Poverest Allotments Ltd. AGM Minutes

Date: Sunday 20th September 2026, Start time 11am

30 plot holders in attendance

Committee Attendees: Bob, Rob, Natalia, Rachel, and Ester.
Apologies: Arun and Graham

Overview

The Poverest Allotments Annual General Meeting addressed financial stability, membership management, and critical water consumption challenges.

Governance Reports

Chairman's Report

- **Rob** provided the chairman's report, highlighting the successful establishment of the **Biodiversity Group** led by **Joan**, which we are looking at getting a SINC protection, which means our site is of importance for nature conservation in Bromley Borough.
- The committee successfully met two primary objectives:
    - Stabilising finances through a rainy day fund.
    - Improving site tidiness by banning tyres and clearing scrap metal.

Membership and Secretary Reports

Bob presented the membership and secretary reports, noting a healthy waiting list of approximately 40 people.
Key updates:

- Previous minutes and accounts were approved.
- A discussion on plot limits concluded that existing members may continue to hold up to two full plots (or four half plots), while existing members are prioritised for expansion over new applicants.
- Plot maintenance walks have improved through a distributed team approach.
- Concerns were raised regarding theft of produce and equipment, with a request for community vigilance and evidence collection.

Financial Status

Current Position

Bob reported that, despite the lack of a formal treasurer, the site maintains a working surplus of approximately £1,000.

- Total income: **£7,427**
- Total costs: **£6,487**
- Reported surplus: **approximately £939**

Budgetary Details

Significant expenditures included:

- Fly-tipping clearance plot 101: **£250**
- Water: **£3,209 to date**
- Septic Tank**: £396**
- Electricity: **£280**
- Council rent: **£227**
- Bank Charges**: £102**
- HMRC submission: **£200 – to be confirmed**
- Comprehensive insurance: **£852**

To offset increase in insurance costs, **Arun** transitioned the site from **Microsoft** to free **Google** services.

Rent Adjustment

Due to rising costs, particularly water, members unanimously voted to increase the annual rent from **£39 to £44 per plot for 2027**.

Water Management

Water consumption has become the primary financial concern.

- Previous year's usage: **674,000 litres**
- Current year's usage: **852,000 litres**
- Previous year's cost: **£2,100**
- Current year's cost: **£3,209**

Conservation Strategies

The committee is exploring ways to help educate members on mulching, drip irrigation and water harvesting.
Discussion points included:

- Organising workshops and events through the **Biodiversity Group**.
- The possibility of implementing a levy for members who have structures capable of collecting rainwater but fail to do so.
- Addressing the discrepancy between highly engaged members and those who do not participate in community efforts.

Question for the committee: How can participation in water conservation education be effectively encouraged or mandated for the 80% of members who currently do not engage?

Action Items

- Send an email to all plot holders explaining the produce and equipment theft issue and asking them to remain vigilant.
- Post a notice in the Facebook group explaining the produce and equipment theft issue.
- Organise a water-conservation educational event with the Biodiversity Group covering rainwater collection, drip irrigation, and effective water use.

Detailed Minutes

Minutes and Chairman's Report

- The meeting opened with apologies from Graham and Arun.
- The minutes from the previous annual general meeting were reviewed and approved by the attendees.
- Chairman Rob reported on the committee transition following the departure of Dennis, John O'Connell, and Bill Watley.
- Rob highlighted two main objectives:
    - Stabilising finances via a rainy day fund.
    - Improving site tidiness.
- Significant recent expenses included clearing fly-tipping at plot 101 and removing asbestos left by a former plot holder.

Biodiversity and Council Recognition

- The establishment of the Biodiversity Group was noted as a major success for Poverest Allotments.
- The site has been recognised as having biodiversity potential equivalent to a site of importance for nature conservation in Bromley Borough.(SINC)
- Councillor Josh Coldspring-White visited the site and expressed his praise for the allotments on social media.

