

YORK ALLOTMENTS CIO

England & Wales · Charity number 1174306

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2017-08-17

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

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Activities

Objects: THE OBJECTS OF THE CIO ARE TO PROVIDE OR ASSIST IN THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR ALLOTMENTS IN THE CITY OF YORK AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, IN THE INTERESTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR RECREATION OR OTHER LEISURE TIME OCCUPATION FOR THE PUBLIC AT LARGE WITH THE OBJECT OF IMPROVING THEIR CONDITIONS OF LIFE.

Activities: To provide or assist in the provision of facilities for allotments in the City of York and surrounding area in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time or occupation for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** IN THE CITY OF YORK AND THE SURROUNDING AREA
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-12-31	£88,908	£85,437	-	-
2024-12-31	£89,665	£100,027	-	-
2023-12-31	£77,204	£78,973	-	-
2022-12-31	£74,122	£68,831	-	-
2021-12-31	£73,945	£66,678	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Anthony Chalcraft	Chair	2017-08-16
ADAM MYERS		2017-08-16
Christine Robertson		2026-01-07
Colin Smith		2017-08-16
Helen Butt		2022-03-26
LISA TURNER		2017-08-16
SIMON WILD		2017-08-16

YORK ALLOTMENTS CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1174306

Accounts

York Allotments CIO

Charity Number 1174306

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2025

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Charity accounts preparation &
independent examination service

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Trustees' Annual Report

To: 31st December 2025

Charities Full Name: York Allotments CIO

Registered Charity Number: 1174306

Introduction

2025 was the eighth full year of YACIO's management of the allotments. Our initial seven-year lease granted by the City Council in November 2017 expired in November 2024. During 2025 we continued to manage the allotments in the expectation that a new lease would be provided.

In many ways 2025 was one of the most challenging years YACIO faced since its establishment. As well as delays with progressing a new lease there was an unprecedented level of theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour affecting many sites. We also experienced problems with our IT system which caused administrative issues and impacted our ability to improve procedures and our website. As in previous years much trustee time was absorbed in dealing with operational matters. 2025 was also a challenging growing year for many tenants due mainly to the warm and very dry spring and summer. This is reflected in the significantly increased water bill for the year.

On the plus side YACIO's financial position remained satisfactory, our two part-time administrators employed in autumn 2024 grew into their roles and we progressed negotiations to manage an additional allotment site.

In most other respects the aims of trustees were largely unchanged on previous years: improving and streamlining administration to make it more cost-effective and responsive to tenant needs; upgrading allotment sites through a programme of gradual reduction in the number of unused plots and better maintenance of poor condition hedgerows and trees; monitoring and reviewing policies and procedures to ensure YACIO operated in an equitable and transparent way in accordance with its charitable objectives.

Governance

For most of the year there were eight trustees, one less than the nine maximum prescribed by the Constitution. In September trustee Heather Whittaker requested a three-month leave of absence. At the conclusion of this Heather chose not to continue as a trustee. Maria Lewington-Gower, who had been a trustee for four years, stepped down from the end of the year due to family commitments. In the summer Christine Robinson, who had earlier expressed an interest in becoming a trustee and attended meetings as an observer, was co-opted. Christine is standing for formal election as a trustee at the Annual General Meeting.

Trustees' Annual Report

Governance

During the year there were no changes to the offices held by trustees. Tony Chalcraft continued as Chair, Helen Butt as Secretary and Lisa Turner as Treasurer. The only changes made to the specific responsibilities of trustees resulted from Heather Whittaker's leave of absence and subsequent resignation and Maria Lewington-Gower's limited availability to deal with complaints. At the end of the year Heather's Risk Assessment responsibilities were covered by all trustees as necessary and a rota system put in place to deal with complaints. Otherwise trustee specific responsibilities continued as in the previous year:

- Administrative Support Supervision: Lisa Turner
- Association Liaison: Adam Myers
- Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower (supported by all trustees, rota system from year end)
- Documentation: Simon Wild
- Newsletter, IT System Development and Website: Helen Butt
- Risk Assessments: Heather Whittaker (until September)
- Site Maintenance: Colin Smith
- Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft
- Tree Issues: Adam Myers

At the end of the year there were six elected trustees, five of whom have been in post, largely with the same offices and responsibilities, since the inception of YACIO. We are very aware that to ensure the longer-term development and sustainability of YACIO priority needs to be given to the recruitment of additional trustees.

The seventh AGM, and only the fourth to take place in person due to Covid, was held on 22nd March 2025. About 30 members were in attendance. In accordance with the Constitution limiting trustee tenure to three years Colin Smith and Lisa Turner stepped down as trustees but were re-elected for further terms. The formal AGM was followed by an open forum during which issues and questions were raised by members. A wide number of matters were raised, particularly in respect of theft and anti-social behaviour.

As in previous years we received a small number of formal complaints from tenants. Some were submitted following non-cultivation notices. These were either dealt with by trustee Maria Lewington-Gower or other trustees as available. All complaints were resolved according to YACIO's procedures.

Trustees' Annual Report

Administration

Our day-to-day administration is largely carried out by our two part-time employed administrators Janet Devlin and Nick Smith. Janet and Nick were appointed in September 2024 and took over full responsibility from our previous part-time self-employed administrator in October of that year. Administration is overseen by trustee Lisa Turner.

Having two administrators rather than one has improved the flexibility and consistency of service provision, for example reducing the risk of gaps during holiday or sickness leave. As Janet and Nick have gained experience there has been an overall improvement in the speed with which routine matters are dealt with and queries responded to. Trustees are grateful to Janet and Nick for their work and hope that in time, their roles can be developed further.

At the start of the year, trustees encountered further difficulties with the performance of our allotment management system, Colony, provided by Kogitas (MCPC) Ltd. It became apparent that not all rental invoices had been successfully received by tenants, and that some payments made via PayPal had not been automatically reconciled within the system. Investigating and resolving these discrepancies required significant administrative time and caused inconvenience to a number of tenants. These issues reinforced the need for trustees to review the reliability and integration of our current IT arrangements.

In spring, Kogitas made available a trial version of Orkastrate, the proposed replacement for the current Colony allotment management system. Following initial review, Helen Butt, who leads on IT, advised trustees that Orkastrate had the potential to improve functionality and modernise elements of our administration processes.

