

Pretoria Road Allotment Society

Minutes of the committee meeting held at the allotment site 3rd July 2016

Apologies for absence: Terry Wall, Darren Bowden

The chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The minutes from our last meeting (1st May 2016) were adopted and signed off by the chairman.

Item one. From Roger. We have an ongoing problem with the fact that most people, when giving up their plots leave them in a very bad condition. This leaves us with the problem of trying to let these plots out again with their condition putting many applicants off. We have recently had to let out three plots for no rent whatsoever, until Renewal date. This was solely because the people who gave them up left them in a terrible state. Roger suggested that in the future, we should charge a deposit on each plot when it is first taken up. This deposit to be refundable only if the plot was in good and tidy condition after one year.

A discussion was held on this suggestion. Leon thought that if we adopted this idea, that we should hold the deposit indefinitely and only return it when the plot was given back to us and in good condition. Mike Checkley also thought that we should keep the deposit open-ended if we were going to have deposits, as it would be easier to administrate. Larry suggested that we should take no deposit, but simply reduce the time given to plot holders to get their plots in good condition, before losing them.

This suggestion seemed to find general favour. A vote was held on Larry's suggestion and the majority of those present voted in favour of shortening the time given to plot holders to sort their plots out, prior to losing them. If the new process did not work, the committee would reconsider Roger's suggestion again.

Item two. From Roger. With the number of plot holders wishing to bring their cars on site increasing, our present parking facility is proving inadequate at times. With this in mind, Roger asked if we have any news from PTC regarding our request to use some of the land behind the raised beds for parking.

We apparently have no real news regarding our request to PTC but several suggestions were made regarding this problem.

Larry suggested that if we are to use some of the land in question, that a hard core base would be appropriate.

Les and Leon thought that there is a potential problem with access, as we should not have cars driving past the shop and kitchen areas as this could be a hazard, especially if any children were on site. It was suggested that a new and separate entrance should be created by putting a gate in the perimeter fence, beyond the kitchen area.

Les has agreed to speak to PTC again and make them aware of our discussions and ideas. He is to enquire as to the feasibility of the ideas put forward.

Mike Stinchcomb said that several plot holders wished to park on the grassed area between plots 43a and 44a, as this would not block any of the main routes around the site. This was considered acceptable as long as those people were willing to move their cars if requested for any reason.

Item three. From Mike Stinchcomb. Mike raised the problem of access around the site for the farmer who makes manure deliveries and also helps us out by moving rubbish and compostable materials to our green waste area on plot 52. The problem has been brought about by several plot holders having allowed their plots to creep beyond what was originally set out as their plot perimeters. This has the effect of reducing the width of the green pathways, causing access problems for larger vehicles. Even the council people have had problems on occasion, with getting their grass cutting equipment around on site.

Mike has suggested that we approach the plot holder on 44a and ask if he is willing to give up a portion of the front end of his plot to allow the farmer to cross it, thus making it possible for him to turn properly without causing damage to crops. This together with the fact that the holder of plot 53 has now moved a structure which was overhanging the green pathway, should solve the access problems at either end of the site. We should point out that there is no suggestion here that plot 44 has encroached upon the green pathway.

Since the meeting, Les Brookes and Roger Fussell have agreed that, if the plot holder on 44a is in agreement with our request, we should reset the rear boundary of his plot so that he still has a full half plot to work. The remainder of plot 44 could then be let out as a quarter plot for anyone who would like one.

Item four. From Roger. A request to re-visit the decision to remove cups and mugs from the kitchen. This was done because most people were spoiling the facility for everyone else, by not washing their cups and putting them away. Roger felt that whilst we had solved this problem by removing cups and mugs, we have now got the situation where far fewer people are using the kitchen facility. This means that fewer people are seeing any notices we post and are less likely also, to visit the shop. Takings for tea and coffee have also dropped considerably.

Larry and Leon both stated that they were against changing the situation. Mike Stinchcomb suggested that we leave a limited number of mugs in the kitchen, so that people would have to clean them in order to get a drink.

Following further discussion, the majority of those present were of the opinion that we should leave things exactly as they are now.

Any other business. Larry advised that signs would be put up regarding payment of annual rents and that we need to display the rates payable. He also felt that we should broach the subject of a membership fee increase at the AGM.

Larry also advised that the Gazebo project is ongoing and that he is looking at what is available for us. We have been given £500 toward this project.

On the subject of improvements to water harvesting. Larry and Leon advised that this is ongoing. Brass taps to replace the plastic ones are being obtained. Leon stated that the upgrading would be finished as soon as possible but that a timescale could not be put on this.

Regarding the Open Day for the Patchway Festival. It was agreed that we need to have people on site fairly early on 16th July (say around 9.30 to 10.00 am) in order to get set up for the day.

Mike Checkley advised that on the day, he will be manning a stall in full fancy dress, as a scarecrow. He has produced posters showing our prices for various items.

Cream Teas at £1.80

Drinks at £0.50

Hot Dogs at £1.00

Burgers at £1.50

Mike Stinchcombe wants to arrange for a double load of manure to be delivered to our green waste area, to assist those plot holders who currently have no room on their plots for it. This was not widely considered a good idea, as the last time we had a mound of manure left in that area, people took barrow loads of it without subsequently paying for it.

Larry suggested that people who wanted manure for their plots but had limited or no room, could buy it in bags from the shop. He indicated that they could buy 6 bags of manure for the same price as a half load of manure. This would overcome the problems of people helping themselves and bring in funds for the Society.

On that note the meeting was wound up.