

Minutes of L.A.A. Meeting - Wednesday 15th July 2020

Held on Site due to Covid19 restrictions.

Welcome to all attending

Members Present: Kay West-Chair, Glenys Milliard-Treasurer, Samantha Shakespeare-Minutes Secretary, Julie Debbage representing Council as Town Clerk

Apologies from: Graham Milliard, Elaine Smith, Mark Culbet, Cathy Fewlass, Diane?

Present: Phil and Diane Emes, Hilary Tuite, Dave Cope, Jane Lacey, Tracey Savage, Karen Harris, Ray Wall, Vivienne Pearson,

Matters Arising from Last Minutes

- Middle Car Park 'Recycling Site' Julie pointed out that on Google Earth it showed that this area had been three plots. Once it is cleared the area could return to being three plots. Mention was made of care around Electricity cable buried there and the possible acquisition of 2nd compost toilet facility with better access than the existing one.
- Vacant Plots known to be truly available to new plot holders on the waiting list will be shown by Mark next week ending 25th July. Office staff have been ringing round current owners of plots seemingly unattended for clarity of intentions to return or if help is needed.
- Membership fees for Association and invoicing for plot rent could not be actioned due to Covid restriction. However, new Software to be used by the Council Staff will enable and improve issues of Allotment administration. The Town Council Office is open from 10-2pm Monday to Friday and from August it could well be possible for fees to be manually paid in this way. Julie checking if online payments will be possible.
- Flooding Issue is being pursued by Mark who has been continually let down by original contractor, currently seeking new possibilities that may lead to mini digger creating trench to alleviate ongoing issue with water retention on site. Hope to locate necessary contractor by the week ending 19th July.
- Lease for Site is being negotiated as original site lease expires 2026 with 2nd part of site 2029.
- Harvest Supper at The Grange booking to be checked by Julie. No awards this year due to unfairness of those having to shield themselves from Covid19 Virus.
- Signage on site to be updated and checked by Mark.
- Bonfires are only permitted after 3pm to comply with Tenancy Agreement but because of the pandemic it is deemed unwise to light them at this time.

A.O.B

- Glenys Milliard presented as treasurer The LAA Accounts to date 2019-2020 giving a Total Reserves figure of £1,360.63.

- Mark Culbert was on Site and met with Kay and Samantha 17th July 2020, Discussed Council Recycling area, its future use and the removal of unnecessary items dumped there, also the vacant plots, their availability and the weed control needed on them as affecting neighbouring plots.
- Julie reported that Soil conditioner/Compost, although available by the ton at a cheap price, is expensive due to the delivery costs from Worcester.
- **Communication** will hopefully be further enhanced by the displaying of the minutes of last meeting enabling all to read and be kept up to date with matters pertaining to the Site. **A new Notice Board** on the side of Community Shed was discussed, to show email addresses for plot holders to use for their queries or concerns. Grant for this might be available from Midland NAS.
- L.A.A. AGM. postponed in May 2020 because of Covid virus lockdown. This will take place as soon as possible, with at least one month's notice given, as required, with at least one month in advance. This could be a Zoom meeting or held on sit and socially distanced. Waiting for response from Committee members to confirm a suitable date and format.
- Sam to email Cynthia Partridge with regard to involvement with The Plant Fair to be held socially distanced on The Grange 19th September 2020 9am-3pm
- Compost toilet requires attention and possible replacement of straw bales in the future, as noted by Sue Morris.
- Community Garden has had much work done recently by Kay and Ray , a request for donations of suitable plants and the need for permeable path membrane to be put down keeping tree roots watered, planks for edging and a further path on the yet to be weeded fruit bed which will help to suppress the many weeds currently creeping onto neighbouring mini plots.
- Attention drawn to the Rat Traps on site containing yellow blocks that ascertain what creature is nibbling them, correct traps for type are then used. Reminder to plot holders to report directly to the council by email or telephone.
- Gates to be closed after each person arrives/leaves the site as thefts have been noted causing upset. Appropriate signage to be hung in plain sight on the gate. This is returning to usual practice whenever using the gate entrance.
- National Gardening Association Magazine currently posting to Glenys address may be able to be passed on after 72 hours between readers.
- Seed Catalogue available through Jane - details to follow

Many Thanks to All working hard to keep their plots looking so good and attending this unusual meeting on site!

