

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 APRIL 2021 AT 5.30 VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: Susan Pownall (in the Chair), Tony Whittle, Richard Littlewood, Frank Lightfoot, Steve McDonnell, Sue Johnson, Sue Brophy, Nicola Francis and Nick Coster.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

ELECTION OF MOORSIDE COMMITTEE OFFICERS FOR 2021

At the Committee meeting on 2 March, being the sole nominees, SP, SJ and NF were Proposed and Seconded by individual committee members as Committee Officers. Nevertheless, in accordance with the Rules and Constitution paragraph 7.2 subparagraph b, the process of election was re-run at the 6th April meeting, whereupon, SP was elected as Chairman by all members present (excluding herself); SJ elected as Secretary by members present (excluding herself) with one abstention; and NF was elected Treasurer by all members present (excluding herself).

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING held on 2 March had been distributed to the committee and taken as read.

MATTERS ARISING

FL pointed out that he had not specified the plot giving rise to the complaint made to him regarding noise made by children.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

SP noted the sad news of the death on Friday 26 March of Nigel Todd who had served as a Newcastle councillor representing Elswick, Wingrove and Arthur's Hill areas for forty years campaigning and supporting minority groups throughout his tenure.

Plot 76 showed signs of a disturbance and SP had advised the tenants.

The tree surgeons returned to cut back a cherry tree which had caused damage to the shed at the back of plot 5. A query about this had been posted on the Moorside Facebook page but SP confirmed that the tree was dead, had been taken down as far as possible and that the responsibility for tree management was with Newcastle City Council.

Fence damage behind plot 5 will be reported to the Council by SP.

Fence damage between plots 76 and 77 was noted. SP will contact the tenant of plot 77.

Due to recent very cold weather the water supply had been turned off temporarily. SP requested RL to put a notice regarding this on the website.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

There was nothing to report.

TREASURER'S REPORT

There were five rents outstanding and one underpaid. A reasonable number of tenants had paid by Bank Transfer and also made payments by cash.

Payment was due to be made to the National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Ltd (NSALG). The NSALG calculate the cost according to the membership of an allotment site therefore payment will be made when final numbers of members are known.

The bill from Northumbria Water will be paid using an estimate of water usage which is the usual practice.

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TRADING HUT MANAGER'S REPORT

Takings at the end of March amounted to £1,125.77. All compost had been sold and more had been ordered. There had been a very fast turnover of goods.

COMMUNITY PLOT

There had been a bonfire.

Events would be arranged when Covid-19 restrictions made them possible.

There was a discussion regarding running a plant scheme at some future date from the Community Plot.

HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

SM advised that he had obtained the materials to construct a noticeboard.

The tenant of plot 85 had extended the treehouse. SP had spoken to the tenant. SB noted that there were no sides to the trampoline.

TW asked if the committee ought to consider a policy regarding children's safety and parental responsibility on site. FL agreed. The current policy covers child protection only.

WAITING LIST AND LETTINGS

There were 41 people on the waiting list. The waiting time for a plot was estimated to be four years. FL suggested that the list should be closed. SJ commented that the Allotments Officer requested that waiting lists should be kept open in order to demonstrate the demand for plots throughout the City. It was agreed that RL would add a sentence to the appropriate section on the website that the potential waiting time for a plot on Moorside was approximately four years.

Plots let were 17, 18, 23b, 56, 91 and 100.

The tenant of 101a left and the tenant of 101b had taken the tenancy of the whole plot.

The tenant of 79a has taken the tenancy of 23a.

The tenant of 17 had given up her plot and taken the tenancy of 86, which comprised the Plant Scheme project. She had chosen to pay an annual rent for the plot. She had done so as Manager of the project and the transfer was to concentrate solely on the running of the Plant Scheme, albeit temporarily suspended due to the Covid-19 constraints. Two Committee members raised concerns as to the manner in which the transfer had been effected without prior referral to the committee on how the arrangement would work. Moreover, should SJ retire from Moorside or give up the running of the Plant Scheme, the location and format of the project would be reviewed at that point.

The tenant of 31 will be leaving and the tenant of 95 will take that plot.

Plots left to let were numbers 79a and 95.

INSPECTIONS

The inspections were the first of 2021. Due to Covid-19 restrictions the inspections were made by individual members of the Inspection Team rather than as a group. One inspection team member's comments had been provided to the Chair but were not presented at the meeting due to a misunderstanding between the team member and the Chair. It was agreed these would be circulated for information after the meeting.

Plots viewed with problems were 27a), 73b), 52, 75, 82 and 108. SP will contact tenants who have been long-term absentees not connected with Covid-19. SP and SJ commented that the tenants of 76 /106 /107a) attend between April and October.

A few additional plots would be monitored during future inspections.

It was noted by SM that in general the site looked good.

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NAWG MATTERS

SP reported that the Allotment Officer was keen to organise the Annual Allotment Competition which had not been possible in 2020 due to Covid-19. Notices will be put on the website when information and dates are known.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

FL asked if it would be possible to get a skip, even at Association expense. SP agreed to contact the Allotment Officer with a request for a skip to clear 'derelict plots', which the Association could access free of charge from Urban Green, who as a general rule no longer facilitated the service with skip hire companies. FL advised that he would be reducing the size of a greenhouse and also that inherited rubbish could be removed should a skip be provided.

The fence and gate on plot 31 would be adjusted to accommodate wheelchair access.

SM asked if soil conditioner would be made available (from Sandhills Garden Waste Recycling Centre). SP offered to contact Sandhills.

An application for a greenhouse to be built by the tenant of plot 63b / 64a was approved. SP had written to the tenant of plot 60 advising that greenhouse framework housed on the plot would have to be positioned ultimately at the back of the plot. The tenant of plot 78 showed an interest in having the said greenhouse and was advised by SP that whichever plot housed the greenhouse, an application/plan from the plotholder to the committee would have to be made and the greenhouse would have to be placed at the back of the plot.

SP confirmed that the new tenant of plot 18 had been made aware that the existing shed should be re-positioned to the back of the plot.

The new tenants of plot 56 had brought a greenhouse onto the site and it was seen in front of the existing shed. SP would contact them to advise that the greenhouse must be placed at the back of the plot and that permission for its construction would have to be sought from the committee before work could begin.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Committee meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday 4 May at 5.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 6.59 pm

SJ

3 May 2021