

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

Trustees Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended

31st December 2021

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Charity accounts preparation &
independent examination service

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

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Trustees' Annual Report

From: 1st January 2021

To: 31st December 2021

Charity's full name York Allotments CIO

Registered Charity number 1174306

Objectives and activities

Summary of the purposes of the charity set out in its governing document

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.

Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts

To provide an effective and responsive administrative system for the allotments it manages (e.g. letting, rental collection, waiting list management, etc)

To ensure allotment plots are kept in good condition and sites well managed with grass, hedges etc. appropriately maintained

To balance income and expenditure to ensure financial sustainability

To avoid/limit rent increases while generating income surpluses sufficient to meet potential future costs and/or provide funds to improve allotment provision/sites

To publicise the availability of allotments and promote allotments as a leisure activity

To improve the knowledge and skills of plot holders to better use and manage their allotment

To improve facilities on allotments sites

To support allotment associations and encouraging wider community engagement

To foster the innovative use of allotment plots and sites in ways that have wider social, health, economic and environmental benefits

To operate 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)

To ensure allotments are managed and used in a way that protects the environment and wildlife

The trustees consider that they have complied with their duties to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.

Introduction

2021 was the fourth full year of YACIO's management of the allotments. The priorities for Trustees throughout the year were essentially threefold: to consolidate and develop improvements to the administration and management of the allotments; to continue the process of strengthening and revising the policies and procedures inherited from York City Council; and, although this was less of a factor than in 2020, mitigate and adapt to the constraints imposed by the continuing Covid pandemic

Administration & policies

Trustees continued to engage the services of a part-time self-employed administrator. On average the administrator worked 20 hours per week but there were considerable peaks and troughs with longer hours required at the start of the year following the issue of rental invoices to tenants.

The administrative contract is renewed annually. Following discussion in the autumn it was decided to offer the administrator an interim six month contract to give trustees time to review administrative functions, including trustee input and oversight. This process is ongoing at the time of writing.

We continued to make use of the Colony allotment management system provided by MCPC to maintain records, generate invoices and reminder letters, etc. As in previous years the majority of tenants made use of the online payment facility provided by Colony to pay rental invoices. There continued to be performance issues: for example limitations on reporting and temporary loss of functionality following software upgrades. These had an impact on administrative effectiveness.

A number of improvements were made to procedures during the year. A simplified system of warning letters for 'non-cultivation' was introduced alongside a modified 'end of tenancy' process. These changes were initiated as part of ongoing efforts to improve cultivation standards and reduce the number of severely neglected plots.

Another policy change during the year was the introduction of a clear 'Co-Tenancy Policy' designed to clarify the procedures relating to the addition of another person to an existing tenancy.

In collaboration with the Administrator, Trustees continued to enhance and revise documentation designed to record and standardise administrative procedures. This included both the 'Manual' and the 'Tenant's Handbook'. During the year it became increasingly clear that improving and clarifying procedures was made difficult by ambiguities and outdated clauses in the Tenancy Agreement inherited from York City Council. Apart from one change in 2021, this had not been modified since YACIO took responsibility for managing the allotments, or indeed for many years. As a result Trustees decided to undertake a full review of the Tenancy Agreement with a view to both updating and clarifying the terms.

To take this forward an initial draft was drawn up and a tenant consultation process undertaken through email submissions and Zoom sessions open to all tenants. Following helpful comments a revised Tenancy Agreement was completed to come into effect from the start of 2022. Unless unexpected issues arise, Trustees do not anticipate further changes to the Tenancy Agreement during the remaining duration of the lease from the City Council (e.g. no changes for 2023 or 2024).

Site Secretaries continued to play a key role as YACIO's representative on each site. Trustees are particularly grateful for their continuing support. As in previous years Trustee held several meetings with Site Secretaries (via Zoom). New Site Secretaries were appointed at Glen and Howe Hill. At the end of the year Paul Graham stepped down as Holgate Site Secretary after many years in the role. YACIO are particularly grateful to his long service in the role and the contribution he has made to community initiatives on the site such as the Carriage Garden. Replacement Site Secretaries have been recruited. In addition, two additional assistant Site Secretaries were recruited at Low Moor to support the existing Site Secretary with the running of this large site.