CLOSE OF MEETING WITH THANKS TO ALL FOR THEIR INTEREST AND ATTENDANCE.

Leominster Allotment Association Annual General Meeting

Monday September 7th 2020, 7.00pm in the John Abel Room, Grange Court, Leominster.

Committee members present: Kay West, Samantha Shakespeare, John Braithwaite, Christine Conlon, Graham Millard

Others present: Jane Lacey, Sue Morris, Ray Wall, Vivienne Pearson

Apologies: Glenys Millard, Dawn Arkell, Ian Wilkins, Cathy Fewlass

Minutes: Samantha

Shakespeare

Minutes Approval

The minutes from the previous A.G.M. meeting, 1st May 2019, were approved as a true record of last year's meeting, with a slight correction to clarify that tree roots absorbed waste from the compost toilet. Then they were signed by the Chair, Kay West.

Opening matters

Kay welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked several people, including Chris Conlon for continuing to run the Allotment Association webpage as there were no volunteers' forthcoming to do this last year, Jane Lacey for her support and help in distributing the seed catalogues, aiding John Braithwaite.

Kay also thanked Ray for his continued assistance in maintenance, especially for his skills in repairing the community sheds.

Report from the Secretary, Samantha Shakespeare

A total of seven general meetings and one AGM have been held in the Leominster Allotment Association year, 1st May 2019 to the current date of September 7th 2020.

Due to Government restrictions, imposed because of Covid 19, there has obviously been an impact on the opportunity for and organisation of meetings. Consequently, the meeting in July 2020 took place outside in the Community Garden with everyone bringing their own chairs and observing social distancing. The restrictions also delayed the A.G.M.

The Minutes are currently put onto the Documents page of the website, enabling public access. The minutes will no longer be available in the folder in the Community shed, as in previous times. The shed has been out of bounds since March 2020, due to Covid 19 restrictions. Consequently, minutes from the meeting that took place in July were posted on the allotment notice board instead of being filed in the folder in the Community Shed. This made them available for all to read as they could be seen and did not need to be touched.

In future, the minutes will be displayed on the Allotment Notice board for those interested and on the Allotment website

We are hoping to replace the rather small noticeboard by the gate with a much larger Notice Board by the Community Shed. This will make it easier to display all relevant information, especially for those who do not have ready access to the internet.

I took over the role of Secretary in May 2019 and since then I have taken minutes for 7 meetings and this is my first AGM.

Report from the Chair, Kay West

Since May 2019, there have been numerous site visits with Mark Culbert, who took up his post with the Town Council in April 2019.

The purpose of the site visits is to check that all is running smoothly down at the allotments. Some plot holders have not been able to attend to their plots because of Covid 19 shielding and these have been strimmed to help prevent the weeds from spreading.

The Council is in the process of allocating vacant plots to interested people. Plot holders have really appreciated the fact that, throughout Covid restrictions, the allotments have remained open.

The variety of planting and organisation of plots is amazing and, overall, the site looks quite stunning.

Activities during the year – numerous planned activities were not able to take place because of Covid restrictions.

- May 2019 - Leominster Allotment Association had a stall at the Plant Fayre that was held in Corn Square. Photographs were displayed and plot holders donated plants that were sold to raise funds for the Association. Many people asked questions and expressed an interest in becoming a plot holder.
- August 2019-A BBQ / bring-and-share picnic was held down at the allotments, next to the Community shed. Some of us had prior commitments but were able to attend for part of this event and those who did enjoyed it, especially as it was such a warm and sunny day.
- October 2019 - a property marking event at the allotments was organised. Unfortunately, West Mercia Police were only available on a weekday, it was pouring with rain and so there was only myself and the two police officers. They did leave pens for security marking and these were placed in the Community Shed so that plot holders could have access to them.
- October 2019 - the annual Harvest Supper and Awards Evening took place at Grange Court. Unfortunately, this clashed with a fundraising event for the Priory. However, it was a successful evening with the usual delicious assortment of food, an entertaining quiz and a raffle to raise funds.
- February - Leominster Allotment Association had a stall at the "Seed Swap" event that was held at the Priory. This helped to publicise allotments and the Leominster Allotment Association.

