



## YACIO Annual General Meeting Minutes

23rd March 2024

10am

Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Anna Pawlow

### 1. Chair's Welcome

TC welcomed members to the 6<sup>th</sup> YACIO AGM. Two previous meetings were remote with this being the fourth 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. He asked that any matters to be discussed at the open discussion after the formal meeting be written down during the break.

TC introduced the Trustees present HB, SW, AM, CS, LT (& AP).

### 2. Apologies

3. TC read the list of apologies given.

4. Approval of Minutes of 2023 AGM

Yes, approved and seconded (JS & MH)

AS wished to raise an issue regarding whether the changes made to the rents and concessions were constitutionally valid. He queried whether as the discussion took place outside of the formal AGM and no vote of all tenants was taken the changes were legitimate and under what authority the changes had been made.



TC noted that the discussion at the last AGM took place as a consultative basis and was not part of the formal AGM. Trustees believe that they have the power to make these changes without any vote of all members needed under the constitution as it stands under clause 9. TC noted that the constitution did set out how to make changes to the constitution itself and that this was a longer process and would need approval from the Charity Commission.

AS felt that amending the rents without a formal proposal to the members wasn't constitutional. TC noted that the formal AGM was the necessary business of the AGM and the discussion afterwards was informal. AM noted that this was the structure of the charity. If the Trustees did not have the power to make these management decisions then the charity could not run. Some attendees felt that members should be consulted on and vote upon changes. Trustees noted the logistical challenges such a proposal would entail.

TC stated that Trustees felt they had the authority under the constitution to make decisions about the income, rents and other changes as without this authority the charity would not function. It was noted that the Council had previously raised rents every year without any consultation with tenants. Trustees believed that raising the rents and changing the concessions was the right thing to do to ensure cash flow and make allotments fairer and more accessible to more people. It was hoped that no further changes would be necessary within the next 3-4 years at least having made these changes.

## 5. Trustees' Report

TC noted that the full report was available on the website.

Trustees had been focusing on stabilisation, site improvements and site maintenance. YACIO continued to engage a self employed administrator in AP. AP had given notice that she was leaving this year



and Trustees were considering changes to the role and it was likely that two part time employed administrators would be engaged. If anyone was interested in the role then they should keep an eye out for news regarding this. This would be a big change as AP had taken care of the administration for over 6 years now.

The IT system YACIO uses was not without issues, following a large problem with payment processing last year there had been other smaller issues through the year that had an impact on efficiency. However, there were at present no plans to make changes this year with the other changes due.

TC noted that there was still one vacancy on the board for another Trustee after HW joined last year.

TC read out some statistics for the tenants and plots that YACIO had. He noted that there had been issues with Anti-Social Behaviour and Vandalism on several sites. The police were involved and YACIO were treating the issues as serious matters.

The newsletter continued to go out 4 times a year and a blog written by an anonymous tenant, who TC offered thanks to, was published regularly on the website.

It was intended that the Best Plot Competition would continue this year.

Trustees had begun preliminary discussions with a local landowner about a new allotment site. This was likely to be a long process.

Trustees were focusing on the renewal of the Lease with the Council. No major changes were expected other than the term, which it was hoped would be much longer.

Trustees hoped to expand the allotments and to improve the existing sites but acknowledged that this would entail seeking external funding to make substantial improvements. Ideas for improvements were things like toilet provisions and security fencing. Other issues



that would also require larger funds (outside of rental income) could be tackling issues of standing water some sites were experiencing. CS gave a brief report on maintenance work undertaken. He thanked tenants for the positive feedback.

HB noted that a revamp of the website was planned for the year so changes might be seen there soon.

AM encouraged tenants to join and support their local associations.

SW noted that YACIO could offer support with the establishment of new associations on sites that did not have them .

#### 6. Financial Report

LT gave a brief outline of the accounts prepared. She noted that there had been an overspend and that this was planned to enable investment in maintenance works that were required for trees and hedges. She also noted that there was now a small additional income from interest earned on the restricted deposit funds. It was again planned to make an overspend during the year to invest once again in site maintenance and improvements.

A query was raised regarding the proposed direct employment of new administrative staff. LT noted that Trustees were aware of the potential issues surrounding this and had expertise available to them.