Before committing to migration, trustees agreed that the system needed to be thoroughly tested to ensure it met YACIO's operational requirements and integrated effectively with our website and proposed new online payment gateway (Stripe). A series of structured training and demonstration sessions were arranged with Kogitas for the trustee working group and administrators. These sessions were intended to review system functionality in detail, confirm that Orkastrate replicated the capabilities of Colony, and demonstrate how online applications and plot payments would operate in practice. While a small number of sessions took place, the majority were cancelled or postponed at short notice, and a demonstration of the Stripe integration was not delivered within the agreed timeframe.

Trustees had set a clear cut-off date to allow sufficient time for testing ahead of the January 2026 invoicing cycle. As this deadline was not met, trustees took the decision to defer migration until after invoicing had been completed.

Given the challenges experienced with both Colony and the delayed demonstration of Orkastrate's full capabilities, Helen also began reviewing alternative allotment management systems to ensure trustees had a comprehensive understanding of available options. Discussions have taken place with Scribe and dialogue continues with both Scribe and Kogitas. Trustees intend to reach a decision and implement a new system during 2026, subject to confirmation that it meets YACIO's operational and integration requirements.

Trustees' Annual Report

Helen continued to manage YACIO's website throughout the year, ensuring it remained up to date and fully operational. In parallel, a completely redesigned website has been developed in a test environment. The new site is currently under review by trustees and site secretaries. Its launch is dependent on final decisions regarding the allotment management system, as the functionality for plot applications and online payments will need to integrate directly with whichever platform is adopted. Once that decision is confirmed, the new website will be ready for launch.

Trustees introduced several initiatives to administration and operations during the year. These included setting up an Action Log to record issues that needed to be progressed after decisions taken by trustees at meetings and revised procedures for trustee meetings including time limiting agenda items. Another development, resulting from the increase in incidents of theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, was the establishment of an Incident Report Log. This was introduced to ensure all incidents are recorded, to help establish patterns and to assist in reporting to the police and other relevant authorities.

Health and Safety inspections were carried out in the first half of the year by trustee Heather Whittaker.

Site Secretaries are YACIO's voluntary representatives on each site. Trustees are grateful for their work, support and input. As in previous years trustees held three in person meetings with site secretaries. These were invaluable for obtaining feedback and considering and finalising new policies and procedures.

There were a few site secretary changes during the year. Two long-serving site secretaries, Phil Renshaw at Bootham and Mary Harlington at Green Lane, stepped down during the year. Rob Rafton took on the joint Site Secretary role at Bootham and, shortly after the end of the year, Mario Manganoro assumed responsibilities at Green Lane. Trustees are especially grateful to Phil and Mary for their longstanding commitment and support. As in previous years, all new site secretaries are recruited following advertisement to all tenants on site and discussion with a panel of trustees. Other changes included Sarah Penn taking a backseat for a time at Hospital Fields with trustees providing temporary cover, Amanda Kent stepping down after a few years in post as one of the three site secretaries at Low Moor and, at the end of the year, Gary Flakes stepping down at New Lane.

Trustees' Annual Report

Finance

Full financial information is available separately to this report. Overall, the current financial position remains favourable. Total funds carried forward at £78,260 were higher than in 2024 (£75,149). Total income at £88,908 was slightly lower than in 2024 (£89,665). Expenditure at £85,437 was significantly lower than in 2024 (£100,027). This resulted in a surplus of income over expenditure of £3,471 in contrast to a deficit of £10,362 in 2024. In 2024 trustees had planned for a deficit budget, spending accumulated funds on site upgrades. In contrast, for 2025 we set a budget with the aim of balancing expenditure with income. The year end surplus of £3,471 was therefore not anticipated.

2025 rental income at £86,313 was almost the same as in 2024 (£86,867). YACIO remains dependent on plot rents to fund its activities. Following the small rent rise implemented in 2024 and the changes to concession eligibility introduced at the same time, income can only be grown through further rent increases or the development of other income streams, for example grants, awards, donations or other external funding. The granting of a new and much longer-term lease should give potential funders the surety required and allow trustees to pursue external funding for improvement and development works in the years ahead.

The decrease in expenditure during 2025 resulted from several factors. Late in 2024 our part-time self-employed administrator left. We took the decision to replace her with two part-time directly employed administrators and introduce organisational changes. This was expected to be cost neutral or make a small saving but has reduced administration officer costs by nearly £5,000. The other significant reductions in expenditure were on upgrade of sites and repair and maintenance. The former reduction was partly a result of the planned high expenditure on improvements carried out in 2024. It should also be noted that changes in the way site upgrades and repairs and maintenance were carried out make year-on-year comparison complex. For example, some of the work previously carried out under these budget headings, particularly in relation to contracted tree work, has been assigned to the grass and hedge cutting budget.

There were two areas of significantly increased expenditure during the year, grass and hedge cutting and water. As outlined above, higher costs for the former partly resulted from changes to the way work was contracted. However, our main contractor (for grass and hedge cutting) did increase their costs and along with administration these are our two major areas of expenditure. The exceptionally dry conditions in spring and summer more than doubled our water charges to £7,596.

When considering the accounts it must be borne in mind that 42% of the £78,260 carried forward were 'restricted' funds comprising refundable deposits paid by tenants on the uptake of a new tenancy. Whereas some deposits are not refunded due to forfeiture on termination of tenancy because the surrendered plot is in an unlettable condition, trustees cannot prudently transfer significant funds from the restricted to unrestricted category. Therefore, although we can allocate a small proportion of restricted deposit funds to unrestricted funds each year, a significant proportion of the total funds held cannot be allocated to support site improvements or offset future operating deficits.

Trustees' Annual Report

Policies and Procedures

Relatively few policy or procedural changes were introduced during the year. Trustee Simon Wild undertook a review of documentation, especially the Site Secretary Handbook and Tenant's Handbook to ensure these were aligned with procedures. The former handbook was fully updated. Trustee Lisa Turner began a review of organisational policies in accordance with Charity Commission requirements. A few policies relating to tenants were also updated. For example, changes were made to clarify and widen the requirements needed to obtain permission to erect structures on plots.

Lease

YACIO's seven-year lease on the allotments from the City Council expired in November 2024. Through late 2023 and 2024 trustees had pressed the Council to take forward granting a new, longer-term, lease. Positive discussions had taken place early in 2024 with council officers indicating a new lease would be finalised by the autumn. However, at lease expiry in November no new lease had been offered.

