

Alresford Allotment Society

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Thursday 6th June 2024 in the Committee Room at NATC.

Present: Tony Mott (Chairman), Nigel Webb (Secretary), Dawn Othen (Treasurer), Tim Dicker, Mike Symons, Russ Waterton, Cllr Johnny Dakin and Co-opted Member Tim Dodd

Apologies: None

Item No	Minutes	Action
1.	The Chairman confirmed Debbie Cook's decision to step down from the Committee due to personal circumstances. He was however, delighted to introduce Tim Dodd co-opted onto the Committee as her replacement.	
2.	The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 st March 2024 were agreed.	
3.	The following matters arising from those Minutes were: - The Chairman confirmed that with the support of Cllr Dalkin the Council had now given the Society guidelines for the operation of the manure heap:- <i>"The Council have taken advice from the legal advisor to the National Allotment Society who have stated that if the manure is used regularly and not left stagnant and exposed for long periods, they do not see there being any legal implications to be concerned about. They further state that should the manure be in situ for a longer period during cold and wetter weather conditions it would be prudent to cover the heap."</i> - At the previous Committee Meeting Debbie Cook had raised the issue of keeping bees on her plot. Cllr Dalkin advised that this was an excluded activity under the Council's Rules. If it was to be considered further a Health & Safety Assessment would need to be undertaken. MS commented that there were now some particularly aggressive bee varieties. It was agreed not to pursue this further.	

	- NW confirmed that the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 21st March had been circulated to all Members as will all Minutes in future. - The Chairman wished to thank the sub-group tasked by the Committee to deliver the new shed project consisting of Nigel Webb, Mike Symons, Dave Basford and Howard Boardman. This involved the dismantling of the old shed and subsequently re-erected on the New Leaf Charity's plot, the construction of a new base and sourcing a suitable shed from a local manufacturer. Installing anchor points, set in concrete, for securing the new mower and a petrol safe supplied by the Council. The entire project had come under the budget of £1,800 by £40.00. MS said that he did not want to be associated with the decision to use the local manufacturer.	
4.	The Chairman confirmed that he had booked a room at Alresford Golf Club for the AGM to be held at 7pm on Thursday 14th November. The Club has not indicated that any hire charge will be applied. Barry Newman, a well known and respected speaker had been booked for the evening.	
5.	The Treasurer presented her Report. The current Bank balance stood at £1,226.46. Since the last Meeting she had paid out £1,473.00 to Winchester Sheds, and a further £287.14 was due for payment for materials for the base, security anchor points, padlocks, guttering and a water butt. We had received a sponsorship donation of £100.00 from New Farm Motor Services and £28.75 for manure. The Treasurer drew the Committee's attention to the fact that we had paid out £300.00 for manure and had only received payments totalling £229.75 to date. She asked that any outstanding payments due from plot holders were made as soon as possible. The Secretary agreed to highlight this in the Minutes circulated to all Members. The Treasurer also advised the Meeting that our Bank, Barclays, had credited the Society Account with £50.00 for compensation for their mistakes in processing the new Bank Mandates. She said that she was happy to limit her reimbursement to £25.00 to cover her fuel and parking expenses when attending the Bank in Winchester on two occasions.	

	It was agreed to keep the issue of on-line Banking under review however, due to the minimal number of annual transactions it was not felt necessary to pursue this further at this stage.	
6.	The Chairman advised that all Committee Members were now happy with the revised policy ruling and that he would forward the document to the Council for their approval and adoption.	
7.	The Chairman advised the Meeting that earlier in the day he had emailed the inaugural draft Newsletter to the Committee. He apologised for the delay in producing this but factors had not been on his side. He asked the Committee to let him have any comments by the end of the weekend as he needed to finalise the copy with the Council on Monday morning. He thanked Claire in the Council Offices for her help and support in constructing and formatting the Newsletter. The overall impression was that the Newsletter looked well presented and professional and that we should aim to produce two copies a year, one in the Spring and the other in the Autumn. Tim Dodd said that his partner, who had experience in these matters, would be happy to help produce future Newsletters. The Chairman said that he greatly appreciated this gesture.	
8.	It was agreed that the Council would initially undertake upto 3 inspections a year. Cllr Dakin and another member of staff would form the inspection team accompanied, in the first instance by the Chairman and Secretary. It was agreed that two Committee Members would join the Council team on all inspection visits. The Chairman produced a draft 'Allotment Inspection Checklist' based on the Council's Rules. Once this has been agreed by the Council they will send it to all plot holders so that everyone is aware of the expected requirements. Any plot holder falling short would be written too and given a month to rectify any identified issues. A follow up inspection would subsequently be carried out and further action taken if necessary.	JD

