Attendees:

Jacky Stennett (**JS**) Chair, Dave Stennett (**DS**) Treasurer, Dave Wignall (**DW**) Min Sec, Derrick Walls, Gail Blackburn & Sarah Mather.

**JS** opened the meeting at 1945hrs and welcomed all.

**Apologies**

John & Isabel Horn, Albert & Bernie O’Hara

**Minutes of previous meeting** 28/02/2015 were accepted without amendment by the meeting.

**Matters arising** from previous meeting

Produce Show – a joint event held with David’s Slack Allotments. A new venue has been found – The Visitor Centre within Stanley Park, at no cost, but it is a smaller venue. We are permitted to have a produce stall but will not be able to have a café. The intention is to have two marquees either side of the entrance to the visitor centre. One will be for booking in and the other for staging. Once the show is underway, these marquees can then be used for produce stalls.

Kings Seeds order – all received and distributed.

Fence and encroachment, plots 13 & 14 – Council officer Neil Makie has promised to check who is dealing with this in Legal Services as the neighbours have not responded to the Council’s letter on the subject. There must be no contact with them from the allotments.

New Trustee – Neil Cartmel. Many thanks to the two others that had also volunteered.

New co-signee for the bank account – Elizabeth Westhead.

On site machinery – DS & Derrick have looked at the equipment we have for hire and, following their assessment of condition, age, use and size, recommend that the two largest strimmer’s and two largest rotavators be ‘disposed’ of. The two large strimmer’s are now available to plot holders to purchase for £10 each. Contact a committee member if interested.

That would leave us with the following equipment…

2 multi-tools, 3 strimmer’s, 1 hedge trimmer, 2 medium rotavators, 1 Mantis & 1 shredder.

All types of equipment are used on a regular basis (growing season) for site maintenance.

All equipment is used but the Mantis is used most, but requires new blades and possibly a new carburettor/valves.

The recommendation is that another Mantis (2-stroke) is purchased – about £360.

JS proposed that the decision to purchase another Mantis be deferred to the next meeting when it is hoped more members would be in attendance.

JS thanked DS & Derrick for this report and distributed for the meetings attention, an email from Bernie and Albert which questioned the cost and upkeep of the equipment to the Association. Figures for hire charges from outside companies were provided to show the disparity.

After a fully involved discussion, it was agreed that whilst Bernie and Albert had raised many valid points, the membership ‘expected’ equipment to be available for hire at a very reasonable rate and to be in full working order and safe for use. The equipment was also needed for site maintenance and needed to be safe to use by any volunteer members.

The method of charging was also considered – by the day? By half day? By the hour? But it was felt that the current method of hire – by use – was considered to be ‘fair’, as long as members returned it when their task was complete, rather than just keeping hold of it…just in case… so that it was available for other’s use.

Following further discussion and thanks to Bernie and Albert for their email, it was unanimously agreed by the meeting that…

* The equipment is a shared resource and needed for site maintenance
* The cost of equipment hire is increased by 50pence per hire.
* Returning equipment in a dirty unusable condition will raise a fine to be imposed on the hirer.
* Equipment must be returned ASAP after use to ensure it is available for others.

The servicing of equipment (thanks to DS, John and Derrick) was required to ensure that the equipment is safe for use. The previous firm used to service the equipment were considered to be expensive and with hindsight, methods used inappropriate (jet washing equipment, including the engine). It was therefore agreed that the equipment needed to be safety checked, but another firm be found.

\*The membership was invited to let the committee know of suitable alternate firms that could be used for checking the equipment.

Solar power – an estimate has been received from Neil Cartmel for the installation of solar powered lighting and charging point for power tools. This is estimated to be no more than £1000. Progress on this item is dependent on the Bee Project gaining a lottery funding grant.

Coffee grounds have been distributed to each plot.

**Chairperson’s report**

Not a great deal to report this month. On 19th February I attended a meeting of Open Spaces at Stanley Park and a Friends of Kingscote Park meeting on 23rd February. Both meetings were a bit ‘doom & gloom’ as the impact of Blackpool Council cuts affected both groups, with a loss of 7 gardeners and 2 managers from the Parks Department. One of the managers is the Chair of the Friends of Kingscote Park group.

**Secretaries report.**

No report this month as Isabel is away.

**Site Report**

Following the changes on site resulted in plot 22 becoming vacant. The plot was offered to the next on the waiting list and has been taken on by Kerry and Paul from Blairway Avenue.

**Treasurers Report**

DS distributed his account summary report.

Most have now paid this year’s rents.

There is £528 in hand and £8479 in the bank. Although this looks good, there were still bills to be paid – e.g. water bills for the year to be paid and £870 in key deposits.

After next month, the accounts will change to show from January to December. This will give a better visibility of rents taken in and bills being paid, particularly the water bills.

DS confirmed to Derrick that the water had been turned off in the street at the end of last year. There had been a number of questions asked as when the water would be turned back on. DS replied that it would be when the danger of frost is over – same as every year, possibly the end of March. DS reminded all that all plots had been given a water butt a couple of years ago and could be using this collected water for washing tools etc. The use of collected water does reduce the water bills the Association have to pay. Similar to the argument of non-users of the equipment subsidising the users of the equipment, those using collected water from water butts, are subsidising the users of the mains water.

Derrick reminded the meeting that water was available from the bath on plot 35.

**AOB**

JS reminded all that baths are not permitted to be brought onto the site. Blackpool Council banned the bringing of baths onto allotments some years ago. Those already on site were OK to remain in use, but two baths have now ‘appeared’ in our reuse area. The origin of one is known of and the owner has given the assurance to remove it off site if it is not taken for reuse. The owner of the other one must remove it ASAP.

JS informed the meeting that an Association Committee meeting was held on 12 February. At that meeting a discussion and vote was taken to decide if the Association should become a charity. After a great deal of consideration and understanding the pro’s and cons for this action - there were a lot more cons. All votes cast were against becoming a charity.

Next meeting Sunday 29th March 2015 at the allotment tea rooms 13:30hrs

JS then closed the meeting thanking all for attending.

The meeting closed at 2050hrs.