

**Minutes of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held at
the Blandford Forum Corn Exchange
On Friday 1st October 2021 at 7 pm
Chaired by Ian Ricketts**

Those Present: *Ian Ricketts – Chairman, John Harding – Treasurer, Barbara Marjoram - Plot Allocator, Virginia Barnard – Webmaster, Annette Baxter – Seed Secretary, Ann Edwards – Social Secretary/Minute Taker, Peter Brundish – Committee, Dave Buchan - Committee, Phil Williams – Committee, Elizabeth Road, Carol Williams – Committee, Elizabeth Road, plus 30 Allotment Holders and Nicci Brown – Press.*

Apologies for absence: *Plot holders: Phil Brown, Claire Smith, Martin Prior, Pat Richardson.*

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last AGM

A copy of the 2019 minutes, this year's agenda and the Treasurer's report for 2021 were given to all members present. The 2019 minutes and 2021 Financial Report were agreed and signed. Ian thanked everyone on the Committee for their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

It has been two years since our last A.G.M., and things have changed quite a lot. We seem to have coped with the Covid pandemic, but let us not be complacent, as it is still very much with us. We now have waiting lists for both sites, due in part to Covid. In fact, it is great to see so many young families taking up plots.

The neighbourhood plan was passed, so it looks more likely that Lamperds Field will be moving at some time in the future. We have been in discussion with the Town Council about how the new site should be laid out. Because we will be losing our hazel coppice at Lamperds Field, we are going to plant another on the waste land on the end of Elizabeth Road plots. It will be part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee project, which is the Queen's green canopy, in partnership with the woodland trust. They are giving trees for community projects and hazel trees are included. We will need some work party days to clear the site, the first of which will be on 24th October. Then we will plan others as needed. Planting of the trees will be in the spring. So please come along. Talking of Work Parties, we have one every Wednesday from 9 am at Lamperds Field. We do work at Lamperds Field and Elizabeth Road. Work focuses on tidying up of vacant plots, grass cutting, delivery of manure, movement of manure, delivery of wood chip, and movement of woodchip, cutting down of trees and replacing fence posts, etc., to both sites.

5. Treasurer's Report – John Harding

Once again, this brought forward figure was a healthy £2971.75. That is over £1000 ahead of the previous year

Regarding rental payments - approx. £150 ahead of last year, reflecting basically the increase applied by the Council over the previous year as the allotments were virtually all occupied.

Seeds.....The commission due to us showed a healthy £1600 increase over last year, reflecting the success of the scheme that year, when allotment holders took advantage of Kings Seeds, as it looked like seeds might be in short supply, due to lockdowns etc. Thanks here to Annette. This is the first time she has co-ordinated the seed order and a truly excellent job she made of it.

There was no barbecue in 2020 due to Covid restrictions. Therefore no income or expenses for that event.

Miscellaneous. There was a good increase last year as:

a) Lots of allotmenters used the manure facility and purchased compost etc. and

b) last year's figure was considerably depleted because of loss of raffles and products for sale – again due to Covid restrictions. Thanks to Ian for all his hard work ordering stock, running raffles etc.

Expenses

The website costs reflect the renewal and rebuild of our www.blandfordallotments.co.uk site

Water bill.....We had a very dry summer again last year plus we had more new allotment holders.

NAS Membership - 17% increase, which reflects the increase in allotment holders. All members pay £3.00 each year to belong, which is added to their annual rent invoice.

Regarding insurance and electric, there was very little change this year.

Miscellaneous....The increase mainly reflects the increase in orders of goods for sale.

Finally, as our finances were in a good state towards the end of the year (2019/2020) we were able to purchase a new mower which was badly needed to replace the old one which was falling to bits.

We finished this year with a carried forward figure of £3929 almost £1000 ahead of last year.

6. Plot Allocator's Report – Barbara Marjoram

This has been a very busy year on the plots. With the lockdowns came a large number of requests for plots. Many were given plots; however, with the reopening of work some of these plots were poorly cultivated.

This year, more yellow warning letters were sent out which resulted in some individuals improving their plots. Those who did not cultivate their plot have been evicted (6 people).

Since the start of this rent year, 22 plots, at Lamperds Field have been let and Lamperds Field has a further 8 plots to let.

It is expected that the Elizabeth Road will have up to 4 plots to rent over the next few weeks.

Once these plots have been allocated, it is expected that there will still be on the waiting list – Lamperds Field - 4 and Elizabeth Road – 4.

When people leave their plots, most are in a very overgrown state. We try to rent out plots in a good state. We have only managed to achieve this because of the hard work of the Wednesday work party.

7. Report on Elizabeth Road – Ian Ricketts on behalf of Phil/Carol Williams

The work party has cut down the big eucalyptus tree, replaced several fence posts and installed a ramp for a plotholder, to avoid steps. All plots are taken now.

8. Report from Social Secretary – Ann Edwards

As minute taker, since the last AGM in September 2019, I have taken the minutes of 11 Committee meetings, the last one being on 27th September 2021. All of these minutes can be easily accessed on our website, www.blandfordallotments.co.uk. Do please take a look.