- The Allotment Association was going to have involvement with the 2020 Leominster in Bloom event. Kay contacted Romy for advice re this but plans to meet up in March had to be cancelled, along with the formal judging of this event, because of Government Covid restrictions

Kay thanked all the committee members for their work during the past sixteen months. and wanted it recorded that she also wished to thank the members of the Town Council who support us and help to oversee the allotments Julie Debbage -Town Clerk, Mark Culbert - Environmental Services Officer and the Office Staff: Jackie Whittall and Lena Dahnsjo.

Other Matters

Bonfires- There was an issue at the start of lockdown, possibly due to the fact that more residents were at home, when Julie Debbage received a complaint from an asthma sufferer and resident of the Buckfield Estate because smoke from bonfires were drifting over their garden. Plot holders were advised to check the wind direction before lighting a bonfire in consideration of this. (See the relevant extracts of the Code of practice below) Also, because of the exceptionally dry conditions plot holders were advised by a notice and poster from Herefordshire Fire Service that lighting of bonfires was not permissible.

Code of Practice for Bonfires on Allotment Sites

- There are to be no bonfires on Bank or Public Holidays and the site restrictions on lighting times for bonfires must be obeyed
- Only dry material should be burnt and wherever possible composting and/or shredders should be used in preference to burning.
- “No bonfire shall cause a smoke nuisance to the surrounding residents” as stated in Section 79(1)(b) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

On the Leominster Allotment site bonfires should not be lit before 3p.m.

Compost toilet-In line with the Covid ruling regarding all public toilets in Leominster, the compost toilet is not to be used. Sue Morris advised that this was probably a useful action as this type of toilet should have a period of rest for it to function properly. She also advised that it may need some attention. There is an issue on how to ensure the use of the toilet can be safely reopened as Government guidelines state there needs to be “good hand hygiene by making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand driers) are available. • Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces. • Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible. This advice would not be easy to follow.

Compost Toilet/ disabled facilities- Due to the number of plot holders now using the site it was felt that a second toilet should be made available and that it should give access to disabled people. This is something that is being considered.

Town Council issues

- Julie Debbage, was appointed as Town Clerk in March 2019 and we were very pleased to welcome her back. She has always been supportive and proactive in ensuring that the allotment site is well managed and maintained.
- Mark Culbert was appointed as Environmental Services Supervisor in April 2018. Part of his work involves overseeing the maintenance of the allotment site.
- The area occupied by the dismantled compost bays was used by the Council for storing green waste until it was chipped. Unfortunately, it was also used to dump inappropriate and non-compostable material. This area will be tidied up during the winter/ spring period and have a change of use. The area will then be divided in to Individual allotment plots to also Include an accessible plot.
- The Pest Control operator continues to successfully use a 'targeted control' of vermin, avoiding harm to wildlife. It is believed that food spillage from bird feeders, attracts vermin, so advice is not to put feeders on plots.
- The matter of the surface water leaking into some plots has been investigated. The latest news regarding this is that a contractor used a mini digger to dig trenches to try and locate the cause of the problem, "during the recent site investigation works the drainage contractor found a collapsed plastic drainage pipe on the entrance to plot 51 this will be repaired shortly by the drainage contractor but Mark is still awaiting a final update from the contractor.
- There is now a standpipe near to the Community shed. Replacing the one that was in the car park.
- New Software- Council Staff have received training on the implementation of new software that will make it easier for them to collect payment for plots and Allotment Association membership and to be able to contact plot holders more efficiently, when necessary.
- Vacant plots - the current number of empty plots as of the 28th August is 6 (plots 61,62,68,69,85,86,). There are 16 people on the waiting list.
- It is envisaged that a central information signage board for the allotment site will be installed during the winter period, near to the Community Shed.
- The entrance gate information has now been refreshed.
- Julie is looking into the lease of the site as these expire in 2016 and 2029.

Report from Website Administrator - Christine Conlon

The number of people using the website has shown a yearly increase since it was started in 2016.

In 2019-2020 there were 798 users and 997 sessions.

