

**Mile Road Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Association Ltd (MRALGA)
Ratified Minutes**

Annual General Meeting (AGM) 18th November 2023

(These minutes were ratified at the AGM on 16th November 2024)

Meeting opened at 11.00 am

38 tenants attended and 9 proxy votes were received.

Welcome by Chair

Good morning and thank you for attending our AGM today. Moving forward can I remind everyone that we are a group of volunteers and we ask that you remember this when conversing with us and each other. No swearing please and keep an even temper throughout.

Apologies for absence

Jake Sale, David Moon, Lynn Orpwood, Lisa Muxlow.

A minutes silence was observed to remember members who have passed away since last AGM.

Minutes from the 2022 AGM were approved and signed off.

Chairs report: Maria Moon

I would like to thank Cheryl Britton and Lisa Muxlow for their help throughout the year as Trustees; unfortunately they have decided to resign for health and family reasons.

Big thanks to all trustees and volunteers who have worked hard throughout the year on:

Track repairs, improvements to greenhouses for plant production for this coming year, new hand wash area, security to site and huts including new doors and roofing panels, grass cutting and hedges, administration of the site and all our legal requirements.

In addition, cleaning, support with events and beautification of site entrance and communal areas.

If you would like to help, please let us know.

Any questions: None.

Treasurers report: Carol Andrew

I hope you have all had time to read through the accounts. Please note that since end of year we have spent reserved funds on site tracks and further improvements to the hut roof.

As you can see the Woo woo and area surrounding is now complete and all funds reserved for the project have been spent.

Vicky Perkins Is our independent Examiner the below was read by CA as Vicky sent apologies and could not attend.

I have now been through your accounts and can advise that I don't have any issues or queries with these. I have not been instructed to carry out an audit or a review of the financial statements of MRALGA, merely independently examine the accounts in accordance with Charity Law to ensure that the correct records are being kept and raise any concerns that I may have.

After examining the accounts, I can confirm the following:

The records being kept are more than adequate, with sufficient detail. The presentation of the accounts is suitable and in the correct format. I have no concerns to raise on these accounts.

I have submitted the report to the Charity commission Report and, Companies House as legally required and viewable on line and a copy on the huts notice board.

Questions:

Tenant: How are cash donations decided upon?

MM: Proposals are placed before Trustees and decided in advance with agreement.

Health & Safety report: Garry Black

Over the last year we have done well on the health and safety side. No accidents have been reported and we have managed to keep all risk assessments updated.

All events have run smoothly thanks to the help of volunteers and trustees. All fire alarms have been checked on a monthly basis and have been found to work well.

Fire fighting equipment has been checked and will be scheduled in for recheck in the New Year and updated where necessary.

PAT (*Portable Appliance Testing*) has fallen behind on all equipment due to the fact that our tester person has not been able to attend due to personal circumstances. Therefore we are getting quotes from an electricians company to take on the job.

New electric points have been put in place in the poly tunnel and the greenhouses and are waiting to be signed off for safety reasons before going live.

A defibrillator has been attached to the wall of the huts and is now live and ready if required. All safety signage is in place throughout the site and regularly checked.

On those weekends when fires have been allowed the site has been patrolled to make sure people are burning in fire bins and not leaving them unattended. Where they are not adhering to the rules they have been warned and in the main things are going well on this front.

Environmental health and safety (*from Bedford Council*) visited the site and inspected the kitchen and facilities and awarded the site the maximum 5 stars. This is all thanks to the volunteers and Trustees so well done all.

Questions: None.

Security report: Mark Moore

Cameras are checked every Saturday. Barbed wire has been erected on fence by Skate Park and right side of front gate to stop people climbing over. Luminous signs have been added which are easily seen. The fencing to the rear of the site by orchard is checked on a regular basis for holes. I ask tenants if they have had sheds broken into or items taken on a regular basis.

Thank you to tenants who report concerns or break ins and please notify the police.

Any questions. None

Plots report: David Osborn

Maria and I would like to thank you all for the steady improvement of the site in general. At the plot competition, the Judges were very impressed. We are very impressed by the work of new tenants who have really got "stuck in" to their new plots and the continued improvements from those who have been around a bit longer.

We know that warning letters are not appreciated although necessary. An example that makes our life difficult is:

A plot holder went abroad for 6 months without informing trustees as the tenancy requires. He later stated that he had asked someone to work the plot for him however they did not.

However, on a positive example;

A lady tenant kept us informed in writing of circumstances why she was unable to work her plot. She is now back to working the plot with some help. We continue to allocate plots as they become vacant.

Questions:

Tenant: How are vacant plots decided upon for new people?

DO: In date order when requested, going back to September. One plot per person.

5 plots are available at present with 10 persons on the waiting list. We always ask about maintaining a plot.

Tenant: Is it fair that some tenants have more than 1 plot? Can plot holders give a plot up to help numbers on the waiting list?

