



YACIO Annual General Meeting Minutes

2nd March 2019, 10am-1pm

Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York YO23 1BW

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Anna Pawlow

1. Chair's Welcome

TC Welcomed all attendees to the first Annual General Meeting of YACIO and explained the structure for the meeting. TC introduced each Trustee and the Administrator. Trustees present were TC, Colin Smith, Lisa Turner, Adam Myers and Simon Wild with Anna Pawlow, the Administrator.

TC gave some background to the establishment of YACIO in 2017 and explained the structure of the Charity. YACIO is a member led organisation with a board of Trustees elected from those members. YACIO is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with a constitution, registered with the Charity Commission. YACIO manages 16 allotment sites in York that were formerly managed by City of York Council but not any of the parish sites. YACIO pays a peppercorn rent to CYC and have to be completely self sustaining. All rental income is used to finance YACIO. Management decisions are made by the board of Trustees and AP is contracted as a self employed administrator to carry out the routine administration. YACIO uses a specialist piece of software called Colony to manage the allotment sites. All sites are represented by a voluntary site secretary who deals with on site issues and manages the waiting list for YACIO. As it has now been 18 months since YACIO took over the running of the allotments the Trustees felt they now had a better understanding of the organisation.



2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Trustees Maria Lewington-Gower and Tina Funnell as well as Angela Johnson, Dorothy Nott, Anne & John Harper, Chris Wooldridge, Lesley Clark, Laura Potts, Kevin Holland, Helen Balawajder, John Shirbon, Chris Adams, Roger Bilsby, Laura Jenner and Keith McIntosh.

3. Trustees' Report

The Trustee's Annual Report had been published on the website for all to see. TC summarised a few key sections and asked for any questions.

A question was raised regarding legal representation as well as insurance.

TC noted that LT is a Lawyer and that through YACIO's membership of the NSALG there was free legal advice available to the Trustees at all times.

4. Financial Report

LT presented a summary of the Financial Report, also available on the website. It was noted that this was not yet finalised for submission to the Charity Commission. It was noted that these accounts represent a 15 month period and so would show higher figures than for a standard year. LT confirmed that the financial year ran from 1st January to 31st December. LT also noted that there were still some unknown expenditures to be accounted for, such as the water bill that CYC would be reclaiming from YACIO. Overall the financial forecast was positive and showed that YACIO could not only operate within budget but build a small surplus for reinvestment in the allotments, with a contingency fund for emergency works also. LT also briefly summarised the budget for the year ahead, based on the same expenditure as last year. LT invited questions from the floor.

A question was raised regarding the restricted funds of £18,000. LT explained that this was a grant specifically for the development of the easy access area at Green Lane Allotments and that so far £12,000 had been spent with £4000 still to spend. Any unspent funds would be returned to the Forgotten Corners fund. Therefore this money could not be used for any general



maintenance issues.

A question was asked regarding the legacy works to be carried out by CYC and whether these were all completed. TC noted that there were still some works to be carried out and that the original timeline had been extended to the end of 2019 due to budget issues. The legacy works list was based upon site visits made by Trustees when they took over from CYC and should be comprehensive. It was clarified that legacy works were usually concerning fences, walls, trees and hedges.

A question was asked regarding rent arrears. It was confirmed that at least 70% of funds for the year were paid but that issues with the Colony software prevented up to date figures from being available.

A question was asked regarding the possibility of rent reductions. TC noted that YACIO would be reluctant to do that in the near future as there could be large unexpected expenses down the line and it was essential to retain a sinking fund to cover this. However, Trustees would keep the situation under review. It was noted from the floor that by avoiding rent rises in effect a reduction had occurred in real terms. TC confirmed that had the allotments remained with CYC an overall increase in rents of 15% or thereabouts (7-8% each year) would have occurred by now.

TC summarised that when Trustees first took on the management of the allotments from CYC it was unknown whether the service could be provided within budget given that CYC had been unable to do so. It was noted that it was encouraging to see that YACIO could not only run within budget but make a profit.

A question was raised regarding whether concessions were provided. TC confirmed that they were.

A question regarding the former Allotments Officer position was raised. TC confirmed that a large saving for the charity came from removing the Allotments Officer role and that Trustees took on the management decisions and that AP was less expensive than the previous administrative staffing costs.



There was a short debate regarding allotment rental costs in comparison to other areas.

TC noted that YACIO were extremely grateful for the support given to them by CYC and in particular Dave Meigh in establishing YACIO and in the continuing support offered by DM. Trustees felt that his support had been invaluable in making a success of YACIO.

A question was raised regarding the threat to allotment sites from house building in York. TC noted that YACIO had a lease for 7 years and that there was no indication that any sites might be at risk. Furthermore most sites were protected by being statutory allotments, and so would need the Secretary of State to agree to any disposals, or protected by being green belt land. It was further noted that where allotments remained fully tenanted with places in high demand, as was the case at present, there was some protection.