Report from the Membership Secretary, Dawn Arkell

The membership list as at March 2020, shows a total of 54 members. Due to the disruption of the pandemic, and the postponement of the usual April renewal time, this list is now out of date. I have received no notifications of changes since March 2020. In the last year membership has been promoted at the following events – Leominster in bloom plant fair in June, Leominster Seed Swap at The Priory in Feb 2020. Both events helped publicise the Allotment Association and led to some new members joining. The summer BBQ and harvest supper were well attended and enjoyed by members. A key challenge has been in communicating with members and keeping them informed of allotment news. There were some inconsistencies in gathering contact information at the time of paying subscriptions last year, which meant not everyone could be included on the email lists.

The Face book page has been a useful method of communication, but again, not everyone chooses to use social media. Word of mouth is always an important way of sharing news but perhaps a more organised approach would ensure inclusion of all our members and is something worth considering in the future? In previous years the role of Membership Secretary has been combined with that of Treasurer. I think this makes for more accurate record keeping. For this reason, I shall be stepping down from the committee but look forward to staying involved in community events. I know many members, like myself, have found their plots a place of sanctuary, during this challenging time and our thanks goes to the Town Council for keeping the site accessible and safe.

Report from Facebook Administrator – Ian Wilkins

Membership of the Leominster allotment group currently stands at 52. We have regular people who comment and post, often asking questions that I cannot answer. It would be good to see more photos of harvested crops. It would be also beneficial to group members I feel if we encouraged allotment related chit chat in the group.

Report from the Seed order Co-ordinator, John Braithwaite and Jane Lacey

Seed catalogues will initially be available for collection by association members from Plant Fayre Stall **and** then from the Community Garden Greenhouse, following Covid Government guidelines they will each be wrapped individually.

Report from Treasurer for April 2019 to March 2020 -Glenys Millard

It has been a fairly quiet year financially. I took over the accounts at the last AGM and it was a little while before I received all of the paperwork and then even longer before we managed to get access to the bank account.

We had a Plant stall in Corn Square in May 2019 and this brought in £100.17. Most of this money was subsequently spent on the barbeque and the small residue put into petty cash. There was also some income from the Harvest Supper raffle after costs of £12.90, this was also put into the Petty Cash bringing the Petty Cash Account up to £43.24 which I then banked.

We bought a banner for the table at the Seed Swap in February which cost £36. We will be able to use this for other events in future to advertise our presence.

With very little current information about membership supplied from the Council it was difficult to put together a membership list. But having established that 70 people had paid their subs and only having 50 forms I then used an old membership list and corrected it where I could. It was on this basis that I paid the National Allotment Society and then adjusted that for the insurance in January.

As at the end of March the bank balance stood at £1,340.63 and there was a further £20 in Petty Cash making Total Assets of £1,360.63.

The bank balance is down by £89.81 on the year.

See detailed accounts at end of AGM minutes.

Election of Officers

This year, there was no expression of interest in joining the committee and taking on roles.

- **Kay West** – Remains Chair
- **Samantha Shakespeare** – Remains Secretary
- **Dawn Arkell** – Resigned as Membership Secretary.
- **Glenys Millard** – remains Treasurer, was proposed by Kay West as the new **Membership Secretary** and this was seconded by Jane Lacey
- **John Braithwaite** - remains as **Seed Order Co-ordinator**
- **Ian Wilkins** resigned as **Facebook Co-ordinator**. **Sam will monitor this** as she continues to be an administrator.
- **Elliana Meek** has left the area and is no longer on the committee
- **Graham Millard** remains on the committee.

Christine Conlon – remains as **Website Administrator** representing **Chris Preece**.

These appointments were proposed, seconded and passed unanimously by those attending the meeting.

Any other business

- **Plant Fair, September 19th 2020** – Samantha has already contacted Cynthia Partridge as the LAA will be taking part in this event Cost of pitch is £25. The association will sell plants, as well as publicising the allotments and the LAA.
- Harvest Supper will take place on Friday October 9th if Covid restrictions allow this event to go ahead.

Kay West then thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the meeting was closed.

Next Annual General Meeting:

May 5th 2021, 7pm, in the Town Council Offices, Corn Square, Leominster.
Please bring your copy of these minutes with you to the next A.G.M. meeting.

The Next LAA meeting is Weds Nov 11th at the Town Council Offices at 7pm

