

KENILWORTH ALLOTMENT TENANTS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, HELD ON THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER 2023, 7.30PM AT THE KENILWORTH SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB

Present: 32 members including committee members, 29 eligible to vote.

The quorum of six members in addition to committee members was met. Voting rights - one per tenancy.

1. Apologies Sheila Franks, Nikki Mottram, Kay Winterburn
2. The Minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted as a true record. Proposed by Tor Clark and seconded by Pete Hayes.
3. Matters Arising - none.
4. Chairman's Annual Report
Chris Coton gave the following verbal report to the meeting:

"I'm pleased to report a successful year for your association. Our objectives have again been met, engaging with the community, promoting allotments and providing a safe, enjoyable, well-maintained place for like-minded people to grow their own food.

This year we had a cold late spring, March turned out to be the wettest and dullest month of the year so far with 125mm of rain. April and May were average and the lack of warm settled weather put many people behind with soil preparation and seed sowing.

The committee have put on our usual competitions, for those who wish to participate. I would like to thank Sarah from Hinton's nurseries and town Clerk Maggie Field for their diligent judging. This year we have added a photographic competition and will be producing our very own calendar. The winner will receive a trophy that has recently been given to the association, first presented in 1953 for a potato competition. The coronation cup 1953 will become the coronation cup 2023.

Open day was a great success, again well attended by the local community and we welcomed mayor and plot holder Alix Dearing. Lots of volunteers helped set up and run the stalls on the day. The Lion's show saw lots of plants donated and again it was great to see so many plot holders helping set up and run our stall. I would like to thank all plot holders who helped with both events. Beehive open day, as part of Kenilworth open gardens, had 100 visitors and raised £90 from the plant stall. This was our 10th year contributing to the event and we were presented with an inscribed trowel and certificate. I would like to thank Madeleine Sexton and Beehive plot holders who helped make it a success.

The trading shed has been an asset to the association this year. Volunteers have been helping out on Saturday and Sunday mornings, lots of people stop to have a chat, ask advice or hire some equipment. The new electric strimmer has proved very popular, together with the mower and the rotavators, the nominal hire charge has raised £367 which will go towards servicing and repairs.

Once again, this year we have been able to donate to charity. £200 from open day goes to the mayor's chosen charities, The Kenilworth Centre and Kenilworth Guides. The Lions received £50 for our stall. Macmillan coffee morning raised £200. This year we chose to support Medics to Medics providing essential medical supplies to Ukraine; £50 from the sale of sunflowers, £70 surplus from the summer BBQ and £267.37 of loose change and foreign currency collected at the trading shed.

The committee have had a busy year. We have written to the Town and District councillors requesting more allotments as part of the new housing developments. We have agreed to split whole plots as they become available to help reduce the waiting list which currently stands at 93. We introduced standard letters of notice and reviewed the notice periods taking advice from the National Association. Regular plot inspections have

been carried out and we have engaged with those plot holders identified. The rules have been reviewed and we have some amendments we are bringing to this meeting.

My time as Chairman comes to an end at the conclusion of this meeting. Pete Hayes currently vice Chair has been elected by the committee to the position of Chairman, he will bring new ideas and fresh energy to the role. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him and all the committee for their endeavours over the last year to make it an association to be proud of.”

5. Treasurer’s Report for the Year End 30 September 2023

The annual accounts had been distributed with the papers for the meeting.

The current account stood at £7,190.28 and the savings account £21,700.20.

Phil Jordan: “I am pleased to report this year we have achieved an increase in Income over Expenditure of £2674.73 against last year’s figure of £736.54.

Income is down slightly, but Expenditure down by just over £2200.00 due to no expenditure on new equipment and a reduction in maintenance costs. The Trading Shed contributed £1936.60 down very slightly from last year.

The Balance Sheet remains strong with healthy Cash Reserves. The Deferred Income is the income from this year for rent which is carried forward into next year. The cash and stock are our reserves.

It is very important that we maintain this position as some very significant Capital Expenditure will be required in the next few years. This expenditure will include the replacement of the Main Bridge and the replacing of peripheral fencing and hedging.

We are still unable to cover our Core Running Costs from Rental Income. This has been an ongoing problem for many years, mainly because we have not increased plot rentals in line with continually increasing costs. This problem must be urgently addressed. The Lions show and Open Days continue to generate income, but this is just shoring up our inability to cover our core costs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members involved in the running of the Shop and the Open Events both of which provide a vital contribution to the wellbeing of our Association. However, we should not be relying on these incomes and other events to cover the running of allotment sites, this is why we, as a committee, have proposed a £5 increase per full plot, effective from September 2024.”