Trustees pursued the matter further in early 2025. It became apparent, as the lease document for the initial seven-year lease wasn't drawn up by the council and signed until April 2020, that some council officers were under the misapprehension the lease did not expire until 2027. This despite trustees securing written agreement from the council's legal team that the lease term commenced from November 2017. To resolve this situation trustees sought support from the relevant council Executive Member, Councillor Kent. This eventually led to a council officer attending the June trustee meeting to take matters forward. Following this most remaining issues with lease, mainly relating to boundaries and areas of responsibility, were finalised. It was indicated the new lease would be for 35 years and that it was expected to be approved by the council's executive group in the autumn.

Unfortunately, there was again a further pause in communication and progress from the Council. Despite attempts by trustees to establish the situation it was not until November that we were informed a new lease would be progressed through council committees in early 2026. At the time of writing this process is underway and it is anticipated a new 35-year lease will have been signed off by the council's Executive Group in early March. It is hoped that confirmation of this will be available before the 2026 AGM at the end of March.

The lack of certainty regarding the lease, especially after the expiry of the initial term in late 2024, has been a significant concern for trustees throughout the year. Time and energy have been expended following up on progress. It is hoped, assuming a new longer-term lease is finalised, that YACIO will have a more secure future foundation and be able to begin planning for the longer term.

Trustees' Annual Report

Performance

At year end there were 1,545 lettable plots (1,551 2024). Of these 78 were vacant (about to be let to new tenants) (96 2024) and 130 were under notice (124 2024). 5.8% of plots were let to tenants qualifying for a 50% rental concession. 28.1% of plots are let as full size (a very small number are let as extra large), 56.4% half size and 15.5% quarter size. There are 14 plots in two apiaries (Bootham Stray and Carr) and 13 'starter' plots.

During the year 196 tenancies ended (246 2024). 134 (136 2024) were ended voluntarily by the tenant or for other miscellaneous reasons. 29 of the tenancies ended voluntarily followed issue of warning notices by YACIO. 24 tenancies were terminated by YACIO (38 2024), 15 for noncultivation (26 2024) and 9 for non-payment of rent (12 2024). 9 tenancies ended due to the death of the tenant (5 2024).

208 plots were relet during the year (258 2024). This gives a 'turnover' rate (number of plots relet as a percentage of total plots) of 13.5%. At year end there were 3,208 waiting list applications (3,102 2024) from 1,694 applicants (each applicant can apply for a plot at up to three sites) (1,641 2024). The waiting list measured by the number of applications therefore grew slightly (3.3%) during the year. 854 (26.6%) of the 3,208 applications on the list at the end of 2025 were made during the calendar year (937 (30.2%) 2024). Therefore, although the total waiting list grew, the rate of growth slowed by nearly 9%.

In considering the waiting list it should also be noted that site secretaries continue to report many applicants do not respond to invitations to view plots on reaching the top of the list. This, in part, may be due to the length of the lists with many of those waiting having changed circumstances before a plot is offered. It is therefore highly likely that the waiting list overestimates the number of people actively wanting a plot.

However, with a 3.3% increase in the number of applications, compared to a 5.8% fall in 2024, demand for allotments remains high as in all the years of YACIO management. Although many applicants may not take up a plot when one becomes available and there is perhaps some weakening of demand, there is no sign that there'll be a return to the situation 25 or more years ago where some sites had no waiting lists and empty plots.

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Site Issues, Improvements and Developments

Theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour are constant concerns but until the last two years incidents have been relatively limited. In 2024, starting in the spring, there was a significant increase in incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour mainly affecting sites on the west side of the city. Although activity abated later in the year these were the most sustained and serious occurrences experienced since YACIO took on administration of the allotments in 2017. It led to trustees and site secretaries liaising with the police and Holgate councillors and improvements being made to site boundaries and gates.

Unfortunately, during 2025 incidents escalated to unprecedented levels. Early in the year an apparently organised theft occurred at the Bootham site. The site gates were forced at night and many sheds broken into with tools, especially powered equipment, stolen. Weeks later fires were reported at Hempland Lane. Further into spring two sheds were burnt to the ground at Scarcroft. This was the first of a series of arson attacks, shed break ins and vandalism affecting Scarcroft, Hospital Fields and Hob Moor. At least six sheds have been completely destroyed with attacks occurring in spates through the year. Incidents appeared linked and may have been largely carried out by the same group of youths. Trustees and site secretaries have liaised with the police and local councillors and were present at a meeting of local residents to discuss the issues in October. We also began maintaining an incident log recording all occurrences with a view to better reporting and coordination.

Incidents also occurred elsewhere especially through late summer and autumn. Sites affected included Low Moor, Fulford Cross, New Lane, Carr, Green Lane and Hempland Lane. Most often sheds were broken into with some vandalism. Overall, there was limited theft.

Trustees and site secretaries are very aware of the impact these incidents have had on tenants, especially at the most seriously affected sites. Understandably, there are concerns about the potential for further damage and attacks as well as personal security. Responses from the police have been mixed. Officers attended some of the incidents, either after an emergency call or as a follow up, but on other occasions there has been a limited response. There appear to be difficulties with the police linking incidents. There has also been some confusion as to whether reports must be made directly by tenants, as has been generally advised, or by site secretaries/YACIO. At the end of the year a more proactive approach from the police developed which is now being taken forward by trustees.

On a more positive note, we continued to undertake maintenance and improvements to sites. Our main contractor, Aspects Horticultural Services, carried out seven grass cuts, trimmed site perimeter hedges and assisted with occasional clearance works. Gardener/handyman Dave Ruddock and team provided repair and maintenance and plot clearance services. Tree works were largely undertaken by James Bedford. As in previous years clearance of very overgrown plots, or those with neglected and dangerous structures, took place. Some of this work was carried out by site volunteers but where this was not feasible considerable costs were incurred. The cost to bring one very neglected plot into lettable condition was £1,500. Clearing neglected plots remains a concern to trustees.

Additional support and help were provided by the Council. This included donation of palisade fencing to reinforce boundaries at Green Lane and provision of an asbestos collection service.

Serious flooding at Howe Hill caused by blocked drains was resolved through professional help assisted by site secretary Dean Fawcett and trustee Colin Smith. Trustee Adam Myers continued to lead on tree issues and prepared a paper on long term management plans. Trustees have also established a separate budget for tree maintenance work. The large number of trees on some sites remains a

Trustees' Annual Report

significant concern. While we recognise their value to site character and biodiversity, trees can inhibit cultivation of plots through shade and roots as well as presenting a potential hazard if damaged or decayed. A particular concern is how to manage and reduce the number of saplings, especially on plot or site boundaries.

