

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

Trustees Annual Report & Financial Statements

for the year ended

31st December 2022

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Charity accounts preparation &
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York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

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Trustees' Annual Report

From: 1st January 2022

To: 31st December 2022

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

2022 was the fifth year of YACIO's management of the allotments. The priorities for Trustees through the year were primarily twofold: to continue the process of consolidating and developing improvements to the administration and management of the allotments; to continue the process of strengthening and revising policies and procedures inherited from York City Council. In addition, trustees also began to look at wider issues such as how the natural environment of the allotment sites could be enhanced, what measures were necessary to provide significant and sustained improvements to facilities and services for sites and tenants and how allotment provision in the City of York could be increased. These latter initiatives were partly undertaken with an eye to the longer term. The seven year lease under which YACIO manages the allotments on behalf of City of York Council expires in autumn 2024. Trustees recognised, should a new lease be offered as hoped and anticipated, that YACIO would need to take a longer term, more innovative, view of its activities and role.

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 cost of providing administrative services at £18,008 was broadly similar to that in 2021

Since the inception of YACIO the contract under which the administrator worked was renewed annually. To give both parties more surety (trustees and the administrator), after negotiations a revised contract was drawn up to operate from December 2022. New provisions included linking the rate of increase in the administrator's annual fee to inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index, assurances regarding continuity of operation in the event of unplanned absence and changes to the way certain tasks were carried out. The new contract runs for a two year period until the end of YACIO's current lease in November 2024..

We continued to make use of the Colony allotment management system provided by MCPC to maintain records, generate invoices, produce reminder letters, etc. The license for the Colony software incurs an annual fee of £1,890, a relatively small proportion of YACIO's overall expenditure. 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 in extracting coherent data for monitoring and reporting purposes. This had an inevitable effect on administrative effectiveness. Despite these issues, trustees decided replacing Colony with an alternative system was not feasible in the short term due to constraints such as time, cost and the potential for disruption as data was migrated.

During the year, trustee Helen Butt took over responsibility for managing YACIO's website previously maintained by the administrator. As well as allowing the administrator more time to focus on operational and Colony issues, Helen used her professional experience and expertise to enhance the website including more frequent updating and beginning a redesign of its structure. In addition, Google Analytics was utilised for the first time to give trustees a better understanding of how the website was used.

A number of improvements were made to procedures during the year. One example was the change to the production of updates for Site Secretaries which were fixed for the same day each month to provide greater regularity.

In collaboration with the Administrator, Trustees, led by Simon Wild, continued to enhance and revise documentation designed to record and standardise administrative procedures. This included updating the Manual and Tenant's Handbook.

The new Tenancy Agreement drawn up during autumn 2021 following a consultative process with tenants and Site Secretaries became operational from the start of the year. Sent to all tenants with annual rental invoices in January, this met with hardly any comment or concern from tenants and has operated without issue through the year. As made clear when the revision was open to consultation, unless exceptional issues arise, trustees do not propose to make any further changes to the Tenancy Agreement during the period of the current lease from City of York Council.

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 three in person meetings with Site Secretaries including one at Green Lane which included a tour of the site. In addition, to facilitate better communication with and between Site Secretaries, a dedicated What's App group was set up. Efro Tooms stepped down as Site Secretary at Glen and Steve Cooke at New Lane. Trustees are grateful to Efro for assuming the role at a difficult time for the site and Steve for his long and diligent service. Both vacancies have been filled.

Governance

An AGM was held at Clements Hall on the 26th March attended by about 30 members. This was the first in-person AGM since 2019 due to the pandemic. Helen Butt was formally elected as a trustee on the advice of existing trustees, having been acting in the role for six months. In accordance with the terms of the Constitution, two Trustees, Colin Smith and Lisa Turner, stood down but were re-elected as Trustees.

There was a significant change in trustee responsibilities during the year. Colin Smith stepped down from the role of Secretary in favour of Helen Butt in September. Helen also assumed responsibility for supporting and supervising the work of the administrator. Colin's resignation allowed him to focus on his other main role as a trustee overseeing all matters relating to site maintenance and developments. Colin had served as Secretary from YACIO's inception. Trustees are extremely grateful for the time and effort Colin has committed, and continues to commit, to YACIO. It is no exaggeration to say that without Colin's efforts YACIO would not have been able to function successfully.

