

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7th DECEMBER 2010 AT 5.30 P.M. AT THE NUNSMOOR CENTRE, FENHAM

PRESENT: Peter Whewell, Nicola Loose, Sue Brophy, Sue Johnson, Tony Whittle, Neils Souter, Sue Pownall

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Krys Gaffney .

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING held on 26 October 2010 had been distributed to Committee members and were agreed as a true record

SECRETARY'S REPORT

None in the absence of the Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

NL reported that the Trading Hut stock take had been completed on the 27th November. Preliminary estimation was that the Trading Hut made a profit of around £500 last year, but this would have to be confirmed. **PW** had circulated a discussion paper on rents which described the historical rationale for low allotment rents; the fact that our rent to members historically has been around the average for Newcastle Allotments; a tension within the Newcastle Allotment Working Group with some voicing the opinion that council rents were currently unrealistically low in relation to the social circumstances of the majority of allotment holders; the need to tabulate our basic site outgoings in order to calculate a rent to members in 2011 which reflected these basic costs; the need to protect concessionary rents at their present level; the question of whether to subsidise rents with trading hut profits. There was full discussion of these issues at the meeting. **NS** pointed out that the depreciation costs of machinery had been traditionally held in the deposit account with the key money and that members might not agree to rent increases unless it could be clearly demonstrated why these were necessary. We would not find out what the council rent was for 2011 until February and if the council did put up rents, a surcharge might have to be made to members in June. **NL** had worked out our basic costs for 2011 and that if we kept the concessionary rent stable at £38, the full rent would need to go up to £ 52 per annum. It was decided that a full and detailed discussion paper would be produced for the AGM so members could vote on alternatives. It was agreed that maintenance of machines hired from the hut would be covered by the Trading Hut budget. The meeting's view was that Trading Hut profits should not be used to subsidise member's rents, but should be used to expand stock and secondarily to purchase items which otherwise the association would not be able to afford (an example being the shortfall in cost of the canopy). It was agreed that we needed to conduct a survey to find out how many keys were actually in members possession in order to calculate how much of the current deposit account was needed to cover key deposits.

TRADING HUT MANAGER'S REPORT

SP reported she had sought alternative and more reasonably priced suppliers for the purchase of seed potatoes than those quoted by Kings Seeds. It was likely that we would restrict our purchases to fewer varieties this year, following excess quantities left over last season. SP would consult with David Vincent about which varieties to buy, at the same time selecting where possible, varieties with worm resistance. SP had also been in touch with the Council about whether we needed planning permission for our proposed new trading Hut sign, to replace the existing one. Given the time lapse since the previous one had been erected, it seemed we did not so it was agreed to go ahead with a replacement as soon as possible. We have been approached by Marshall's Seeds about a scheme for seed buying which promised 35% discount, even for individual orders from our Allotment members. Whilst it was probably too late for the 2011 season, it was agreed that we trial the offer in time for the 2012 season. The offer would be promoted on the Allotment website at the appropriate time and once the arrangement had been formalised with Marshalls.

SP had negotiated a very good deal on scaffolding boards and it was agreed we would purchase a further 200 as an initial order, for delivery as soon as the weather was sufficiently thawed to

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

accommodate them. A note would be put up on the website inviting orders, which should be made to SP as soon as possible. It was also noted that there had been some discussion between Trading Hut volunteers about opening in very inclement weather. It was agreed to keep the nominal opening hours as usual but leave it to the discretion of volunteers on the day to close early etc if necessary. Heating for the hut was discussed, which resulted in the safer option of using the generator rather than the purchase of a paraffin heater. It was agreed to repair the motor mower in the Spring when it could be rescued from behind the stock of compost in the storage shed. It was agreed to try to arrange refresher strimmer training, at the request of Trading Hut volunteers. NL is to draft a document concerning conditions of use of machinery hired from the hut.

GRANTS AND FUNDING APPLICATIONS

A funding sub-committee meeting would be arranged in the New Year to look at creating beds for the less able next to the toilet block and to investigate green energy. **PW** is in the process of liaising with the City ecology Officer to design the two Bumble-bee boards for the bee garden. It is hoped we can fund a wildlife notice-board out of the bee grant.

BEE GROUP

The Newcastle Allotment Bee Group (NABG) have now finalized their governance document giving rules, recommendations and advice to associations keeping bees on site and this had been circulated to Committee members. The Moorside Bee group had met to consider the document and the minutes of this meeting had also been circulated to Committee members. The Bee Group recommends we license four hives for 2011, TW on plot 95, HH two on plot 85, SJ one on plot 17 and this was agreed. We would need each beekeeper to fill in a detailed information sheet to be held by the Committee to comply with governance. **PW** noted that the plot-holder on 96a who had made a complaint was satisfied with the new arrangements. The plot-holder on 96b had not yet replied to details of the new arrangements. It was agreed HH should liaise with SB and the plot-holder of plot 84 about the exact site of the two hives on plot 85. Arising out of discussions at the Bee Group it was noted that Moorside needed a specific Health and Safety Document. **PW** and **SJ** volunteered to form a Working Group and they would try to co-opt David Vincent.

