



York Allotments Charitable Incorporated Organisation (YACIO) Annual Report of Trustees 2017-18

Report for the Period 1st Nov. 2017 to 31st Dec. 2018

Charity Registration No. 1174306

Registered Office; York Allotments, Popeshead Court Offices, Peter Lane, York, YO1 8SU

Charity Trustees Tony Chalcraft, Adam Myers, Colin Smith, Lisa Turner, Simon Wild

Governance, Establishment and Objective

YACIO was established in summer 2017. It is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members other than trustees. Its full constitution is publicly available at:

http://yorkallotments.org/documents/CIO_Constitution_16_8_17.pdf

In 2016/17 City of York Council, as a result of funding pressures, carried out extensive consultation on the future arms-length management of its 16 directly managed allotment sites. A group of plot holders was formed to consider options, eventually determining a CIO provided the most appropriate structure for the management of the sites. Six plot holders agreed to become potential trustees and took forward the creation of YACIO which was registered as a charity in summer 2017 and formally took over management of the allotments from City of York Council on a seven year lease from 1st November 2017.

As stated in the Constitution YACIO's overall objective is to ...“provide or assist in the provision of facilities for allotments in the City of York and the surrounding area, in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life”.

www.yorkallotments.org

All persons letting an allotment through YACIO are automatically members of the organisation.

Overview of Objectives and Activities

YACIO's objectives and activities are focussed on:

- providing an effective and responsive administrative system for the allotments it manages (e.g. letting, rental collection, waiting list management, etc)
- ensuring allotment plots are kept in good condition and sites well managed with grass, hedges etc. appropriately maintained
- balancing income and expenditure to ensure financial sustainability
- avoiding/limiting rent increases while generating income surpluses sufficient to meet potential future costs and/or provide funds to improve allotment provision/sites
- publicising the availability of allotments and promoting allotments as a leisure activity
- improving the knowledge and skills of plot holders to better use and manage their allotment
- improving facilities on allotments sites
- supporting allotment associations and encouraging wider community engagement
- fostering the innovative use of allotment plots and sites in ways that have wider social, health, economic and environmental benefits



- operating in a transparent and open way and ensuring that allotments are let and managed in an equitable manner and in accordance with legislation e.g. Equality Act (2010)
- ensuring allotments are managed and used in a way that protects the environment and wildlife

Review of Achievements and Performance

Nov. 2017-Dec. 2018

Administration

- secured the services of a self-employed administrator (18 hours per week)
- secured the services of the software company previously supplying an allotment management system to City of York Council (company MCPC; software system 'Colony')
- prepared and delivered invoices to our 1,500 (approx) tenants utilising the Colony software system. We were particularly pleased to be able to use features of the system to facilitate online payment, a facility not previously used by City of York Council. We were also able to support other payment methods to meet the needs of all tenants
- developed improved and consistent policies and procedures for dealing with matters such as letting plots to new tenants and plots in a poor state of cultivation. These policies are being collated into a Manual to ensure consistency of approach and transparent operations.



Structure and Governance

- secured a long term commitment from five out of the six original trustees
- filled the officer posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer from within the trustees group
- all trustees, as per Constitution, are subject to election by the membership at the AGM
- introduced a bi-monthly trustee meeting schedule.
- carried out a recruitment exercise and appointed two new trustees on a three month probationary basis from 2018
- introduced a monthly rota with each trustee 'on duty' to deal with issues requiring more than an administrative response
- appointed 'Site Secretaries' (voluntary site coordinators) for all sites to liaise with the Administrator and, where necessary, trustees
- established a schedule of quarterly meetings between all Site Secretaries and trustees to discuss issues, improve procedures, develop policies, etc.
- scheduled initial AGM open to all members (2nd March 2019)

Operational Management

- negotiated a contract with a commercial gardening company to cut grass and hedges on all sites. The contract provided for a greater frequency of grass cutting than previously provided by City of York Council. Overall the contract has operated successfully



Performance Management (all data for 2018 calendar year)

- established 176 new tenancies
- managed waiting lists with 457 new applications
- full performance data is attached as a separate pdf

Risk Management

- secured Public Liability Insurance covering all aspects of operational elements and trustee responsibilities
- secured membership of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (UK) which provides, amongst many other benefits, legal advice

Community Initiatives

- begun a process of gathering information about plots which are gardened on a 'community' basis with the aim of establishing a policies on rent concessions, practical support, etc.
- participated in the York Bloom Event during the summer of 2018 in the centre of York with a display that attracted a good deal of interest both from local people and visitors
- in conjunction with associations supported funding bids. This included Green Lane (Green Lane Growers) where we supported and facilitated a successful £18,000 funding bid to develop six easy access plots with an individual water supply, custom toilets, etc; Hempland Lane where we supported a bid to revamp raised beds; and Bootham Stray where we discussed and offered support to the



Associations plans to use a block of vacated plots for community purposes

- supported allotment associations by trustee attendance at AGMs

Environmental Initiatives

- encouraged recycling and composting as a way of managing waste and reducing the need for bonfires

Issues & Challenges

- dealing with disputes between individual or groups of plot holders. These can be difficult to resolve, may require trustees to develop improved mediation skills and have the potential to absorb a lot of trustee time
- providing Site Secretaries at every site (two posts became vacant at the end of 2018) and ensuring consistency in dealings with tenants across sites
- managing income and expenditure to minimise or avoid rental increases beyond 2020
- Recruiting suitably qualified additional trustees (up to a maximum of nine as per Constitution)

Future Plans

- extending provision of gardening opportunities to residents of York who would not normally have access to sites due to disability



- continuing and developing a programme of plot clearance (where plots have become unlettable due to neglect) to ensure that we are making full use of all available space.
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing and developing management plans for sites that are sustainable and promote biodiversity
- developing closer relationships with site associations in order to support them in their endeavours and assisting in the development of associations at sites where none currently exist
- formulate a clear policy for community plots and support community gardening
- support any initiatives that promote overall well-being, for example improving mental and physical health, alleviating social isolation, provide sustainable locally produced food, support the local economy, etc.

