



## YACIO Annual General Meeting Minutes

22nd March 2025

10am

Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Helen Butt

### 1. Chair's Welcome

Tony Chalcraft (TC) welcomed members to the 7<sup>th</sup> YACIO AGM. He 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 forum be written down during the break.

TC introduced the Trustees present Maria Lewington-Gower (ML-G), Helen Butt (HB), Adam Myers (AM), Lisa Turner (LT), Heather Whittaker (HW), Simon Wild (SW) & Christine Robinson (CR) (on probation).

### 2. Apologies

Colin Smith (CS) trustee and tenant, Dean Fawcett (DF) site secretary Howe Hill allotments and tenant, Norah Godfrey (NG) site secretary Glen allotments and tenant, Sarah Penn (SP) site secretary Hospital Fields and tenant, Angela Johnson (AJ) tenant, Laura Potts (LP) tenant

### 3. Approval of Minutes of 2024 AGM

Yes, approved and seconded Janet Cordingley (JC) and Clare Kennard (CK)

### 4. Trustees' Report

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



Financially, YACIO is in a sound position. Concession and rental changes last year have increased income and meant that YACIO are able to freeze rents despite other costs rising. Nevertheless, the trustees recognise that external funding is necessary to fund large projects. Trustees main concern is that there is currently no active lease and it has proved hard getting clarity from City of York Council (CYC). Some assurances have recently been forthcoming, but the issue is ongoing. The expectation is that a new, longer-term lease will be secured after CYC's technical requirements have been met. Once the new lease is in place, trustees will be able to pursue external funding opportunities.

TC introduced CR as a potential new trustee. CR will sit on the board and if both parties are happy, will be presented for election at the next AGM. TC noted that, with CR, the board now has the maximum number of nine members.

TC noted that there are 1550 plots. 246 tenancies ended during the course of the year, and 38 tenancies were terminated by YACIO. 258 plots were re-let. This meant that 16% of plots were turned over, a higher proportion than in previous years. There were 1641 applicants on the waiting list, although TC noted this figure is likely to be inflated given that some applicants make duplicate applications to up to three different sites and some applicants fail to inform YACIO if they are no longer interested in having a plot.

Following the resignation of Anna Pawlow, YACIO's self-employed administrator, YACIO has employed two part-time administrators, Janet Devlin (JD) and Nick Smith (NS), who are currently managed by Board Treasurer, LT. The aim is to provide more administrative cover for the same cost and offer better communication with tenants by offering a direct phone line rather than a remote answering service. Some technical issues with Colony, the YACIO IT system remain, but



for the first time this year, YACIO were able to issue most invoices via email, saving substantially on postage costs and trustee time.

TC confirmed that All Aspects (gardening contractors) continue to be contracted to cut hedges and maintain grass pathways across all sites. TC also noted that Dave Ruddock (DR) continued to provide an invaluable maintenance service across the sites and thanked him for providing an excellent service.

TC noted that there had been issues with vandalism on several sites with the police and trustees actively involved.

Trustees' aspirations for the coming year are to improve administrative functions, make better use of the website to communicate with tenants, improve allotment sites, bring more plots back into use and explore ways in which allotments can provide value to the whole community.

CK asked if trustees thought CYC were looking for other organisations to look after the allotments? TC couldn't categorically rule this out but he thought this unlikely with CYC technicalities being the main cause of lease renewal delays.

CK asked about YACIO's plans to increase the number of allotments. TC noted that discussions with a private landlord had fallen through, but there were two other possibilities, one managing a local parish council allotment site and another developing a small set of plots as part of a larger growing project on the outskirts of the city. Specific details would be shared with tenants when possible.

Mary Harlington (MH) asked what ideas trustees had for the future direction of the allotments. TC referred MH to the trustees' report and noted that trustees would welcome the input of members in forming active interest groups to pursue targeted projects on the allotments.

Sue Norton (SN) expressed an interest in taking part in a group looking at biodiversity and trees across the sites. AM highlighted his



new role as trustee responsible for trees and welcomed the possibility of a group with a remit of considering sites from an ecological point of view. He asked for any members interested to come forward.

#### 5. Financial Report

LT gave a brief outline of the prepared accounts and reported no concerns from the auditor. She noted that there had been a planned overspend of £10K to continue maintenance work of trees and hedges. She also noted that there had been an increase in costs across the board, but that YACIO had been able to make some additional income from interest on the restricted deposit funds. There is no planned overspend for the coming year. Any large projects would need to attract external funding.

Accounts and annual report approved.

