

North Road Plottolders Group Minutes of Annual General Meeting 22nd September 2013

1. **Apologies for absence**

Terry Miles
Carol Jones
Linda Wilkerson
Phil Roberson
Nik Wilson
Peter Henderson
Shoko Holness

2. **Minutes of AGM 30th September 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. Jim would give the report, with Peter adding anything that he felt Jim had missed.

We had the entrance track surfaced. We want to spend some more money on improving the rest of the track around the site – not with road scrapings as the drive is, but with the crushed granite that we have used before.

We used the spoil from the track to level out the ground in front of the storage container. This winter will tell us how solid it is, but we believe that it is an improvement on what we had before.

We received a grant from the Lottery Fund towards buying a bigger and better shredder. This is petrol driven and will take branches up to 40 mm (an inch and a half for the older members). We have used this quite a bit and found it very successful. We are thinking about whether we should bring this out every week at this time of the year so that members can shred their waste material straight away.

We spent a lot of time this year trying to sort out the problem with the compost pens. Members will all know of the problems that we have had, due to the unstable nature of the ground. This culminated in our contractor starting work in June with the intention of rebuilding two of the pens with reinforced concrete foundations. Unfortunately, when he started to dig the footings, we discovered that the ground was far more unstable than we had realised. The ground had clearly been made up a lot further in than we had thought and the subsoil contained a great deal of rubbish, including bicycle frames, corrugated iron and carpet. If we had continued, the cost of extra concrete alone would have been far in excess of our budget. As a result of this and the potential danger to the contractor of the ground giving way beneath the digger, we decided to call a halt, get the whole area made safe and then ask you, the members, how we should proceed. We have an item later on the agenda to discuss this.

At present all plots are let and we have two people on the waiting list.

We had our usual barbecue and best kept plot competition in June.

4. Treasurer's Report

We ended the year with an increase in funds of £700. This was not planned, but was part of the money that we had put aside for the repair of the compost pens. We had put other projects on hold while we concentrated on the pens and when we called a halt to the repair work, we had this money left. It was by then too late in our financial year to divert the money to other projects.

The figure shown for rent includes the rent for the previous year which had been collected by HTC and not handed over to us until the current financial year.

The shop showed a gain of £46 over the year. Although we aim to break even, we do have unders and overs.

A copy of the accounts is attached.

There were no questions on the report.

It was Proposed by Margaret Miles & Seconded by Paul Fleetwood 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, apart from Louise Sanderson, who found it difficult to fit in the allotment work with family requirements. Jim thanked Louise for her work on the committee. Liam Mulhall had indicated his willingness to

join the committee and he had been duly proposed and seconded. All other members and officers had been duly proposed and seconded.

Jim asked if anyone else wished to join the committee, but there were no other nominations.

It was Proposed by Elaine Kingsford & Seconded by Hugh Emery 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
	Liam Mulhall
	Linda Wood
	Mike Jones
	Peter Creasey

6. Compost Pens

Jim had outlined the problems with the compost pens earlier in the meeting. He now explained that there a number of options:

1. Do nothing – let all members do their own composting, possibly buy everyone a compost bin. Probably the cheapest option.
2. Rebuild the pens with reinforced concrete foundations. These would undoubtedly last a long time, but the cost would take all of our funds for the next three years or so, It would cost something in the region of £6-7,000 and would leave us no money to do other improvements, such as replacing the toilets and repairing the tracks
3. Rebuild the pens in tanalised timber. We would use four inch posts at four foot centres and the use tanalised gravel boards for the sides and back.. While this would not last as long as the previous option, it would be decidedly cheaper and would last several years. It would also be easier to repair as necessary and there would be no danger of heavy concrete panels falling on anyone.
4. Instead of compost pens, we buy manure and wood chippings for members use.

Members were asked for their views.

After a full discussion, it was agreed that we should rebuild the compost pens in tanalised timber as in option 3. We would erect one bin as a priority and then build further bins as money became available.

Jim asked if the Group were happy for the committee to sell the concrete posts and panels from the old pens. This was agreed, proposed by Brian Ruskin, seconded by Diane Barnes-Cook

7. What do you want ?

The committee had reported to the Group what we have done and what we would like to do, but what do the members want ? Is the committee going in the right direction ? Is there anything that the committee is not doing that we should ? Do you have a pet project ?

Members generally felt that the committee were doing what members wanted. At last year's AGM it was suggested that the toilets be replaced, but this was put on hold due to the potential cost of repairing the compost pens. Could these be replaced now ? It was agreed that this should be a priority for the coming year.

8. Rent

When the Council sent out the rent bills in December 2011, they also served notice to increase the rents from 1 January 2013 to £4.20 per pole. At last year's AGM, it was agreed that we would only collect 50p of this increase, although the true rent would be £4.20. Jim Asked if the Group wanted to keep the rent at this level or increase it again. A 50p per pole increase would bring in about £200 per year.

After a full discussion it was agreed to keep the rent at the current level. Proposed by Alison Madge, seconded by Judy Goodall.

9. Any Other Business

Brian Wilkerson asked about rat control as he had had to kill a number on his plot. Jim explained that this responsibility had now been passed to the Group and he would contact East Herts Council to arrange for the rat man to come.

We had a problem with the toilets as we had run out of the "blue" liquid to go in the tank. Brian Wilkerson advised that this could be bought at Stansted Abbots marina.

Seed scheme. Jim explained that we were considering whether to change to Kings seeds this year, as they were considerably cheaper than Thompson and Morgan. Brain Wilkerson noted that there was no commission from T&M in the accounts. Jim explained that T&M had initially replaced the commission with gift vouchers, but had then stopped giving commission altogether. It was agreed that we should switch to Kings. Jim thanked Alison Madge for running the scheme.

Len Davies proposed a vote of thanks to the committee for all of their hard work. This was seconded by Hugh Emery and agreed by the members present.