



**Claylands
Avenue
Gardeners
Society**

Est. 2010

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2012

Monday 10th December 2012

St John's School, Worksop 7- 9 pm

Attendees; 7 Committee members, 23 members and 3 guests

1 WELCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

Martin Hadfield (MH) welcomed everyone to the AGM. MH explained that the meeting was to report on the state of the Society, the finances, elect new officers and highlight plans for 2013.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Andy Bruynseels, Janet Batty, John and Sandra Steeper, Jo Parry, Roy Hancock.

3 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

David Holliday (DH) presented the minutes from the General Meeting held 8th May 2012 which had been distributed electronically. MH had completed the 1 action. These were proposed as a true record by Roger Faulkner and seconded by Dave Mander.

4 VOTE OF THANKS

MH gave an overview of how the Society had developed over the past three years and paid especial tribute to the support of our local councillors. In recognition of his support, the Society presented Ivor Jones with a small gift.

5 TREASURERS REPORT

DH presented the financial highlights for 2012.

The accounts have been prepared and will be audited in the month. The shop sales were down by 5% on last year. DH remarked this was in common with the trend seen in the horticultural industry as a whole.

An overview of the finances was presented. The Shop account was in credit and there were no outstanding invoices.

Both Society accounts were in credit. DH explained that although the figures looked healthy we had a number of liabilities in the near future for rent and water as well as insurance for 2013. The funds also contained some protected amounts for use with the Community Garden as well as future water bills. Taking these into account the Society still had funds available with which to operate, a huge improvement on our position from three years ago.

6 REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY

DH presented a report to the meeting which highlighted

- some of the achievements from 2012
- a proposal for water charges in 2013
- a look at what 2013 was likely to involve

DH presented an overview of the progress with self-administration. The early part of the year had seen the establishment of the database to support the Society with self-admin. There had been some initial hiccups but these have been resolved and the database now supports the Society.

As part of self admin DH presented some details around site management. These covered site inspections, tenancy agreements and the number of improvement notices and notice to quit letters that had been issued.

We had issued some 355 invoices and had now reached the position of being able to operate on an in front basis.

There had been a lower level of incidents this year however the Society continued to work with the council on trying to improve security for the site.

DH informed the meeting that we had obtained agreement to our request to Name the Lane as 'Gardeners Way' after all statutory bodies had been consulted.

DH presented some facts about water usage over the past few years. DH expressed his thanks to tenants for the efforts to reduce consumption but this had also created a problem since we had no real basis for next year especially as 2012 had been so wet. SH then went on to explain a proposal to handle water for 2013. This would operate on the basis of a charge as per 2011; however excess monies collected would be deducted from this charge with the net figure applied to April invoices. Water usage would be monitored and any change to the charge, up or down, would be applied in October. This was accepted by the meeting. Proposed by Jane Hadfield and Seconded by Myke Duncan.

DH gave an update on the Tenancy situation. The Management agreement requires the Society to act to try and maintain the level of occupancy which had fallen during the year to 92%. DH explained that the Committee had started to take action and would be using an advertising campaign to try and boost occupancy.

DH then went on to give an overview of activities in the coming year. DH explained this was to be his last year in office (as per Society Rules) and requested if anyone would be interested in shadowing him (to become Secretary in 2014), please come forward. There would be the first annual review with BDC of the Management Agreement in 2013. There was also a need to monitor the water consumption.

7 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

MH presented the Highlights for 2012. The Society had been taken on self-administration, the Community Garden had been created, we had received awards from the Local Improvement Scheme, Bassetlaw District Council and Notts Wildlife Trust. We had received grants from Veolia, the Rotary Club and Notts Wildlife Trust as well as donations from Haygrove, BDC and ACF.

Martin invited Linda Foy to address the meeting to give a 'school's perspective' on the Community Garden.

Linda Foy gave a presentation to the meeting in which she expressed her thanks for being part of the community garden. Linda went on to explain the benefits that the children obtain from visiting and working in the Garden. Linda also shared with the meeting her difficulties in getting visits established, as some parents and staff felt that children would not learn from the experience. Linda then recounted the positive effect of visiting the garden on children with behavioural problems and hoped she could focus on this in the future.