In view of the long waiting list trustees continue to explore possible new allotment provision. We continue to pursue the development of a new site, potentially for a small number of full-sized plots, on land owned by the city council. As the site is probably only partially usable as allotments YACIO is collaborating with Edible York and interested individuals with the aim of forming an umbrella body to fund and separately manage the land. Planning advice has now been received but negotiations have yet to be carried forward regarding length of lease. Additionally, there have been very tentative discussions with council planners regarding possible allotment provision on the British Sugar development site.

Late in 2024 YACIO was approached by Fulford Parish Council regarding the management of their site of 29 full plots. Following discussion involving several trustees YACIO has agreed to take on full administration and management of the site on a five-year lease from April 2026. Fulford residents will continue to have priority for a plot, but the waiting list will also be open to anyone in the city council area. Rents for Fulford and non-Fulford residents will be equalised over a three-year period. There are currently a high proportion of underused plots but few other issues in terms of site maintenance. Fulford Parish Council have agreed to financially support initial improvements. Trustees are confident that assuming responsibilities for this site will not have a significant short term cost impact on YACIO and, once rents are equalised, that the site will provide a positive contribution financially.

Future Issues and Plans

The most important immediate concern for trustees remains securing a new lease from the City Council. As outlined under Lease above, it is now anticipated a new lease with a 35-year term will be confirmed in spring 2026. Trustees are aware that this will bring new opportunities and responsibilities. The seven year lease under which we have operated since 2017 did not allow for long term planning. Most significantly, it constrained fund raising from external bodies. As a charity independent of the public sector YACIO is well placed to apply for grants and awards. Indeed, as already outlined, if rent increases are to be restricted obtaining outside financial support is the only means by which significant improvement and development of sites can be achieved.

Once a new lease is in place, pursuing fundraising opportunities will be a high priority. This may require specialist advice and/or the recruitment of an additional trustee with relevant experience. To effectively improve and develop sites a more proactive, planned, approach will also be required. This will entail the development of a strategic plan for sites and allotment provision. While further consideration needs to be given on how any plan should be taken forward, consultation with and input from plot holders, site secretaries, allotment associations and other stakeholders will be essential.

Trustees' Annual Report

Trustees remain committed to minimising rent increases. At present no rent rises are planned. However, should inflation increase, or we face large scale and unexpected repairs, costs may be financially unsustainable. With YACIO's income currently dependent on tenant rents we also need to keep in mind the impact of any longer-term fall in demand for allotments. Although a large fall does not appear to be an immediate concern, demand for allotments has been cyclical in the past. For the present however, the pressing issue is the length of the waiting list. While in practice not all listed applicants want a plot when one becomes available, the length of the lists means waits to reach the top are long. Wait times vary by site but are usually more than two years and for some popular sites, generally those nearer the city centre, four or more years. Ultimately, although YACIO has attempted to meet demand by generally restricting new lets to half plots, waiting lists can only be reduced by the provision of new allotment sites. Apart from the potential new site being explored, and Fulford Parish allotments coming under our management, opportunities are limited by the lack of suitable land.

In looking to the longer term YACIO must consider a wide range of other factors. One of these is the impact of a changing climate. As well as potentially increasing costs, for example higher water bills, drainage of sites flooded by excessive rain, tree surgery due to gale damage, etc., there is the possibility that what can be grown and how it is grown on allotments will change. This may necessitate reconsideration of how allotments are used and managed by tenants. Other factors could include social changes. For example, the demographic makeup of allotment holders has changed, and continues to do so. Newer tenants may have different expectations and priorities to those longer established. There is also a political dimension. YACIO's existence essentially arose from the financial pressures experienced by local authorities that led City of York Council to seek alternative methods of allotment management. It is possible that future governments, national or local, will introduce policies that further impact on allotment provision. As an organisation entrusted with management of the allotments for a 35-year period YACIO must be alive to such developments and plan accordingly in the best interest of tenants.

In thinking longer term, trustees are aware that we must not lose sight of the need to improve and develop services. Although progress has been made since 2017 in improving administration and tackling the backlog of poor record keeping and neglected site maintenance inherited from the Council there is still much to be done.

Shorter term priorities for 2026 and the next few years include:

- keeping under review the efficiency and resilience of administrative and other routine operational activities and introducing changes and enhancements as resources permit
- upgrading the IT system, either through the replacement software Orkastrate offered by the current contractor Kogitas (MCPS) Ltd or migrating to a new system with the required functionality
- making more use of the website to communicate with members and the wider public
- integrating the newly managed site at Fulford into YACIO's administrative and procedural systems
- making fuller use of available space at sites other than that required for access or conservation purposes
- exploring opportunities to develop new allotments sites
- developing site specific tree and hedge management plans

Trustees' Annual Report

- recruiting additional, appropriately experienced, trustees
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing
- managing sites in ways that promote biodiversity
- developing closer relationships with site associations to support their endeavours and assist in the formation of associations covering sites where none currently exist
- providing increased advice and support, through training sessions and the website, for tenants, especially those taking on a plot for the first time, on effective use of their allotment
- supporting community groups and other innovative growing activities on allotment sites
- collaborating with other allotment providers to increase access to allotments across the City of York Council area

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of York Allotments CIO

I report on the accounts of: **York Allotments CIO**

For the year ended: **31st December 2025** Which are set out on pages 13 to 15

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act;
- or**
2. the accounts do not accord with those records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Karen Wood (ACMA)
Outsource independent examination service
2 Gallygap Lane
Osbalwick
York YO10 3NR

05/03/2026

Date

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Receipts & Payments Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	86,313	-	86,313	86,867
Donations	-	-	-	913
Fundraising & events	-	-	-	60
Key deposits	-	220	220	55
Bank interest	2,375			1,770
Total receipts	88,688	220	88,908	89,665
Payments	£	£	£	£
Administration officer	19,083	-	19,083	23,698
Insurance	1,083	-	1,083	1,070
Grass & hedge cutting	34,095	-	34,095	20,440
Deposits returned	-	1,505	1,505	1,480
Honorariums	680	-	680	765
Licences	2,064	-	2,064	2,053
Independent examination fee	350	-	350	350
Admin support & office costs	4,371	-	4,371	6,028
Upgrade of sites	359	391	750	23,232
Repairs & maintenance	10,741	-	10,741	14,445
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	-	-	-	71
Water	7,956	-	7,956	3,568
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,759	-	2,759	2,727
Event costs	-	-	-	100
Total payments	83,541	1,896	85,437	100,027
Net of receipts/(payments)	5,147	(1,676)	3,471	(10,362)
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
Balance brought forward	40,584	34,565	75,149	85,511
Balance carried forward	45,731	32,889	78,620	75,149

