

Gertie Gales Allotments Committee Meeting

8 Nov 2022 at the Ship, Portishead

First meeting post 2022 AGM

Attendance: Stuart Armstrong, Les Curwood, Gilli Shorey, Evelyn Grounsell, Steve Lobley, Bob Shepherd, Kate Knight

Apologies: Roger Howard, Alan Harrison

1. Notice Board - Site manager (Steve)

A good quality second hand notice board had been purchased and refurbished. Just Perspex now to be fitted. It was agreed the notice board would be fitted to the new shed expected early 2023.

2. Consideration of the intro of Social media - Media officer (Steve), Website (Les)

The AGM again included an item re social media as a means of plot-holders making connection and becoming involved in wider site activities. This might include posting images of their efforts, asking/offering advice.

The committee discussed Steve's detailed paper on the advantages and issues associated with potential social media platforms, and how our Weebly website might be exploited via a forum plug in.

GDPR was an issue (WhatsApp - tel numbers visible.) Instagram is photo based and no real point.

Site notices by email will continue as it was recognised that the younger and the retired generations might use social media and email in different ways.

The Committee agreed that initially a website forum appeared to be the best fit, and the Website Manager was to investigate and report on the costs if any and functionality of the free and paid forum. The latter offers more controls that may not be needed.

Access to the forum is both via a page on our website or direct to the host with a moderator controlling the list of valid email addresses. Then plot-holders create their screen name and password as per any forum.

The committee also agreed that no one there was an expert on social media, and Kate volunteered to seek more advice from a friend, a web designers and media pro.

3. Potential Communal Plot - Site manager (Steve)

The committee returned to the subject of some form of communal or community plot. Two reasons - the Britain in Bloom (BinB) judge had suggested we might provide space for use by those on the waiting list; and the odd shaped plot on row 1 is available now.

Steve had produced example plans of community beds of fruit, herbs, flowers; and advised that the plot was well overgrown, needing clearance. Discussions however failed to identify demand for

community space, and who might have time to ensure that space was maintained. There was also a discussion if we use this plot for a try before you buy

Over the years Portishead schools, homes and other groups approached by the Committee had sufficient outside space for their gardening the option, and P in B already offers sociable gardening opportunities for flat dwellers, and older residents who do not wish a regular commitment.

It was decided that this plot would not be turned into a community plot not a try before you buy plot as we do not have the time to police the state of the plot.

4. Pests - Site Manager (Steve)

No action at this point. The Association do not have the money to pay dealing with pests on site and as we are surrounded by open land then the pests will always return.

Wasps nests are not treated this season as the colony will die soon.

There is a continuing issue with pigeons, mice and field voles that happens at any allotment site, and no action is proposed.

It was noted that poisons are not allowed under the town's site rules. The site offers perches as well as the cemetery that our local hunting owls can use.

5. Top Shed Replacement - Chair (Stuart)

Stuart advised that PTC grants committee appear to have agreed a loan or grant of up to £2k, with conditions as yet unknown.

In line with the AGM, Stuart has however sought costs from the supplier for a smaller shed (16x10 to 12x10 with a single door) to be in place by May 2023.

As per the AGM only communal equipment and shared wheelbarrows with green tape will now be permitted in the shed. Stuart will issue a notice directing removal of private equipment & sundries from the shed before February.

6. Toilet solid waste - Chair & Site Manager

Time to swap the solid waste bin. The urine waste has been emptied again for the third time.

2021 solid waste has been composting for a year but will be too early to be used as compost. The extent of composting needs to be checked, and we have an option if required to store for another year in a sealed composter by the cemetery railings.

Usage was discussed. Mulch the hedgerow likely to be the best plan as the compost will contain too many human chemicals to be used on plots.

(POST MEETING NOTE. A Government notice inter alia calls for composting 24 hours at 70 degrees C before use on veg)

7. Problems with replaced gate. - Chair (Stuart), Site Manger (Steve)

There had been further work on the new gate and catch (replacement better version one) put on the gate and it appears to be working for all plot-holders now. But the main post replaced a year earlier remains loose.

When it was reported, the council responded for some unknown reason that the post had been hit by a car. We refuted this and sent a recommendation for how the post can be repaired. The post will be secured soon by PTC.

8. Cemetery Tree Works

NSC tree specialist will be removing a dead tree next to our site. All other trees in the cemetery next to our site appear to be ok. Precautions will be in place we are advised.

9. Hedge Cuts - Chair (Stuart) Site Manager (Steve)

The PTC managed hedges require cutting off season to protect wildlife. Stuart sent a reminder to PTC because it is already November and the contractors get booked up soon so the hedges need cutting soon.

NSC manage the cemetery hedges that were radically reduced in recent years. NSC have been reminded they agreed that they manage cutting both sides of that hedge.

The farmers field hedge had been cut by the farmer in the past. Now that field has been taken out of the green belt all we can do is watch and wait. We have contacted the new owners to get them to cut the hedge

Whips. South boundary and other in fill doing well, and PTC have been advised that the hedging damaged by the neighbour should be replaced as part of the damages claim.

The next batch of WOODLAND TRUST whips will be used mainly along the field where there are gaps (only nettles).

10. Apple Trees - Site Manager (Steve)

Steve has the tools and will enjoy giving the trees their annual prune.

11. Manure & Wood chips - Chair (Stuart) Site Manager (Steve)

Manure delivery likely to be December now as our bank did not process the payment due to policy changes. Then timing is dependent on the farmers workload.

The drop off zone has been levelled by Les. Notice board about indicating the "paid pile" of manure proposed.

Plot-holders will be notified that they should take the wood chips to make more space and so the hedge can be cut. Note the wood chips arrive ad hoc when contractors have a load locally. We neither pay nor control delivery.

The dust/mould encountered when piles of chips are disturbed? Steve has built the piles to ensure better water penetration to reduce the dust.

12. Bank account - Chair (Stuart)

Stuart remains a signatory and so has volunteered to regularise the signatories in line with the 2022 AGM during November 2022.

The bank continues to change at will its policies re bank accounts for associations but has now rescinded the requirement for charitable status. We do not have charitable status so we are under regular scrutiny.

Bank charges now apply (£5 monthly charge and additional charges for cheques (receiving and issuing) and cash transactions). We agreed cheques would not be accepted in future due to the £0.40 charge per cheque. Bank giro, BACS or internet banking can be used in the future and promoted by the Committee. Same we will pay all future bills by standing order or BACS.

13. Clearance of fly tipped house/building waste by neighbour at South Boundary - Chair (Stuart)

The employed contractor was stood down because of potential site damage on our soft ground after heavy rain. Steve chased PTC saying we will attend with the contractor to ensure all goes as it should. Action ongoing now with PTC but they have confirmed the waste will be cleared shortly.

14. Proposed PTC Fence at south boundary.

PTC are considering a fence of their own to ensure no further incursions or encroachment from the householders.

15. Standing item, General State of Plots. - Lettings Manager (Les)

Plot states are pretty good.

Identified problem plots are being provided with advice.

Those recently given up have been in a mostly fair state, which is good. Notably ill health has been a higher factor than previously.

16. Waiting list. - Lettings Manager (Les)

The list has reduced. The list is 10, with 3 deferrals to Spring 2023. 7 plot-holders have asked to expand to a whole plot.

17. Dropbox Storage.

This was set up for all past and current records created during COVID in case something happened to a Committee member and we needed access to records.

Stuart and Les have access, but they are arranging to add more documents and provide access to more people in the coming months.

Date of next meeting is Tues 18 April 2023 at the Poachers