5. Election of Trustees

TC explained that there were currently seven Trustees on the YACIO board, with the provision for two more to be added to a maximum of nine. Having just added two new Trustees it was felt that for now the total should stand at seven but that the board may appoint another two Trustees during the course of the year if this were felt appropriate. TC noted that any newly appointed Trustees would need to be elected at the next AGM and that as a member led organisation there was always the possibility to remove Trustees if members felt that they were not doing a good job.

TC proposed that unless there were any objections all 7 Trustees be re-elected in one vote. The proposal was agreed and all Trustees were re-elected by a clear majority vote.

The Trustees were thanked for all of their hard work for YACIO and TC also thanked AP for her contributions.



6. Appointment of Officers

TC proposed that the appointment of officers be confirmed in the same way, with TC remaining Chair, CS Secretary and LT Treasurer. He noted that it was possible that these roles may change during the year if circumstances changed. A vote was held and a majority confirmed the re-election of all officers.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiners

TC requested that members allow the Trustees to defer making a decision on the appointment of the Independent Examiner for next year and members agreed this by majority vote.

8. Next AGM

There was some debate regarding the timing of the AGM for next year with arguments in favour of both having the meeting earlier and later. It was agreed that for practical purposes, primarily having accounts ready, the meeting would have to about the same time next year.

9. AGM Declared Closed

The formal Annual General Meeting was declared closed and a break for refreshments commenced.

-BREAK-

Members' Discussion

TC reminded members that YACIO had asked for questions to be submitted in advance to allow Trustees to research any issues raised. He noted that if there was time it may be possible to open the floor to questions at the end but asked that questions were kept to general matters and that any site specific issues be raised separately by emailing the Administrator.



Claire Kennard had submitted a question regarding the “Hosepipe Ban” that YACIO had enforced.

TC stated that it was not a “hosepipe ban” but a policy on hosepipe usage. He noted that this had always been a CYC policy, though not necessarily enforced, and was a part of the tenancy agreement. He noted that the financial implications of this policy were impossible to tell as YACIO do not have accurate water readings from CYC to go upon. However, it was not just a policy based on financial aspects, or on water scarcity, but on fair use for all. It was noted that constant use of taps for hosepipes or sprinklers restricted the use for other tenants. It was noted that calling it a “ban” was very emotive and that in actual fact it was a usage policy. Members debated the ethics of water usage and discussed various options for charging for water use. It was noted that charging separately for water would not necessarily be an equitable policy and would be difficult to administer. It was also noted that those with mobility issues might struggle to use a watering can rather than a hosepipe. After some debate it was agreed that the issue would need to be revisited next year when more clarity regarding water costs could inform the discussion further. TC confirmed that the policy was that hosepipes could be used to fill water butts but not to directly water crops and that sprinklers should not be used at all.

Kevin Holland submitted a question regarding site secretaries and asked why some sites had more than one.

TC responded that this was primarily due to historic precedent. There was no strict policy but that it was up to the needs of the particular site at any point.

Kevin Holland submitted a further question regarding the use of carpets on allotments as a weed suppressant. It was noted that many wool carpets now contained synthetic materials and should be banned too under the conditions of the tenancy agreement.



A further question from the floor proposed that the use of all plastics should be reduced due to their environmental impact.

TC noted that plastic use was becoming a larger concern but that alternatives were not necessarily available or practical. It was noted that carpet use specifically was an easier topic to address. It was noted that it was primarily the long term use of carpet that caused issues, where plots were left to become overgrown with carpet beneath. It was agreed that the tenancy agreement would be amended to ban the use of all carpets as a ground covering for all new tenancies and that historic use would need to be reported as part of site inspections and work done to address and remove these issues.

Kevin Holland had asked a further site specific question regarding the removal of asbestos from Hempland Lane. It was explained that this was a legacy issue and was being addressed by CYC but had been delayed.

Heidi Davies from Lollipop had submitted a question regarding the toilets on Holgate site. It was noted that the toilets did not belong to YACIO but were made available to allotment holders by informal agreement of the Bowling Club. It was noted that there was a wider issue of the provision of toilets on sites, with some sites having composting toilets already. Trustees would like to look at this in the future but it was acknowledged to be a very costly exercise.

Hannah Swierstra had submitted a questions regarding Public Liability Insurance for Community groups. This was prompted by the difficulties that the Carriage Garden at Holgate had had obtaining appropriate insurance for events.

CS explained that when YACIO took over the PLI was increased to cover not only YACIO as an organisation but also individual members. The insurance company covered any named member on the tenancy agreement but did not account for organisations of community groups' use. It was agreed that Trustees would research the implications and costs of increasing the insurance cover for the benefit of community groups to allow them to hold events.