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at:

31st December 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2025 Total funds	2024 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Assets				
Cash at bank and in hand				
Current bank account	2,630	-	2,630	32,952
Cooperative deposit account	-	-	-	817
United Trust Bank	42,910	32,889	75,799	40,000
Charity Bank	-	-	-	1,050
Paypal	191	-	191	325
Petty cash	-	-	-	5
	45,731	32,889	78,620	75,149

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2025 Total Funds	2024 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Liabilities				
Independent examination fee	350	-	350	350
	350	-	350	350

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Notes to the Accounts for the year ended:

31st December 2025

1. Basis of accounts

The Trustees have taken advantage of section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 and prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

2. Restricted funds

Fund name	Purpose
Deposits	Deposits which may be refundable if plots are returned in a responsible state
Carr Allotment Association	Donation for projects on their site

	Balance b/fwd	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer between funds	Balance c/fwd
Unrestricted Funds	40,584	88,688	83,541	-	45,731
Restricted Funds					
Deposits	34,174	220	1,505	-	32,889
Carr Allotment Association	391	-	391	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	34,565	220	1,896	-	32,889
Total Funds	75,149	88,908	85,437	-	78,620

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Approval of accounts for the year ended

31st December 2025

The report and accounts were approved at a meeting
of the trustees held on

4th March 2026

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees



Signature

LWA TURNER

Name

TREASURER

Position (e.g. Chair etc)

4. 3. 2026

Date

YORK ALLOTMENTS CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1174306

Accounts

York Allotments CIO

Charity Number 1174306

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2024

outsourcE

Charity accounts preparation &
independent examination service

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Trustees' Annual Report

To: 31st December 2024

Charities Full Name: York Allotments CIO
Registered Charity Number: 1174306

Introduction

2024 was the seventh and final year of YACIO's management of the allotments under the terms of the lease granted by the Council in 2017. The priorities of trustees through the year were largely unchanged from previous years: improving and streamlining administration to make it more cost-effective and responsive to tenant needs; upgrading allotment sites through a programme of gradual reduction in the number of unused plots and better maintenance of poor condition hedgerows and trees; revising policies and procedures to ensure the YACIO operated in an equitable and transparent way in accordance with its charitable objectives. As in previous years much trustee time was spent dealing with operational matters. Two issues required particular attention. The first was the decision of our self-employed administrator not to seek a further contract after its expiry in November. As a result, trustees decided to move to directly employing staff appointing two part-time administrators from September. The other significant issue was preparing for a new lease to replace the initial seven-year lease that expired in November. This involved considerable work, especially in clarifying boundaries and areas of responsibility.

Finance

Full financial data is available separately to this report. Overall, the immediate financial position is still favourable. Although funds carried forward at £75,149 were more than £10,000 less than in 2023, the reduction was almost entirely the result of trustees' decision to set a 'deficit' budget for the year of £10,000. After building up funds in the early years of YACIO's management of the allotments trustees determined that a planned spend on a programme of site enhancements and improvements, especially on unlettable plots, insecure boundaries and inappropriately sited or poor condition trees, was the best use of the charity's resources. This is reflected in the 'Upgrade of Sites' spending which, at £23,232, was far more than previous years.

The only other budget area of significant growth in expenditure was Administration Officer. This was mainly accounted for by the employment of the two new directly employed administrators to work alongside the stepping down self-employed administrator for a period in the early autumn. Trustees judged the expense incurred necessary to both provide the support and training the new staff needed and ensure service continuity. In moving to direct employment of administrative staff trustees planned to make the change cost neutral. As well as reducing contract costs the employment of two staff rather than one self-employed contractor has enabled an increase in staff hours and the discontinuation of the previous unsatisfactory and expensive telephone answering service which should realise an annual saving of c.£2,500.

2024 income increased by £12,461 over 2023. This was largely the result of the 4.1% increase in plot rents and changes to concession rates both implemented from January. Trustees had expected an increase in income because of these changes but the total was greater than anticipated.

Trustees' Annual Report

In reviewing the financial situation, it is important to consider several constraints that may have longer term impacts. Firstly, YACIO remains almost totally dependent on rental income to fund its operations. Unless other income streams can be developed, for example through fundraising, continued site improvements are unlikely to be sustainable. Secondly, if inflation picks up in the next few years, YACIO's almost total reliance on rental income means service levels could only be maintained through rent increases. Trustees have made only one small overall increase in plot rents in the seven years since taking over administration of the allotments. Whereas it remains our intention not to increase rents in the next few years this cannot be guaranteed. Thirdly, when looking at the accounts it must be borne in mind that nearly half of the funds carried forward are 'restricted' comprising refundable deposits paid by tenants on the uptake of a new tenancy. Whereas some deposits are not refunded due to forfeiture on termination of tenancy because the surrendered plot is in an unlettable condition, trustees cannot prudently transfer significant funds from the restricted to unrestricted category. Therefore, only c£40,000 of unrestricted funds is available as of the end of the reporting year to support site improvements or offset operating deficits. This has been a key factor in setting a reduced expenditure budget for 2025 of c£91,000.

Governance

During the year there were no changes to the offices held by trustees. Tony Chalcraft continued as Chair, Helen Butt as Secretary and Lisa Turner as Treasurer. Some changes were made to the specific responsibilities of trustees during the year. As of December responsibilities were as follows: Administrative Support Supervision: Lisa Turner; Association Liaison; Adam Myers; Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower (Maria resumed responsibility during the year following maternity absence); Documentation: Simon Wild; Newsletter and Website: Helen Butt; Risk Assessments: Heather Whittaker; Site Maintenance: Colin Smith; Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft; Tree Issues: Adam Myers

There are currently eight trustees. The Constitution provides for a maximum of nine. During the year Christine Robertson expressed an interest in becoming a trustee. Christine began attending meetings at the end of the year and will be considered for co-option and election in due course.

Trustees, five of whom have been in post since the inception of YACIO, are aware consideration needs to be given to ensuring additional and new trustees come forward.

