

Committee Meeting
Third Meeting of 2017
2nd July 2017

Present: Ann Christie (Chair); Brigid (Secretary); Les Moore (Rents Officer); Les Coupland (Committee member); Siobhan (Committee Member); Weldon and Rita (Plot holders); Elspeth (Plot holder)

Apologies: Claas (Treasurer); Aidan (Committee Member)

Previous Meeting's minutes - agreed by Ann

Matters Arising

Emails are still not receiving responses within 7 days from all committee members.

No suitable grant has yet been identified for notice boards.

No update from Claas re: financial matters

No evidence was seen by Committee members of the use of sprinklers or hoses left running.

Secretary's Report

Attached.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Claas, we can report that our bank balances on 8th June 2017 are: £18,165 in the current account; £25,132 in the savings account.

If Claas remains absent, Les will put together a spreadsheet of expenditure, preparatory to the AGM.

Ann continues in the role of interim Treasurer until we hear from Claas.

Our former Treasurer, Georg, is still a signatory and is counter signing cheques, when requested by the Committee.

Financial Strategic Plan

We are advised by BAF that we should have a five year strategic plan. At the previous meeting we discussed the Draft document, at this meeting we agreed as a Committee to put it forward at this year's AGM.

ACTION : Financial Strategic Plan to be presented to the 2017 AGM, and circulated, prior to AGM.

Barnet Annual Return

This form is a condition of our lease. It includes information about how many plots are let and how many are let to non Barnet residents, and also asks about current and potential problems. As in previous years, we have listed the tree works which were identified, at the time our self management lease was agreed, by Barnet Council's Officer for tree surgery. These works, which the Council agreed it would do, remain outstanding, and BAF continues to raise this with Barnet Council on our behalf.

Brigid also proposed including the problem of dog walkers littering our site with bags of doggy do's (especially hanging them off the fence on Holden Road Field), as this is something the Council might address by putting bins near our entrances (not inside our site). The majority of Committee members present agreed to this. No other comments were made for inclusion in the Return.

ACTION: Brigid will complete and send the Return to Barnet Parks dept

Resignations/ Secretary and Rents Officer vacancies in November

This could be seen as a potential problem, given that our Lease requires a minimum of three trustees. However, it

would not be helpful to raise this as a problem with Barnet Council, as they would not be able to provide any constructive help.

The Committee members present said that they would not be able to take on these roles.

Siobhan suggested that a document outlining the roles and responsibilities would be helpful to members who may be considering these roles.

Brigid said that it might be better to think in terms of tasks which could be shared across different people - as the Secretary role has been for many years, rather than one person being responsible. In the past the idea of 'Path Reps' had been raised. Les C was in favour of this, however it could only work if those people were fully engaged with the Committee, and the tasks involved.

Action: Information to be provided in the Newsletter and notices : the tasks of the Committee, and the legal requirement to have three Officers, to be made clear to the membership.

Stock order

Ideally, we will make another stock order, however this will depend on having support to unload. Lester is not available. Ann could help in the morning, but stock tends to be delivered in the afternoon.

Action: Brigid will try to find help.

BAF competitions

As in previous years, the road and pathways through our site are not maintained well enough to warrant entry for Best Site. However, it might be worth making an entry for the

Community Plot.

Action: Brigid to apply for the Ted Green Memorial Award

Issues of concern

Report of a plot holder's dog biting another plot holder on site. Dogs must always be kept on the lead on site.

ACTION: Committee agreed to find out from the plot holders involved what had happened, what they had done and would do in future, before deciding on an outcome.

The next Committee meeting will be on 3rd September, this will be a promenade around the site, to include site inspection, H&S, and agree best kept and best new plots.

Appendix Draft Financial Strategy

Development of Strategic Financial Plan

BAF advises that all sites need to develop a strategic financial plan, and when answering monitoring questionnaires we have been asked if we have one. To date, we are one of a number of sites who do not have a Strategic Financial Plan in place. In order to develop such a plan we need to have a clear understanding of our finances. Strategic financial planning is a) for long term, big ticket spending, such as water, roads, fences, and land drainage; disabled access; (b) additional services to plot holders (e.g. tool hire) (c) planning for emergency spending; (d) diversifying in case of reduction in interest in allotments.

Income since implementation of self management

The income of the association is principally rent paid by plot holders. The annual income is directly related to the number of plots let and dependant upon the proportion eligible for discount. As such it is variable, but it is reasonable to assume that we will continue be almost fully let and with approximately half the membership eligible for discount. This amounts to a sum of approximately £7000 per annum.