Although the pandemic did not impact as significantly on administration of the allotments as in 2020, Trustees remained aware that some tenants, for example due to self-isolation or shielding, were unable to maintain their allotments as normal. Although most standard activities, such as new lettings continued, some planned developments were not fully implemented. In particular, Trustees did not follow up on the implementation of a more structured programme of plot inspections that had been planned pre-pandemic.

Structure and Governance

Due to the pandemic and resulting restrictions it was again decided not to schedule a face-to-face AGM. Instead this was held online in April with about 30 tenants attending. In accordance with the terms of the Constitution, two Trustees, Tony Chalcraft and Simon Wild, stood down but were re-elected as Trustees for further three year terms.

Despite publicity in the newsletter there were only three expressions of interest in becoming a trustee. Helen Butt (Holgate) was recruited as a potential trustee during the summer and after attending a number of meetings was co-opted to the Board in October. Trustees are recommending Helen is formally elected as a Trustee at the 2022 AGM.

At the start of the year the lease from York City Council had still to be formally signed off. This process was completed early in the year. However, an error on the part of the Council in defining its duration necessitated a further amendment. As provided for under the terms of the lease, Trustee met with Dave Meigh Operations Manager at the Council for a review meeting in July.

Through the year Trustees formalised a structure for taking lead responsibility on specific functions and issues. In addition to the posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer (Tony Chalcraft, Colin Smith and Lisa Turner respectively), Trustees took on the following roles: Administrative Supervision: Colin Smith; Association Liaison: Adam Myers; Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower; Documentation: Simon Wild; Site Maintenance: Colin Smith; Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft. In addition, at the end of the year, Helen Butt took on responsibility for the Newsletter and Website.

A total of 17 formal complaints were made during the year. All of these were dealt with internally although a few did involve correspondence with councillors and an MP. Following a specific issue, Trustees undertook a re-working of the Complaints Procedure to make it more explicit. This work is ongoing at the time of writing.

Operational Management

The Site Maintenance contract was re-tendered during the year. 12 companies were contacted and three bids received. White Rose Gardening Services, which had held the contract since YACIO took over running the allotments, was unsuccessful. However, the company initially awarded the contract was unable to proceed, resulting in the contract being awarded to All Aspects Garden Maintenance. The company formally takes up the contract from January 2022.

The Site Maintenance contract is primarily for grass and hedge cutting. Much other work, such as repairs to gates, fences and noticeboards, rubbish removal and clearing overgrown plots, etc. is undertaken by our handyman Dave, sometimes assisted by Rich. Over £12,000 was spent on repairs during the year, well in excess of the initial budget. However, many of the 'repairs' were, in effect, improvements, some of which might otherwise have been met from the Improvement Bids budget.

Perhaps the most serious operational issue to arise during the year was a broken drainage pipe at Howe Hill resulting in the flooding of a number of plots. Ultimately YACIO had to engage the services of a drainage contractor to remedy the problem. Although the cost of this was much less than originally feared, unexpected problems such as this can result in significant financial loss to YACIO (see further Risk Management).

Colin Smith, as well as acting as YACIO's Secretary and supporting and supervising the administrator, ably led on all matters relating to maintenance and repairs.

Improvements

The decision was made to budget £10,000 for Site Improvements. Bids were invited from sites and a number received. It was decided to cap bids at a maximum of £500. In total £2,960 was spent on bids, far less than the allocated budget. However, as mentioned previously, a number of repairs carried out could be considered site improvements as upgraded facilities (for example new replacement noticeboards) were provided. The actual expenditure figure therefore significantly underestimates spending on improvements.

Performance Management

There is some difficulty extracting data from the Colony system so the following figures may not be completely accurate.

As at year end there were 1,315 lettable plots. Of these 80 were vacant (about to let to new tenants) and 57 were under notice.

There were 1,588 people on the waiting list for a plot. This appears to be a significant increase from 2020. However, it should be noted that Site Secretaries report a large proportion of those on the waiting list do not respond to invitations to view plots on reaching the top of the list. This, in part, may be due to the length of the waiting lists with many of those waiting having changed circumstances before a plot is offered. It is therefore highly likely that the waiting list number overestimates the number of people actively wanting a plot.

Four newsletters were issued (via email) during the year. These elicited a few queries and suggestions from tenants.

Risk Management

Trustees have considered a number of risk management issues.

A significant risk is the reliance on one contracted self-employed administrator. Trustees are currently evaluating a new administrative contract. How to alleviate this risk is one of the key factors under consideration.