The sixth AGM, and only the fourth to take place in person due to Covid restrictions, was held on 23rd March. About 30 members were in attendance. In accordance with the Constitution limiting trustee tenure to three years Tony Chalcraft and Simon Wild stepped down as trustees but were re-elected for further terms. During the AGM issues were raised regarding the changes to concessions policy. This and matters relating to hedge management, communication with tenants especially in relation to non-cultivation of plots and trustee accountability were also asked in the open forum that followed the AGM. Trustees have considered the issues and, where possible, made some adjustments to policies and procedures.

As in previous years there were a small number of formal complaints from tenants. Many were submitted following non-cultivation notices. Most complaints were dealt with by trustee Maria Lewington-Gower. One complaint taken to Rachael Maskell MP by the complainants absorbed considerable trustee time. Trustees are grateful to Rachael Maskell for her help in bringing the complaint to a mutually acceptable resolution.

Trustees' Annual Report

Performance

At year end there were 1,551 lettable plots (1,537 2023). Of these 96 were vacant (about to be let to new tenants) and 124 were under notice. During the year 246 tenancies ended. 136 were ended voluntarily by the tenant or other miscellaneous reasons. 105 of the tenancies ended voluntarily followed issue of warning notices by YACIO. 38 tenancies were terminated by YACIO, 26 for non-cultivation and 12 for non-payment of rent. 5 tenancies ended due to the death of a tenant.

258 plots were let during the year. At year end there were 3,102 waiting list applications from 1,641 applicants (each applicant can list for a plot at up to three sites). In December 2023 the number of applications was 3,294. The waiting list measured by the number of applications therefore fell by 192 (5.8%) during the year. 937 (30.2%) of the 3,102 applications on the list at the end of 2024 were made during the calendar year.

In considering the waiting list it should also be noted that Site Secretaries continue to report a large number of applicants do not respond to invitations to view plots on reaching the top of the list. This, in part, may be due to the length of the lists with many of those waiting having changed circumstances before a plot is offered. It is therefore highly likely that the waiting list overestimates the number of people actively wanting a plot. The slight fall (5.8%) in the number of applications during the year may also signify that demand for allotments has peaked.

Administration

Anna Pawlow, our self-employed contracted administrator who had been with YACIO since the organisation's inception in 2017 informed trustees in the spring that she did not wish to consider renewing her contract on its expiry in November. Trustees are hugely appreciative of the work Anna has done for YACIO over the last seven years. Her support has been instrumental to YACIO's development.

After considerable research and discussion, and determining that such a change was likely to be cost neutral, trustees decided to move both to directly employing administrative support and splitting the role in two. Factors influencing the decision were the opportunity for improved responsiveness and continuity of service (e.g. reduced risk of gaps during sickness or holidays), the discontinuation of the telephone answering service and a more directly accountable level of service through trustee Lisa Turner acting as line manager. Following advertisement and interviews Janet Devlin and Nick Smith were appointed and took up post from September. After training from Anna and Lisa, Janet and Nick took over responsibility from October. The transition has gone smoothly and trustees are grateful to Anna and Lisa for supporting the change. Trustees also hope that over time, with two posts rather than one, there may be capacity to expand the administrative role and provide an improved level of service to both tenants and YACIO Site Secretaries.

In comparison with previous years the performance of the Colony software on which YACIO's IT system is based was relatively trouble free despite some issues with report generation and invoice processing. A significant enhancement was adaptation of the system to facilitate issuing of rental invoices by email to tenants. Implemented with the 2025 renewal invoices this will allow significant savings in postal costs. Whereas trustees remain concerned about the reliability of Colony, Orkastrate, an upgraded, Web based system, will be available to YACIO in 2025 which may reduce issues and provide a more robust and reliable service.

Trustees' Annual Report

Trustee Helen Butt continued to take responsibility for managing YACIO's website during the year. Helen introduced a number of enhancements to improve functionality. Further changes are planned on migration of the main IT system to Orkastrate in 2025.

To improve budget control and financial reporting a subscription to Quickbooks accountancy software was taken out during the operating year.

Site Secretaries are YACIO's voluntary representatives on each site. Trustees are grateful for their work, support and input. As in previous years trustees held three in person meetings with Site Secretaries. These were invaluable for obtaining feedback and considering and finalising new policies and procedures.

There were just a few Site Secretary changes during the year. After sharing the role for 17 years Claire Pickard and Graham Sanderson stood down at Scarcroft. Rob Eastman and Andy Maycock replaced them after a phased transition process. At Hob Moor, with no active Site Secretary, trustees Simon Wild and Heather Whitaker stepped in on an interim basis. This enabled a backlog of plot letting and non-cultivation issues to be addressed after which Hob Moor tenant Matthew Gray took over the role.

Policies and Procedures

The implementation of the new concession policy agreed in 2023 from the issuing of 2024 rental invoices proceeded smoothly. Few queries were received and the changes do not seem to have led to a significant number of tenants no longer eligible for a concession giving notice. Trustees did consider a few requests for exemptions. As noted under Finance, the changes did lead to an increase in rental income.

Following concerns about non-cultivation notices and repeat non-cultivation by a minority of tenants some amendments were made to procedures and the wording of notices.

To assist the administrative team and site secretaries in letting plots trustees approved revised guidance on plot letting in relation to eligibility and plot size. Specific points include: plots are only available to those with an address in the City of York Council area; there is a presumption, with some exception due to site layouts, that new tenants will normally be offered no more than a half plot; except where a tenant already occupies more than a full-sized plot, the maximum size plot rentable by one tenant is full size (300 sq. yds). A further revision was a change to guidance and warning notices relating to safety and risk issues concerning structures, ponds and livestock.

Site Issues

As in previous years some sites suffered vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Early in the spring Holgate was affected over a period of weeks by a group of youths that broke down fences, damaged plots and structures and intimidated some tenants. New Lane and Green Lane were also then targeted, possibly by the same perpetrators. Following the involvement of the police trustees, including Helen Butt as Holgate Site Secretary, liaised with both the police and Holgate councillors. Steps were also taken at Holgate and New Lane by Site Secretaries and YACIO to reinforce fences, hedges and gates. After several months the anti-social behaviour mainly ceased. While other sites, notably Glen, had occasional issues, the level of disruption that occurred at Holgate and to a lesser extent at New Lane and Green Lane, was the most prolonged and damaging since YACIO took over administration of the allotments.

