

**Minutes of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held at
the Blandford Forum Corn Exchange
On Friday 29th September 2017 at 7 pm
Chaired by Amanda Bibby**

Those Present: *Amanda Bibby – Chairperson, Andy Dickinson – Treasurer, Ann Edwards – Social Secretary/Minute Taker, Norman Moors – Estate Manager, Pat Richardson – Webmaster, Ian Ricketts – Seed Secretary, Diane Mawer – Plot Allocator, Ken Pearce – Plot Allocator, Lynn Lindsay of Blandford Town Council, plus 41 Allotment Holders. Apologies for absence: Dave Buchan*

1. Welcome

Amanda welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular the Town Councillor, Lynn Lindsay, representing the Blandford Town Council.

2. Minutes of the last AGM

A copy of last year's minutes, this year's agenda and the Treasurer's report for 2017 were given to all members present. The minutes were agreed and signed. Amanda thanked everyone on the Committee for their hard work and commitment throughout the year. She reminded the meeting that all Committee Members are hard-working unpaid volunteers.

3. Presentation by Lyn Lindsey

Ms Lindsey was welcomed by Amanda and introduced to the meeting. She commented that due to the neighbourhood plan not being adopted because the regulator deemed that there is more suitable land available for development, there have been no plans submitted for the allotments, school, waste transfer and housing. This impacts on any relocation of the allotments and the Town Council do not envisage this happening for some time. Regarding Elizabeth Road, these allotments are leased from North Dorset District Council, and could at any time be earmarked for housing. If this were to happen, then the allotments would be taken back, with a 3 month notice of eviction. Regarding Elizabeth Road rents, these had gone up this year, taking into account that there had been no rise for the past couple of years. The rise of 2p per metre per year had not been collected in previous years, so this year the rise takes account of that. The good news is that the Council are not collecting any arrears of rent payment. She pointed out that allotment rents are amazing value, and this year's increases had been kept to the absolute minimum. She said that the Town Council love their allotments and allotment holders and do everything possible to look after them. A couple of questions from the floor were answered satisfactorily.

4. Treasurer's Report – Andy Dickinson

Andy presented his accounts from 2016 to June 2017. There was a surplus of £1677.28. He asked everyone to watch out for water leaks, as our water rates bill can be affected by water leaks. There were no known leaks. He said he had achieved a reduction in the price of insurance for equipment. Sale of the seeds had generated a profit of some £50 into the accounts, which was welcome. Various new notices had been erected at Elizabeth Road. He said the finances are in a healthy condition. The Councillor said that we are entitled to put in for the money for the water butts, as money is ring fenced for such items. Andy said he would do so.

5. Report on Plot Allocations

Ken reported on behalf of himself and Diane. He said that this time last year on Lamperds Field site we had in excess of 20 plots of varying sizes that were vacant and we had no waiting list. Steadily throughout the year, these have been taken and we now have a waiting list of approximately 7 people. The Elizabeth Road site has still at least 5 vacant plots, with a possible interest of 2 people wanting plots there. To enable us to keep an accurate record, can everyone

please let a committee member know of any address/telephone number/email change? Any problems or queries please contact a Committee Member through the facility on the website.

6. Report on Elizabeth Road by Norman Moors

Amanda reported on behalf of Norman. He had overseen the erection of notices, cameras, and solar lights. The vandalism had thankfully now stopped because of all the measures he had taken, including informing the police and taking their advice. Yellow cards had been staked on overgrown and untended plots and it is hoped that this will have a positive effect on the neglect. Elizabeth Road allotment holders were encouraged to take advantage of the monthly coffee mornings at Lamperd's Field on the first Saturday of the month, and to try to access the website to keep in touch with any latest developments. It was pointed out that because Elizabeth Road allotments belong to North Dorset District Council, there is a possibility in the future that the land could be needed for development even though at the moment there is no hint of this. The task force on a Tuesday morning, and Community Action days in the year had helped Norman greatly to keep Lamperds Field Allotments' communal areas in good order. Norman had suffered long term ill health, making it difficult to carry on, so he said he wishes to step down. He had served faithfully for some 12 years on the Committee. We will need labour in place of Norman!

7. Report from Social Secretary – Ann Edwards

As minute taker, since the last AGM, Ann had taken the minutes of 8 Committee meetings, the last one being on 11th September. All of these minutes can be accessed on our website, www.blandfordallotments.com.

(a) Annual Barbecue

This took place on June 25th, with some 40 people attending. The Committee worked hard to erect a marquee and gazebo, and put up tables chairs and barbecue. This was a great success. Food that everyone brought was excellent, as were the meats cooked on the barbecue by Andy and Ian. Photos are on the website.

(b) Plot Judging

Judging for the best plot was done in August, by members of the Committee, and we will know the lucky winner/s tonight.

(c) Monthly Coffee Mornings

Each month, we have had a coffee morning at 11 am on the first Saturday of the month. They started in March 2017, so we have had 7 up to September. The total this year will be 10. The Coffee Mornings have become very popular. We are now having to cater regularly for about 20 people. (We don't have one in January or February 2018.)

List of Coffee Mornings in 2017 all at 11 am

On 4th March – Report from Committee regarding re-location of allotments

On 1st April – Barbara Marjoram - "Lady allotmenters are no April Fools! Get started on your plot!"