DO: In previous time more than 1 plot was permissible option. If a plot holder wishes to give up a plot they can do this; it is not a compulsory requirement.

Tenant: What about the plot inspections to ensure plots are more available?

DO: Please refer to the tenancy agreement which explains the letters process and have tried to make as fair as possible.

Tenant: Can I keep Bees?

MM: Yes. You will need a licence to keep bees on plots and trustees will need to maintain a note in advance if you intend to keep them re inspections of plot. Please read tenancy which explains requirement.

Events report: David Osborn

On behalf of the trustees and the events team, I would like to thank you all for the tremendous work that has made all events successful. Events are an important part of the site as they help to build up our community spirit.

If you would like to volunteer, even the odd hour or two will be much appreciated.

Any questions: None

Nominations for Trustees received from:

Miss Alhaj Yasmin

Yasmin introduced herself. Included her experience and potential help as a trustee.

Mr Nigel James

Nigel introduced himself. Included his experience and potential help as a trustee.

Vote to accept nominations

Proposed by: Carol Andrew

Seconded by: Majority

Yasmin and Nigel were voted in and accepted to join front table.

We have received the following proposals within the agreed submission date. No other proposals can be discussed today.

Proposals;

Tenant Nigel James has proposed:

We should restrict access and egress to the site to between the hours of dawn till dusk.

Loan working and visits during unlit periods puts persons on plots at unnecessary harm and risk.

Likelihood of harmful incidents and accidents increases.

Emergency services who may need to attend cannot always determine where the person is even if alarm raised by mobile.

The Trustees have also proposed this and support the proposal.

Any questions:

Tenant: Why dawn to dusk? Isn't this not helpful for those who are working late and can only attend site at set times?

CA: We have to consider working plots and the hazards and risk this gives rise to especially if loan working. Emergency services might be needed and what if no phone contact?

Tenant: What about getting down maintaining and feeding my chickens?

CA: This should be done wherever possible during daytime, although there may be emergency requirements for animal welfare.

Tenant: How do you propose to maintain and monitor this rule?

CA: We have a site camera system. Houses overlook the site and report in by phone calls.

Tenant: How do you define 'work' on a plot?

CA and MM: Working on a plot is digging and cultivation. We will make alteration to the tenancy agreement for this to be accepted.

Vote on proposal:

Accepted by majority show of hands.

Garry Black oversaw voting.

Tenant Nigel James has also proposed the following.

Changes to site access entrance:

MRALGA uses a one main gate system for means of access like many sites. Many plot holders use the gate over 300 and some have 2 keys.

Daily use of gate has increased over the years. Repairs need to be made when sometimes lack of attention when using the padlock or needs replacing when shown signs of wear and tear.

Trustees need to attend the site at, sometimes unsociable hours to make repairs.

Therefore, could we investigate the cost of electronic gates or have an additional pedestrian gate to the right of the current gate. The additional gate will assist when main gate repairs are needed.

Trustees' response:

The cost of installing an electric supply at the gate would be costly and would mean digging up the main track to the huts causing a lot of disruption. Electronic systems are very costly and supply of necessary equipment and maintenance and management of the system would need to be outsourced. Pedestrian gate would be a way forward.

Any questions:

Tenant:

Why has this come about now? Why important?

DO: Additional work by trustees to attend site much more frequently, the addition of another gate or side gate will help if persons trapped on site if difficulty in opening main gate. As well as this, we then have 2 means of access and egress and this forms part of the site risk assessment for emergency planning, especially if ambulance required.

Discussion then took place amongst members on the potential cost of a full electronic system. This was generally decided as impractical. The vote went ahead for a side gated system as soon as practical.

Vote on proposal:

Accepted - for side system maintaining keys and padlock, by majority show of hands. Garry Black oversaw voting.

Trustees proposal:

Whether we should have bonfires during the summer months.

Discussion ensued amongst the members present to restrict and ban bonfires during summer months. It was agreed by the majority and supported by the trustees that **burning** would be permitted on the first weekend of every month, on January, February, March, April, May, October, November and December. This left 4 remaining months June, July, August and September as NON burn months.

Posters would be erected to this effect and bonfire calendar posted on MRALGA website as soon as practical. MM Changes made to all tenancy agreements and current policing arrangement with metal incinerators must be acted upon.

A.O.B

MM mentioned that the allotment site had been nominated for the Kings Award. We had received a letter back saying we were unsuccessful for an award and MM reminded the group that this was a high award and on this occasion not successful. The letter was signed Sir Martin Lewis CBE.

NJ mentioned that posters were up about the IMPAKT charity group in Bedford which welcomed surplus fruit and vegetables from people's allotment. The collection

point is the Priory Methodist Church and welcome surplus Thursday and Friday mornings.

Tenant mentioned about care for wildlife on the allotments included grass snakes. They are an endangered species in the UK and recent case of pregnant female being found dead.

The meeting closed at 12.00 noon.