

North Road Plotolders Group Minutes of Annual General Meeting 30th September 2012

1. **Apologies for absence**

Brenda Meadows
Mike Jones
Louise Sanderson
Terry Miles
Vicky & Steve Pratt
Alan & Margaret Rowley
Nina Vila
Brenda & Ken Dyer
Judith & Norman Goodall
Brian Ruskin
Jim Ferguson
Linda & Brian Wilkerson

2. **Minutes of AGM September 2011 & EGM 19th February 2012**

These minutes had been displayed in the site shelter and were agreed to be a true record.

3. **Chairman/Secretary's Report.**

The Chairman, Jim Waight, explained that this was a joint Chairman's and Secretary's report as he and the Secretary, Peter Holness, worked closely together and shared the duties of both posts. Both of them found this arrangement to be helpful.

At the EGM in February, the Committee was tasked with negotiating a new agreement with HTC. This has now been agreed and signed. While we did not achieve everything that we would have liked, we did get all that we could have reasonably expected. The agreement was finally signed on 11th June. Jim explained the agreement. In particular that there is a clause where, in the event that the agreement ceases, certain equipment purchased with money provided by the Council (rent or grants) and used for the maintenance or administration of the site,

would need to be returned to the Council. There is a schedule of equipment that already belongs to the Group that is expressly excluded from this clause. Similarly, any equipment purchased with other funds (e.g. the Mantis Tiller) is also excluded. The meeting voted that the agreement be approved. We now have a very good working relationship with the Council.

The committee decided to invest in some new equipment, as a lot of the existing equipment was becoming troublesome. We now have a new mower, which is a heavy duty, professional machine, built for hard work. We also have two new strimmers, one of which has a hedge trimmer attachment. We have also bought, thanks to Cllr Peter Ruffles, a Mantis Tiller. This is a small, light rotovator, that is easy to handle and ideal for cultivating small areas.

Another project has been to find a better method of repairing the tracks around the site. Members will all have seen the new surface where you turn left at the bottom of the main track. This is chipped granite and should provide a solid, hard wearing surface. We have only used it on that small section so far. We wanted to see how it went down and wore and wanted member's views on whether we should buy more of this. It is not cheap, that small section cost £85, and if we do more, it would need to be done over a few years. It is obviously not appropriate for all of the site, certainly not around the car park area, and we would only use it where the track has excessive wear.

The Committee has also been in talks with the Council about the main track coming down into the site. This is in a particularly bad way and some cars have bottomed out on the central part. The Council is responsible for the stretch from the gate to the end of the gardens and the Group is then responsible from then on. The granite chippings would not be suitable, due to the slope and we have been advised that the best material would be road planings. We have had a quote and our share would cost about £850. The Council have agreed to pay for their part. The Committee would be seeking member's views on whether we should prioritise this.

Another problem that member's are all aware of is the compost bins. When Peter and Jim were doing a H&S inspection, they discovered that the rear posts had started to lean out and many of the concrete panels were in danger of falling or cracking. As an emergency measure, we have had two of the bins emptied. We have removed a number of loose panels and secured others. We have also closed off the dangerous bins. Repairing the bins is not going to be cheap and the Committee will be asking for member's views. We are in the process of getting quotes for the work. In the meantime, we intend to erect a temporary bin so that you can continue to compost green waste.

The oak tree by the bins has been trimmed by the Council to eliminate the danger of dead branches falling.

We have applied for a lottery grant to buy a petrol driven shredder, so that we can compost bigger branches, etc. rather than burning this material.

The Committee have installed some new signs, that are clear and easy to read. There will be some more new signs as funds permit.

Alison Madge has kindly volunteered to run the seed scheme this year and Chris Holyfield will be helping her. The discount is 55% and there is no packing charge. Orders must be in by 1 December. Catalogues are in the shelter.

Chris Holyfield and Glenna Cox had volunteered to maintain the orchard. Again, many thanks to them.

On a sad note, we lost one of our long term members this year. Roy Powell died in February. Everyone that new him regarded him as a gentleman. When Jim was Treasurer a few years ago, he was our auditor and took a keen interest in the accounts. When there had been a problem, he was always willing to help Jim resolve it.

The Committee have enjoyed most of our time running the site. The amount of goodwill that we have been shown is remarkable. Whenever we have announced a work day, we always have plenty of volunteers. While there is not room to mention everyone, Hugh Emery must have mowed the equivalent of several football pitches this year, and Margaret and Terry Miles, who regularly burn material we cannot compost.

4. Treasurer's Report

As Brenda was on holiday, Jim presented the report on her behalf.

