sustainable for the next few years, given the likely future commitments and that the assumptions made were reasonable. The only possible omission noted was a sum to cover insurance for the Seed Store. This insurance had recently been renewed. Karen was thanked for her work on the plan, which it was agreed should be presented to the AGM.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Karen/ David H</p>
3	<p>Road Resurfacing</p> <p>Gill and Nick reported back on further discussions that had taken place with three contractors about the work that needed to be done on the tracks around the allotments. The three quotes had now been analysed. Comparison was difficult as each contractor advised on their proposed solution, all of which were different. One was unaffordably high, one was low and details of the work to be carried out were considered not specific enough. The recommendation was to pursue the middle quote, seeking a reduction in specification and price. Requirements would be limited to substantial work at the entrance and the track from the gate past plots 80-84 where road drainage was poor plus some remedial skimming and levelling work in the stretch to the Seed Store cafe. It was agreed that work on other areas of road was not needed and the Committee wanted to discourage car use where possible.</p> <p>The Committee agreed this recommendation subject to Gill and Nick refining the plan with the contractor as soon as possible. It was recognised that neighbouring ploholders would need to be warned and cars would be banned from access while the work was being done. The plan would need to be reported to the AGM. Two ploholders – John Hourigan and Gray Rigge had kindly agreed to make themselves available to help to supervise the work. Action: Gill and Nick</p>
4	<p>Replacement of Incinerator Project</p> <p>Theo reported on his preliminary work planning the replacement of the incinerator.</p> <p>He had talked to the supplier previously identified and concluded that it might be better to go for the Maxi rather than the Midi model previously discussed. This was £1000 more expensive, but even with the charge for delivery and the likely cost of installation it would still be within the budget in the financial plan. The company had suggested a 10 to 15 year life was normally expected.</p> <p>On siting, Theo had reviewed the three possible sites suggested and his recommendation was that rather than try to find a new site the incinerator should be installed where the existing one was situated. This seemed likely to be most convenient for delivery and use and would avoid disruption to other ploholders.</p> <p>The Committee approved the proposed siting of the incinerator. Discussion indicated support for a larger incinerator, subject to a check that the extra cost could be justified and that the height of the loading aperture for the incinerator was accessible to shorter allotment holders. It was agreed that the final details should be circulated to the Committee for final agreement out of Committee before the AGM so that the final plan could be reported to the AGM on 15 November.</p> <p>Action : Theo</p>