The subscription charged to all members amounts to c. £300. We in turn pay subscriptions to BAF, NAALG and others leaving negligible surplus.

The water charges are directly allocated to the costs of water supplied. This is variable, dependant on usage but any surplus in one year would also be

negligible. (This should include the cost of annual turning on/off ?)

The Trading Hut will continue to be very close to self financing and non profitable and as such not relevant to this review.

The money held in our savings account (£25000) is set aside to cover possible high cost essential works to the site such as repairs to our water supply, the main driveway or other expenses not covered by our insurance.

We also generate income through grants which are sought for specific projects/ purposes. Grant income should be treated as a separate category for accounting purposes, in order to avoid confusion and is not relevant to this review. We can of course look into possible grants for any future projects.

The sum of £7000 per annum which is our income has to meet our costs, a rough estimate would be

Insurance £500

Electricity £ 300

Maintenance work to the site:

Tree surgery £ 1000

Rubbish removal £1500

Work parties £ 300

General Expenses:

Annual show £ 500

Other social £ 300

Print and stationery £200

Miscellaneous £1000

Total £ 5600

This would lead to a small surplus in the region of £1500.

The above numbers are obviously all estimates, but should prove reasonably accurate. What they do show is that any suggestion that the Association is awash with money to be spent is somewhat exaggerated, but that we do have sufficient funds to be able to respond to our needs as they arise, provided we continue to carry out voluntary works to improve our site.

I suggest that at the end of our financial year we go to the AGM and inform the meeting what our surplus for the year amounts to, seek suggestions of ways the members would like this money spent and whatever remains be added to our savings, and that this together with the areas outlined below amounts to our strategic financial plan.

Developing a Strategic Financial Plan

A

1) Fencing and security

In 2014/2015, the Committee looked into the costs of fencing the site to improve security. The costs are prohibitive, in excess of £100,000 equating to a surcharge of £1,000 on each plot holder. Our plan for fencing includes : ongoing dry hedging and native hedge planting, carried out by volunteers in Work Parties (approx £35.00 in catering per party); and works done by the Synagogue in 2016 (approximate costs). Gates have also been installed by volunteers in several places around the site. The costs of materials for this and other improvements has been made available to plot holders.

In this current year we have purchased 2 motion sensitive cameras in an attempt to improve site safety and security at a cost of £150, which are being evaluated at present and it may be felt that further expenditure in this area is a good idea. We are awaiting information from the police regarding 'Allotment Watch'.

2) Water

The water system on site is in good condition, and we can cover the costs of repairs as they arise. We do not foresee having to replace the entire system at any time in future, but need to ensure we have contingency funds as there are areas of the site where works could be expensive, e.g. Holden Road field where there may be pipes beneath the public path.

3) Roads

Works to repair pot holes in the road through the site were made by Barnet Council as part of our self management agreement. We do not anticipate that any contracted works will be needed to the roads in the next three years, although minor repairs may be necessary, which could be done by volunteers, and work could be done to improve the road to the end of the site by voluntary activity. Again, we need to ensure we have contingency funds.

4) Land drainage

Not needed.

5) Disabled access

Options have been discussed for Holden Road Field. Nor costed as yet.

B

Developing services for ploholders.

Tool hire was discussed at the 2015 AGM, and agreed, but due to the time and expenses involved (e.g. booking in and out tools, tool maintenance, H&S etc), it did not come about. We note that other sites charge for tool hire, and this may be explored in future.

We plan to improve annual events such the plant sale and Annual Show (in 2016 this included children's activities)

We plan to invite speakers and organisations to the site (e.g. Franchi Seeds)

C

Savings/ contingency funds

We need to ensure that we have sufficient funds for emergency spending

I am of the opinion that at £25,000 our contingency fund is perhaps slightly insufficient.

D

Diversifying

By developing our community links and activity, we will be stronger and more able to withstand any possible threat (e.g. reducing numbers of plot holders; attempts to reclaim land by Barnet Council); we will also be more able to raise funds through grants, and more engaged in the local community, hopefully leading to a bigger waiting list, and more actively engaged plot holders.

It is therefore worthwhile for us to invest money into developing community links and community resources, with a view to this becoming a key part of our site.

At our 2015 AGM, we agreed to invest up to £5,000 into our Community Plot, but have not used any of this, to date, but will continue to work on the basis we have this agreed, as and when needed.

The Community Plot is currently being developed and costs (rent, water and electricity) are waived by the Association.

The Community Plot has generated income through grants, and brings in volunteers, and positive publicity, e.g. the Big Dig

We are making links with other organisations (e.g. to enhance the site experience. We may possibly hold events/ open days in future with a charge.