



YACIO Annual General Meeting Minutes

25th March 2023

9:30am

Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Anna Pawlow

1. Chair's Welcome

TC welcomed members to the 5th YACIO AGM. Two previous meetings were remote with this being the third in person one. TC thanked members for coming and outlined the structure of the meeting with a formal AGM, then a break and then open forum for discussions.

TC introduced the Trustees present HW, LT, TC, HB, ML (& AP).

He also noted that there was still one vacancy on the board so if anyone was interested in assisting with the running of YACIO to please get in touch.

2. Apologies

SW, CS, AM and Warwick Ivel, Nigel Collinson

3. Approval of Minutes of 2022 AGM

Yes, approved and seconded (MH)

4. Trustees' Report

TC reflected on YACIO's 5th year of operation. There are 18 months to go on the current Lease. He noted that Trustees wanted to discuss later whether members want us to continue with that. Trustees had tried to improve on management of allotments compared to management by CYC. Trustees would be looking at issues like the length of the waiting



list. AP continues to be the administrator and does all of the admin work to keep ticking over. The IT system inherited from CYC underpins all that YACIO do. It was noted that this had caused a number of problems. The system is designed for Councils, not charities. Members can pay online but system not really made for that so this can cause problems when vital functions fail. Tenants don't see the background work that goes on and Trustees had noted need to improve upon the stability of the system.

Trustees had undertaken to update website and produce a quarterly newsletter. In 2022 an updated tenancy agreement was adopted and those amendments were functioning well. TC noted that YACIO was very reliant on the volunteer Site Secretaries and it was good to see lots present here today. Without Site Secretaries YACIO couldn't function. They receive a paltry honorarium each year and put in lots of effort. So thank you for all that you do.

TC announces several changes in the Trustees roles this pasyt year. CS was Secretary and also managed all maintenance. He oversees the contractors and Dave Ruddock, special thanks to him too, he's our 'man with a van' and YACIO is very grateful to him.

CS had stood down as Secretary this and HB had taken over the role. TC proposed a vote of thanks for CS as without all his work YACIO wouldn't work.

HW would be joining as a Trustee.

Some issues had occurred with maintenance contract in the past year.

Trees were a big issue and controversial. It can be very expensive if issues arise and there was a plan to look at management of trees in the longer term.

YACIO has a total of 1515 lettable plotsm with 3018 people on the list. Each applicant can register for up to 3 sites but even if they did so this would still mean a minimum of 1000 people on the list. This is a big number and applicants can wait several years to get a plot. TC noted that there aren't enough plots to sustain this type of demand, the provision



isn't adequate. Trustees were very aware that this will be a big issue to address moving forward.

Overall it was noted that there had been less vandalism this year, though this was very variable across different sites.

A group was looking at reviving the Best Plot Competition this year for all YACIO members.

Trustees had devoted considerable time to issues regarding the concessions policy.

TC noted that Trustees wanted members' views on YACIO renewing the LEase and that this would be discussed in the second part of the meeting.

MAINTENANCE

ML readed a report on behalf of CS.

Last year YACIO had struggled to secure a consistent relationship with the contractor. This was the 3rd contractor to take on the work now. He continued to try to find the right people to work with us. CS noted that he was hopeful that this current contractor will be a much better fit and on board with our priorities such as ensuring hedges are properly managed and path clearance. Aspects Horticultural Services are the new providers with a bigger team, better equipment and more manpower. Keen to work with us. During the spring of 2023 boundary hedges have been trimmed to proper height. Feedback had been good, please do let us know if you have any further comments. Grass cutting will start in April.

Complementing the main contractor we have Dave the 'man with a van' for routine maintenance. In 2022 he made 102 trips to James Street for non-green waste disposal. Hopefully seeing improvement across sites as a result of that. The policy of 1.5m hedge reduction results in some green waste as well.

It was noted that 40% of YACIO's income is spent on the maintenance of sites. It was hoped that YACIO could allocate an additional 10% per year on tree management after neglect of the Council and then Covid



disrupting issues so addressing that backlog was a priority. He noted that Trustees were keen to get any feedback both positive and negative welcome.

Members were thanked for their patience as Trustees learn to look after our wonderful sites.

Q- Does that maintenance include pathways through allotments? There is a muddy path on Scarcroft.

A - Need to clarify who is responsible for this maintenance. We think the responsibility stayed with the council fro PROW.

TC wished to make a point of clarity on the contractor - the name of the last one and the new one are very similar.

5. Financial Report

LT gave a brief outline of the accounts prepared. There had been an increase in income last year (only a few hundred pounds). YACIO had income other than rental income. Have managed to let put a few new plots but no other source of income. She noted that costs are going up and we do have to look at that.