Linda explained that she was only allowed 2 hours per week with 8 children and was having to work with staff and families to maintain the garden. To this end they held Family Days once a month and again feedback has been good as this allowed fathers time with their children.

However there is now a page on the school website.

On the more positive side the produce from the gardens had been used in the school kitchens and the children were now keen to grow even larger pumpkins than this year! Linda had a number of stories to tell of how children had gained insights from their visit from tool inspections to a shop with no till. And perhaps importantly how some children had gained an appreciation of where food really comes from.

MH reported that self-administration had been established and in particular expressed thanks to the Secretary for his efforts.

We had been able to obtain funds from Rotary Club and NWT to enable the Community Garden to operate for the next five years.

We had made some progress with site improvements with the naming of the lane and drainage improvements. We had been hopeful of obtaining funds (from our MP) to address the fencing but this had not materialised. BDC had no funds to address the desire for additional water taps. However we have applied for a new LIS grant for 2013 to try and move the fencing renewal forward.

We had held both the Opening Day and Family Day in 2012 to great enjoyment although the Family Day clashed with School and Village Fetes even if the weather was more inclement!

MH gave an overview of the Society website and the benefits that it brings which are both tangible and intangible.

MH also stated that the Society has had mention in a number of media sources this year, including radio interviews and publications.

MH went to state that this was the end of his three year tenure as Chair and he expressed his thanks to both Sally Beardsley and Gary Williams who had been with him at the start of CAGS and the end of WDAS. MH expressed his thanks to the members of the Committee and the other gardeners at Claylands for their support. MH also expressed thanks to the staff from St John's School for their support for the AGM.

8 AMENDMENT OF RULES

MH presented the proposed amendments to the Rules of the Society for 2013. These had been circulated prior to the meeting and no issues had been raised or feedback given to the Committee.

These were proposed by Gary Williams, seconded by Pete Spencer and accepted by the meeting.

9 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

MH outlined the positions within the Society. MH explained that the current Treasurer would also need to step down and wished her well with her expanding family. MH explained that current committee members were willing to continue but stressed that 2013 was to be the last year for the Secretary and that the ongoing success of the Society relied on others stepping up to take part.

We had received nominations for the position of Chair and Treasurer. As these were unopposed they were elected.

MH stepped down as Chair.

10 NORTH LEVERTON FLOWER AND PRODUCE SHOW 2013

Chris Spittlehouse, Chair of the (North Leverton) Society, gave a presentation to the meeting of the annual show held in Sturton le Steeple. 2013 would mark their 50th anniversary and hoped that some (Claylands) gardeners would be willing to give it a go and enter some of the many categories they have. The show is to be held on Saturday, 7th September 2013.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Colin Lambert remarked that the top end of the allotments near to Gateford Drive was exposed after clearance by the council. In view of the rising prices of foodstuffs he expressed concern for the site security. MH agreed to follow up with BDC to establish when they would complete the installation of the fencing. ACTION 11.1 MH

Ian Whitehouse asked what was to happen with the plot next to his, as the roof had been blown off the dilapidated shed. DH explained that current understanding was that the tenant wanted to demolish this in any course.

12 NEW CHAIR INTRODUCTION

Roger Faulkner took the floor to introduce himself. He wanted to express his thanks to MH as outgoing Chair. To this extent he called upon Barry Harris and Barbara Shelley to present MH with some gifts in recognition of his efforts.

RF went on to explain his expectation and hoped that gardeners would support the Family Day in 2013. RF recognised the need for people to become involved in the running of the Society and stressed the need for gardeners to consider applying for Vice-Secretary this year, to become Secretary in 2014. RF asked gardeners, both present and absent, to consider this role and let him know if they are interested.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

General Meeting, Tuesday, 7th May 2013, 7.30pm – Learning Centre

Family Day – early July 2013 (TBC)

North Leverton Produce and Flower Show - Saturday, 7th September 2013

The meeting closed at 9:10 pm.

INTRODUCTION

"2012 will be another challenging year" I remember Martin saying at the end of the AGM last year and so far nothing has proved him wrong. The year has been one of much activity for the Society seeing a large turnover in tenancies, the implementation and bedding down of self-administration policies and procedures.