NAWG MATTERS

The minutes of the November NAWG meeting and copies of two consultation documents on plot cultivation and buildings/structures had been available on the website and posted to association members without email so everyone had had chance to comment. Only one specific comment had been received from members, by the plot-holder from 80b querying the limitation of hut colour to brown or green. The meeting agreed that colours which were distance colours (blue, white, in addition to green and brown), should be allowed as long as the colours were not harsh. The meeting also objected to the overly prescriptive description of internal fencing in the buildings/structures document and objected strongly to any ban on polycarbonate. These three issues regarding buildings/structures would be relayed to the NAWG meeting on the 9th December by **SP**. Regarding the cultivation standards document it was noted that the term 75% was ambiguous. It was suggested that paths needed to be included as cultivation.

DATE OF 2011 AGM

The date of the AGM was agreed as **Wednesday the 19th January 2011. at 7.30pm in the Robert Stewart Memorial Hall**, it having been ascertained this was not a Newcastle United FC home game date. Committee nomination forms were circulated at the meeting and would be posted up on the website.

MOORSIDE 2011 SHOW

The Show Committee for 2011 had had its first meeting with PW, SJ, TW and Pat Francis. The first objective was to find a main sponsor to fund the printing of a Show booklet and **SJ** had volunteered to do this. It was hoped to engage a number of other advertisers and to produce a final Show booklet by

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Easter 2011 well in advance of our Show on the 3rd September 2011. The Show Committee would meet next immediately before the next full committee meeting on the 11th January at 4.30 pm

GARDEN CLUB 2011

Rob Germany had been in correspondence with **PW** about continuing the Garden Club next year on a less frequent basis, with more emphasis on topics brought by members. **PW** mentioned in relation to Rob it would be a nice gesture for Moorside to have a category of Honorary membership for persons who had left Moorside and who had in the past made major contributions to the association. This would be put to the AGM

SITE INSPECTION TEAM

PW reported that we had a new tenant for plot 82b (Asif Rafique) and for plot 79b (Beverley Sawyer). Mrs. Douglas would move from plot 59b to plot 79a. Plots 105 a and b would be offered to Mrs. Hattam and Mr. Milburn from the waiting list. In the New Year plots 101b and 59b would be available for new tenants.

NEW NOTICEBOARDS

PW noted that the notice-board opposite the Trading Hut was rotting and needed replacing. He had received quotes from Ben Walker of Benwell Lane Allotments for replacing this board, creating a wildlife board, a weatherproof sign for our free area and a board to go over the Northumbria Waterboard sign to advertise our Show and Open days. The quotes were extremely reasonable. It was decided to go ahead with replacement of the noticeboard, timber-framed with steel concreted posts at a cost of £210.00 and a free sign aluminium panel for £20. We would also go ahead with the wildlife board if we were entirely happy with the first board and if we could get monies from the bee grant. **PW** would liaise with Ben Walker about this.

SITE MAINTENANCE

PW had circulated to Committee Members a discussion document on site maintenance. The meeting had time only to consider driveway and outside plot maintenance. There was a problem that a few members did not cut/mow the outside of their plots regularly so that committee members had to do quite heavy emergency work prior to outside inspections. It was also noted that there was a particular problem where driveways abutted the perimeter fence as along the Fenham Hall Drive boundary and the top of the East lane. In the document, **PW** suggested four different ways of approaching the matter:

1. Responsibility remains firmly with individual plot-holders and their efforts are monitored closely by the committee inspection team to ensure regular trimming

The meeting thought that this principle should hold with members being responsible for the immediate outside of their plots. However there should be back-up help for mowing driveways and in those instances where members were away or for other reasons not able to trim.

2. Responsibility is devolved to eight or nine small neighbourhood groups which were responsible for themselves organizing rotas/arrangements for driveways in their areas

The meeting thought that in general this sort of voluntary arrangement would probably not work.

3. Responsibility devolved to a maintenance working group which might contain committee members but which might also co-opt other members.

The meeting felt that such a group should be formed specifically for mowing driveways and helping those unable to manage the outside of their plots (see 1 above)

4. Responsibility is devolved to a single site maintenance person who is remunerated for their work. This is the case for instance at Highbury North where rents were raised to pay for this arrangement

The meeting did not want to go down this route

These options and the Committee's views will be packaged into a discussion document by **PW** for the AGM

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

GLUFOSINATE AMMONIUM

PW has written a brief description of the research literature concerning Glufosinate Ammonium "Kibosh) which would be posted for information on noticeboard and circulated to members for the AGM. The Committee agreed we are unable to recommend the herbicide and members using the product do so at their own risk.

MOORSIDE CALENDER 2011

Montse Ferres attended the meeting to bring a draft of the Moorside calendar 2011 she has designed for us. The meeting was very impressed with the calendar and we agreed she go ahead and edit the draft and arrange printing at the University. We would order 40 calendars in the first instance priced at £6.00 per copy.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This will be on Tuesday 11th January 2011 at 5.30 p.m. in the Nunsmoor Centre.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.