



# YACIO Site Secretary Meeting

16<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Attending: **Tony Chalcraft [TC]**, **Adam Myers [AM]**, **Lisa Turner [LT]** **Anna Pawlow [AP]**, Graham Sanderson, Chris Adams, Jane Thurlow, Brian Strudwick, Mary Harlington, John Shirbon, Celina Gee, Steve Cooke, David Brinklow, Malcolm Hainsworth, Warwick Ivel, Phil Renshaw

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Anna Pawlow

## 1. Welcome/ Apologies

TC welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised attendees of the schedule for the meeting. All attendees introduced themselves by name and site. It was noted that for any issues that were raised that were off the agenda AM would be writing them down to be revisited later.

Apologies were received from Colin Smith(CS), Simon Wild (SW), Claire Pickard, Paul Graham and Christine Robertson.

## 2. Trustees' Report

TC reported that Trustees were still meeting twice a month and looking at policy decisions. The production of a Site Secretary Handbook and a YACIO Manual to codify these decisions was an ongoing work. He reported that there was a designated Trustee on duty every month to deal with any issues or enquiries that were outside of the remit of the administrator. CS had been very busy as Duty Trustee for June dealing with broad ranging issues from tenant disputes to boundary issues. He noted that the work undertaken by the contractors was still undergoing some fine tuning. He further noted that the advert for New Trustees had resulted in a good number of applications and that he and AM were

proceeding with the selection process. It was envisaged that at first two Trustees would be appointed and then perhaps in a few more months two more could be appointed so as not to introduce too much change and uncertainly at once but to bring the number of Trustees up to nine for the AGM. He reported that the stall at the Bloom Festival had gone well from YACIO's point of view. It was noted that YACIO had produced an information leaflet and a banner with the YACIO logo on it that could be used for other events involving YACIO and that if any site secretary thought they could use these for any events then these could be requested from the Administrator.

Chris Adams wished to note that Colin Smith had been very helpful meeting on site to address issues. Trustees were asked if they could provide more follow up communications. TC noted that this was an issue that they were aware needed improvement.

TC finished his report by noting that there had been some interest in what was happening with York's allotments from further afield such as Rotherham and also that other allotments in York had expressed interest in perhaps joining with YACIO in the future.

### **3. Site Secretary Handbook**

The first draft of the site secretary handbook had been circulated by mail prior to the meeting and site secretaries were asked to provide any feed back that they wished on the contents. Several queries were raised regarding specific processes and appropriate changes and amendments noted. AP would circulate the updated version once it was complete.

TC noted that Trustees did not wish to be too prescriptive and that Site Secretaries should always use a common sense approach. The Handbook would be most useful to the new site secretaries joining YACIO as they would be able to easily see all of the information and processes that they should be following.

The section on Data Protection was queried and it was reiterated that home computers must be password protected as a minimum and that sensible

precautions should be taken with printed information to keep it secure and prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.

Specific queries regarding the processing of waiting list applications were discussed. AP noted that where an existing tenant wished to go on the waiting list for, say, the plot next door to expand their plot then this facility already existed on the website and was used. It was stressed that in all situations the site secretaries were invited to use their discretion and common sense. It was agreed that the waiting lists should be managed fairly and that the specific knowledge of the site secretaries was important in these situations. TC noted the concerns of the site secretaries and Trustees would revisit the issue in the future if problems were found to occur.

#### **4. Template Notice Letters**

The template notice letters that had been drafted to use for non-cultivation notices had been circulated to site secretaries prior to the meeting. In general the wording was approved with some minor modifications. In the future following from site inspections site secretaries should notify the Administrator of which letter they wished to be sent to which plots. It was explained that the letters were deliberately generic to initiate conversation with the tenants and come up with solutions. It was noted that it was not always possible to downsize plots and that each case should be looked at on an individual basis.

#### **5. Vacant Plot Policy**

LT presented the policy on the taking of deposits for vacant plots drafted by SW. Where a tenant leaves the site it was up to the site secretary to judge whether they should have their deposit returned or not given the state of the plot. It was agreed that every new tenant should pay a deposit but that if the plot were in a bad enough state that it would take a lot of work to bring it up to a cultivatable state then a half or full year of rent free time could be offered but that the rent would then be due in the January of the following year. Site Secretaries discussed their experiences with offering discounts and several found it was

unnecessary as the demand for plots in York was such that new tenants were happy to do the work without financial incentive.

It was agreed that the internal document of the draft policy would be circulated to site secretaries so that they could consider the issue before the next meeting and finalise the policy but that a rule needed to be adhered to by all.

-BREAK-

## **6. Community Plot Inventory**

AM explained the issues with community plots and their use. Several different ways of recording and paying for plots had been inherited from the Council and YACIO were keen to know what community plots were being used for and by whom and to assess what other community assets were in place for tenants. This would then allow them to make more educated decisions about future assistance and provisions. Trustees were keen to stress that they were in favour of community plots and that this assessment was about being able to provide best for them only once they were aware of them. It was agreed that AP would send round an email asking for information on community plots, groups and assets such as toilets, shops, storage, associations etc. This fact finding exercise would then enable Trustees to look at the whole situation and devise an appropriate policy.

## **7. Finance Report**

LT presented a brief outline of the current finances and reported that YACIO was in a good position with the projected surplus at the end of the year expected to be around £20,000. However, it was stressed that as this was the first year of operation there were still a lot of unknowns and expenditure could rise if, for instance, a lot of maintenance work needed to be undertaken. The need for a healthy surplus to enable YACIO to deal with any potential unforeseen issues was stressed. If a large surplus were eventually built up then Trustees noted that this could then be spent on larger development works and upgrades to sites but that those issues could only be looked at on a case by case basis in the future.

## **8. Feedback from Site Secretaries**

Trustees invited site secretaries to pass on any feedback. Some site specific issues were raised that Trustees asked to be raised separately so that they could look at the individual issues more closely.

Site secretaries were asked to report any maintenance issues to the Administrator so they could be dealt with.

Pest Control was discussed and Trustees advised that the first step for pest management should be a reduction of possible habitats by tidying untidy plots and turning compost heaps regularly. YACIO would be purchasing some snap traps for use in extreme cases but that a common sense approach was always the best.

Site secretaries were reminded that in any cases of theft these should be reported to the police by the tenant. YACIO kept a log of reported incidents but the police were the only ones with the power to take action.

#### **9. Honorarium**

TC explained that for this year YACIO had simply repeated the same payments made by the Council last year but that a more formal policy would be formulated in the future. Site Secretaries were invited to collect their cheques.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

##### **- Site Secretaries**

David Brinklow noted that £100 had been raised at the summer fair the day before. He also shared that spent hops were available from York Brewery for composting. It was noted that these could be poisonous to dogs but everyone felt that this was a good deal.

##### **- YACIO**

None.

#### **11. Next Meeting**

The next meeting was proposed to be held in October and a date chosen and circulated nearer the time.