

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22 JANUARY 2009 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE ROBERT STEWART MEMORIAL HALL, WINGROVE ROAD, FENHAM

1. PRESENT: The meeting was well attended by over 50 members and Peter Whewell was in the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Carole Billham, John Coster, Paula Dewhurst, John and Fiona Douglas, Michael Duckett, Rob Germany, Mrs. Jamieson, Bill Metcalfe, Eamon Moloney, Steve and Marion Reeve, David Rochester, Ben Rudden, Peter Stoddart and Alan Thornton.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held in January 2008 had been circulated to the membership and were confirmed as being a true record of that meeting. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2008

The Chairman delivered his report (attached). The Vice-Chairman objected about the Trading Hut accounts and maintained that the balance sheet was merely a list of meaningless figures. The Vice-Chairman, without first consulting with the Committee, had telephoned the Inland Revenue. He raised the issue that the Association's Officers would be liable for heavy fines from the Inland Revenue if the Association did not make a tax return on the profits made by the Trading Hut. It was agreed that the Committee should look into, and resolve, the issue of the Trading Hut accounts.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Although the Treasurer had resigned from the Committee in November 2008, he delivered his report (attached). The Association was in a strong financial situation and had no liabilities. He recommended that the rents remain unchanged for 2009 but would need to increase slightly in 2010.

6. PROPOSED NEW CONSTITUTION

A Committee working group had rewritten the Association's constitution in line with current leasehold requirements. This was ratified by a majority of those present.

7. RENTS FOR 2009

The meeting agreed that rents would remain unchanged at £40 for a full plot and £25 for a half plot (£35 and £22.50 for Senior Citizens and the unwaged).

8. HONORARIA

It had been agreed at the 2008 AGM that the Trading Hut managers should each be paid an honorarium from the hut's profits; in 2008 they also received a free plot each. Three motions were proposed to re-address the matter of honoraria:

- I. The Association will fund the costs of honoraria directly to the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and the Trading Hut Managers - this motion was carried
- II. The honoraria will consist of a free plot and a small cash sum (as decided by the AGM) - this motion was carried
- III. The small cash sum for 2009 will be £ (to be decided at the AGM) - the amount would be £30 and this motion was carried

The Vice-Chairman questioned the legality of paying honoraria to the Association's officers and it was resolved that the Committee should investigate the legal position regarding honoraria.

9. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2009

Nine people had been proposed and seconded for Committee membership - Sue Brophy, Harry Carter, Krys Gaffney, Robert Germany, Frank Lightfoot, John Reid, Niels Souter, Stan

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Tortoise and Peter Whewell; they were re-elected. Sue Johnson and Sue Pownall were elected to the Committee.

10. OPEN FORUM

- It was suggested that minutes of Committee meetings should be circulated to members to keep them informed of events around the site. To this end, a newsletter would be produced shortly and Committee news would be posted on the noticeboards. In recent years a newsletter has been published twice a year and information relevant, and of interest, to members is sent out with it.
- The Chairman put forward a proposal about culling crows and magpies on the allotment site; these birds decimate songbird populations by eating their eggs and chicks. The Allotments Officer and the City Ecology Officer had been consulted and they were not opposed to, but doubted the efficacy of such a course of action; if it were to take place, the local police would need to be notified of any cull. The Chairman invited the member from plot 60 to address the meeting; the latter has 40 years' experience of culling unwanted wildlife for farmers. He confirmed that magpie and crow numbers had increased in recent years - they are a successful species feeding not only on road-kill but also on songbird populations. He admitted that the issue of shooting was a controversial one and proposed that a small number of crows, pigeons and rabbits be culled to increase biodiversity on the allotment site. The member from plot 17 asked to address the meeting and spoke eloquently and passionately about the delicate balance of nature and the consequences of interfering with it; she was strongly opposed to any culling. Although members clearly had strong feelings about this matter there was not enough support from the members present to discuss the issue at an Extraordinary General Meeting. Instead it was agreed that bird populations should be monitored and that nest-boxes and nesting sites should be installed to encourage the population of songbirds. The matter would then be re-visited at the next AGM.
- The cancellation of the 2008 annual show had been a great disappointment and it was suggested that contingency plans be put in place for 2009 in the event of bad weather. The Committee had already considered approaching the local church of St. James and St. Basil to discuss the possible use of the church hall in staging the show.
- A member suggested that the Community Hut should open to collect rents from members at weekends but there were no volunteers willing to take on this responsibility.
- Bottle-diggers had been active on the Moor adjacent to Moorside. The Freeman of the City had employed a company to dig out any remaining bottles but they failed to dig deep enough and this had encouraged the bottle-diggers to return. The work had now been completed and the area had been fenced off to prepare for re-seeding.
- The Vice-Chairman spoke from the floor; he wanted to know who had been encouraging members not to vote for him at the AGM. One of the Trading Hut managers admitted that he had been responsible. A series of accusations and counter-accusations ensued between them and members of the Trading Hut manager's family. The Chairman called the meeting to order.
- There was praise from the floor for the Association's website.
- The Committee was aware of, and concerned about, security issues on the site. Members were advised that they should inform the police of incidents on their plots as well as reporting them to the Committee.
- Both Trading Hut Managers tendered their resignation as managers of the Trading Hut and from the Committee.

The ill-feeling and disharmony generated by the acrimonious exchanges between the Vice-Chairman and the Trading Hut manager caused the Chairman to call the meeting to a close, without discussion of many of the items on the agenda, at 9.07 p.m.