# PRETORIA ROAD ALLOTMENT SOCIETY – MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3rd JULY 2021

**Committee Members Present: Les Brooks – Chairman**

**Mike Stinchcomb – Vice Chairman**

**Derek Howell Treasurer**

**Doug Blackwell- Secretary**

**Diana Sidwell – Minute Secretary**

**Norman Bradford**

**Apologies: Terry Wall**

**Mary Hayward**

The Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 6th July, 21 were agreed and adopted.

1. **Boundary Fence – Ongoing issues/up-date**

Les updated the Meeting saying PTC have objected to the Planning Application and it will now go back through the process. It had been thought that money had been allocated to increase the number of plots on the Site but it is thought that this is not likely to happen at the current time.In view of the current waiting list, Les will check with Jack at PTC to see if funds are available.

1. **Mike Stinchcomb – Should Plot holders in future, book mowers/strimmers and the rotavator on line through Pretoria email address**

The use of Allotment equipment is only available on Saturday mornings between 10.00 and 12.00pm, Mike reported that on occasions plot holders are asking to use the equipment very late in the morning when the shop is closing even though they have been on site on their plots for some time. When asked to request the use of equipment earlier it has led, on occasions, to verbal altercations taking place. Mike asked whether a formal booking system should be in place. Following much discussion it was agreed that the current system should remain in place. Whilst some Committee Members have said they are happy to let out the equipment “outside” of these hours if they are on site, other Committee Members are not and Plot holders must respect this. It was the majority view that Plot holders on the Site are very lucky that equipment is available for them to use, (other Sites around the area do not provide facilities or equipment), it ultimately remains their responsibility under the Handbook rules and agreement signed when taking on a plot to adequately maintain their plots. Doug will send an email reminding plot holders that the Committee members are all volunteers and as such have a right to work their own plots and also have a family life. However, a booking is needed to use the rotavator as this piece of equipment is generally needed for a longer period of time.

1. **Doug Blackwell**  - **Management issues of Plot xxx**

Following issues raised during a successful meeting with the Plot Holder, Doug suggested that the Plot holder might wish to forward a Statement for inclusion/discussion at the next Committee Meeting, as items that had been raised may need to go to the next AGM for ratification.

Doug read the following Statement to the Committee.

**Statement from xxx**

**To be Read at Pretoria Rd Allotment - Committee Meeting Saturday 3rd July 2021 at 10.30am**

**Trailer Removal**

**I am pleased to confirm that the trailer was removed on Wednesday 23rd June 2021 as soon as the ground was dry enough to drive onto allotment and retrieve the trailer without causing damage to the grass pathways. I would like the following comments to be read out at this Committee meeting and officially recorded in the minutes of the meeting:-**

**We were fully aware that the trailer needed to be removed from the allotment site but there were extenuating circumstances that caused a delay and I would like all committee members to be aware of the reason as to why - early in 2019 Patchway council cut all the perimeter trees and bushes and the resultant tree branches/cuttings were placed down the whole right-hand side of both xxx allotments, completely blocking off access to the area.  This made it impossible to access the area to get the trailer out or cut the grass. The previous acting Secretary was made aware of this and totally agreed that there was nothing that we or the committee could do as this was apparently essential maintenance work that had not been carried out for 15 years. These tree cuttings and bushes covered the whole grass area and was five feet high remained and not removed by Patchway Council until the end of October 2019.   Upon clearance of the area by PCC, we attempted to remove trailerbut the ground wasso waterlogged it was impossible to do this.From mid-March 2020 came the Coronavirus pandemic until recently my son and I have been shielding, as per government guidelines and advised by our GP's. This was an unfortunate situation that was outside of our control and would like the Committee to acknowledge this and note this in the minutes.**

**Site Access**

**We are aware that plot-holders are not permitted to take vehicles onto the allotment area, however we would like to ask the committee for permission to access our plot xxx the grassed areas to drop off 100 litre compost bags and manure etc by prior arrangement with Doug and we anticipate that access would only be necessary for perhaps two or three occasions during the course of the year. We can make a commitment that if pre-arranged access is permitted, this would be no more than three times a year, would only be requested when the ground is dry and that the vehicle will drop off and immediately return to the car park?**

**Plot xxx– Wildlife Preservation Area**

**As you are aware, we have common lizards and slow worms on plot xxx which are both protected species in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, mainly endangered due to the destruction of their habitat. We would like to propose that we are allowed to keep an area of 10ft x 6ft as a relatively natural area, whereby we would keep the grass a little longer to protect the habitat, however, the grass would not be left to untended and would be kept at an acceptable length by strimming going forward. We also intend to plant this area with wildflowers to encourage bees, butterflies for pollination and wildlife to encourage a diverse natural habitat.**

**Plot xxx – General Upkeep**

**After meeting with Doug on-site on Saturday 26th June, we acknowledge that the plot was in need of strimming to an acceptable length (with the exception of the wildlife preservation area) and have committed to strim the grass and maintain this going forward. We pointed out that plot xxx had been dug over in April / May 2021, the full width of the plot and approximately 2.5 to 3 metres, so a considerable area completed in readiness for planting. W/C 7th June 2021 strimming had commenced on the longer grass but we were interrupted by a committee member which caused a situation whereby we felt the need to leave the maintenance of the plot for another day. We are sociable and polite and want to enjoy our time at the allotment and would respectfully ask to be allowed to do this without being ostracised.**

**We commit that we will keep the plot strimed to the level agreed with Doug going forward.**

The Committee responded to the Statement in three Parts.