Membership and Maintenance Updates

- Membership Secretary Bob reported that all plots are currently paid for through the end of the year.
- A healthy waiting list exists, with at least 40 people requesting plots.
- A proposal to limit existing members to two half plots instead of four was discussed but ultimately postponed for future review.
- Plot maintenance walks have improved due to splitting responsibilities among several committee members.

Security Concerns Regarding Theft

- Bob reported instances of produce theft occurring on various plots, including Middle Road and Julie Grove’s plot a couple of years ago.
- A wildlife camera has been installed on one plot to help monitor activity.
- Members were advised not to lock sheds heavily, as this may cause more damage during break-ins, but rather to keep valuables out of sight.

- Bob asked everyone to be vigilant and hoped that if the whole community is aware/on guard it will stop. However, if anyone is found/proved to be stealing their tenancy will be terminated immediately.

Financial Overview and Rent Increase

- Total income this year was **£7,427**, while total costs amounted to **£6,487**, leaving a surplus of approximately **£939**.
- Bob detailed various costs:
    - Insurance: **£852**
    - Water: **£3,209 to date**
    - Fly-tipping plot 101: **£250**
    - Septic tank: £396
    - Electricity: **£280**
    - Bank charges: **£102**
    - HMRC Submission: **£200 to be confirmed**
    - Council rent: **£227**
- To account for rising costs, particularly increased water usage, it was unanimously agreed to increase next year's rent from **£39 to £44 per plot**. This is £1 higher than the committee's initial proposal of £43.

Water Consumption and Conservation Efforts

- Water consumption rose significantly this year to **852,000 litres**, compared with **674,000 litres** last year.
- High water costs reached **£3,209** so far this year due to increased volume and higher unit prices.
- The committee discussed educating members through workshops on mulching, drip irrigation and water collection methods such as rain butts.
- There is ongoing discussion regarding potential levies for those who do not utilise water collection structures when they have them available.

Site Maintenance and Infrastructure

Road Damage

- Road damage won't be repaired this year but one for next year, the bollard is helping mitigate the damage caused in wet conditions.
- Soft ground is causing damage from heavy vehicles; an awareness campaign is planned.
- Planar Chippings have noticeably improved the bottom road.

Water Tank Lids

- Perspex/PVC replacements have been trialled successfully.
- Plot holder Marius was thanked as he installed several lids on the middle road for free, using recycled electrical backing material.
- One Perspex lid was personally purchased for approximately **£100** as another test and is lasting well so far.
- Several lids on the lower road need replacing and some tanks are still leaking – work will go ahead once our water is turned off on 1st October.

Mower

- Mower repair remains outstanding and needs to be resolved – Plot holder Dennis has volunteered to help.

Water Conservation Projects

Thames Water Grant

- A Thames Water grant application has been submitted for up to **£5,000**.
- Natalia and Ester led the submission – Bob thanked them for all their work.
- Proposal: approximately **20 IBC tanks (1,000 litres each)** installed around the site with roof collection systems.

Borehole Feasibility

- Borehole feasibility is under investigation.
- Estimated cost: approximately **£40,000**; National Lottery funding is being pursued.
- Council and Environment Agency approval would be required before any digging.
- Lower Road allotment comparison:
    - They use a natural spring from the River Cray.
    - The spring dried up this year, forcing main water use throughout the season.
- The Environment Agency will control abstraction limits; figures have been calculated and considered safe.

- Again Natalia and Esther were thanked for their extensive work on this so far and the Committee will keep plot holders informed of what decision the Lottery comes to. If approved, then a further meeting will be held with plot holders to go through the proposal in detail and provide opportunity to vote on it as there are pros and cons.

Water Butts

- Water butts are encouraged for all plot holders.
- Target: everyone to have one by the end of the year, although this is not yet enforced.
- Cost ranges from approximately **£20** for a converted dustbin to **£70+**.
- The committee is helping members install them.