There were several questions and comments:

- If we pay more this year, ie £10, would this be better than having to raise the rent again next year? - The committee had discussed this and felt that smaller regular increases where necessary were preferable.
- This increase appears to be a lot in view of the amount in the bank accounts and may put pressure on pensioners and those on small incomes - The committee had also discussed this issue and if anyone was struggling financially with rent payments and is on benefits, ways may be found to offer support.
- As landlords, can the Town Council support with major site maintenance costs? – The Town Council are very supportive landlords; however, they have delegated the responsibilities for the sites and we have not had to approach them for financial support in the past.

The Proposal to increase rents by £5 per full plot and pro rata for smaller plots, was approved, by a vast majority, on a show of hands by members. This increase to come into force in September 2024.

6. Election of Committee

Chris Coton, as indicated in his report, was retiring from the Committee. The Committee had welcomed Pete Hayes’ (currently Vice Chair) offer to take over as Chair. Richard Robinson and Trudy Hayes were willing to join the committee who were prepared to stand again: Ann Barry, Lily Brownjohn, Sheila Franks, Paula Hallam, Peter Jones, Phil Jordan, David Hoy and Tor Clark.

All were in favour of the Committee being appointed en bloc.

7. Motions

7.1 Amendment to rules:

- 7.1.1 Cultivation requirements. First bullet point to read: From the start date of your tenancy agreement, you have a three-month period in which enforcement for non-cultivation is not applicable. After this you will receive a letter giving one month's notice to remedy if satisfactory progress towards at least 75% cultivation of your plot, by the end of your initial 12months, is not observed.
- 7.1.2 You are not allowed to interfere, modify or tamper with any communal utilities.
- 7.1.3 You are not allowed to have a bonfire on your plot except during the months of November, December and January.

The existing wording of the cultivation requirements (7.1.1) were read out by the Chairman who explained that the Committee felt the proposed amendment was fairer to plot holders. Discussions took place regarding how 75% cultivation was assessed – this could include flowers but not sheds, pathways and grass. This was a measure used by allotment associations across the country recommended by the National Allotment Society.

With regard to the rule on communal utilities (7.1.2), it was explained that fitting a hose for the sole purpose of filling a water butt was not considered tampering. Emphasis was put on the fact that the association was metered for the water provided on site and that collecting rainwater wherever possible was preferable.

7.2 Bonfires are not allowed in the summer months: May, June, July, August and September.

This motion submitted by a plot holder linked to the initial motion regarding bonfires, above.

Lengthy discussion took place regarding: the dampness of bonfire material during the winter months; smaller plots which necessitated less pruning; the benefits of composting green material and the importance of consideration for other plot holders in the vicinity when proposing lighting a bonfire together with that of near neighbours.

Environment Health and the Town Council were able to impose bans on bonfires should excessive complaints arise. Several complaints were received by the committee each year and, whenever identified, plot holders were engaged with. There would still be a blanket ban on bonfires should there be a fire risk.

A recommendation that plot holders at Beehive Hill do not have bonfires during school/nursery hours was made and will be a topic for the next committee meeting.

A suggestion of purchasing a portable (between sites) shredder for smaller prunings and green material was made and this would be investigated by the committee at a future meeting. It would still be necessary to hire a commercial shredder for the Odibourne willow pollarding at a cost of approximately £200 – an estimated £10,000 to purchase.

After discussion voting took place on the motions, with the following outcome:

- 7.1.1 Carried – majority in favour
- 7.1.2 Carried – majority in favour
- 7.1.3 Failed – majority against
- 7.2 Carried – majority in favour

8. Any other business

- A plot holder raised his concerns that the new pedestrian bridge was too steep and slippery in wet weather. The original bridge was also considered to be slippery in wet weather. These comments to be discussed at the next committee meeting.
- A question as to whether a new Rules sheet would be issued - Yes and posted on the website.
- Pete Hayes thanked the outgoing Chairman, Chris Coton, for his 20 years as a committee member and 6 years as Chairman of the committee. His huge contribution had been appreciated by the committee and members of the Kenilworth Allotment Tenants' Association. Barbara Platten seconded his sentiments.

Chris thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

AB/28.10.23

These Minutes to be ratified at the AGM 2024