Other trustee responsibilities remained unchanged. Tony Chalcraft and Lisa Turner continued as Chair and Treasurer respectively. Further roles and responsibilities were: Administrative Supervision: Helen Butt (Colin Smith until September); Association Liaison: Adam Myers; Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower; Documentation: Simon Wild; Newsletter and Website: Helen Butt; Site Maintenance: Colin Smith; Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft. Maria Lewington-Gower took leave of absence for personal reasons from spring until the end of the year. During this time her responsibility for complaints was covered by other trustees on a rota basis. Potential trustee Heather Whittaker carried out a health and safety audit of sites in November.

During the year two members and one non-member expressed an interest in becoming a trustee. Following meetings with existing trustees Heather Whittaker, a tenant at Bootham, was invited to shadow existing trustees with a view to becoming a full trustee. Trustees are recommending Heather is formally elected as a trustee at the 2023 AGM. Assuming Heather's election there will be eight trustees. The Constitution provides for a maximum of nine so one vacancy remains to be filled .

Due to an error the lease from York City Council, which was only finally completed and signed off in early 2021, required further amendment. This process was completed early in the year. In December, under the terms of the lease, trustees met with Dave Meigh Operations Manager Public Realm (Strategy and Contracts) for the annual review meeting. A key issue discussed was the granting and terms of any further lease to YACIO for management of the allotments from November 2024. Further discussions on this matter are expected with trustees' views outlined in Future Plans (below).

There were only a handful of complaints during the year, far fewer than in 2021. Most of these arose from disputes between tenants. All were resolved satisfactorily with no tenancy terminations resulting from a complaint. Following review of the handling of a specific complaint trustees undertook a reworking of the Complaints Procedure to make it more explicit with regard to notification and formal warning.

In comparison with previous years there was limited engagement with councillors or officers of City of York Council, apart from Operations Manager Dave Meigh. However, a group of trustees did meet with York Central MP Rachael Maskell, at her invitation, during the summer. Discussion extended to matters such as allotment waiting lists and provision across the city. Trustees are grateful to Rachael for her time and interest.

Operational Management

Colin Smith, as well as acting as YACIO's Secretary and supporting and supervising the administrator for a large part of the year, ably led on all matters relating to maintenance and repairs

Prior to the start of the year the site maintenance contract was re-tendered. A new contractor, All Aspects Gardening Services was successful replacing White Rose Gardening Services which had held the contract since YACIO took over responsibility for the allotments. Despite initial enthusiasm and progress All Aspects struggled to meet contract requirements falling behind schedule on grass cutting and failing to complete hedge cutting. As a consequence full payment of the annual contract fee was withheld resulting in a saving of £2,727 and the contract terminated. A new contractor, Aspects Horticultural Services has been engaged for 2023 on a one year contract. The cost is significantly higher than that paid to All Aspects but includes one-off hedge cutting and is reflective of inflation over the year. Trustees hope that the new company, which carries out grounds maintenance for a number of schools, will deliver a better service.

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 Ruddock, sometimes assisted by Rich. Trustees are grateful for the effective and responsive service provided. There was also considerable expenditure on tree work during the year. Overall £12,888 was spent on repairs and maintenance and £8,292 on the 'upgrade' of sites. In practice there is some overlap between these two budget headings. Trustees are aware that a significant amount of money is spent on repairs and maintenance. A particular concern is the cost of clearing plots neglected by tenants. Trustees are in the process of working with Site Secretaries to draw up clearer criteria where YACIO clearance should be offered and where a new tenant should be expected to do this without assistance.

Managing trees on sites, especially at Low Moor and Scarcroft, was a focus through the year. The aim of trustees is to carry out a long term programme of tree management both for health and safety reasons and to prevent a backlog of work building up that could be costly to finance in the future. Work was carried out at Scarcroft early in the year guided by Castle Tree Surgeons focussed on preventative work to trees that could present a safety hazard as well as limited felling to improve the viability of shaded plots. A smaller amount of work was undertaken at Low Moor. Further work is planned, especially at Low Moor, where a full tree survey, to be conducted in conjunction with the Association, is planned. Trustees are very aware that tree maintenance is a considerable risk in terms of safety and costs, which requires a long term view.

Performance

There is some difficulty extracting data from the Colony system so it is not possible to obtain full data on either the number of plots let during the year or the total number of persons on the waiting list.

At year end there were 1,515 lettable plots. Of these 68 were vacant (about to be let to new tenants) and 87 were under notice.