Further Water Conservation Work

- A dedicated water event is planned covering the pros and cons of boreholes, mulching, drip systems, and other conservation techniques.
- A water task force is needed to help build IBC tank infrastructure if the grant is awarded.
- The site is currently on a payment plan with the water supplier to ease cash flow.
- Annual average usage: approximately **500,000 litres**.
- This year usage spiked to approximately **852,000 litres** (Everflow billing for 1.4M).

Toilets

Current Proposals

- Renovation quote from Horton Builders: **£34,000** (deemed unrealistic).
- Prefabricated single-toilet unit: approximately **£30,000+**.
- Another supplier, Sandy Lane, offers a prefab unit at approximately **£5,000**.

Immediate and Longer-Term Work

- Immediate fix: replace rotting floor joists using donated wood, with Brian assisting.
- Accessibility requirements to factor in:
    - Level access.
    - Handrails.
    - Dementia-friendly contrast.
- Concrete base condition is unknown until the existing structure is removed.
- Longer-term: seek more realistic quotes from builder contacts on site.

Manure, Trees, and Biodiversity

Manure Supply

- The previous arrangement of 80 tonnes via Bill's son-in-law is no longer reliable.
- Stables are now treating manure as an income source rather than waste.
- Our usual ddelivery driver is back in action, but deliveries will be small and infrequent.
- Options are to pay for a regular supply or stop altogether; the committee will explore a formal arrangement with Bill.
- Wood chip supply is strong and free from local tree surgeons who avoid disposal costs.

Tree Management

- A 5–10 year plan is being developed for communal and plot trees.
- Fruit trees must be kept at a “reasonable height” under the tenancy agreement (clause 1.4).
- Plot maintenance walks in December will note tree heights; the committee will ask for plans but not enforce immediately.
- A tree-care talk from an Ashford company is still planned, delayed by drought.
- For the oak tree overhanging Helen's plot, a crown lift is being explored; no TPO has been confirmed on site oaks.
- Boundary trees should be pollarded every 2–5 years; the council has no capacity to act unless there is a safety risk.

Biodiversity

- Laurel hedging is to be removed and replaced with native hedgerow.
- A Woodland Trust application for native whips was submitted and Council approval will be sought.
- An air pollution monitoring station is in place on the middle road.
- Goal: achieve SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) status.

Communications and AGM

Current Communication Channels

- Monthly newsletter: **113 sent; approximately 50 opened**.
- Facebook group.

- Noticeboard.

WhatsApp Community

- WhatsApp Community has been set up by Natalia and is ready to launch.
- Proposed structure:
  - **Announcements:** admin-only, one-way.
  - **Chit Chat**
  - **Q&A**
  - **Kitchen**
  - **Academy**
- A poll/voting feature is available for informal decisions.
- Phone numbers are visible to all members; formal votes should not be conducted via WhatsApp.
- Participation is opt-in only; existing channels remain active.

- Separate email to be sent out giving plotholders the opportunity to join up or not.

- Other sites use it very effectively

AGM and Committee

- AGM timing: **September confirmed**.
- End-of-year accounts will be discussed at the **December meeting**.
- Arun is stepping down at year end; thanks were noted for fuel management and Microsoft cost savings.
- No new committee nominations were received; an open invitation to join remains in place.

Next Steps

Action	Details
Recruit water task force volunteers	Help build IBC tank infrastructure if the Thames Water grant is awarded; sign-up to be coordinated after the meeting.
Organise dedicated water event	Cover borehole pros/cons, mulching, drip systems, and conservation techniques; open to all plot holders.
Explore formal manure delivery arrangement with Bill	Establish cost and logistics for regular supply so members can decide whether to fund it collectively.
Replace toilet floor joists this season	Use donated wood; Brian to assist as a stopgap before a full rebuild is costed.
Launch WhatsApp Community and send opt-in email	Announce alongside the existing newsletter and Facebook channels; joining is voluntary.
Begin plot maintenance walks in December	Log tree heights, note oversized fruit trees, and follow up with plot holders on their management plans.