9.	The Secretary reported that the Mower Rota was in place through to the end of October, each month being covered by two Members. He also reported that everyone on the rota had undergone the necessary training proscribed by the Council to operate the mower in a safe and orderly manner and that the appropriate Forms had been signed and were now held by the Council. The course had been under the instruction of Howard Boardman who the Chairman wished to thank.	
10.	The Secretary reported that the Council had kindly recently provided two 8 yard skips which had been filled remarkably quickly. A work party had helped to tidy the site but there were still redundant items scattered around the site. It was hoped that the Council would provide a skip on an annual basis. One issue that was highlighted was the ownership of certain sheds and compost bins. It was agreed that all plot holders should be mandated to number any shed or bin not on their immediate plot with their plot number. Numbers will, in due course, be provided for this purpose. Concern was expressed about the level of water leakage when plot holders run hoses from the site's mains taps. It was agreed that all connections should be tight fitting to avoid loss of water. The Secretary agreed to highlight this in the Minutes. MS raised the possibility of extracting water from the spring fed stream in the middle of the site powered by a solar pump. Cllr Dakin said that he would need to check what was allowed under the Head Lease with the Tichborne Estate. Extraction Licences can be expensive.	TM/NW NW JD
11.	Cllr Dakin brought the Meeting upto date on the progress being made on the new allotments. They had been let down by their initial Contractor but had instructed another Contractor to complete the work. This they had agreed to do in the second half of August. The Council had agreed to reduce some of the larger plots by half thereby increasing the number of plots available overall to 27 from 22. There would also be provision for a disabled parking and short term unloading bays. The Chairman expressed his concern that there appeared to be a Right of Way from the field adjacent to the new allotments on the west side and that a clear access might need to be maintained through to the lane. The Secretary agreed to find out more about this with Cllr Dakin's approval.	NW

12.	The Chairman had asked the Council for guidance on raising sponsorship from local businesses and organisations. The Council had agreed this was acceptable subject to having a final veto on the sponsor. To date New Farm Services Ltd had generously sponsored the allotments for £100.00. The Chairman volunteered to seek further sponsorship.	TM
13.	The Treasurer said there was nothing currently to report on our Facebook page. RW suggested details were posted on the Notice Board by the gate.	DO
14.	- The Chairman reported that it looked increasingly unlikely that we would be able to install a defibrillator close to the allotments due to the lack of a suitable power supply. He was in discussion with the PIGS who suggested the Cricketers Arms as a possible site. It was suggested that it might be possible to source a defibrillator operated by solar power but this could be very expensive. - DO had spoken to some friends who had allotments on other sites and was gaining some background information. At the Chairman's suggestion she agreed to concentrate her efforts on exploring the organisation of the Winchester Allotments which she advised she had already contacted. The Chairman said he would approach Bishops Waltham Allotment Society who had given him some useful tips on producing the Newsletter as we now had a contact. - MS enquired if there was a national allotment competition that we might aim for at some point in the future.	DO TM
15.	- The Chairman asked the Secretary to advise the Meeting on his exchange of emails with PC Goodsell on allotment theft. He mentioned that two plot holders had contacted him over minor thefts from their plots. The advice from the Police was not to lock allotment sheds on the basis that more damage was caused breaking into a shed and the value of the contents was minimal. They strongly recommended that no electrical/mechanical equipment was kept in an allotment shed and that items were marked and photographed.	

	- The issue of whether to have a summer barbecue was discussed. As the previous format had become increasingly less well supported over the years it was suggested that it might be more appropriate to hold an event when the new allotments were up and running. This would give the new allotment plot holders an opportunity to meet the existing plot holders and with the waiting list considerably reduced we could hold an 'open day' and invite would be allotment holders and show them around. - The Chairman advised the Meeting that he was working on drafting an updated Constitution for the Society which had not been addressed since being established in 2005. He went onto suggest that we should seek input from the previous Committee Members whose knowledge went back considerably further than the present Committee. Once all comments had been received and digested a revised Constitution would be sent out to the Membership with a request to raise any issues well in advance of the AGM in November when an, agreed, version would be voted on. The timetable for progressing this matter were agreed as follows:- Updated Constitution to be circulated to the previous Committee Members by the end of June with a deadline for comments by mid-July. Distribution to the Membership by no later than the end of September allowing a statutory minimum of 28 days notice before the AGM. - The Chairman asked the Committee if they felt it was a good idea for the Society to become an affiliated Member of the RHS for an annual subscription of £45.00. Benefits include free admission to RHS sites and access to their helpful horticultural data base. It was agreed to take this up and review after 12 months. - Membership of the Nation Allotment Society was raised. One principal benefit was liability insurance protection at a cost of £3.00 per Member. This would necessitate an increase in the annual levy. It was suggested this should be put to the Members at the AGM.	
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	- The Chairman had asked Tim Dicker to review the Council's Rules which he had done. There were a number of areas he had identified requiring attention. He proposed to let the Secretary have his comments in full for discussion at the next Meeting. - It was proposed to hold an official opening of the new allotment shed. A Trustee from the Alresford Agricultural Show had been asked to cut the ribbon with Cllr Dakin holding one end and The Chairman the other together with the Committee. DO's husband would be asked to take the 'team' photo which the Hampshire Chronicle have agreed to publish. A convenient date was being finalised. Date of next Meeting, Thursday 8th August 2024 at 7pm. There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9pm. NKLW 07.06.24	
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