

Pretoria Road Allotment Society

Minutes of the committee meeting held at the allotment site 5th November 2017

Those present:- Les Brooks - Chairman
Derek Howell - Treasurer
Roger Fussell - Secretary
Diana Sidwell
Norman Bradford
Kelly Morgan-Ramseyer

Apologies for absence: Darren Bowden, Terry Wall, Mike Stinchcomb

The chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The minutes from our last meeting (3rd September 2017) were adopted and signed off by the chairman.

Item one. From Roger: Can we discuss an approach to PTC and Merlin for further funding? This is to improve the look and functionality of the front of the kitchen area. It could be modified to provide more shelter for those visiting the kitchen area and for open day events. It could also be adapted to provide for more rainwater harvesting which would reduce our reliance upon mains water.

Norman told us that funding from Merlin was extremely tight at present, but this need not rule out an approach (perhaps in early 2018). Les also pointed out that PTC funds are stretched at present. However, Les and Derek will ask the question when they have their next meeting with PTC.

Item Two. From Norman and Roger: There is a lot of rubbish that has accumulated in and around the kitchen and shop areas, including useless electrical items. These things are using up valuable space and accumulating dust and dirt. Norman and Roger have volunteered to get together and remove these items and have a general tidy up. Following this, Derek and Roger will remove these items to the local tip. The question of general rubbish also arose, but we have no regular collections unless we pay quite a lot of money out each year. The consensus was that whenever possible, we should take turns to take the rubbish home with us and put it out with our own household refuse. These suggestions were agreed unanimously by those present.

Item Three. From Mike and Roger: The rainwater harvesting system which was set up under the new gazebo, is not working very well. Originally it was suggested that two of the four clear butts

should be removed and placed elsewhere on site. This idea would not work well and Mike has now come up with a solution. He has devised a method for splitting the downfall of water from the guttering, so that it should fill all four butts over time. This has been achieved by a simple 'T' piece being created with some extra plastic piping. Well done Mike!

Roger went on to say that the gazebo was not getting any regular use, as it did not fulfil its intended functions, because it was not finished off. Originally, it was suggested that we put some sheets of marine ply or similar along at least two sides of the structure. This would provide shelter for anyone working at a distance from the kitchen area and could also double up as another area for putting up notices. These notices would replicate those already on view at the kitchen. This would do away with the excuses that we often hear when folk say they didn't know about certain events and when rents are due etc. This idea was thought to be workable and we will get prices for materials. This is a job which the committee could easily carry out without calling on a tradesman.

Item Four. From Kelly: Can we have a discussion about providing sheds, as we agreed we would at our AGM. We discussed this at length and various ideas were put forward. Les suggested that we adopt a "Bike Store" style of shed, as these were not too large and would permit storage of most items but would not be a walk-in shed. Derek seconded this idea and it was agreed we should look further into it and also ballot members to see how many would take up such an offer. Roger has agreed to run with this idea and contact suppliers for prices/discounts etc. He will then ballot the membership by email where possible and also by letter for those who have not got an email address or have not provided us with one.

Item five. From Kelly: Can we discuss fund raising for 2018. There was a general discussion about this and the result was that we agreed the following;

February 24th – A "Seedy Sunday" coffee morning, when people can bring and exchange seeds and plants.

March 30th – Easter open day. We will have an Easter Egg hunt and face painting for the children together with Coffee/Tea/Soft drinks for all plus food for sale.

July 14th – Patchway Festival. Details to follow as they become available.

We have also agreed to put out a questionnaire to the membership as to whether they want an International Food Evening. We need to know who is interested and will attend and support it by bringing food. If we get enough positive response, we will organise it. In the same questionnaire we will ask members if they are interested in a National Gardens Open Day.

AOB

Roger raised the issue of vacant plots. He said that twice in 2017, the committee had agreed that they would deal with the untidy state of these plots and keep them in a reasonable state. However, very little has been done in this direction and a lot of what was done was done by Mike and Diana earlier on and by Les and Brian Jones. Brian is not even a Committee member but does a great deal to assist us and the membership in general. He should be commended for his generosity.

It was agreed that various members of the committee (Les, Derek, Roger and Norman volunteered), would trim plots whenever they could find the time and that we would ask Mike to source some sheeting from the Web, to put down once a plot was trimmed.

The issue of plots continued with Roger pointing out that, at present, there is no incentive for people to leave their plots in a reasonable condition when they give them up. We already have a £10 key deposit in place and this works quite well. It was proposed that going forward, we also charge a £20 plot deposit. This would be on top of the first year's rent and would be returnable after three years, provided the plot was kept in good order (very little weed, paths mowed regularly etc.). This was discussed and agreed upon by all present. Roger has also agreed to produce some posters advertising vacant plots and get them put up at various places around Patchway, as this worked well last year.

Roger pointed out that we had agreed to change the key codes on the key safes at least twice a year and that we have not yet done this in 2017. It was agreed that Mike would be asked to deal with this on his return from holiday.

The matter of a Wild Flower Meadow was raised by Kelly and it was agreed that we would create this as soon as weather permitted in 2018

The matter of plot 51 and its condition was raised by Roger. We originally agreed that this would become 4 quarter plots and be for community usage. However, nothing has yet been done toward this aim. It was suggested that we level the plot and buy some quality fruit trees to create a small orchard. This was unanimously agreed upon. We have to start making arrangements for this as soon as we can, or the planting season will be over. Roger will liaise with Les and Derek over this.

Derek has said that he will sort out any useless machinery or any that has not been labelled, in the next few weeks. Any that are no good and /or will not work will be removed and disposed of once and for all.

On that note, the meeting was closed.