On 6th May – Malcolm Fowler – "Bee Keeping" with hive and honey

On 3rd June – Mike Holloway of Woodhouse Gardens Fame – "Fuchsias from Wimborne to Chelsea"

On 1st July – "Come and meet your committee"

On 5th August – Bring your courgette recipe, along with samples to taste! Did you know you can make courgette brownies?

On 2nd September – Pat talked about "No dig approach to your allotment" based on Charles Dowding's book, which can be bought on Amazon.

On 7th October – Vlad Gorre will talk and demonstrate "apple and pear pressing".

On 4th November – "Dahlias" – SPEAKER NEEDED PLEASE

On 2nd December – Christmas get together – mulled wine and buffet.

Ann was immensely grateful to all the speakers. In particular, Pat Richardson, Mike Holloway, Malcolm Fowler, Barbara Marjoram and Vlad Gorre. And – Pearl and Jan for their lovely cakes.

As Social Secretary, she was grateful to Pat Richardson for all her hard work servicing our website and Ian Ricketts for being responsible for our Facebook page. Not forgetting a big, thank you to everyone for supporting the social events.

8. Report from Pat Richardson – Webmaster

Our website address is www.blandfordallotments.com. She was pleased to report 1500 hits to date and that the website had been very successful. This is 3 times as much as last year. There is a contact form on the site for allotment holders to email their Committee. She would like to have a page for the Elizabeth Road site and appealed for material. She urges everyone to use the site as it contains photos of the committee, advance warnings of events, minutes of meetings and lots of other useful information. She thanked everyone for their input throughout the year.

9. Report on Facebook Page – Ian Ricketts

Ian started Facebook back in May 2017. There are now 47 members and it is a closed group, so you will have to ask to join. We have kept it closed so only members and/or members' family only are able to join. The reason it was set up was so that allotment holders have a chance to see what fellow allotment holders are up to, or upload photos and chat etc. It does not replace the website. The website is for information and contacts. Immediately, it was well received and successful.

10. Report on Seed Order etc. – Ian Ricketts

Ian had been responsible for the seed order from Kings for the past few years. Catalogues were available at the meeting and seed orders must be in by November 1st. As a result of our bulk order, there was usually an amount of some £50 excess fed into the Allotment account. He said that this year there had been no sunflowers large enough to be judged!

11. Presentation of Awards – Ian Ricketts

Again we had Dave Miles to judge the plots. Ian walked around with him on a hot day in July. Elizabeth Road was first to be judged. After a lot of deliberation, Amenda Bealing's plot was judged the best plot.

At Lamperd's Field there are many different sized plots – quarter, half and full. Ian and Dave decided to have a best kept small plot and the winner this year is Phil Burgess.

Coming to the over-all best plot, they got it down to two. It was difficult to choose, but in the end they decided the runner up goes to Diane Mawer and the winner is Judith Potts.

12. Committee Structure 2017 – 2018 – Amanda Bibby

Amanda said that the majority of current committee members are willing to be re-elected, and that the Chairman, the Treasurer and Norman wished to step down. She proposed a vote for the re-election of existing Committee Members willing to be re-elected - Ian Ricketts, Ann Edwards, Pat Richardson, Diane Mawer, Ken Pearce and Dave Buchan. The vote was carried unanimously.

New Chairman

Ian Ricketts had been proposed and seconded. A vote was taken from the floor which was unanimous in agreement. He was duly elected.

New Treasurer

John Harding had been proposed and seconded. A vote was taken from the floor which was unanimous in agreement. He was duly elected.

13. AOB - Notes on Pre-AGM Meeting with Elizabeth Road and The Committee, at 6 p.m.

This was a special opportunity for Elizabeth Road residents to voice their concerns to the Committee, which were:

1. Rent increases and
2. Yellow cards.

Rent increases – The Committee responded as follows. Elizabeth Road allotments are leased from the District Council, unlike Lamperd’s Field, and could at any time be earmarked for housing. If this were to happen, then the allotments would be taken back, with a 3 month notice of eviction. Regarding Elizabeth Road rents, these had gone up this year, taking into account that there had been no rise for the past couple of years. The rise of 2p per metre per year had not been collected in previous years, so this year the rise takes account of that. The good news is that the Council are not collecting any arrears of rent payment. The Committee pointed out that allotment rents are still amazing value, and this year’s increases had been kept to the absolute minimum

Yellow Cards – The Committee outlined the procedure for yellow and red cards. Some plots are not maintained, and it will be these which will be sprayed off, if the Committee can’t get to the plot holder. It had been decided to put yellow or red cards staked in the middle of offending allotments, as well as sending letters. Yellow cards give time (one month) to the allotment holder to bring the allotment up to some sort of acceptable order before they are re-assessed and the possibility of a red card comes into play. This had worked well elsewhere. She urged those who are ill and unable to keep up their plot to inform the Committee, who will arrange for a work party to help them. Also, if a person is temporarily absent, please inform the Committee. She requests that paths and roadways are kept clear for access. She urged Elizabeth Road residents to attend the monthly Coffee Mornings at Lamperds Field to share time with fellow allotment holders and the Committee.

Ian arranged to meet on site those Elizabeth Road residents who were present, on the following Monday.

14. The meeting closed at 7.45 pm with Amanda (our retiring Chairman) thanking everyone for being present.
15. Date of next Committee Meeting is Tuesday October 10th at 7 pm in the shed.

Ann Edwards (Social Sec.) 3.10.17