Dependence on the MCPC Colony IT system is a further significant risk. System upgrades resulting in temporary loss of functionality has created performance issues. There are also issues with regard to flexibility and the ability to extract data. Trustees have begun preliminary research on possible alternatives but are aware that system migration is also not without risk and costs.

The unexpected drainage problems at Howe Hill highlighted YACIO's potential vulnerability to unexpected damage necessitating expensive repairs. A particular concern is the large number of trees on some sites. Storm damage or the need to urgently fell some of these for safety reasons could require considerable expenditure. As a result Trustees are aware of the need to develop a tree management policy.

To guard against unexpected repair or other issues requiring significant expenditure Trustees have agreed a Reserves Policy of £20,000.

YACIO continued to provide public liability insurance covering all operational activities and trustee responsibilities.

Site and Community Developments

Maintenance and improvements were carried out at most sites. Issues impacting on sites also arose. Some of the most significant of these are summarised below:

- Holgate: relatively minor vandalism occurred. The Association produced an ambitious plan for the development of an apiary and community orchard on derelict plots adjacent to the site entrance for which external funding was sought and obtained.
- YACIO agreed to provide £1,000 to help part fence the area.
- Low Moor: vandalism late 2020 and early 2021. Following liaison with the Association a security company was engaged by YACIO to patrol the site. Issues arose regarding the 2021 tenancy change specifying hedges be maintained at 1.5 metres. There were also issues relating to plot inspections and the use of ground cover materials. The possible impact of resident only parking in Kilburn Road on the site was also a matter on which YACIO made representation to the City Council
- Scarcroft: it came to light that the Association was letting car parking on site to the adjacent York Croquet Club. Following discussions and correspondence with the croquet club this arrangement, which was potentially detrimental to allotment tenants use of the car park and contrary to the terms of YACIO's lease, was terminated
- Wigginton Road: led by Lisa Turner, liaison continued with the developer proposing housing construction on the Dennings scrap yard adjacent to the site. The objective was to safeguard access and parking for the allotments and secure benefits for tenants. Official representation was made on the planning application. The matter is ongoing.

Collaboration with allotment associations was to some extent put on hold during the year, partly due to the pandemic. However, a useful meeting between YACIO trustees and association representatives led by Trustee Adam Myers was held at the Hempland Lane site in May. It is intended to renew liaison and collaboration with associations in 2022.

Issues and Challenges

Disputes between individual tenants, or groups of tenants, continued to occupy a good deal of Trustee time. Dealing with and resolving formal complaints was also a significant issue. Special thanks are due to Trustee Maria Lewington-Gower for overseeing the complaints process.

Anti-social behaviour and vandalism continued to affect sites particularly, as previously mentioned, at Low Moor. This is an ever present threat and one to which YACIO may need to respond at any time.

As in previous years the financial situation was stable, the year ending with income and expenditure almost balanced. As a result Trustees decided, as for 2021, that no rent increase was necessary for 2022. It is the hope of Trustees that no rent increases will be required for the remaining two years of YACIO's lease from the City Council (2023 and 2024) although this cannot be guaranteed. YACIO is currently almost totally reliant on rents for its income. The prospect of relatively high inflation in 2022, which may impact on costs, is a particular concern.

The length of the allotment waiting list remains the most significant challenge. Although this can be partially managed by letting half or smaller sized plots to new tenants, this alone will not meet demand. Ultimately, current demand can only be met through the provision of new allotment sites.

Future Plans

In many respects future planning was put on hold during 2021 because of the uncertainties resulting from the COVID pandemic and difficulties in holding face-to-face meetings. Plans outlined in previous reports remain largely in place. These include:

- further increasing the efficiency of administrative and other routine operational activities to enhance services to tenants and be more responsive to Site Secretaries
- further developing and speeding up the programme of plot clearance (where plots have become unlettable due to neglect) to ensure that we are making full use of all available space and maximising rental income
- upgrading the website including improvements to presentation and ease of navigation
- further considering the policy on rent concessions in light of overall fairness to all groups and in the context of the charity's 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 their endeavours and assist in the formation of associations covering sites where none currently exist
- providing advice and training, especially for new tenants, on making effective use of their allotment
- supporting community and other innovative growing activities
- developing and supporting initiatives that increase the role of allotments in promoting the overall well-being of tenants and the wider public, for example improving mental and physical health, alleviating social isolation, providing sustainable locally produced food, supporting the local economy, etc.

