

Western Wards Allotment Association

Management Committee 'Zoom' Meeting Tuesday 5th January 2021 at 7pm

Management Committee Members

Alastair Burnett, (Acting Chairman) Site Manager, HPR (AB);
Robin Green (Acting Hon. Secretary), Site Manager, Sarisbury Green (RG);
Keith Johnson, Site Manager, HPR; (KJ);
Martin Barnett – Site Manager, HPR (MB);
Gill Rock Site Manager, Warsash (GR);
Paul Rann, Site Manager, Warsash (PR);
John Parsons, Site Manager, Posbrook and Shop Manager (John P).

Also in attendance

Richard Bastow, Chairman of WWAA Trustees (RB);
Ted Weager – WWAA Trustee;
David Doran – WWAA Trustee;
Avoen Perryman (AP) (co-opted to the committee as an advisor); Mr Perryman a plot holder at HPR but was not known to some members of the committee. He introduced himself to the meeting and presented his professional life, including raising sponsorship and donations for non profit organisations, and how he could potentially assist the WWAA.
Julie Prescott (Julie P) (co-opted to the committee as an HR and 'SharePoint' software adviser.)

1 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Sandra Milam – Site Manager, Lodge Road (SM) – difficulties with Zoom computer link;
Martin Wheeler – Site Manager, Sarisbury Green (MW) – difficulties with Zoom computer link.

2 Declaration of any other business (AOB)

- 2.1 RG – Lockdown Restrictions and Avian Flu – National Allotment Society guidance.

3 Minutes of the 'Zoom' Meeting dated 3rd November 2020 for accuracy and content

- 3.1. The minutes of the 'Zoom' management committee meeting dated 3rd November 2020 were discussed.
- 3.2 There were no comments made by members of the committee and the minutes were accepted as an accurate record by the Chairman.
- 3.3 When reviewed for data protection purposes, a version would be forwarded by the Hon. Secretary to Rona Neilson for publication on the website.

4 Matters arising and actions outstanding (from the meeting 3.11.20)

4.1 RB Chair of Trustees to review the WWAA Chairman role description suggestions, consulting other Trustees as appropriate

4.1.1 RB had reviewed the documents provided for him and drafted a role description for a WWAA Chairman. This document had been circulated to committee members and the meeting approved publication on the website by Rona Neilson. (Action discharged on 7.1.21)

4.2 PP to further contact WWAA Insurance Brokers;

4.2.1 PP had resigned as Treasurer on 22nd December 2020 and it is not known if he had successfully made contact with the Insurance Brokers who act for the WWAA. JP to check the administration amongst the Treasurer's records for details.

Additional action – Hon. Sec to make a further enquiry re Insurance cover when Brokers identified.

4.3 PR and PP to comment further on use of unspent funds as a policy;

4.3.1 PR advised that there had been no opportunity to meet with PP. However, he would be commenting at Agenda item 7 on Financial Management issues. A replacement Treasurer will clearly wish to be consulted before future banking decisions are taken. (Action discharged)

4.4 Acting Chairman to send a letter re late payment;

4.4.1 GR advised that this matter had been resolved when payment had been made. (Action discharged)

4.5 Site Managers to notify tenants re Government coronavirus guidance

4.5.1 Rona Neilson published guidance on website as requested and linked to National Allotment Society website advice. Site managers had communicated Tier 4 advice. It appears that there is little change following the Prime Ministerial announcement that there would be a further period of lockdown nationally. (Action discharged)

5 Acting Chairman's update including the date for the AGM in February 2021 and issues arising;

5.1 Following consultation with committee members, it was agreed that the postponed AGM 2020, as required by the Constitution, would be held on Thursday 25th February 2021 using 'Zoom' facilities. Notification of the event had already been published on the website.

Action – RG to ask Rona Neilson to publish the date of the AGM on the website (action discharged on 7.1.21)

5.2 Site Managers confirmed that there had been some initial interest from members in taking part 'on line'.

- 5.3 RG advised that he would circulate to the committee the:-
- Agenda for the AGM 2020;
 - Minutes of the AGM held on 21st November 2019, and,
 - WWAA General Account – Income and Expenditure Accounts for the Year ended 30th September 2020;
 - WWAA Shop Trading Account and Profit and Loss Account for year ended 30th September 2020;
 - WWAA - Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2020.
- 5.4 RG recommended the use of a ballot paper 'matrix' for circulation to the members of the WWAA setting out the candidates proposed and seconded for election. The ballot paper would provide the opportunity for members to have a vote for candidates despite not being able to access 'Zoom' on 25th February. The meeting accepted the suggestion.

