

Saltersgill Allotment Association
Annual General Meeting
23rd April 2023
Sutton Community Hall

Committee Members present:

Laurissa Papprell (Chair), Keith Lewis (Vice Chair), Eric Millar (Plot Lettings Secretary), Craig Story (Retiring Treasurer), Helen Ellis (Treasurer), plus Jacqui Lovell, Joe Keir, Lynn Waters, Barrie Kearney, Cliff Trenholme, Peter Bland, Phil Gibson, Joe Fisher (Retiring).

Also in attendance 23 plot holders (Total 35)

Apologies were received from Ian Ford.

1. Laurissa welcomed the attendees to this first post-Covid AGM, and introduced the Committee members. Invitation letters were sent out by the Council, but it appears that not everyone had received one and the text got badly transposed, for which the Chair apologised.
2. The minutes from the last AGM on 19th November 2021 were circulated and accepted as a true record.

ANNUAL REPORT (Keith Lewis)

3. During the past few years several Committee members have passed away, given up their plots and moved away, or resigned for different reasons. Hence during 2022 the Committee was effectively 'non-functioning', and a big effort was made by those remaining to recruit sufficient people to fill most of the key roles and to create a functioning committee. A letter was sent out in November 2022 to this effect. The alternative of requesting the Council to take back the management of the site was absolutely a last resort option, and something nobody wants to happen, including the Council.

Five people responded positively to the letter and volunteered to join the Committee, and the first meeting of the 'new' committee took place in January 2023.

4. A committee is now in place with Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Plot Secretary and this has enabled the management of the site to continue.
5. Since the last AGM a number of site improvements have been made including, the erection of a large notice board near to the main entrance; the acquisition of a chipper and a new container (both stored at the shop compound); regular hedge cutting; a series of tap repairs (by Eric Dryden) which are also now allocated a number for identification purposes; and perimeter fence repairs. Two old containers were also sold off to a tenant whose plot adjoined them, for £200.

Road repairs are also currently under review and estimates are awaited - expected to be around £2,000. Repairing pot-holes in site roads is seen as an inevitable piece of ongoing planned maintenance, say every 3 years.

£14,400 (incl. VAT) was spent in 2016 and £1,800 (incl. VAT) in 2020. The alternative – a total site reconstruction is estimated to cost at least £30k.

6. Difficulties with the CCTV have continued, but a new SIM card is to be installed in the camera so that the Association can view reported incidents on remote devices. The possibility of installing a new (solar powered unit) by the South emergency gate especially to monitor South Avenue and the rubbish plot is being investigated.
7. Vermin control remains another ongoing issue and the Committee is looking into whether

the Council will be willing to run another training course. We currently have only 1 person who has the right certification to carry out baiting (previously we had 4). Recruiting enough volunteers to take the course and carry out the controls would also be needed.

8. Water usage remains one of the main expenses on site, so plot holders should be encouraged to have barrels where possible and to be careful about overuse of hose pipes. Isolation valves could help where leaks are identified, so the Committee intends to investigate further improvements to the water system.

REPORT FROM FINANCE OFFICER

9. Craig Story, the retiring Treasurer, presented a financial report and a brief commentary. The Association has sufficient funds to meet its outgoings. As reported above, water is a major cost which is rising year on year. Members are requested not to use sprinklers, or leave hoses on and unattended, they are also encouraged to install water butts. It is difficult to monitor misuse but at the moment the Rules and Regulations don't address this issue. A revision of the Rules and Regulations is being considered and any changes made will be brought forward for adoption at either the AGM or an EGM.
10. A further major expense is the removal of rubbish. The upgrade and installation of further CCTV will help track some 'fly-tipping' offences but sadly it is felt that much rubbish is brought onto site by plot holders themselves. This matter is not helped by the number of key holders which has risen and not been sufficiently managed. A change of locks, re-issue of new keys and a new list of main gate and barrier key holders is to be established which should help.
11. The on-site shop has been very successful and was able to contribute just over £1,000.00 to the general account. Joe Keir and Lynn Waters were thanked for managing the shop following the resignation of Sybil Taylor who had previously made it a very successful venture. Members were encouraged to use the shop as it provides items at a little over the cost price and subsidises the running costs for everyone. Lynn is always looking for volunteers to help man the shop and after a survey of current helpers it was agreed to keep the current operating hours of one hour on Saturday mornings.
12. The audited accounts were circulated and accepted. In summary the opening balance in April 2022 was £17,704.65 (net of fixed assets) and the closing balance in March 2023 was £17,637.98. The annual turnover was £12,129.67, with a shortfall of income over expenditure of just £66.67.

Craig was thanked for all his hard work over the past few years, not just as Treasurer, but for 'holding the fort' after Sybil stepped down as Chair in the summer.

13. RENT.

It was proposed and agreed that rent levels for the year ahead should be kept the same as last year.

Standard Plot:	£45
Double Plot:	£90
Half Plot:	£25

PLOT MANAGEMENT

14. Eric Millar has been working very hard to identify all current plot holders and to update the waiting list and general data base. There issues have arisen over payment to the Council where plots are in joint names, and plots where there are multiple 'subtenants' and are separately managed. In all cases, should it be needed, it should be noted that each plot has only one vote.

Eric reported the following:

- * He has set a June deadline to establish all existing plot holders.

- * There is a lot of rubbish outside plots, including glass, which needs removing. * Many fences are not in a good condition.
- * Double plots will gradually be phased out when they come up for re-letting which will help the waiting list, and
- * In his view, sheds should be better constructed.

Eric has also been contacting tenants of plots that are either not being worked on or worked very lightly and issuing warning letters and re-letting where appropriate. There are currently 19 letters out for non-cultivation which has encouraged three tenants to work their plots. The waiting list is also being updated but many on it are not responding to approaches. Plots for re-let are "sold as seen" and, if in bad condition, half-rent only is payable in the first year. This is a difficult, mostly thankless job and help for Eric is being looked for.

- 15. EQUIPMENT.** There is a store of equipment, some of it donated by Billy, stored at the compound. However, it is very difficult to set up a loan system unless someone is willing to take responsibility as 'Storeman'. Dave Foster has offered to check it over and assess what repairs might be necessary and the committee will continue to consider how to proceed. The current woodchip equipment is considered not fit for purpose, so it might be better to sell and look for a bigger, better one.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

- 16.** The current committee members, half of whom have only joined in the last few months, have all put themselves forward for re-election. There being no further nominations or volunteers, it was proposed and seconded by Jan Lewis and Dave Appleton that they all be elected. It was suggested and agreed that names and plot numbers of Committee members be added to the Notice Board, so that they can be contacted by plot holders.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 17. Rubbish.** It was suggested that a quote be obtained for the collection of maximum two bags per plot each month by an outside contractor, which would save having to cart rubbish onto the storage plot. A member (PW) suggested this could be around £400.
- 18.** Eric Millar suggested that a "big sweep", clean-up be conducted across the whole site. The Committee will give both of these points further consideration.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 11:45 a.m.

Jan Lewis/Jacqui Lovell

June 2023