At 1st August last year, the Group had a balance of £2928 in the General Fund. £1030 has been spent on site improvements, £1168 on maintenance and admin and we have spent £1807 on new equipment. There was a further £265 on insurance.

Our income consisted of £1700 grant from HTC and a £300 grant from HCC via Cllr Peter Ruffles, which went towards the Mantis Tiller. The Accounts show a balance of £861 c/f, but we need to add £1097 to that for the rent which was collected last year by HTC and was passed on to us after the end of the financial year. So our actual balance at 31 July was £1958.

The shop showed a small gain of £7 over the year.

A copy of the accounts is attached.

There were no questions on the report.

It was Proposed by Alison Madge & Seconded by Doug Waight that the report be accepted. This was accepted unanimously.

5. Election of Officers/Committee

All of the committee and officers had signified their willingness to stand again. They had all been duly proposed and seconded.

It was Proposed by Alan Nadin & Seconded by Wayne Daw that the Committee and Officers be re-elected. This was approved unanimously.

The Officers and Committee are:

Chairman	Jim Waight
Secretary	Peter Holness
Treasurer	Brenda Meadows
Committee	Brenda Dyer
	John Cook
	Louise Sanderson
	Linda Wood
	Mike Jones
	Peter Creasey

6. Forthcoming Projects

The Group has two major projects to consider:

- a) Resurfacing the entrance track: and
- b) Repairing the compost bins.

The track. Our share would cost about £850. Obviously we need to do it at the same time as HTC do their part. For this, we would have a properly surfaced track from the entrance gate down to the noticeboard. The hump at the bottom of the track will be flattened out.

The compost bins. We have taken some ground samples with an auger and found that the soft ground at the back of the bins goes down at least 3 ft. It is substantially more behind the bins. The ground here was made up and used to slope down to the ditch. Our plan is to move the bins forward by 2 metres and put a proper reinforced concrete footing all the way round with a concrete base inside each bin. This should provide a far more solid foundation and the bins should then last many years. This is not going to be cheap. We are currently obtaining estimates of cost. We will be applying for grants towards the cost of repair, but we may well have to repair the bins over two years.

Bringing the bins forward will necessitate removing the dead tree in front of the bins. We may not be able to move the first bin forward if there are roots from the oak tree in the way. We will have to go carefully there. We also need to confirm with EHDC that moving the bins forward will not require any planning consent.

Of the £1900 that we had at the end of July we have spent about £200 of that so far and will need about £1000 to run the site for the next year. This only leaves about £700. However, we will receive further grant from HTC and will have rent coming in January. We cannot pre-empt the level of grant that HTC will give us, but we have no reason to believe that it will be much different from last year.

Members were asked how they wanted these projects prioritised. We should have enough money to resurface the track and to do at least the first half of the compost bins, but cannot guarantee this just yet.

Once these are out of the way, should we then concentrate on repairing the other parts of the track with the granite chippings ?

There was a full discussion around these projects and members voted overwhelmingly to prioritise resurfacing the entrance track and then the compost bins. The granite chippings should be used to repair other parts of the track as funds became available. It was also agreed that we should erect a temporary compost bin behind the shelter.

We have applied for a lottery grant towards the cost of a big shredder. If we get this grant, we will still need to raise about another £400.

7. Rent

When the Council sent out the rent bills in December, they also served notice to increase the rents from 1 January 2013 to £4.20 per pole. This would bring in about another £600. Members were asked if we should go ahead with this, or should we, as a group, rescind the increase ? There was a long discussion on this point. While members accepted that the rents were below the level of Council rents, the proposed increase was quite substantial. It also did not take into account the work that members did to maintain the site.

It was proposed by Alison Madge and seconded by Doug Waight that the increase should be phased in and limited to 50p per pole for this coming year. The rent level would be reviewed at next year's AGM. This was carried unanimously.

8. Members Views

The Committee had reported to the meeting what they had done and intended to do. Members were asked their views. Are we going in the right direction ? Is there anything that we are not doing, that we should? Do you have a pet project ?

We were asked if we could replace the toilets, as they were beginning to become run down and were not always working properly. It was agreed that the Committee would look in to replacing the toilets. Jim reminded members that, although the Committee checked the toilets regularly, if anyone felt that they needed emptying or repairing, they should let a Committee member know.

Jim asked members to let a Committee member know if there was anything that felt we should be doing or if they thought of a project at any time.

9. Any Other Business

Peter Creasey said that he wished to make the following statement:

“Having completed my first year as an NRPG Committee Member, I wish to thank the Chairman and Secretary for their outstanding work in the management of our site this year.”

This was supported by the members present and Peter asked that it be recorded in the AGM minutes.

Jim and Peter thanked members for their support and in turn thanked the Committee and other members for their hard work.