**Part 1 - Removal of Trailer**

It was agreed that as the trailer issue has now been resolved it is no longer an issue for the Committee. The Committee accepted that Covid restrictions had presented a maintenance problem for some Plot holders but Plot holders had been contacted and asked if they were self-isolating and if so, were they happy for Committee members to go onto their plots to do strimming maintenance work and this was carried out throughout the time that Government guidelines on self isolation were in place.

**Part 2 – Site Access**

During the past 15 months and, as a result of various Covid restrictions, the Committee has had to make some decisions related to the Allotment Site that would, in normal times, have been put to the AGM for ratification. The decision to no longer permit vehicles to use main Pathways was taken by the Committee following representations from PTC because of the damage that was being caused to the main pathways during wet weather. The Committee agreed to review this decision on a yearly basis until ratification at the AGM could take place. To date, due to Covid restrictions, it has not been possible to hold the AGM. The Committee has been/and continues to be mindful of the difficulties this decision might place on some of its older member and has/is always willing, if asked, to help wheelbarrow heavier items to peoples plots. Site Access will be put on the next AGM Agenda.

**Part 3 – Wildlife area and general plot maintenance**

Diana raised the following points. 1) PTC have already allocated a wildlife corridor area and this is the strip that runs alongside Scott Park fencing and the beginning of peoples plots. 2) in view of this fact and the long waiting list that we currently have it is not acceptable to have a plot left as a wildlife area when someone else would wish to cultivate it. 3) In the plots current state it is unacceptable to any of the plot holders within the vicinity to have to manage the “seed/weed wind transfer” that occurs especially now that the grasses and weeds are again beginning to set seeds.

Derek said that he actively encourages wild life on his plot whilst also maintaining it and has recently photographed hedgehogs in the longer grass at the edge of his plot and the top fence line.

There was general acceptance that whilst planting wild flowers and encouraging wildlife was welcomed, this should be done within the boundaries of maintaining the plot in line with rules set out in the handbook and the agreement made with the Society when taking on the plot.

It was the Committees view that to allow a section of plot to be turned into a wild life area would constitute “change of use” and before any decision could be taken on this issue we would need to seek a view from PTC. Should agreement be given the change of use would need to be ratified at the next AGM and amendments made to the Handbook.

4 **Mike Stinchcomb – Re-opening the Kitchen and guidance needed in light of the Government guidelines.**

It was agreed that the Kitchen would be open for all to use on Saturday 10th July, but in line with the current restrictions, only 6 people at a time. Plot holders will need to provide their own cups/tea and coffee etc., No cups are to be left in the kitchen. Following the redecoration and newly painted floor, Plot holders will also be asked to remove muddy boots/shoes before entering.

Les advised that PTC will be holding an Funday in Scot Park on the 28th August. Should we use this opportunity to fund raise by doing refreshment, as we have done successfully in the past. There was also discussion whether the AGM could also be held on the same day but in the morning following on with a BBQ and then opening this up to people attending the event in Scott Park in the afternoon. However as the 28th is a Bank Holiday weekend, it was thought likely that many plot holders may be away. The AGM will now take place on Saturday 21 August at 11 o’clock at the Allotment Site, followed by a BBQ. Poster will be put up around the Site. Plot rents can also be paid at the AGM

5 **Di Sidwell – Compost Site Overspill**

This issue had been raised by a plot holder adjacent to the compost site who was concerned that the overspill was creeping ever near the plot. He was also concerned that people appeared to have also been putting “mare tail” weeds on to the Compost heap. The Committee acknowledged that this was a constant problem. The green bin initially provided for “mares tails” had had to be removed because people had been putting plastic bags and other inappropriate item in it. Doug will send out an email reminding people not to dump allotment waste on the pathways and the danger of putting “mares tail” on the compost heap. Plot holders will be asked to either burn the “mares tails” or leave them in water to rot away.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. It had previously been agreed that work should go ahead to tidy up the front of the kitchen area and extend the roof to the end of the toilet block. A quotation has been received but the outlay is more than the funds available. This work will now be held over until next year or until such time that sufficient funds are available to undertake the work.
2. Everyone was asked to be aware when locking the containers that the bolt needs to be firmly closed.
3. The part for the Strimmer is now here, just needs to be fitted
4. The Committee will meet informally in August to sort our food/drinks etc for the BBQ

**Date of next Meeting will be Saturday 4rd September 2021, 10.30 at the Allotment Site.**