#### 6. Election of Trustees

TC noted that trustees are required to seek re-election every three years. This year LT and CS sought re-election. Members voted to re-elect them to the board.

There were some questions from members about the election process. CR queried why her apprenticeship needed to last 15 months. Gary Flakes (GF) and Keith Macintosh (KM) asked how the process could be made more transparent. TC noted that the election process is explained in the constitution which is available on the website. He recognised that the constitution may need to be reviewed, but explained that it was crucial for the good function of the board that the trustee team were able to work well together and this delicate balance needed to be considered when adopting new trustees. AM added some context around the practicalities of ensuring a cohesive and productive trustee board.



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 2025.

Malcolm Hainsworth (MH) proposed a vote of thanks to the trustees.

10. AGM declared closed

-BREAK-

Open Forum Discussion

TC noted that several questions had been submitted prior to the meeting by KM.

KM asked for trustee comments on site vandalism and allotment security with particular regard to Low Moor. AM noted some serious incidents of vandalism on Low Moor. TC noted that tackling vandalism was extremely difficult. YACIO had previously investigated employing a security company to carry out patrols, but the cost had been prohibitive considering the limited actions a security company could take. He recognised that, in some circumstances, investing in better fencing could help to reduce incidents, but that this was expensive and would therefore require external funding. TC noted the recommendation from the police to maintain hedges at a height that ensures clear lines of vision across allotment sites and also suggested storing tools in more secure, communal facilities. HW highlighted the extensive vandalism and theft across multiple plots at Bootham in a single planned incident and noted



that none of the additional security measures suggested would have prevented this.

KM suggested a collaboration between CYC, York University and YACIO to provide lighting on the main public right of way through Low Moor allotment site. TC explained that while YACIO could advocate for this should Low Moor Association request it, the path was owned by CYC and was ultimately their responsibility. SW highlighted that evidence from the police suggested that lighting pathways may not improve safety and security and that many tenants felt strongly that darkness should be preserved as much as possible to support nocturnal animals such as bats. MH noted that there was a reason insurance for allotments was expensive and that members should accept the reality that allotments were impossible to secure entirely.

KM asked who owned the Low Moor allotment car park. TC confirmed that the car park was owned by CYC and was YACIO's responsibility under the terms of the lease.

KM asked about the possibility of installing toilet facilities at Low Moor. TC noted that in an ideal world all allotments would have toilet facilities and that they would improve sites, making them accessible to a greater number of people, but that installing them is expensive and urged Allotment Associations to fundraise for facilities. This approach was backed by AM and HW, whose own Association at Bootham had successfully applied for funding for a compost toilet. SW noted that Low Moor's upcoming Association AGM in May would be an ideal time to re-open this debate. There was a general discussion exploring how other allotments across the country generated income and options for fundraising. ML-G explained that many allotments are under Council control which has implications for raising funds. AM and TC urged Associations to take a pro-active approach to fundraising and asked for members with fundraising experience to come forward. There are options



for members to form special interest groups to support the work of trustees, with fundraising being particularly welcome.

John Shirbon (JS) questioned whether rents should be raised to provide more funding. TC explained that trustees had favoured lower rents to keep allotments financially accessible to as many people as possible and they preferred to look for external sources to raise funds.

KM asked about the possibility of installing an information board at Low Moor which educated tenants and the local community about ecological issues at the allotments. SW suggested that KM could drive this forward via the Low Moor Association.

KM asked about the financial loss for the year. LT explained that this had been planned in order to undertake major tree and hedge work and that no loss was budgeted for the coming year. She was confident this was achievable assuming that no major, emergency work was required.

Heather Dawe asked about the planned felling of two ash trees on her plot. TC assured her that this work should be undertaken soon and that delays had been caused by the necessity of liaising with CYC.

Compensation to the tenant is a possibility.

CK enquired about water butts on Glen. During her next health and safety visit, HW will check that all taps have water butts under them.

CK asked if there was a way we could talk more about good news at the allotments. HB explained that the newsletter is the ideal forum for good news stories and urged site secretaries and members to send news items through to [contact@yorkallotments.org](mailto:contact@yorkallotments.org)

CK asked about the possibility of improving the manure bays at Glen and cited Hemplands as a model example. David Brinklow explained that Hemplands Association had successfully applied for a grant to build these and that Glen might try this too.

GF asked if the best plot competition would go ahead this year and asked if the criteria might be reconsidered given that the same people won



every year. TC confirmed that the best plot competition would go ahead and that the organisers would look at their criteria to see if adjustments were necessary.

The meeting was declared over.