#### 7. Election of Trustees

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

Members voted to re-elect them to the board.

#### 8. Appointment of Officers

TC was voted to remain as Chair



HB was voted to remain as Secretary

LT was voted to remain as Treasurer

9. Appointment of Independent Examiners

Members voted to confirm using the same Independent Examiner.

10. Next AGM

It was agreed that the next AGM should be in March 2025.

11. AGM declared closed

-BREAK-

Open Forum Discussion

TC reopened the discussion by inviting CP to announce the Best Plot Competition 2024.

CP announced that entries were now open for the Best Plot Competition. The deadline to enter was 18<sup>th</sup> June and judging would take place in the last week of June/the first week of July with the presentation of prizes during National Allotment Week in August. She noted that judges would require a plot number to be displayed and any locked plots would need to give information on how to access the plots. No site secretaries or tenants should be present for the judging so as to avoid any bias.

She also requested that anyone who felt experienced should volunteer as a judge as there were too few last year. Anyone interested should get in touch through the Administrator.

Willie noted that the Mikron Theatre would again be performing at Scarcroft and encouraged tenants to attend. He was also looking for



someone to assist in the running to safeguard the tradition into the future. Anyone interested should get in touch with him.

CN raised the issue of Hedge cutting on Scarcroft and on other sites. Some tenants were very upset about the cutting of hedges and the rule of 1.5m set out in the tenancy agreement. There was a short discussion of the timings for hedge cutting. Tenants had been given an earlier date and were upset that the Contractors were cutting after this. CS noted that the contractors were fully qualified and well aware of the requirements surrounding nesting birds. TC noted that no hedges were cut against the tenant's wishes and that this was part of the wider long term strategy for hedge management. YACIO had been repeatedly advised by the police that shorter hedges were better for site security as there were fewer places for people to hide from view. Trustees had also received feedback from tenants that tall hedges could make them feel unsafe. It was noted that YACIO was happy to look at special provisions where there was a reason for taller hedges for specific ecological or security reasons. This would be on a case by case basis only. It was noted that some fruit trees within hedges had been damaged by contractors and this was unfortunate. Trustees would be looking at ways to avoid such errors in the future.

LP expressed her vehement disapproval of YACIO's management of hedges.

AM noted that there was another aspect and that was the need to keep paths accessible especially for those with mobility impairments and that this was very important. He noted there were lots of different, often conflicting viewpoints and it was an important role of the Trustees to balance both.

There was a discussion of how best to manage the need for maintenance, access and security and tenants' personal preferences.



It was noted that DEFRA had just introduced new requirements for all hen keepers to be registered with DEFRA by 1<sup>st</sup> October.

There was a short discussion regarding the use of CCTV to tackle antisocial behaviour on sites. Trustees noted the challenges to the storage and use of the data were a barrier as was perceived 'intrusion' by some tenants.

It was noted that all incidents of vandalism or ASB should be reported individually to the police as the police were data driven and needed the numbers of reports. Tenants should also make sure to note that the incidents were linked to others being reported as the police may not make the connection themselves. Long term Trustees felt that increasing the security of sites was the way forward.

There was a discussion regarding non-cultivated plots. Some tenants felt that it was taking too long to let out vacant plots.

Some tenants felt strongly that YACIO was too heavy handed and that the letters sent to tenants were threatening. AP outlined the standard process for all non-cultivation letters and the legal requirements of the process.

It was noted that all Site Secretaries are volunteers giving their time and that inspections were time consuming events, especially on large sites. It was a difficult balance to strike.

It was queried whether the large waiting lists were giving rise to less leniency on under-cultivated plots, but it was noted that this was not the case. TC noted that Trustees had a duty to those on the waiting list to ensure that plots were being used and not going to waste.

Some tenants felt that the language of the letters was too legalistic and threatening. It was noted that a tenancy was a legal agreement and the termination of such was also a legal matter so some legal phrasing was required. Trustees were keen to point out that no tenants were being



specifically targeted and that sometimes plot numbers could be confused. It was noted that open communication between tenants, site secretaries and Trustees was key.

Site Secretaries essential contributions to the running of the allotments were noted and they and Trustees were thanked for their works.

The meeting was declared over.