SELF ADMINISTRATION

Early in 2012 we were able to complete the agreement to take over the administration of the site from BDC. This meant we have been able to establish

MEMBER DATABASE.

Using data supplied by BDC I was able to set up and "debug" the data ready for the April Invoicing. There were some data errors that I think we have been able to remove but certainly revealed some interesting anomalies in the way BDC operate. So much so they have had to apply updates to their own database.

SITE BILLING

As per the proposal agreed last year billing is now made 2 times per year in April and October. Using our own database 355 invoices were generated. Some old plot anomalies were resolved and understood. £4000 collected of which £1385 to be paid to BDC, £606 to pay for 2011 water and £540 to pay for 2012 water.

REPORTING

As part of our agreement with BDC we are obliged to provide a Quarterly Report which provides a set of statistics and observations of the management of the site. The report covers facts such as the number of tenancies, number of tenants receiving discounts, occupancy level, leavers and joiners and details of site inspections. I also report on known site issues (thefts, damage, roads etc.).

SITE MANAGEMENT

2012 has seen a busy year for me in terms of changes in tenancy and in terms of site inspections. As a Society we are obliged to monitor the state of the site and also the extent to which tenants are cultivating their plots.

Each month has seen a site inspection and although we have tried to be as fair as possible due to the appalling weather there has nonetheless been a need to issue 20 Improvement Notices. I have also had to issue 2 Notices to Quit.

That said we have also seen 16 new tenants as well as 15 tenants leaving us. All of which have needed Tenancy Agreements and introductory paperwork.

NAME THE LANE

After a long process involving many statutory bodies our request to name the lane was completed this year. We are officially

**Claylands Avenue Allotments
Gardeners Way
Worksop**

At some point a formal sign will be erected at the bottom of the entrance track.

WATER RATES IN 2013

The water consumption on the site has been reduced over the last 3 years and for that we need to give ourselves a pat on the back. The last 3 bills have been £1240 in 2010, £606 in 2011, £540 in 2012 (despite the rain!!). So the big question is what will the bill be for 2013?

Last year we agreed that we should pay for the water in advance. Clearly the real world is such that in the face of reducing water consumption from the taps and the weather in this year we cannot reliably predict next years' consumption.

I therefore wish to approach the issue of water costs in 2 stages. April will see an agreed sum applied to the Invoices. This will for the most part allow us to meet a management goal of payment in advance. However I propose that in the October bill an adjustment (up or down) be applied to correct the actual consumption.

In 2012, the year which saw the transition to advance payment and I thank you all for getting us to this position. I have been able to see that we were unable to fully recover 5% of the invoiced water bills. The intention is to fully recover all due costs but not to overcharge. Under recovery was due to the old problem of tenants leaving as bills fall due. As of 2013 this issue should be removed.

Incidentally do you know which month is the wettest in Worksop? July!

SECURITY

I am happy to say that security on site has been much improved as evidenced by a lower number of reported incidents. The PCSOs continue to make visits to the site during the night. We continue to work with BDC to make improvements to the fencing and are looking for ways to obtaining funding to updates the perimeter fencing to assist us and our neighbours. That said it seems thieves will stop at nothing as I have seen ladders used to scale the fence and so we will never be 100% secure. The message therefore is don't keep on site what you can't afford to lose. Tenants are encouraged to keep an eye out for issues and advise the Committee as necessary.

TENANCY

2012 saw the loss of a long standing tenant who sadly succumbed to a long standing illness, although we have also have also lost a number of tenants through illness.

One interesting observation that has started emerge from all our data gathering is that we have lost a number of younger tenants as the demands of modern life and young families are seemingly incompatible with the needs of allotment gardening. As a consequence we have adopted an improved policy for talking to prospective tenants to try and stave off disappointment.

And although we continue to have a steady trickle of new tenants we actually have a smaller number of operating tenancies at the close of the year. We will have to rise to the challenge of letting vacant plots.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- My last year in office
- Water Bills
- Getting someone else to clean the toilet (honest)
- Funding
- Maintaining Tenancy levels