

YACIO Site Secretary Meeting
6th February 2023

Attending: **Tony Chalcraft [TC]**, **Helen Butt[HB] (Holgate), Lisa Turner [LT](Wigginton Terrace), Adam Myers [AM], Heather Whittaker [HW], Colin Smith[CS], Anna Pawlow [AP],** Claire Pickard (Scarcroft), Graham Sanderson (Scarcroft) Jane Thurlow (Carr), Sarah Penn (Hospital Field), Sarah Daneil (Wigginton Road), Dean Fawcett (Howe Hill), Janet Cordingley (Fulford Cross), John Shirbon (Strensall), Mary Harlington (Green Lane), Phil Renshaw (Bootham)

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Anna Pawlow

1. **Welcome**TC welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves and the site they represented.
2. **Apologies**David Brinklow, Christine Robertson, Maria Lewington, Simon Wild
3. **Trustees’ Report**

TC noted that not much activity had happened since the last meeting due to the season. It was a key time for annual invoicing and AP was very busy processing this.

Trustees had had an annual review meeting with Dave Meigh in December and this had been useful. The renewal of the Lease had been discussed ahead of the current Lease’s expiry in 2024. This wold be for a longer term and Trustees would take this to the AGM to gain agreement from Members.

Trustees would be recommending that HEather WHittaker was voted on as a full Trustee at the AGM. The AGM is to be at Clements Hall on the 25th March at 10am. There will be a formal meeting followed by an open floor discussion as previously.

TC noted that the waiting list was longer than ever and shared some brief statistics.

1. **Finance Report**

LT reported that the 2022 accounts had gone to the auditor for preparation prior to the AGM. She noted that the planned overspend had not materialised so this year’s budget would be adjusted to once again predict an overspend to use surplus income on maintenance and improvements. There were some changes planned to payments to spread costs through the year in instalments rather than lump sums, which would impact quarterly reporting. LT noted that Trustees were investigating a higher yield savings account for the restricted deposit funds.

1. **Maintenance Report**

CS reported on the change in contractors following the last contractor’s failure to complete works. A new contractor had been instructed and work was proceeding to catch up on the missed work. All sites had been visited and many site secretaries had met the new contractor. CS asked site secretaries to continue to keep him updates on works and raise any issues with him as they had been doing.

1. **Administrator’s Report**

AP noted that it was the busiest period of the year with annual invoices and that resources were stretched in dealing with the increased volume of work. There had been a critical failure in the MCPC software’s interaction with Paypal so that this was not updating the database with payments taken online. The rents were being paid but there was no record within Colony of these payments. She noted that this was most likely to impact upon credit control activities an delay the termination of any tenancies where rent had not been unpaid, which may impact on how soon plots can be relet this spring. AP noted that this was a source of considerable stress and uncertainty at present.

AP reminded Site Secretaries that they must not relet plots immediately to new tenants without informing AP of the termination so that appropriate paperwork can be processed and the outgoing tenant given time to remove belongings.

AP outlined the end of tenancy deposit process in response to a question:
All tenants are sent a Deposit Return Form to complete if they are ending their tenancy voluntarily. If the plot is On Notice, they do not receive a form and the deposit is automatically forfeit. If the plot is relet swiftly (as is usually the case) then the deposit is returned as the plot is in a lettable state. Where there is uncertainty then AP would query this with the site secretary. This process depends on regular inspections and reporting of issues.

AP thanked site secretaries for all of their hard work and noted that most were now establishing a good schedule of inspections, which was serving to minimise the length of time that plots were being left unworked and hastening the flow of reletting plots.

1. **Concessions Policy**

TC introduced the subject of the suggested amendments to the Concession Policy. He outlined the purpose of the changes: To make the policy fairer and address income concerns. This was proposed to be addressed with both a rent increase and a change to the concessions policy. HB outlined the proposals in detail. TC invited each site secretary to give their own views on the proposal and to ask questions. The proposed policy change was discussed in detail. TC identified five questions.
- Should the Student Concession Continue?
- Should Community Plots remain free or be charged a Concession Rate?
- Should Pension Credit be used instead of a blanket State Pension qualification?
- Should Rents be increased?
- What percentage of discount was acceptable?

It was agreed that Student Concessions should remain, Community plots should pay concessionary rates, Pension Credit and Council Tax Relief should be used as criteria rather than all State Pensioners being eligible. Rents should be increased and a broad consensus of a 50% discount was accepted. JS requested that his strenuous objection to the policy be noted.

Trustees agreed to take the views expressed on board in order to formulate a further proposal to take to the AGM for feedback by Members.

**-BREAK-**

1. **Best Plot Competition**

Attendees discussed the proposed Best Plot Competition formulated by the working group. It was agreed to proceed with the Best Plot Competition and to advertise this to tenants in the Newsletter. The competition would be opt-in only and tenants would need to self-nominate.

1. **Plot Clearance Criteria**

LT had prepared a short summary on what criteria site secretaries should use when faced with a plot that may need clearance work. The preferred option was to get a tenant who would take it on, perhaps with a rent discount as an incentive. If this was not possible or the plot was dangerous then clearance work could be commissioned.

1. **Risk Assessments**

HW had completed risk assessments for all sites and circulated the document to all. HW thanked site secretaries for all of their help. Trustees would continue to work on the issues identified.

1. **Reports From Site Secretaries & General Issues Raised**

CP noted that t had been suggested that a bench be installed in a communal area of Scarcroft.

JS noted that the Strensall Village Show would have a category specifically for Strensall Allotment Tenants this year.

PR noted that the Association had been tackling plot clearance work so anticipated full occupancy this season.

MH noted that there were several vacancies that she had been unable to fill from the top 10 of the list on Green Lane.

DF noted that many new tenants were giving up shortly after taking a tenancy, which was disheartening. He noted that progress was good on the wildlife area on Howe Hill.

JC asked about progress regarding securing the gate for vehicle access to FUlford Cross. Trustees agreed to progress this.

JT noted that Carr was now fully let again.

HB updated on the progress of the Community Orchard Plot. Trees and bulbs had been planted an raised beds installed.

1. **Any Other Business**None
2. **Next Meeting**
19th June - Holgate Allotments (BYO Chair)
6th October - TBC