The waiting list stood at 3,018 at year end. It is important to note this represents the total number of applications, not the total number of people waiting for a plot. This is because each person registering may choose to apply for a plot at up to three different sites. It is not known, or easily possible to establish from the Colony system, how many of those joining the waiting list make multiple applications. However, even if everyone made three, which is very unlikely, the waiting list would stand at 1,006. It is, however, possible to obtain a breakdown of the waiting list by sites. This shows that every site has more applicants than the number of lettable plots. The site with the highest number of applications to lettable plots is Wigginton Terrace at 5.9 per plot followed by Fulford Cross at 5.5 per plot. The lowest is Low Moor at 1.06 (this figure is largely due to the very large number of plots at Low Moor - 277).

In considering the waiting list it should also be noted that Site Secretaries continue to report that a large number of applicants 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 (three via email; one in print) 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. Steps were taken during the year to reduce the risk. These included the revised administrator contract requiring assurances of continuity of service in the event of absence through stand-in help and plans for trustees to have familiarisation sessions with the Colony management system to enable them to better perform standard tasks if necessary..

Dependence on the MCPC Colony IT system is a further significant risk. There remain performance and reliability issues especially in relation to interoperability with other systems such as PayPal. Trustees also had concerns about MCPC's ability to keep underlying software updated, particularly in relation to the website. This necessitated intervention by Helen Butt on YACIO's behalf..

Trees are another significant risk both in terms of health and safety and finance. Some work was carried out as part of a developing tree management programme but further work to identify trees in need of remedial work is required. There have also been issues at some sites, especially Wigginton Road, where a neighbouring property owner has refused to take responsibility for potentially dangerous trees.

Following an incident with a low level water butt a review was undertaken of butts across all sites. As a result it was decided that the minimum height for all butts would be 75cm. Remedial action has been taken to bring this policy into effect. In addition, to ensure ponds are constructed safely in respect of depth and siting, tenants are now required to complete an authorisation request before a pond is excavated.

YACIO continued to provide public liability insurance covering all operational activities and trustee responsibilities. However, the cover was revised during the year to reduce costs. Tenants have been notified of the changes.

As a result of the revised insurance cover YACIO is required to carry out regular risk assessment. A full risk assessment of all sites was carried out by Heather Whittaker in November. The resulting report is now under consideration by trustees with the various issues identified to be prioritised for appropriate action.

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

Other Developments

- Anti-social Behaviour, etc: overall this appears to have been less of an issue than in 2021. However, there was a case of arson at Low Moor, ball bearing pellet damage at Glen and vandalism at a number of sites including Hob Moor and Holgate
- Associations: there was limited engagement with associations during the year. Developments included the 'revival' of the Bootham association and some engagement with Scarcroft regarding a possible community plots in connection with the replacement of the trading hut.
- Best Plot Competition: A working group is looking at reviving a version of this competition, previously held annually by City of York Council, across all YACIO sites.
- Bonfires were banned for a period during the summer drought for safety reasons
- Concessions Policy: trustees had long felt the concessions policy on rents inherited from City of York Council needed review. In particular, there was concern about the fairness of the age and low income concessions, as well as the former's impact on YACIO's finances. After discussion a review was begun, a process still in progress at the time this report was compiled. The intention is to consult members on a revised concessions structure at the 2023 AGM
- Environment/Wildlife: a group of trustees met to consider how the natural environment of sites could be protected and enhanced. An appeal for interested members to join the group to begin the process of drawing up plans was placed in the newsletter.

- Finance: as in previous years the financial situation was stable. Trustees had budgeted for expenditure to exceed income on the basis of surpluses in previous years and a financial reserve judged adequate. However, for various reasons, such as non-payment of the maintenance contractor for failure to meet contractual obligations, expenditure was less than planned resulting in a surplus of income over expenditure of £6,399. Because of the favourable financial situation trustees considered a rent increase was unnecessary for 2023. YACIO has not increased rent levels since taking over running of the allotments in 2017.
- Improvements: there were no Site Bids this year. However, various YACIO funded or implemented work was carried out. Examples include fencing at Holgate (as part of the community orchard/apiary project), a new gate at Hospital Fields and tree management at Scarcroft.
- Maintenance: Work was carried out at most sites. Signs were also replaced with more durable versions.
- Trading Huts: Scarcroft Association are in the process of planning for the replacement of their trading hut. In the process of discussion with City of York Council it became apparent that there was no lease or other agreement for this hut, while the agreement with City of York Council for the trading hut at Low Moor had expired. Trustees feel the arrangements for these, and any other association structures, need regularising under the terms of any revised lease from City of York Council.
- Wigginton Road Development: there was ongoing sporadic engagement with City of York Council regarding the proposed housing development on the scrapyard adjacent to the site and how this would impact on tenants, particularly in relation to retaining parking spaces.