Action – RG to draft and circulate a ballot paper for adoption.

6 Treasurer's Resignation

- 6.1 On 22nd December 2020, the Acting Chairman received the resignation of the Treasurer, Phil Pike, by email. The resignation had been accepted. It will be necessary to advertise the role vacancy on the website and identify a replacement.

Action – RG to ask Rona Neilson to publish the vacancy with a closing date of 31st January 2021 (action discharged on 7.1.21).

- 6.2 Following the resignation, the Acting Chairman expressed his gratitude to PR for providing advice on steps to be taken.
- 6.3 WWAA financial documentation including the Santander Bank cheque book and paying in book/card had been delivered to RG by PP. RG was holding these for safe keeping pending the committee making decisions.
- 6.4 Santander Bank had been advised about the resignation by telephone. In order to continue use of the general account, the Bank requires a letter of authority to amend the bank mandate from two signatories to one. It was agreed that John Parsons should be the sole signatory. The letter of authority had been drafted and is awaiting signatures, including the former Treasurer.

Action – RG to draft the letter, arrange for signatures and post to the Bank. Financial papers to be delivered to JP who will establish a spreadsheet to manage the accounts until a Treasurer is identified and appointed.

7. Review of Financial Structure

- 7.1 PR had been asked by the Acting Chairman to review the financial management of WWAA accounts. PR confirmed that he had done so.

- 7.2 PR advised the meeting that he had reviewed the WWAA General Account – whilst the accounts showed a costs breakdown, there was no such breakdown of income.
- 7.3 Site managers had developed annual budget documents for their spending. PR selected an example that a site might have an income of £1000, x percentage of this is passed to a central budget and the agreed remainder is shown in a site level internal profit and loss account. Routine expenditure incurred by the site is shown as it is now and deducted from the income to produce an operating surplus/ deficit at site level.
- 7.4 At WWAA level the central income is used to pay for central costs such as room hire, insurance etc and also for any agreed large and unexpected costs such as the water upgrades we paid for last year.
- 7.5 The production of a site level P&L is a straightforward Excel spreadsheet (already in place for expenditure tracking). The published accounts structure for WWAA wouldn't change.
- 7.6 A later issue was raised by KJ about a financial deficit incurred by a site during a year and there was a brief discussion about how that should be dealt with.
- 7.7 As regards the payment of 'day to day' site expenses, concern was expressed by RG that site managers are required to pay expenses from their personal funds. It often took months to be refunded by cheque. The issue of debit cards drawn on the general account was suggested. PR advised that an Association like the WWAA could not limit the amount spent on a Bank Debit Card – thus, circulation of a debit card to each manager could be potentially 'open to fraud'. However, it was accepted that general bank account signatories could have a Debit card and pay back the manager's expenses within hours on production of a receipt.
- 7.8 PR favoured the adoption of electronic banking for WWAA financial management but, as regards transfer of the funds to a local bank, advised that in the current COVID pandemic climate, local banks including Lloyds and HSBC Middle Road, Park Gate would not accept accounts transferred from Santander, Bootle, Merseyside. When transfer did take place for convenience to another local bank branch, deposits could always be carried out through a Post Office for those who don't live near Park Gate. This is standard banking practice.
- 7.9 A role description for a Treasurer was discussed. RB offered to draft a document in a similar style to the Chairman's he had recently completed. He would work with PR.

Action – RB/PR to draft a Treasurer's role description for publication on the website (discharged 8.1.21 and published on the website).

8 Site Managers Reports

8.1 Hunts Pond Road

- 8.1.1 Water has been the main feature at HPR recently. KJ, AB and Norman with some volunteers completed the stand pipes project and were approved by the Southern Water Board inspector as compliant to the required standard for allotments. They have also been helping out other WWAA sites with their stand pipe upgrades.

8.1.2 Heavy rain has highlighted another problem, with some parts of the site flooding and the ditch along the HPR overflowing in places. Volunteers have dug trenches and cleared the ditch in the worst places and eventually the water receded. The site managers spent a morning 'rodding' all the culverts under the paths to the gates along the eastern perimeter ditch, enough to keep things flowing. The much needed drainage work for rows 11/12 and 5 have been put back due to the stand pipe work taking precedence.