As already outlined, the increase in the allotment waiting list is a major concern. Considering how to respond to this, especially the extent to which the charity can actively promote and campaign for additional allotment provision within the City of York area, is an important and urgent future planning issue for Trustees. Similarly, as other allotment sites within the city also have lengthened waiting lists, liaising and collaborating with other allotment providers is a further issue for consideration.

Financial review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period

A surplus has been made ensuring the charity has healthy reserves

Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held

25% of annual turnover as detailed in the reserves policy.

Amount of reserves held

£53,329

Reasons for holding zero reserves

N/A

Funds materially in deficit

None

Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern

None

Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document

How the charity is constituted

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members

Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees

Reference and administration details

Charity's full name

York Allotments CIO

Other names the charity is known by

YACIO

Charity's principal address

Popeshead Court Offices
Peter Lane
York

Postcode YO1 8SU

Names of the trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Tony Chalcraft	Chair		
Lisa Turner	Treasurer		
Colin Smith	Secretary		
Adam Myers			
Simon Wild			
Marie Lewington - Gower			

Names and addresses of advisers

Type of adviser	Name	Address
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Independent Examiner	Karen Wood ACMA	Outsource Accounting Services & Independent Examinations Hiscox Building Peasholme Green York, YO1 7PR
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Bankers	The Cooperative Bank
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Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature



Full Name LISA MELONIE TURNER

Position TREASURER

Date 6.3.2022

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of York Allotments CIO

I report on the accounts of: **York Allotments CIO**
for the year ended: **31st December 2021** which are set out on pages 8 to 10.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').


I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2 the accounts do not accord with those records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Karen Wood (ACMA)
Outsource independent examination
service
The Hiscox Building
Peasholme Green
York YO1 7PR

06/03/2022

Date:

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Receipts & payments accounts for the year ended: 31st December 2021

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2021 Total funds	2020 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	73,935	-	73,935	68,317
Fundraising & donations	-	-	-	35
Bank interest	10	-	10	106
Total receipts	73,945	-	73,945	68,458
Payments				
Administration officer	18,365	-	18,365	18,745
Insurance	1,853	-	1,853	1,936
Memberships & subscriptions	-	-	-	-
Grass & hedge cutting	15,000	-	15,000	14,500
Deposits returned	-	505	505	345
Free plots and honorariums	725	-	725	685
Licences	1,890	-	1,890	1,402
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
Admin support & office costs	5,478	-	5,478	5,816
Skip hire & upgrade of sites	3,460	-	3,460	574
Repairs & maintenance	12,344	-	12,344	6,052
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	-	-	-	37
Water	4,345	-	4,345	6,755
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,318	-	2,318	1,951
Sundry expenses	95	-	95	45
Total payments	66,173	505	66,678	59,143
Net of receipts/(payments)	7,772	(505)	7,267	9,315
Transfer between accounts	-	-	-	-
Balance brought forward	45,557	29,165	74,722	65,407
Balance carried forward	53,329	28,660	81,989	74,722

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Statement of assets and liabilities at:

31st December 2021

Assets	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total funds £	2020 Total funds £
Cash at bank and in hand				
Current bank account	22,711	28,660	51,371	42,153
Deposit account	30,244	-	30,244	30,234
Paypal	374	-	374	2,335
	<u>53,329</u>	<u>28,660</u>	<u>81,989</u>	<u>74,722</u>

Liabilities	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total funds £	2020 Total funds £
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
	<u>300</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>300</u>

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Notes to the accounts for the period ended: 31st December 2021

1. Basis of accounts

The Trustees have taken advantage of section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 and prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.


2. Restricted funds

Fund name	Purpose
Deposits	Deposits which may be refundable if plots are returned in a responsible state

	Balance B/wd	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer between funds	Balance C/fwd
Unrestricted Funds	45,557	73,945	66,173	-	53,329
Restricted Funds					
Deposits	29,165	-	505	-	28,660
Total Restricted Funds	29,165	-	505	-	28,660
Total Funds	74,722	73,945	66,678	-	81,989

Approval of accounts for the year ended:	31st December 2021
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The report and accounts were approved at a meeting of the Trustees held on: 2.3.2022
Date

 6.3.2022
Signed for and on behalf of the trustees Date

LISA MELOWIE TURNER	TREASURER
Print name	Position (e.g. Chair etc)