She noted that expenses are going up but last year we did make a surplus on the accounts. This is due to the maintenance contractor failing so last two payments were not made as a result. Also YACIO are now paying insurance on a monthly basis so this spreads the cost out and with the maintenance costs to catch up on this meant that in effect that saving had already been spent.

YACIO's biggest expense are maintenance and administration. Site Secretaries help and tenants help, and the board is very appreciative of that and the work you all do. Would love if people could help more and keep plots tidy and don't leave them in a mess to keep costs of plot clearance down. Plot deposits don't cover that if they are left in a very



bad condition. Trustees want to get plots cleared and relet as soon as possible.

LT noted that she had made a transfer of a sum of money to a deposit account to make sure that those funds are reserved so that YACIO could repay deposits if necessary. With the increase in interest rates might have £700 in interest coming in now as she had opened new account to take advantage.

Unfortunately it was not anticipated that there would be extra funds to spend on 'nice' projects this year due to the need to concentrate on trees and maintenance. Once this was stabilised then in future years can look at investing in more 'fun' things. Maintenance needs keeping on top of though to maintain the high standards we all expect.

Inflation was another worry for future budgeting. YACIO's aim is to provide a better service than CYC for members and to be able to enjoy plots and have basic maintenance covered.

6. Election of Trustees

TC noted that 1/3 of trustees need to stand down at each AGM so 2 trustees would be standing down and seeking re election. These were AM and ML this year.

Members voted to re-elect them to the board.

HW had been serving as a provisional Trustee. She was standing for election to the board.

Members voted to confirm her appointment.

7. Appointment of Officers

TC was voted to remain as Chair

HB was voted to remain as Secretary

LT was voted to remain as Treasurer



8. Appointment of Independent Examiners
Members voted to confirm using the same Independent Examiner.

9. Next AGM
It was agreed that the next AGM should be in March 2024.

10. AGM Declared Closed

-BREAK-

Open Forum Discussion

TC reopened the discussion by asking members for feedback on YACIO renewing the Lease from the Council. TC gave a brief recap of how YACIO was established in 2017.

There was a brief discussion of the pros and cons of YACIO continuing to manage the allotments. YACIO only pays a peppercorn rent (ie nothing) and the allotments land is still owned by CYC and has the statutory protections. YACIO has to be totally self financing. There is no external funding. The discussion touched on the increased demand for allotments and the lack of provision and what YACIO's role might be in the future. TC noted that Dave Meigh's (CYC) input had been invaluable to Trustees and his support was much appreciated.

It was agreed that members were happy for the Trustees to renegotiate the Lease for a longer term and to continue management of the sites.

The discussion moved on to the Trustees' proposals to increase rent and change concession criteria.

TC outlined the need for this citing the recent rise in inflation impacting costs and the ongoing cost of living crisis.



Trustees proposed a rounding of the rental figures by ~5% and amending the eligibility of concessions to be based on means tested benefits to make sure those in most need received it and to increase the amount of the concession to 50% from the current 40% discount with the goal of supporting those most in need and making the eligibility fair to all.

There were mixed responses from the members with those who had historically been in receipt of a age based concession split for and against. Some of those who had expected to be granted a concession based on age felt let down, some were supportive of providing the concession to those in financial need only.

Trustees noted that there was no way to know how many people may be affected by the change in age based concession as YACIO did not have information on those who may still qualify based on means tested benefits. Trustees noted that at present projections if no action was taken then the income would cease to cover the running costs of the allotments. Without any amendment to the concessions policy then the rent increase would have to be much higher to balance the increasing costs. The administrative impact of the proposal was discussed with Trustees noting that this change would result in a slight increase in administrative work to process all applications annually.

The option of having concessions open to anyone who said they had a need with no requirement to provide evidence was discussed but Trustees were wary due to the increased uncertainty that this would introduce to future planning and budgeting. Trustees noted that they have a duty to manage the allotments and their finances responsibly and that this proposal was a very big risk.

In general the balance of the discussion was supportive of the principle of altering concessions for the social good and those affected financially



to enable them to gain the benefit of an allotment but strenuous objections to any changes to age based concessions was noted from some members.

The discussion moved on to the revival of the Best Plot Competition. It was announced that participation would be voluntary with tenants opting in through the website (or on paper) to be judged. There would be two categories, one for established plots, one for newcomers with winners in each city area as well as overall. Prizes would be presented at an event during National Allotment Week in August.

Some site specific queries were raised and discussed briefly and then the meeting was closed.