Trustees' Annual Report

Other issues affecting more than one site were drainage problems, mostly a reflection of the wet winter and spring, rough sleeping on poorly used plots and damage to or from trees. The most significant tree issue occurred in May at Low Moor. A tree on property belonging to the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT), but close to the boundary of the allotment site and York Cemetery, fell onto the allotments bringing down a section of the cemetery boundary wall and obstructing a pathway. Although damage to the allotment site was minor, it has proved difficult to get the wall debris removed. This appears to be due to insurance and issues at JRHT but the incident has been frustrating and time consuming for YACIO. It also underlines the potential risk trees present and reinforces the need for the action YACIO is taking as further outlined in the Site Maintenance and Improvements section of this report.

Trustees continued to visit sites and offer additional support if appropriate. During the year trustees Helen Butt and Lisa Turner looked into plot turnover and vacancies at Bootham while Tony Chalcraft covered a range of individual issues across a number of sites. A notable site driven initiative during the year was both Scarcroft and Holgate setting up 'Taster' plots aimed at beginning allotment tenants unsure if a larger plot would be suitable. City of York Council also continued to fund and arrange an annual asbestos collection coordinated across sites by trustee Colin Smith.

Site Maintenance and Improvements

Trustee Colin Smith ably led on all matters relating to site maintenance and improvements. This included monitoring and coordinating contracted grass and hedge cutting, arranging plot clearances and management of all repairs and improvements. Much of the latter was largely carried out 'in-house' by handyman/gardener Dave Ruddock, assisted by Phil. Trustees are especially grateful to Dave. He and the team provide an efficient and cost-effective service without which a range of external contractors would have to be engaged.

For the second year grass and hedge cutting was carried out by Aspects Horticultural Services. Total costs were £20,440, considerably less than in 2023 primarily the result of less hedge cutting being necessary following additional work in the previous year and one less grass cut because of conditions early in the season. Overall Site Secretaries were satisfied with the work carried out although, inevitably, given the complexities of sites, some areas were occasionally missed. There was also some concern about the length of grass left after some cuts. Another area of disquiet to a few tenants was the extent of cutback on some hedgerows. Trustees have the difficult task of overseeing contracted works, seeking to balance cost-effectiveness and a level of maintenance which keeps sites accessible and in good order with varying tenant views on how, when and to what extent such work should be carried out.

Aside from contracted grass and hedge cutting much of the repair and upgrade work on sites is carried out by our handyman/gardener. £14,445 was spent on repairs and maintenance and £23,232 on upgrade of sites. In practice there is some overlap between these two budget heads. A particular concern is the cost of clearing plots that have been neglected or used inappropriately by tenants. In most cases this far exceeds the £40 retained deposit. The high level of expenditure on upgrades reflects the priority given to site improvements during the year. A number of long abandoned and overgrown plots were brought back into use generating additional rental income. Again, however, the cost of such work far exceeds short term additional rental income received.

Trustees' Annual Report

A considerable amount of maintenance and upgrade costs were the result of works to trees, some of which were large and in poor condition. Tree work is both costly and potentially safety critical. Aware of this, trustees have agreed to prioritise tree maintenance. Work was carried out at several sites and more will be scheduled as funds permit. Trustees remain concerned that trees are one of YACIO's biggest risks. A major storm damaging or felling many trees could be financially crippling to the organisation.

Because tree work is both necessary and sometimes controversial, trustee Adam Myers has taken on the specific role of overseeing issues relating to trees across all sites. The objective is to develop a specific programme of tree management initially focussing on larger trees and those likely to present a hazard. In undertaking this role Adam will work closely with Site Secretaries, and where appropriate Associations, as well as consulting tenants and considering ecological impacts.

Other Activities, Services and Developments

In accordance with YACIO's objectives, trustees seek to provide additional services and activities to both allotment tenants and the local community. This includes continuing to provide community plots, providing information and training on horticultural techniques, organising events that engage tenants and the wider community, supporting and liaising with allotment associations and collaborating with other organisations to further the development and improvement of allotments.

One of the longest established community plots is the Kids' Community Allotment (KCA) founded and run by Angela Johnson at Low Moor. KCA celebrated its 20th anniversary in September which was marked by a visit of the Civic Party. KCA also hosted a further YACIO arranged training session on summer pruning of fruit trees and bushes. This was a well-attended event by tenants from a mix of sites.

A newsletter for tenants continued to be produced quarterly. This was distributed electronically, except for the January 2024 issue which was sent in print to tenants together with annual rental invoices. Trustee Helen Butt acted as editor. During the year a tenant provided a monthly blog highlighting a range of allotment related issues and tasks entitled 'Plotlines'. We are grateful to the tenant, who wishes to remain anonymous, for their contribution.

After its reintroduction in 2023 we again ran a Best Plot Competition. Although numbers were slightly down on the previous year, there were 55 entries from 14 sites. As before there were separate categories for established and newcomer plots. For the second year running the city-wide prize for the best-established plot was awarded to Paula Smith for her plot at New Lane allotments. The city-wide prize for the best newcomer plot went to Melanie Charles and Simon Humpleby for their plot at Green Lane. We are grateful to Rachael Maskell MP for again awarding the prizes at Holgate allotments in August. Trustees are also grateful to Claire Pickard, Jane Thurlow and Heather Whittaker for again coordinating the competition.

Trustee Adam Myers continued to lead on supporting associations. A meeting was held with association representatives in February that provided both helpful suggestions for trustees and acted as a useful forum for associations to exchange information. A major project for the Scarcroft and District Allotment Association was the replacement of their trading hut by a new structure of converted shipping containers. Graham Sanderson led on this complex project that has provided a much-needed replacement for the previous wooden structure. Although most associations remained active Bootham was largely in abeyance while Carr members voted to disband at an AGM due to lack of support from tenants. Remaining funds of the Carr association were transferred to YACIO for future use to improve the site.

Trustees' Annual Report

Following an approach to YACIO from York St John University trustees agreed to take forward collaboration to support PhD research on allotment related issues. After an open recruitment process trustee Helen Butt was selected to undertake a PhD provisionally entitled 'Co-produced local food systems, community governance and regeneration: the future of allotments in York'. It is intended that Helen's research will help inform YACIO's development and future. Helen receives no funding from YACIO in connection with her PhD research. For due process the Charity Commission were informed of Helen's appointment. Following information provided by the Charity Commission trustees are satisfied there is no conflict of interest.

Trustees continue to explore possible new allotment provision. Discussions begun the previous year with a local estate that managed a neglected allotment site have not progressed. However, trustees are currently involved in discussion regarding some council owned land on the edge of a village. As the site is probably only partially usable as allotments YACIO is collaborating with Edible York and interested individuals with the aim of forming an umbrella body to fund and separately manage the land. It is considered potentially suitable for up to ten full-sized plots.