Sarah had submitted a complaint regarding bonfires on allotments. TC noted that bonfires were the cause for a number of complaints in the last few months but that it was very hard to ban bonfires entirely. It was important that YACIO policies were actually enforceable. It was noted that education of tenants was the key issue to try to decrease the number of nuisance bonfires. It was noted that there was always going to be waste produced that was not suitable for on site composting but should not be going to landfill. It was noted that experience had shown that the provision of green waste only skips was rarely successful as other waste inevitably found its way in. It was questioned whether a community shredder could be made available to shred woody waste. It was agreed that Trustees would look into alternatives to bonfires. TC confirmed that if there was a serious problem with a bonfire the correct course of action was to inform the Environmental Protection Office and that they would investigate using their powers of enforcement. YACIO cooperated fully with the Environmental Protection Office and their powers could extend to fining the perpetrator up to £5000.

Keith McIntosh had submitted a question regarding rats on allotments. It was acknowledged that there were always going to be some problems with rats on allotments but the key was to minimise food sources and habitat. YACIO had purchased a number of rat traps for deployment on sites with particular issues.

Keith McIntosh had also submitted a question regarding the provision of toilets. Again, it was noted that this was something to be addressed in the future and it was further noted that Associations might be better placed to address the site specific issues regarding their provision, perhaps looking at ward funding for projects.

Keith McIntosh had also submitted a question regarding neglected plots. It was noted that YACIO had a clear policy on dealing plots that were either under



cultivated or abandoned and that this policy should start to make a noticeable difference on both aspects soon.

Low Moor Kids' Plot wished to advertise that they had vacancies for new member this year. The plot helped teach children how to garden on allotment and was for 5-12 year olds and sessions ran on a Saturday morning 10am-noon. All interested should contact Angela Johnson.

Hempland Community Area wished to publicise that they were one of the beneficiaries of Waitrose, Foss Islands, community fund this month. Anyone shopping in Waitrose would get a green token and a pot of £1000 would be divided between the three beneficiaries accordingly. This funding was to help them complete work partially funded by a £9999 grant from the lottery.

Green Lane Easy Access Plots wished to publicise their opening on the 16th March. The plot would be opened by MP Rachel Maskell. Funding for the project was provided by the Forgotten Corners fund, which had given a grant of £18,000.

The floor was then opened to more general questions.

More information was requested on how Project Bids for sites was being managed. CS explained how applications had been submitted by site secretaries, in conjunction with associations, and that these had been assessed by Trustees. All applicants would be being contacted to explain whether or not they had been successful and why. It was noted that this process was very much an experiment and that Trustees had had no idea what sort of ideas may be put forwards. It had been an interesting exercise thus far. It was further noted that regular site secretary meetings were held which allowed site secretaries to see what was happening on other sites and discuss issues and solutions.

Information on how site secretaries were appointed was requested and how this was democratic. TC noted that YACIO had produced a handbook for site secretaries to ensure that all were using the same policies across all sites. There



were 4 meetings in the last year to allow site secretaries to come together and discuss issues, as well as to allow YACIO to disseminate information and ask for input. Any vacant site secretary position was advertised to all ploholders on site and volunteers requested. The applicants would then be interviewed and assessed for suitability before an appointment was made. It was noted that there were not usually a lot of volunteers. It was further clarified that Associations and Site Secretaries were separate and that we could only encourage people to get involved. YACIO retained the power of appointment to ensure that suitable candidates only were appointed and that if there were ever an issue with a site secretary's conduct then Trustees could review that appointment when they were made aware of the issue. It was noted that at present two sites did not have site secretaries, Hob Moor and Fulford Cross, and that Trustees were filling the position until replacements could be found.

It was queried whether Associations ever got together as site secretaries did. TC confirmed that this was not something that was currently done. YACIO were keen to support and encourage Associations and if there were interest this might be a good idea. It was noted that the NSALG Yorkshire had similar meetings and forums and it might be that the structure was already in place if Associations wanted to attend. TC noted that YACIO did wish to engage with national bodies more but that up until this point the Trustees had had to focus inwards on getting the nuts and bolts of the organisation established.

It was queried whether in the future payment by BACS would be an option for invoices. AP clarified that it would not as the administrative burden would be too great and that it was not a reliable enough system. AP further explained that 66% of payments came through paypal and this was all automatically updated with no administration necessary. Cheque payments accounted for 30% of payments and these required a large amount of time to process. Cash payments accounted for 3% of payments and, again, took a long time to process and account for.



A suggestion regarding whether YACIO could provide or facilitate more training was raised. It was agreed that this was an interesting idea and that YACIO could look at this further.

TC thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and reminded everyone that if they ever had questions they should just get in touch.