

Annual General Meeting

Minutes — as recorded · 11 May 2024 · Ref AGM-2024-05-11

Minutes of the Bathford Allotments Annual General Meeting, held at 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 11 May 2024 at the communal plot.

Voting information was circulated among the attendees before the meeting started.

1. Welcome and introduction

The chair summarised the wardens' first three years, from funding materials themselves during the first year to moving on to a more sustainable footing. In the past 18 months they have invested in various tools and machines to help manage the site, saving money by not having to buy in services such as grass cutting and rotavating. All machines have been sourced and are maintained and operated by one of the wardens. The wardens have been working with the Amenities Committee at the Parish Council, whose support is appreciated.

2. Report from the Parish Council representative

Finances were presented by the Parish Council representative, who thanked the wardens for the vast improvements over the last few years. Legally the Parish Council are the landlords and are ultimately responsible for everything on the site, with the final say in decisions; however, traditionally all major issues are discussed and agreed at the AGM, with the decision passed up to the Council. Anyone interested in decisions or in sharing their views is welcome to attend Parish Council meetings.

- **Action:** request made to put committee meeting dates and agendas on Bathford Community Facebook.

Insurance. The Parish Council insure the paths and communal areas. Individual plotholders are responsible for insurance on their own plots — please ensure you are covered.

Financial report. Finances are healthy, but a larger buffer against unexpected costs would help.

- £2,000 in the current account.
- £2,000 in the deposit account (held in trust for plotholders).
- £350 overspend this year due to improvements and the portaloo, balanced out by minimal spend in previous years.

Rents. Plot rents pay for insurance, upkeep, water, maintenance and improvements, and are ring-fenced for spending on the plots. Upcoming expenditure is needed to move forward the restoration of damaged paths (investing in topsoil). Rents were last raised in 2020. BANES Council allotment rents are raised yearly (currently approximately £100 a year for a full plot). Our water charge has previously been a flat rate per person rather than per plot, which does not match actual usage for most larger/double plots.

Proposed: rent and water charge to be combined into the total plot charge, as follows:

- Full plot: rent plus water, £40.
- Half plot or smaller: rent plus water, £20.

Vote: 25 in favour, 1 against. **Rent rise passed.**

Bamboo. Originally planted so people could have access to free poles and to prevent rubbish being dumped. The neighbour's wall behind it needs repair, and contractors are requesting that the bamboo

be removed (estimate £2,000), although it is a non-invasive species and does not affect the structure of the wall. The Council are deciding who will cover this cost, but it will not be taken from allotment funds. Removal will require a digger and will disrupt some ploholders; every effort will be made to minimise this. A bamboo clump may be transferred to another location on the site. It was asked whether the Council have done an environmental study, as ploholders have seen a lot of wildlife (e.g. toads) using the bamboo.

- **Suggested action:** Council to consider this further.

3. Wardens: progress on projects and pending spending

Restoration of paths and tidying of plots. Overgrown plots are an annual issue that takes a lot of time to chase; there is a process for repeat offenders. If a path is too narrow, the Council insurance will be invalidated, so paths must comply with the width requests. When the digger is on site for the bamboo removal, work will be done to repair a lower path and dig out the top path along the High Street, both currently hazardous. Ploholders will be required to use the soil provided to repair their own paths.

- **Action:** a copy of the paths map to be put on the communal plot; all to check their paths comply.

Acquisition of machines. A ride-on mower (for the main track), a strimmer and a rotavator have been acquired for use by the wardens. Help with individual plots may be available at a cost — please talk to a warden.

Communal plot. Plant-swap racks are now ready to use (please label plants); a seed-swap tin will soon be available. The next stage is a large shed, with a funding application going to the National Lottery. The grass area will be rotavated and bark-chipped for low maintenance. Donations sought: decorative plants for the raised beds; flat stones for the pond; native marginal plants for the pond.

Portaloo. We currently have 86 ploholders, and some had requested improved toilet facilities. The old facility was removed. The wardens explored the options:

- Composting loos: £1,200 to £2,000, and the waste cannot be spread on allotments due to potentially harmful elements.
- Septic tank: £5,000 to £10,000.
- Second-hand portaloo: £350, with an additional £80 + VAT on-demand emptying charge.

The wardens went with the portaloo. Improvements agreed at the meeting: a better padlock; communal hand gel; screening; the wardens to take on cleaning. The location may be reviewed after the trial period.

- **Vote:** to trial the portaloo as is for a year, with wardens managing the cleaning. 31 in favour (including proxies), 0 against. **Portaloo trial for a year passed.**

Bonfires and flytipping. The partial head of an old fork with lethal tines was left in the bonfire, creating a significant safety risk; there is currently a skip on site full of rubbish cleared from plots or dumped on the bonfire plot. The wardens have suspended the bonfire until September but would like to reinstate it, and sought ideas to reduce tipping — CCTV (a good deterrent on other sites) is being looked into. Fencing the field with coded padlocks was discussed but would create an emergency-access risk. Please share ideas before September.

4. Vote on regulations — environmental clause 4

We are trying to reduce the use of weedkiller on the plots; membrane is one of the few alternatives available (carpet is toxic due to the glues and dyes). Cardboard and sawdust can work well for paths

between beds within your plot — Bathford Joinery does large bags of sawdust for free if you can collect (please wear a mask when using).

Current clause: "Only biodegradable ground cover is acceptable. No plastic sheet, carpet, bath tubs, scaffolding poles or building materials are allowed."

Suggested amendment: Ground cover: no carpet. Plastic weed-control membrane is allowed but must not disintegrate into the ground or be left in the same location for more than a year. Membrane can be used on paths but must be replaced every three years. Scaffolding poles are allowed in moderation but must be removable and removed when the plot is left. Postcrete must not be used. No bath tubs, rubber tyres or building materials are allowed.

- **Vote:** 31 in favour (including proxies), 0 against. **Amendment to the rules agreed.**

5. Competitions

Please enter. Scarecrow judged in August (contact allotments@bathford.net for an entry form). Best-kept plots judged in July, with prizes awarded at the Village Flower Show in early September.

6. Volunteers

The wardens thanked several volunteers for their additional help over the past year.

- **New warden:** a new warden was proposed and seconded, and voted in with thanks.
- There is now a "Can you help?" WhatsApp group for occasional work parties — please contact the wardens to join.

7. Any other business

- A ploholders' WhatsApp group was suggested for those not on Facebook (a plotholder offered to coordinate); this would require a data opt-in.
- The newsletter should come out more frequently — talk to the committee to help.
- Thanks to the Parish Council for help with the new High Street sign.
- Double yellow lines to be put in front of the bottom gates, with a request to include the small lower gate to keep it wheelbarrow-accessible.
- **Community deliveries.** The wardens can arrange large deliveries of manure for £100 — people are encouraged to get together to share a load. Bulk material may be dumped on the main track as long as it is shifted quickly. Please only take chip or manure if there is a sign saying "help yourself".
 - **Action:** poster with the wardens' contact details to be put on the top gate.
- **Trees on plots.** Concern was raised about the willow sculpture planted in the ground at the top of the field, as willow takes a lot of water.
 - **Action:** wardens to follow up and request changes so it complies with the regulations.
- A former warden raised a vote of thanks to the current wardens for their hard work.

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