

Park Ward Allotments: Meeting of the Committee, Sunday 3rd April 2016, at the Gregson

Present: Keith (Chair), Nina (Treasurer), Tess (Secretary), Gerry, Nick, Des, Bob, Zephyrine.

1. Apologies: none received, all present.
2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising. Nina confirmed that she had received a refund from the water company, and that in future she would read the meter for them before we turn off the water in the winter. Des has volunteered to organize the website. He said only 3 other sites had both a Facebook page and a website, and it seemed the Facebook page was more used. Zephyrine agreed to put a link to the website on Facebook. Tess said she would advertise the website on the noticeboard. Des agreed to send her the address.
3. Agenda for AGM. We discussed the proposal for a returnable deposit of £50 to be asked of new tenants, and to be used by the Committee if plots needed extensive clearing after tenants have left. £5 of this money to be a deposit for the key. Nina suggested that if people had difficulty in finding the money, they could pay by instalments, by arrangement.
4. AOB. Bob asked if it would be possible for a new tenant to ask for a quarter plot rather than a half. This was agreed. Des has been trying to get us more manure, but has not been able to make contact with our source. At the moment the skip is in the way. It was agreed the skip would remain for two weeks. People were still putting unsuitable material in the skip.
5. Date of next meeting: Saturday 4th June.

6. Park Ward Allotments, AGM, April 3rd 2016, 11.30 at the Gregson.

Present: Committee: Keith (Chair), Nina (Treasurer), Tess (Secretary), Gerry, Nick, Des, Bob, Zephyrine

Membership: Ray Briggs, Gwen Meyers, Jill Bartram, Mark Punter, Graham Madden, Barbara Phillips, Simon Eamonson, Joy Grayson, Wendy Jones, Viv Preece.

1. Apologies. None received
2. Minutes of last AGM and matter arising. The big greenhouse had now been let, and much repaired.
3. Election of officers: Keith introduced the Committee and explained what we do. All were returned unopposed. Jill volunteered to join the Committee.
4. Chair's report. Keith explained about the clean up of plot 46, which had cost a good deal of time and money. He also mentioned the new fence at the bottom of the site. He was happy with the way things were going.
5. Treasurer's report. Nina explained that both the skip and the water were big expenses. We also needed to keep a reserve for emergencies – e.g. if a water pipe broke, or if we needed more fencing. Nina presented the accounts:

Income		Expenditure	
Rent Cheques	1435.5	Skips	388.58
Water Refund	147.79	Water	392.10
Rent Cash	157.60	Insurance	77.00
Total	1740.89	Digger Hire	100.00
		Fencing materials	
		+ plants	89.00
		Gregson Hire	20.00
		Total	1066.68

SUMMARY

Balance carried forward March 2015	3418.51
less Expenditure	1066.68
plus Income	1740.89
Balance carried forward March 2016	4092.72
Cash at Bank	3955.12
Cash	137.60
Total	4092.72

Viv asked if the water was metered, and Nina explained that it was, and that she had now arranged to supply a reading at the point when it is turned off for the winter. She was also asked what the insurance covered, and replied that it only covered liability, i.e. if someone sued the allotments.

6. Secretary's report: The Committee met five times last year. Minutes from all these meetings are available on request. Some of the main items we discussed were: hedges – all tenants to be aware that it is their responsibility to cut back the hedges around their plots; the skip – tenants are still putting unsuitable material into the skip, including electrical items. Because of this abuse, we have decided only to order the skip only once a year; clearing of neglected plots – the Committee had to hire a mini-digger in one case; access from Derwent Road properties – we agreed to have the boundary fence and hedge completed to make clear there was no access. Thanks to Vince for suggesting this and doing the work; website – this is now being set up. Thanks to Barbara, and to Des for volunteering to organize it. Other news: Nina has joined the Committee as our new Treasurer. There are 4 [in fact 8, now I have double checked, though 1 has already left] new tenants since this time last year, and there are 16 people on the waiting list.
7. The proposals about bring the rent deadlines forward were presented and seconded: that for this year the rents should be due by the end of June, and if paid before the end of April, discounts should apply. Next year, and in all years following, discounts will apply if rent is paid at or by the AGM, and the final deadline to be end of May. Nina explained the thinking behind these proposals – they would mean we could remove non-payers in time for new tenants to take over in the current season. Ray welcomed the proposals, and said the late deadline was left over from when the Council took the rents. Nina explained the discounts: half plot, £15, full plot £30 if paid by earlier deadline; or £20/£40 if paid by final deadline. OAP discount, from age 65, £3.50. A vote was taken and the proposals were carried unanimously.
8. The proposal for a deposit was put to the meeting and seconded: that a returnable deposit of £50 be required of new tenants, to be returned when they leave, only if the plot is in good order. Otherwise, the money to be used by the Committee to clear the plot. £5 of the money to be a key deposit, returnable when the key was returned. Nina and Keith explained the time, work and expense involved if a plot was left in a bad state, and needed to be cleared before being offered to the next tenant. Viv questioned whether we could offer a concessionary rate, as some people might have difficulty in finding the money. Should there be criteria? Nina explained that the money could be paid in installments, by arrangement with Tess when she offered a plot, though Tess was unsure how she could judge on this one. Zephyrine pointed out that the money was refundable, and also that we had the cheapest rents of any allotment site in Lancaster. Tess was asked to let people know about the deposit when they joined the waiting list, so they would have time to save the money. A vote was taken, and the proposal was carried by the majority, with one vote against.
9. AOB. Jill raised concerns about security, especially the wall between the site and the new housing development. Bob pointed out that the wall previously belonged to the land owner, and now belonged to the developers. He suggested Jill could get in touch with the builders to ask what their plans were about this boundary. Ray asked if tarmac could be put down at the bottom gate, where it was extremely muddy, though Nina and Tess said they hadn't noticed this. Zephyrine proposed we bring this to the next Committee meeting. Graham raised the matter of produce being stolen from his plot last year, and reported that others had also had produce stolen. He wanted everyone to be aware of this and to be vigilant. Keith said the allotments were more secure now access from Derwent Road gardens had been denied, so there were only three entrances to the site, and a fence had been put up to stop people climbing in by the tree next

to the bottom gate. There was a question about the little water board gate in the hedge: Des said he had been able to open it with his old allotment key. Ray said the allotments were more secure than they had ever been. Jill said it was very sad if the produce had been taken by another tenant. Mark suggested that if this happened perhaps we could all contribute some of our excess produce to the victim. This idea was welcomed. Mark asked how long the skip would stay, and Keith said he would leave it till a week on Monday. He told Mark that wood could be burned, rather than put in the skip. Nina reminded us that rent could be put in the black box by the notice board by the bottom gate – not the egg money box, which has a padlock on it, but the other one to the right. She has a key to this. She also asked people to number their plots, and to put their plot number on the back of the cheque. The meeting adjourned at about 12.30