Issues and Challenges

Disputes between individual tenants, or groups of tenants, continued to occupy a good deal of trustee time but not to the extent of previous years. While reported issues of anti-social behavior was also at a lower level than 2021, this remains an ever present threat to tenants and YACIO as an organisation

Although trustees have been able to avoid any increase in rents since YACIO took over the running of the allotments, whether an increase can be avoided for 2024 is uncertain. We continue to be almost totally reliant on rental income which hovers at around £74,000 annually. Inflation will lead to increased costs during 2023, for example the administrator's fee and new maintenance contract. Trustees anticipate, and have budgeted for, expenditure to exceed income by £10,000 at year end. A factor in determining rent levels for 2024 will be any changes made to the concessions policy but it is likely that at least a modest rent increase will need to be implemented. Consultation with tenants on both the concessions policy and rent levels will be undertaken before final decisions are made on charges for 2024 and beyond.

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 YACIO remains an organisation preoccupied with managing day-to-day operations. Planning for the future has taken a backseat. However, trustees are aware a more strategic, longer term view is required and it is hoped to make substantial steps forward in this regard during 2023. Tentative potential plans remain as outlined in previous annual reports. These include:

- increasing efficiency and building greater resilience into administrative and other routine operational activities to enhance services to tenants and responses to Site Secretaries
- developing clearer criteria when clearance of neglected plots by YACIO is justified and speeding up the process
- making full use of all available space at every site other than that required for access or conservation purposes
- making more use of the website to communicate with members and the wider public
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing and developing taking forward 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.
- considering the extent to which the charity can actively promote and campaign for additional allotment provision within the City of York area, possibly in collaboration with other non-YACIO managed sites, members of the public and any other interested parties

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

£20,000 as detailed in the reserves policy

Amount of reserves held

£50,941

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**Bankers**

The Cooperative Bank

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****Position****Date**

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 2022** 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

Date:

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Receipts & payments accounts for the year ended: 31st December 2022

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2022 Total funds	2021 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	74,075	-	74,075	73,935
Bank interest	47	-	47	10
Total receipts	74,122	-	74,122	73,945
Payments				
Administration officer	18,008	-	18,008	18,365
Insurance	287	-	287	1,853
Grass & hedge cutting	12,273	-	12,273	15,000
Deposits returned	-	1,108	1,108	505
Free plots and honorariums	925	-	925	725
Licences	1,890	-	1,890	1,890
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
Admin support & office costs	6,294	-	6,294	5,478
Skip hire & upgrade of sites	8,292	-	8,292	3,460
Repairs & maintenance	12,888	-	12,888	12,344
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	41	-	41	-
Water	4,158	-	4,158	4,345
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,342	-	2,342	2,318
Sundry expenses	25	-	25	95
Total payments	67,723	1,108	68,831	66,678
Net of receipts/(payments)	6,399	(1,108)	5,291	7,267
Transfer between accounts	(8,787)	8,787	-	-
Balance brought forward	53,329	28,660	81,989	74,722
Balance carried forward	50,941	36,339	87,280	81,989

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Statement of assets and liabilities at:	31st December 2021
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	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
Assets				
Cash at bank and in hand				
Current bank account	50,250	-	50,250	51,371
Deposit account	291	36,339	36,630	30,244
Paypal	374	-	374	374
Petty cash	26	-	26	-
	50,941	36,339	87,280	81,989

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
Liabilities				
Independent examination fee	350	-	350	300
	350	-	350	300

York Allotments CIO
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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	53,329	74,122	67,723	(8,787)	50,941
Restricted Funds					
Deposits	28,660	-	1,108	8,787	36,339
Total Restricted Funds	28,660	-	1,108	8,787	36,339
Total Funds	81,989	74,122	68,831	-	87,280

The transfer between funds represents the monies received as deposits that have been shown in the accounts as rents in previous years.

Approval of accounts for the year ended: 31st December 2022

The report and accounts were approved at a meeting of the Trustees held on:

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees

Date

Print name

Position (e.g. Chair etc)