Our monthly coffee mornings took a turn for the worse, when the pandemic struck. On the whole, during 2020 there were none, except for the 7th March 2020, outside, to hand out potatoes for the competition and on 1st August to weigh in and decide on the winners. A presentation for all winners in 2020 took place outside at Lamperds Field, with the mayor attending, on 27th September 2020. We managed to hold committee meetings outside to keep to Covid rules (masked and distancing), or via zoom. Please read these minutes as they contain all you need to know. If you are not on my email list to be kept up to date with information, can you please let me know. Thank you.

This year – 2021 - we have managed to hold committee meetings keeping within Covid restrictions, in March (via zoom), April, (via zoom), May, July, August and September.

This year – 2021 – we have only had one coffee morning in March to hand out potatoes for the competition. On August 22nd we had our annual barbecue, along with the weighing for the potato competition. The BBQ was held outside, and we had some 70 plotholders and their families attending. It was a great day – the food was magnificent, Mato meats lovely and everyone's generosity resulted in a massive raffle. Huge thanks to the volunteer team helping with the erection of the marquee, layout out etc.(A really labour intensive job.)

Our final gathering in 2021 will be on 4th December 2021. This will be our usual Christmas Gathering and Grand Raffle, which, this year will be at the Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion at 11 am. Plot holders need to put their name down to reserve their place please – for this, a list will be put on the noticeboard soon.

I regret that our idea of a booklet of Recipes using fresh allotment produce, did not get off the ground in 2019 because of Covid restrictions. Volunteers for this task would be very welcome now as it looks likely that we might be able to think about this again. Email to: secretary@blandfordallotments.co.uk please.

9. Report from Seed Secretary – Annette Baxter (read by Chairman)

A big thank you to all allotmenters who have already submitted their orders. To date I have received 13 orders, totalling £431.50. The amount so far is less than a quarter of the total value of last year's order, but you will agree that last year was quite out of the ordinary.

The seed catalogues have been out for a while now and sadly the response so far has been a little slow. I am assuming this is partly due to the delays we experienced with Kings Seeds during the pandemic. However, I am hopeful that Kings have overcome the difficulties and will be back to their usual efficient self.

I will be accepting orders until 16th October; that will leave plenty of time to achieve the Early Bird discount. Extra catalogues will be made available on the evening of the AGM and I will also post a reminder on our Facebook page.

May I suggest that next year we consider a way of making payments by bank transfer available for the seed orders, cheques are becoming increasingly unpopular, especially with the younger generation. A discussion took place regarding the ability to pay by BACS next year and John has suggested that should be possible. He needs to set up instructions e.g. in the information section people will be required to identify that it is for seeds (as this happens at the same time as renewal rents) and plot number.

10. Report from Webmaster - Virginia Barnard

The current website [www.blandfordallotments.co.uk] was designed and launched in February 2019 and together with the Facebook page we have a very good social media presence. I try to keep the website updated regularly, which was necessary and very useful during the Covid pandemic at keeping the plot holders informed of current Government Guidelines with in regard to working on our plots.

We have had a few random issues with our hosting company, TSOHost, regarding Outlook, Hotmail and Live email addresses. In April our Linux Cloud Hosting package was migrated to the latest platform based on CPanel. The new platform means that the hosting services will be faster, easier to use and give access to even more features. They have specifically created this platform to target issues experienced with the current system. The migration was carried out with no interruption to the services.

Current statistics show that during the pandemic visitors to the website have reduced to 6,468 - particularly slow during lockdown - but this was to be expected

The contact form on the website still appears to be very popular. Since October 2020 the online contact form has generated 25 enquiries regarding plot availability.

11. Plot Judging and Presentation of Awards – Ian Ricketts

The Potato Competition had gone well. The weigh-in was held on August 22nd at the Annual Barbecue.

3rd – Mike Holloway 3.3kg, 2nd - Dan Foster 3.7kg, 1st - Ros Foster 3.95 kg.

The winner of the scarecrow competition was Virginia Barnard.

Best kept plots

Lamperds Field

Quarter plots:

Runner up – Christine Adams,

Winner - Heather Shepherd.

Half plots:

Runner up – tie between Ros Foster and Brook MacCallum

Winner – Darrel Adams

Full plots:

3rd Diane Mawer, 2nd Tim Farrow, 1st Judith Potts

Elizabeth Road

3rd Lisa Gale, 2nd Amenda Bealing, 1st Phil Williams

12. Committee Structure 2021– 2022 – Ian Ricketts

Ian said that the current committee members are willing to be re-elected. He proposed a vote for the re-election of existing Committee Members - Ian Ricketts, John Harding, Barbara Marjoram, Virginia Barnard, Ann Edwards, Annette Baxter, Dave Buchan, Peter Brundish, Phil and Carol Williams. Proposed by Ken Pearce, seconded by Dan Foster. The vote was carried unanimously.

13. Any Other Business

Plot holder Ian Condie gave a vote of thanks to the Committee for their hard work and praising them for the way they had handled the Covid 19 pandemic crisis.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm with the Chairman thanking everyone for attending.

14. Date of next BAS Monthly Committee Meeting:

Monday 8th November at 7 pm at Lamperd's Field Potting Shed.

Ann Edwards (Social Sec.) Email: secretary@blandfordallotments.co.uk

8th October 2021