



SAUGHTON MAINS ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

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Minutes of Committee Meeting, Sunday June 13th, 2021, 11am.

Present: Jean Carletta (Treasurer), Kevin Hamilton, Ed Irvine, Sandy Dundas, Jenny Wilson, Yvonne Dawe, David Todd (Observer).

Apologies: Peter Moir, Peter Shaw, Jan Bradbury (Secretary).

There were no previous minutes to approve.

1. The move to Metrobank has gone smoothly, although we only discovered after the transfer that Metrobank does not participate in the "confirmation of payee" programme that most banks use. This means that when anyone needs to pay in money, their bank is likely to tell them that they cannot verify the account details match, and will be less likely to refund the money from payments made incorrectly or from scam attempts using our name. Plotolders have already rightly questioned why this is the case. We will advise plotolders to contact us using our recognised Facebook, website, or email for account details if in any doubt. Jean as Treasurer is willing to speak to any of them on the phone to give details of the site that should reassure them a request for funds is genuine.

2. It was resolved that the authorised signatories in the current mandate for the Saughton Mains Allotments Association Metrobank account be amended to remove Jenny Wilson and add Edward Irvine. The mandate will still require dual authorisation. Jean Carletta (banking name Jean Gifford) and Janet Bradbury will remain as signatories.

3. Over the past year and a half we have lost three members of the Committee - Chiara Puppi, Jenny Wilson, and Douglas Pyper. We thank them for their service. A full Committee is 12 members, of whom three are officers. We now have nine, with the chair vacant. We expect this sometimes to make it difficult to reach a quorum of six with one officer.

David Todd (plot 176) has very kindly offered to join the Committee. Our constitution allows the Committee to "co-opt" members, but it's unclear whether they are intended to count towards a vote or just help for a short time for something specific. Ordinarily members would retire after each three year term at the AGM in September with new members elected. We have recently been lax about this process, and simply asked existing members if they wished to continue each year. Rather than wait and see whether we can hold an AGM this year, the Committee will ask the membership whether there are any objections to David being appointed until the next AGM - whenever that is - when he can stand properly. If there are other plotolders who would also be willing to be on the Committee on this basis, we would be happy to include them. If more than two additional people come forward, Jean will discuss with the Committee the best arrangements for an election short of a face-to-face meeting. Any objections should be received **by 30 June**.

4. Plotolders should not leave hoses permanently attached to the water taps. If they need to attach two hoses to the same tap, they should use a splitter so that one tap is always free for others to wash their hands. Splitters can be purchased very cheaply and there is a good one available from Sainsburys.

5. The committee attempt to take care of the major paths around the site, however plotholders are responsible for the paths around their own plots. They should be encouraged to agree maintenance with their neighbours.

6. We have a petrol strimmer for volunteers to use on common areas only, which has not been used recently. For Health & Safety reasons, eye protection, a facemask, gloves and padding must be worn when using the strimmer. Before restarting use, it was thought advisable to have a training session, and supply written user instructions. Alan McStay will be approached to see if he is willing to give training to potential users, and Yvonne Dawe will attend to make a written user guide. The strimmer is not for loan to plotholders to maintain their plots.

7. It was suggested that a volunteer work party should be organised for path and communal plot clearing. Sunday seems the most popular day.

8. A message will be put on Facebook to inform plot holders where the common fruit is. Jean will check with Donald.

9. We discussed reopening the toilets, as requested by several plotholders. Although we closed them at the beginning of the first Covid lockdown at the Council's request, the Council Allotment Officer has recently informed us that the Committee is free to re-open as long as we and the users are sensible, and has made this known to some individual plotholders. We have been unable to find government CoVid guidance about the shared use of composting toilets, but consider the risks to be somewhat different from for shared flush toilets. The two main risks we identified for users were from touching contaminated surfaces and through inhalation. Although the toilet is designed to vent above six feet outside the enclosing shed, it only operates correctly if users close the toilet lid. Toilet volunteers face an additional risk during maintenance as they must empty the toilet when it is full, digging the contents into the communal fruit areas. They constantly have to remove items such as medicated wipes from the resulting product by hand, as well as to clean up after children who have made a mess, including dropping soiled paper on the floor. Past signage and messaging to the plotholders has failed to correct these behaviours. The volunteers are no longer willing to tolerate these behaviours, nor do we feel it would appropriate for them to do so during the current health crisis. They are, however, willing to maintain the toilets until the next problem occurs, in the hopes that we can change plotholders' behaviour. We have agreed to a trial opening of six weeks, with the following mitigations for the risks: (1) we will mount a hand sanitiser dispenser on the outside of one of the toilets, giving the toilet volunteers charge of a large refill bottle; (2) we will hang soap in old orange/lemon nets from the nearest taps in case the dispenser empties too quickly to refill; (3) we will prepare signage informing users that they may only put paper down the toilet and must close the lid; (4) we will send email to all known plotholders explaining these constraints, as well as putting the message out on Facebook; (5) we will ask families to spread the word among themselves, as children don't read signage and many people with children have no contact with us.

We aim to reopen on 1 July if the preparations can be made quickly enough. We will close the toilets immediately if the volunteers report inappropriate user behaviours. The Committee authorised spending of £75 to cover materials, with the expectation that if more funds are needed, this can be approved by email.

The two current toilet volunteers, Donald and Gill, have requested a third volunteer to help when they are away. Sandy Dundas has kindly offered to do this. We will offer to purchase PPE for the volunteers including close-fitting face masks if they wish it.

Signs will be made for the toilet doors, both inside and out, as follows:

COVID SAFETY
CLOSE LID AFTER USE.
NO WIPES, TOILET PAPER ONLY,
OR TOILETS WILL BE CLOSED.

10. The bonfire ban was reinstated on Council managed sites on 1st May and operates until 30th September.

11. Our bulk compost order is placed in October for delivery in December. Plotholders will be emailed that this is the last year for buying compost with peat. In future only peat-free compost will be ordered and anyone wanting peat will have to source it themselves. There has also been a request for mushroom compost. We will consider whether Tiphereth, a local social enterprise, could supply us with compost made from garden waste.

12. There was a question as to whether we needed a skip on site in both autumn and spring. It was decided to defer until spring, as the last skip took a long time to fill. It is most use when we have the greatest number of new plotholders.

13. The only trees now allowed on plots are fruit trees. We had been asked to consider getting a worker with a chipper in for tree clearance in the autumn. FEDAGA is considering whether they can make arrangements on behalf of all sites so this has been deferred.

14. There was a request for the trees along the Water of Leith to be trimmed as some are overhanging plots. As this is a council issue, Sandy will contact Ian about tree trimming policy.

15. Plotholders are asked not to park on communal paths, as wheelbarrows, etc have to have access to plots. Vehicles should be parked on the grass in the main carpark, or in the small carpark, but not in passing places, especially by the main gate. There was a request for painted parking slots, however it was felt that this would not help and would be difficult to maintain.

16. We have received £106 in extra donations this year, of which £100 was kindly donated by a grateful departing plotholder. It was decided to put this towards the cost of the compost bins, as there is cost overrun of just over this amount. This was approved by the committee.

17. The Fedaga Small Grant Scheme allows a 50/50 split for one-off purchases. The committee will ask around to see what is needed, perhaps more barrows and/or trolleys.

The meeting was closed at 12:20pm.

Next meeting September, date to be advised.