

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Committee Meeting

5.30pm on Tuesday 5 February 2024
Nunsmoor Centre, Fenham, NE4 5AH

Minutes

Present

Richard Littlewood (Chair), Susan Pownall, Nicola Francis, Nick Coster, Barbara Taylor, Steven McDonnell, Simon Rutherford, Emily Sweetman, Karen Brown, Sarah Farrell.

1 Apologies

Frank Lightfoot.

2 Minutes of previous meeting (9 January 2023) and matters arising

Steven confirmed that Northumbrian Water (NW) had replaced the main valve in the outer field. An NW representative would visit the site shortly and demonstrate how to use the new valve. Susan Pownall reported a load of soil improver was due to be delivered shortly, as was straw.

3 Chair's Report

In Frank absence, there was nothing to report.

4 Treasurer's Report

Banking: Nicola reported a third attempt to log the new committee details and signatures with Santander. The bank account would need to be changed once the association was incorporated and this might be an opportunity to secure a new bank account.

Lease: there had been no concrete progress, but no apparent problems. One further meeting with the Freeman, the city and the key sites may be necessary for sign off.

Final year end accounts: Nicola shared a copy of the accounts. It was noted that the Bee grant was gradually reducing. The most significant change between 2022 and 2023 was the reduction in water charges. Steven noted that the new valve would at least provide some indication of leaks in future. it would be possible to take a reading each month. Thanks were noted to Fiona Thoburn for her work behind-the-scenes in preparing the accounts.

It was AGREED that a summary would be prepared for the AGM showing 2022 and 2023.

Action: Nicola to pass to Emily for AGM papers.

5 Incorporation: Proposal to NSALG/FCA and AGM

NSALG, as the sponsor of any associations seeking to become cooperative societies, and recommending approval by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) needed to review MAA's changes to the model rules. Any change proposed by MAA had a cost attached,

but up to six changes were possible without charge. The NSAIG representative suggested that some of MAA's proposed changes might be rejected by the FCA. They recommended MAA submit a simple version with the most important changes and report to the AGM that it was possible to 'tidy up' the rules by amendment through the year at no cost. The advantage was this would give people a chance to raise any issues. It was possible that FCA would object to committee members being paid (i.e. in the form of a rent-free plot. Only one member currently took up this offer.) Expenses incurred in the course of volunteering (e.g. stamps, printing, et cetera) could still be reimbursed.

It was **AGREED** to accept this recommendation.

The model rules stated that any plot or site rules should be set by the membership (referred to as 'Practices'). It was agreed that this might be unwieldy for every small change. It was agreed to recommend to the AGM that the committee would make changes if these were obliged by our lease with the Freeman.

The model rules would mean in future a January AGM would be necessary to give an acceptable amount of time for members to decide to keep their plot / pay their rent. It was **AGREED** not to challenge that on advice of NSALG.

There was a discussion about the number of members needed to be present at the AGM for it to be corporate. It was **AGREED** that 15% of the total membership (115 members) would be appropriate.

This final version of the rules would be proposed and circulated with the AGM papers.
Action: Nicola sent to Emily.

6 Other updates

(i) Treasurer (Nicola)

Covered above.

(ii) Trading Hut (Susan)

Takings were £501.75 in January. Seed potatoes were in stock.

(iii) Inspections (Nick)

Nick and Steven had inspected in the morning and noted very little change. Of those listed as 'action required', nine had seen no progress and four remained as 'to be monitored'. Of those, three had shown no progress. On plot 91 the fence was down. Steve reported he discussed this with the plot holder. Wood was available and plans to repair in hand. Of the remaining seven plots, there was minor cause for concern.

It was agreed that despite the poor weather, it was necessary to be very firm with plot holders at this point. It was agreed to write and warn that if significant progress was not made by the end of March, when rent is due, action would be taken against tenancies. Emily proposed that names of plot holders be recorded on the inspection list, for the committee's purposes only, to avoid any errors of name and plot number.

(iv) Lettings (Barbara)

Number 35 was ready to let. It had been offered once and refused.

(v) Health and Safety (Steven)

Several fences had been damaged by the wind.

There was some wood on site which plot holders would need to see Jean Hannon or Steven McDonnell to access. Funds generated from the sale of wood could be used to buy fence boards. These could be stored in the hut on the Plants Scheme.

It was noted that the Comfrey Project plot fence was down and currently propped up.

Action: Emily to alert via email.

7 AGM 2024

Papers would need to be circulated for the AGM by Wednesday 14 February. Some copies would need to be posted to people with no email contact.

Action: Emily

8 Any other business

Lanes were flooding again. Where vans have gone up the lanes this had contributed to muddy/bogginess.

Action: Emily to remind people during the next update not to drive up the vans when the ground is waterlogged.

It was **AGREED** that documents should be circulated in word / excel wherever possible rather than PDF.

Action: Emily

9 Date of next meeting

5.30pm on Tuesday 5 March 2024

Meeting closed 6:47 pm.