

Extraordinary General Meeting

at

Sunnybank Social Club on Wednesday 21st May 2014

Present

Alastair & Maggi Harris, Bill Monk, Ann & Mike Beeken, David Walker, Jo & Ted Maxwell, Louise Leadbetter, Graham Rawstron, Rebekah Lally, Denise & Mike Taylor, John Shelly, Wynn Holmes, Jane & Stan Pratt, Christine & George Haworth, Joan Glanfield, Ita & Mike Priestley, Rachel Elven, Neil Burton, Brian Essex, Leisse & Paul Cothliffe, Joe Hyland, Judith Collier, Ray Elwell, Michelle Howarth,

Apologies

Janet Lowe, Ann Davies, Linda Grundy, Christine Noble, Steve Bedford, Gary Morton, Lynette Bow, Opal Monk, Frank Holmes, Liz Canham, Linda Doody, Victor Marcinkiewicz, Ann Warburton, Pauline Mc Donald, Kay Nicholson, Neil Greaves.

Purpose of the Meeting

To give a progress report on self-management to Allotment Society Members, to introduce possible major projects and their funding and to agree a new more appropriate Constitution for the Allotment Society.

Journey to Self- Management

2002 First discussions with the Council on self-management.

2011 Following years of Site neglect by the Council, together with a representative from the National Allotment Society, we started regular meetings with the Council to find ways of bringing the Allotment Site back to life.

2013 The Council made us a new proposal for self-management and drafted a proposed Site lease.

March 2014 The Council cancelled their existing agreements with all tenants and recommended each Tenant to take up a new agreement with our Allotment Society. All but one Tenant has taken up this offer. . This Tenant has been issued with a notice to quit by the Council and the plot will shortly be available to our Society for re-letting.

1st April 2014 A 25 year lease for self-management of the Allotment Site has been signed with the Council. The Council is now in process of recording the lease with the Land Registry.

There are 50 Plots and 48 Tenancies now being managed by our Allotment Society. One Tenant has three Plots with two Tenancy Agreements. This will be rectified in due course.

We have an Allotment Society e mail address for members of the public to get information on allotments or join the waiting list. We also have a web site which in addition to a public area has a secure member's area. Members will be individually notified shortly when their access has been activated.

Possible Major Projects

Toilet facilities there are low maintenance composting toilets on the market which do not require mains water, sewerage outlet or mains electricity. The cost would be around £10K

Purpose built Community Building the present hut has given good service but has limited space and being made of wood will need to be replaced in time. A recent meeting was attended on an allotment site in Irlam. This was held in a custom built prefabricated concrete building. It is fire proof and vandal resistant. It has adequate space for catering and meetings. With such a building we could in the longer term expand our social activities. The cost would probably be £15-£20K

Waste Area improvements now that the rogue brook no longer crosses the bottom of the Site, the area used for biodegradable waste deposits and wood burning could be levelled to create two maybe three new allotments and still give adequate space for its current use. Recognising the shortage of land in Rossendale for allotments and the large waiting lists, this seems to be a very good piece of land management. The cost would be relatively small, say no more than £500.

The first two projects obviously need major grant funding. No other major projects were proposed by the membership. A vote confirmed that both projects should be progressed with the toilet being given first priority.

The waste area project would need only minor grant funding and it was agreed that this could be progressed in parallel with the toilet project.

The number and location of water taps was discussed. Whilst the ratio of taps to plots just about meets the standard recommended by the National Allotment Society, due to poor Council monitoring the tap locations are not well spaced. Total replacement of the water mains would be a huge and expensive job. Getting a grant

for this would probably also be very difficult. Minor extension of the mains to the remotest plots, however, could probably be achieved from our own funds using our own labour force.

Fund raising for projects

The toilet project and later the community building project will need substantial grant funding. We have already received a £1600 grant from the Council to be specifically used for matched funding or for financing a company which specialises in grant applications. Our grants project team will have an exploratory meeting in June with one such company “ Proffitts”.

Now that we are self- managed and with a long site lease, Lottery grant funding will be open to us. For this at least three months accounts and a new constitution will be needed. The grants team will pursue this avenue when the conditions have been met.

There are many other sources for small and large grants, both locally and nationally. The grants team has a long list which they intend to work through.

We judge that site rental income will cover day to day running costs and provide some reserves for unexpected emergencies. Whilst our Society is a non- profit organisation, we will need to raise other revenue if we intend to purchase or replace items from time to time. (catering equipment, tables, chairs etc). We will no longer raise money from membership subscriptions as these are now included in the plot rents. We will raise some money from the seed scheme and some from the show raffle. A possible monthly site draw was suggested as another possibility.

Roles of Committee Members

The Society is owned by the members. The Management Committee is there to manage the Society and to run the Allotment Site on behalf of the members. It is therefore most important that as many members as possible take an active interest in the running of the Society and the Allotment Site.

The Management Committee at present has a full complement of 12 members. To get more people involved the various management functions have been divided into “threads” (sub-committees), each being headed by a committee member. Copies of a table demonstrating this were handed out. Members were encouraged to be more active and to consider joining an appropriate group.

Question & Answer Session

Will members have a say in how grant money is spent? This has already been answered in the previous sections.

Will members have access to meeting minutes? In the past AGM minutes have not been circulated. In future all meeting minutes will be posted in the Members Area of our web site.

What rent do we have pay to the Council for leasing the Site and is it fixed?

The initial rent has been agreed at £250pa, fixed for 5 years. It will then change in line with RPI. It will then be reviewed every five years thereafter and changed in line with RPI.

Can we have special memberships, junior for instance to make grants easier to get? The new proposed Constitution allows different types of membership to be created.

Can we have a scheme for bulk buying of gardening supplies? This could easily be done but it needs someone to take it on board. Most of the Management Committee is currently fully committed on other projects. A member of the Committee will however research this and if viable will set it in motion.

What Society tools do we have and why are they not freely available? We have four wheelbarrows. All have recently been overhauled and are openly available on the Community Plot. We have a plate wacker and two strimmers. For safety we have to keep these locked away. These are being used by trained members of the maintenance team. Any other member wanting to use them would have to be suitably trained. Also in the equipment hut are various tools (rake, spade, fork, spike, mattock, shovel, wood saw). These are regularly used by the maintenance team on footpath and other work. Spades, forks and rakes have been made available to new tenants who often need tools to get them going. Most other tenants already have these tools but can borrow them or any of the more specialist tools by asking a member of the maintenance team.

Constitution

Our present Constitution is 10 years old and was drafted when we considered applying for charitable status. This didn't happen and the document is no longer fit for purpose. A new Constitution has been drafted and was circulated to members in advance of this meeting.

There were quite a few questions mostly with a need for clarification rather than amendment. There were however two questions in the Section "Property and Funds"

Item 1 states that two signatories are needed for every payment. It should also state the total number of approved payment signatories.

Item 2 refers to clause 3.8. This could not be identified. It would help with the document clarity if the document was more precisely numbered.

The Management Committee then proposed a motion that subject to the above two amendments this Constitution should be adopted in place of that adopted in July 2004.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