8.1.3 Demand for plots is still strong and we get enquiries almost daily. Interestingly, most enquiries for plots are now from ladies and those who have taken on plots recently have worked wonders transforming overgrown and neglected sites. We still have plots to let though. One just needs to be cleared of brambles, but a couple are underwater so not suitable for new tenants at the moment. Because of the high demand for small plots and little demand for large plots we may have to split some of the larger ones to help cope with the waiting list.

8.2 Sarisbury Green

8.2.1 Vacancies - there are no plot vacancies available at Sarisbury Green site at the current time. We are 100% 'let'.

8.2.2 Waiting List - At the time of writing, there were 19 persons on the Sarisbury waiting list. Martin and I will close the waiting list when we reach 20. We are aware of one half plot vacancy 25b (2) which may become available soon.

8.2.3 Financial profile - we believe our financial position is broadly in line with budgeted spending for 19/20. We have a healthy 'carry over' for 20/21 but any projects have been placed on hold during the pandemic restrictions. All tenants have now paid their fees for 20/21 and there are no outstanding payments due.

8.2.4 The hire of a 12 cubic yard skip was arranged prior to Christmas at a cost of £429 – 60p inclusive of VAT. This was filled with plastic, broken glass and other non combustible rubbish accumulated on the site over 50 years from a corner area. We await the disposal of a huge heap of scrap metal to a dealer. One whole sheet of corrugated asbestos has been discovered and appropriate safe disposal measures will be taken. This is a huge improvement to our site.

8.2.5 The standpipe rectification process has been completed at Sarisbury thanks to the support we received from Hunts Pond Road managers and has been approved by Lee Roberts, the SWB Inspector.

8.3 Warsash

8.3.1 Vacant Plots – Four vacant plots. The two people on the waiting list have been contacted but can't take them on at the moment for personal reasons. Water standpipe rectification completed by two volunteers.

8.4 Posbrook and Trading Hut

8.4.1 Currently have no vacant plots at the Posbrook site with eight persons on the waiting list. John P will be sending the rent renewal notices in February with no increase.

8.4.2 The Trading Hut remains closed, but John P expects the early potatoes to be delivered late February. Delivery will be confirmed by the end of January. Due to lockdown restrictions, not sure when Trading Hut will open again.

8.5 Lodge Road

8.5.1 No site management report has been received from the Lodge Road site manager SM.

8.5.2 The Chairman was aware of two issues at Lodge Road – the water standpipe rectification process had again been carried out by HPR managers. The work had been inspected by Lee Roberts who approved it subject to the closure of a supply/meter which is no longer used. There does not appear to be a stop cock and it will need Water Board assistance at a cost of £500 approx.

8.5.3 Fencing – a 100 meter section of perimeter hedge no longer exists. There is a massive gap and the site is totally insecure. Fencing is the only reasonable solution to close the gap. A fencing supplier and fencing contractor has been contacted and the total cost of materials and work will be in the region of £4,000. This cost can be authorised by the committee under the financial rules (agreed at the last AGM).

8.5.4 The potential to invite Fareham Borough Council to meet the costs was felt to be unrealistic, despite Council ownership of the land and a clause in the tenancy agreement limiting WWAA responsibility to maintain the hedging, not to install fencing.

Action – AB to research two further quotes including local suppliers to get the best price for the work and circulate the information.

8.5.4 Some concern was expressed about the cost of the fencing work. AP advised that it may be possible to seek part funding from the Hampshire County Council or Fareham Borough Council. Funds to assist community organisations had recently been advertised by Counsellor Sean Woodward.

Action – Julie P and AP to research the potential funding support available.

9 Any Other Business

9.1 COVID 19 - RG highlighted that he had caused the WWAA website to provide a link to National Allotment Society (NAS) guidance about Tier 4 coronavirus restrictions for the information of WWAA tenants. Since publication, the Prime Minister had announced a total lockdown. There did not appear to be a great deal of difference between the levels of restrictions, but the NAS link would advise any additional requirements, in particular the length of 'exercise' time.

9.2 Avian 'Flu – on 14th December 2020, new regulations had been introduced to prevent the spread of Avian 'Flu amongst poultry from wild birds. A link had also been provided on the WWAA website to guidance published by the NAS.

10 Date next management committee meeting

10.1 The next management committee meeting will be advised when the new Chairman is appointed.