

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 JANUARY 2023 AT 5.30 NUNSMOOR CENTRE AND VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: Susan Pownall (Chair), Rich Littlewood, Steven McDonnell, Sue Brophy, Nick Coster, Nicola Francis, Sue Johnson (Sec) via Zoom, Tony Whittle via Zoom.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Frank Lightfoot.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING

Agreed.

MATTERS ARISING

SM requested a copy of the wording of the warning letters sent to members which may lead to eviction. It was agreed that it was not necessary for committee members to have copies of the full letters showing addresses.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

SP advised that the City Council were responsible for trees on the sites recently transferred from Urban Green to Freeman management. The trees on Moorside would be inspected by a City Council tree specialist on Wednesday 4 January. Only those suffering from disease or deemed to be dangerous to life and limb would be considered for remedial action now or in the future. A discussion followed regarding specific trees on site. SP confirmed that the willow on the East Lane had been assessed previously and remedial work had been undertaken recently.

SP advised that the monthly housekeeping report had been sent.

SP acknowledged that the former notice board on the middle lane should be replaced. She had previously agreed to organize and would do so now.

Trophies from past winners of the Moorside competition had been retrieved by Pat Francis and were now in the shop. SP suggested a presentation of trophies for the 2022 winners could be made at the AGM. The Committee agreed it was a good idea.

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

There was nothing to report.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The expected Lease had not yet been received. The Public Liability Insurance had been renewed at the previous level of £5 million cover which excluded cover for Community bonfires. Whether or not it was necessary to increase to £10 million cover as proposed by the City Council / Freeman was being investigated. Response was awaited from the City Council Legal Department.

Draft accounts had been prepared but some information was outstanding and would be incorporated shortly. Income from King's Seeds was lower than some previous years while income from the Community Plot was higher. Bank interest had increased.

Expenditure included rent for the second half year although not yet invoiced nor paid. The one-off payment for the preparation of the new Lease had also been taken into account in expenditure.

The water bill was higher than from the previous year. Readings were based on estimates. NF proposed that it might be advantageous to have a couple of exact readings taken before the accounting year end. SP questioned whether there was a problem with hose pipes being left connected and running. RL suggested that there may be leaks and SP advised that this had been checked previously. It was agreed that a

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further test would be carried out when the water was switched on at the end of March. SP would ask Tony Francis to check it out then.

NF advised that the main changes for 2022 were rent to the Freeman, tree cutting paid for out of Moorside funds and the water bill. Although it was estimated that a loss of about £2K could have occurred this did not take into account income for the Trading Hut and Plant Scheme.

SP asked if this highlighted a question regarding individual rent levels. NF suggested that 2022 was a one-off situation and that there was a buffer of some £15K. NF suggested that there need not be a rent increase for 2023 but that the situation would be watched. NF asked if there ought to be a vote regarding the rent levels. SP suggested that that could be on the agenda for the February Committee meeting.

NF agreed to book the church hall for the AGM to be held on Wednesday 22 February to start at 7.45 pm.. RL offered to prepare a poster.

TRADING HUT

Takings for December amounted to £196.15.

SP was undertaking one hour of the shop opening while other volunteers were manning one hour in order to maintain a two hour opening time.

SM commented that rats had taken all of his bird food. SP would check out the purchase of metal bins for the bird food.

SP noted that despite asking for their removal a box of books remained outside the shop.

SP had also ordered seed potatoes from MAA's Scottish wholesaler to be delivered in late January. SP had also ordered some local heritage varieties at a low cost, similar to 2022.

WAITING LIST AND LETTINGS AND INSPECTIONS

There had been no lettings.

Plot 73b was now vacant but would be let within the next couple of weeks. SP noted that FL wished to meet the new tenant. NF noted that this was not appropriate as lettings were undertaken by TW. SM responded that FL would not wish to take over from TW but would like to speak with the new tenant when the plot has been let.

TW advised that he was careful in matching plots with the abilities of proposed tenants. SP noted the amount of rubbish on plot 73b. The previous tenant wished to speak with the new tenant regarding possible compensation for the shed. SP confirmed that this would be a private consideration and nothing to do with the committee.

At this time of the year there was little garden activity. Attention was paid mostly to the worst plots. The team noted that there had been no change from December on plots 17, 20b, 23a, 27, 73b, 79b, 89/90, 95 and 110. There had been improvements made to plots 52 and 83b. A watching brief would be kept on plot 75 where a structure previously with sides only now had a roof. It was noted by SM that otherwise the plot was tidy.

The front fence of plot 91 was unstable. The plot holder would be notified.

Rubbish on plot 20b had not been removed despite reminders. SM suggested that the committee could offer some help. The Secretary would follow up.

HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

SM suggested that members should be reminded that each plot holder is responsible for their own hedges and fences. This could be an item for the AGM.

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COMMUNITY PLOT

Events for 2023 were to be planned. A seed swap was being considered. A bonfire possibly at the end of March was also being considered. SM suggested that any plot holders with wood to burn could use that site.

URBAN GREEN /NAWG MATTERS

There had been no further progress with Urban Green Newcastle.

Leases from the Freeman were still awaited for the “wartime” sites being recently taken under Freeman management.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

SM advised that Gail Young had been doing a litter pick throughout the site.

RL had some baths on his plot which he planned to use for crops after boxing them in.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, 7th February 2023 at 5.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 6.37 pm

SJ 31 January 2023