

Minutes of the Imberhorne Allotment Association AGM 7.30 p.m. Friday 28 October 2016 at Trinity Methodist Church Hall

1. Apologies: Roger and Dianne Gray, John Harding, Don Ely, Sue Robinson, Edward and Betty Archer, Bernard Gillbard, Paul Phillips. Ina Milne had recently had an accident and unfortunately broken her leg. However she was in good spirits and hoped to return home soon.

2. Minutes of last year's AGM were agreed. Proposed by Vic Runacre, seconded by Eric Eves.

AGM 2016: No business items had been submitted by Members. The meeting was attended by 23 members.

3. Annual Report – Roger Tullett, Chairman

Roger ran through the key points from the report which had been circulated with the papers for the meeting at the end of September. In addition Roger thanked Paul Radford for his help in keeping the mowers running, Dick Clark for his participation in the Committee and numerous working parties and Emma Maxwell and Paul Radford for keeping bees on the site.

4. Treasurer's Report – Robin Yetman

A copy of the audited Income and Expenditure Account – year ended 31/8/2016 was available at the meeting.

The accounts have been reviewed by the Committee and independently audited by Bill Blackledge, a current allotment holder and past Chairman of the Committee.

At the end of August, our financial year end, the current account stood at £2,371.28 in credit, the deposit account at £4,476.77 in credit and petty cash at £120.95. Our finances thus continue remain at a sound albeit modest position.

Income

Income for the year fell from £3,121.91 to £2,704.64, a fall of 13.4%. This was due to a fall in rents of 6% and the previous year's income containing an exceptional item – the final repayment of a loan from the beekeepers. This year's income benefitted from a surplus of £190.81 from monies collected from the use of allotment equipment such as mowers and strimmers.

61% of members are now paying their rents by internet banking compared to 53% last year and 40% the year before. This is to be welcomed as it does reduce the administrative effort and cost of collecting rents.

In the previous 2 years we have adopted a late fee as an incentive to encourage prompt payment of rents. Invoices are normally issued during the first week in December with rents due on the 1st January. The late fee applies from the 1st February. I am delighted to report that for the current year all rents were paid promptly and we did not need to apply the late fee in any case. So thank you to every one for making timely payment and I look forward to being able to report a similar position next year.

Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £1,156.08 a decrease of 53% on the £2,451.63 of the previous year.

So, although income has fallen by 13% our costs have fallen even further. As a result overall income exceeded expenses by £1,548.56.

The decrease in expenditure is due to greater voluntary activity by allotment association members in maintaining the site and to more benign weather conditions.

Site maintenance costs fell 56% from £518.24 to £227.04 for the current year. This was primarily due to the fact that we did not hire a skip this year which now costs in excess of £300. In addition to this our volunteers managed to carry out all the mowing of common areas around the car parks and orchard thereby saving the Association a further £260 for the year. In particular I should like to thank Robin Peach and Alan Stonley for their hard work and contribution in this regard.

In terms of work carried out on the site in 2015-16 we invested £126 in improving the drainage and hard standing in the car park area. We also planted daffodils and roses to brighten this area at minimal cost. Ongoing maintenance to the orchard area accounted for £59 of our expenditure and there was the usual maintenance and repair required of the water butts kindly carried out for us by Eric Eves.

Our expenditure on equipment repairs and investment fell significantly from £837.13 to £226.84. We made significant progress on cost reduction by exchanging 2 of our mowers still under guarantee for new models on a like for like basis. We invested £60 in obtaining new 3 year guarantees for the 2 replacements which should give us some significant cost insulation in the next couple of years. I cannot say whether we would be able to repeat this exercise at a future date as Homebase has now been sold to a new parent company and a number of their business policies are changing. For the present however, we have surety in the guarantees we have obtained.

The committee has also invested in 2 battery powered lamps for the container as an aide to safety removing and returning equipment, as well as making it easier to read notices, instructions and manuals that may be retained at the back of the container. We have also purchased a new first aid box at a cost of £20 which is also held in the container.

Our water consumption fell by 31% and this we attribute to good maintenance of the water troughs and to the general weather conditions during the growing period. Our 3rd party insurance costs fell by 11% to £173.94.

Costs associated with holding our AGM and summer barbeque increased 38% to £79.72.

The Association's internal administration costs came to £98.16 which includes office expenses of £16.99 and £61.18 for the website.

The committee has agreed to transfer £1,500 from the Association's current account to its deposit account which now stands at £4,476.77 and constitutes the Association's reserves against future liabilities, shortfalls, and indeed future capital projects to be carried out.

Conclusion

Financially 2015-16 has been a successful year in terms of managing our costs and undertaking regular maintenance activities to manage the site generally to a high standard.

The Committee intends to hold the rents at their current level of 15p per square metre (nominal) for 2017 plus the £5 membership fee.

It also intends to retain the late payment fee of £5 for members who have not paid by the 31st January 2017 as it appears an effective measure in encouraging timely payment of rents.

There were no questions.

Proposed by David Williams and seconded by Robin Peach.

5. Association Business

Site improvements

Jim Thomson set out that the site inspections and associated criteria were started 2 years ago. Cultivation of plots was going well, the site looks great and was ready for autumn and the spring.

Drainage problems had been noticed eg where tarpaulin was used and plot holders were encouraged to use membrane or leave uncovered to let the rainwater drain away.

Plotholders were reminded to keep their edges neat and relatively straight as this made a big difference to the appearance of the site.

Site inspections would continue in 2017. Where points were noted plotholders would be contacted by phone in the first instance to identify what was happening and to offer advice and support. A letter would be sent if things didn't improve to the agreed timetable. If things still didn't improve a letter to terminate a plotholder's tenancy would be sent.

Roger added that committee members would be offering support, help and encouragement to new plotholders for the first 6 months to reduce the number giving up after a few months.

A point was raised about the large size of some of the plots and people taking on too much. Roger replied that we tried to match people to appropriately sized plots but sometimes it was not possible to relocate people or reduce plot sizes.

A suggestion was made for a probationary period of 6 months where the Association reserved the right to terminate.

Information was given on the working parties which were held on the first Sunday morning of the month during the autumn and winter months. Members were encouraged to join in and make suggestions. The main areas were clearance of vacant plots, keeping the stream clear of blockages and cutting back trees along the boundary of the site. 2 gabions were to be installed to replace a part of the bank of the stream which had been washed and members were asked for hardcore to help fill them.

East Grinstead in Bloom visit in July 2017

Roger set out that as the lease for the site was due in 2019 it would be important to give a good account of ourselves. It was suggested that members planted flowers at the front of plots alongside the track through the site and we would provide more information in due course. Robin Yetman added that Wyevale garden centre sold plug plants which could be ordered in December at 40% off the retail price in March. Jim Thomson added that RHS members could order seeds on line. Also members could become an associate member of Mount Noddy allotment association and get money off potatoes, seeds etc.

6. Resignation of committee members and Election of new Committee members

Robin Yetman's 3 years as Treasurer had come to an end. He was proposed as Treasurer for the next 3 years and members voted in favour of his re-election as Treasurer. Peter Simpson was also elected to join the Committee. This was proposed by Jim Thomson, seconded by David Williams and supported by members.

Signed Date
(Chairman)