5	<p>Bonfire Ban</p> <p>It was noted that a few objections had been received to the proposed bonfire ban, but most ploholders had accepted that it was inevitable given the failure of some few irresponsible ploholders to observe the previous requirements, with the consequent danger to road users and nuisance to neighbours. The Chairman was due to report to the AGM explaining the ban and the actions in place to mitigate the effect, such as the proposed new incinerator and possible improved arrangements for communal composting.</p> <p>It was noted that a few areas of the website needed amending to reflect the ban consistently. Action : David H/ Gill</p>
6	<p>Presentation on Composting</p> <p>It had been agreed that it was desirable to set up a presentation on composting to encourage alternative means of disposing of unwanted vegetation. Jenny had kindly contacted the RHS and they had indicated a willingness to discuss the provision of a session at the Seed Store one Sunday. The Secretary would co-ordinate this with the RHS and the Seed Store Cafe. Action: David P</p>
7	<p>Autumn Social Report</p> <p>Jenny had provided a report on the recent successful Autumn Social which was welcomed. Thanks to the work of all the hardworking volunteers and able organisers, especially Jenny for the Social Committee, Anne for the cafe and Ruth for the Produce Show, a very commendable sum of over £700 (with café contribution of £170 included) had been raised for allotment funds. The Committee recorded their warm thanks to all concerned. The event was agreed to be an important and valuable one for the continued success of the allotments.</p>
8	<p>Community Plot</p> <p>The continued good progress being made on the Community Plot was discussed. The six month trial period agreed by the Committee when the Plot was initiated had now ended and Karen recommended that the Community Police Officers who operated the plot should be told that the continuation of the plot could be confirmed for the future and that no rent should be charged. This was agreed. Action: Karen</p>
9	<p>Preparation for AGM</p> <p>Jenny had helpfully provided a checklist for preparation for the AGM and the items were reviewed. Agenda items needed to be agreed by 25 October and the Chairman would then issue the agenda. Jenny has the three cups and is arranging engraving. Theo agreed to print the award certificates again and would ask Jenny to laminate them. Carol had agreed to provide a Treasurer's report as she had been controlling the funds as a handover to Dan had not proved possible, and a well-qualified volunteer to take over the role after the AGM had now been found. The Chairman would send out invitations to attend to councillors and award winners. The Secretary would arrange for printing of the papers and agenda once they had been finalised by the Chairman. He would also provide the Chairman with notes on matters outstanding from the last AGM. Action: David H, Theo, David P</p>
10	<p>Reporting Back to Committee</p> <p>Anne asked if there could be a standing arrangement for a report back to Committee on the outcome of issues which the Committee has been asked to give approval to, such as evictions. It was noted that there could be confidentiality considerations about some matters, but that a general update on the situation by the Chief Inspector and/or Secretary would be appropriate at committee meetings. Action: Chief Inspector/Secretary</p>
11	<p>Signage</p> <p>Gill displayed examples of the proposed new signage for the pump notices and other signs on the allotments. The recommendation was for signs at the identified main 7 pump sites to be mounted on the more expensive metal posts, with the remainder attached to wooden posts. The majority of the Committee preferred the lighter version of the signs and this was agreed subject to a more generic reference to the contact on pumps to avoid the signs becoming outdated before the end of their life expectancy. Action: Gill</p>
12	<p>Charges for Ploholders Upgrading their Holdings</p> <p>The procedures put in place some five years ago requiring a £24 'plot application fee' for ploholders who applied to add a second half plot to an existing half plot holding were discussed. The item had been raised following some ploholders querying the appropriateness of the charge. Discussion revealed that committee members were not all aware of this fee, so clarification was given that ploholders are now limited to a maximum of 1 full plot, and any additional half plot should be adjoining the existing half plot holding. The 'Waiting List Procedure' available in the committee 'box' details this together with the requirement to pay the 'plot application fee' on being added to the waiting list. Gill advised that there were normally not more than 3 such applications a year and that the fee was in place largely to cover administrative costs. It was recognised that the arrangements did involve effort in investigating the validity of the request in relation to the relevant allotment rules (checking location and inspection results), and raised some useful funds for the allotments. It was also recognised that the amounts raised through this fee were relatively modest, being no more annually than the café takings for 1 week. The appropriateness of this fee was discussed, given that existing half-ploholders had already paid what was traditionally</p>

regarded as their one-off £24 membership fee and would effectively have paid double that paid by an original full plot holder. It was suggested that the fee was also a means of ensuring that plotheholders valued their holding, as rents are comparatively low.

The proposal discussed was 'to remove the £24 'plot application fee' for adding a half plot to an existing one, relying on the inspection record alone to establish competence for additional half plot wait-listing'. It was suggested that this would be a fair and reasonable approach.

A majority of those present were inclined to support the change, but it was agreed that as several members who might have strong views on this were not present it was appropriate to postpone a final decision until further discussion at the next Committee Meeting after the AGM. This would allow further time for reflection.

13

Any Other Business

(a) Welcome to New Tenants

Gill had redrafted the welcome note for new tenants. She would circulate this and Committee members could give any comments by email.

(b) Solar Panels and Generator

Dylan reported that he might be able to secure some unwanted surplus solar panels for possible use on the Seed Store roof. He would keep in touch with the Chairman and Nick on this. Martin added that he might be able to source a spare generator. Either might help deal with poor lighting levels in the Seed Store cafe during exceptionally bad weather in winter. These offers were welcomed.

(c) Redistribution of Spare Produce

A tenant had suggested to the Committee that some publicity should be given to a well-regarded phone application that enabled the redistribution of surplus food and produce to those in need. It was called Olio. After a short discussion it was agreed that this should be drawn to people's attention on the site noticeboards and website.

Action: David P

Next Committee Meeting: To be held at the conclusion of the AGM on 15 November