YACIO was reapproached during the year by an estate owning a part disused allotment site on the edge of a village within a few miles of the city centre. Following viewing of the site and discussion with the estate's agent, trustees agreed to pursue a possible lease. Negotiations on this are continuing at the time of writing. The site currently has a few remaining tenanted plots but is otherwise used for horse grazing. Some investment would be required to develop the site. Trustees are agreed that funds for this would primarily need to be obtained externally. The site represents an opportunity to provide new plots in an accessible location and could help reduce the waiting list.

Lease

With YACIO's seven-year lease from the City Council due to expire at the end of November trustees invested significant time in preparing for a new lease. Following positive discussions early in the year with Dave Meigh, Head of Public Realm, trustees worked on the expectation a new lease, with a far longer term, would be granted. The main concern of trustees was to ensure that the new agreement was clear on the division of responsibilities between the Council and YACIO. This was particularly important with respect to some boundaries and trees that could be potentially prohibitively expensive to repair and maintain in the longer term. An additional concern were the so-called "legacy" issues, works that were outstanding at the inception of the initial seven-year lease in 2017 which the Council had committed to carry out but remained either uncompleted or not begun. Trustees carried out thorough inspections of all sites over the summer usually in conjunction with Site Secretaries. This was followed up in the autumn by trustee Colin Smith visiting sites with Dave Meigh to update plans and agree responsibilities.

It had been indicated by council officers that approval of a revised lease would likely be discussed and signed off by the Council Executive in the autumn, just prior to the expiry of the existing lease. Trustees made it clear that we wished this to be the case, mindful the previous lease had only been finalised and signed more than four years after YACIO assumed responsibility for the allotments. Trustees were particularly aware that without a completed and signed lease document there was little prospect of significantly improving the allotments. Larger scale developments can only be financed through external funding. However, grant awarding bodies are highly unlikely to provide funds if YACIO is unable to demonstrate it has a finalised and secure lease. In addition, trustees were also conscious of its responsibilities as an employer. Our two part-time employees were engaged on clear indications from the Council that a new lease would be forthcoming. Without a lease in place our staff have limited job security and YACIO has potential liability should their employment have to be ended.

Trustees' Annual Report

Disappointingly, despite requests through late November and December, no information on the lease situation, or any communication, from the Council has been forthcoming. This is of increasing concern to trustees. At the time of writing we are still attempting through various channels to clarify the situation. It remains our expectation a new lease will be granted and, in the interim, we continue to administer the allotments. A verbal update on the lease position will be provided at the AGM and, if necessary, to all tenants via email.

Future Issues and Plans

The most important immediate concern for trustees is securing a new lease from the City Council. Until this is completed and signed, or at least the intention to grant a new lease is confirmed in writing, trustees' scope to undertake longer term planning is restricted. We are aware, if a long duration lease is in place, that this needs to be accompanied by a more strategic approach to developing and improving the allotments. As has been noted, significant improvements cannot be funded through rental income. Once a new lease is in place, pursuing fundraising opportunities will be a high priority.

Trustees remain committed to minimising rent increases. At present no rent rises are planned. However, should inflation increase, or we face large scale and unexpected repairs, costs may be financially unsustainable. In such a situation it would either be necessary to increase rents or cut the level of service YACIO provides, for example, reducing the number of grass cuts. With YACIO's income dependent on tenant rents we also need to keep in mind the impact of any longer-term fall in demand for allotments. Site Secretaries increasingly report that when contacting prospective tenants at the top of the waiting list many no longer wish to take on a plot. Although a fall of demand does not appear to be an immediate concern, we must keep in mind that demand for allotments has been cyclical in the past.

For the present however, the pressing issue is the length of the waiting list. As of the end of 2024 there were 1,641 applicants on the list, 90 more than the 1,551 plots currently available. While in practice not all listed applicants want a plot when one becomes available, the length of the lists means waits to reach the top are long. Wait times vary by site but are usually in excess of two years and for some popular sites, generally those nearer the city centre, four or more years. Ultimately, although YACIO has attempted to meet demand by generally restricting new lets to half plots, waiting lists can only be reduced by the provision of new allotment sites. Apart from the potential new site being explored, the opportunities for developing these are limited by both the lack of suitable land and funding constraints.

Trustees' Annual Report

Other priorities for trustees in 2025 and beyond include:

- keeping under review the efficiency and resilience in administrative and other routine operational activities introducing changes and enhancements as resources permit
- upgrading the IT system to the replacement software Orkastrate and evaluating whether this provides the long term functionality required
- making more use of the website to communicate with members and the wider public
- making fuller use of all available space at every site other than that required for access or conservation purposes
- developing site specific tree and hedge management plans
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing and managing sites in ways that promote biodiversity
- developing closer relationships with site associations to support their endeavours and assist in the formation of associations covering sites where none currently exist
- providing increased advice and support, through training sessions and the website, for tenants, especially those taking on a plot for the first time, on effective use of their allotment
- supporting community group and other innovative growing activities on allotment sites
- developing and supporting initiatives that increase the role of allotments in promoting the overall well-being of tenants and the wider public, for example improving mental and physical health, alleviating social isolation, providing sustainable locally produced food, supporting the local economy, etc.
- collaborating with other allotment providers to increase access to allotments across the City of York Council area
- considering the extent to which the charity can actively promote and campaign for additional allotment provision within the City of York area, possibly in collaboration with other non-YACIO managed sites, members of the public and any other interested parties

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Move the Masses

I report on the accounts of: **York Allotments CIO**

For the year ended: **31st December 2024** Which are set out on pages 11 to 13

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

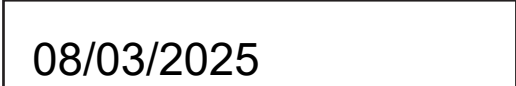
I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act;
- or**
2. the accounts do not accord with those records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Karen Wood (ACMA)
Outsource independent examination service
2 Galligap Lane
Osbalwick
York YO10 3NR



Date

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Receipts & Payments Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2024

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2024 Total	2023 Total
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	86,867	-	86,867	76,097
Donations	-	913	913	-
Fundraising & events	60	-	60	69
Key deposit	-	55	55	-
Bank interest	1,770	-	1,770	1,038
Total receipts	88,697	968	89,665	77,204
Payments	£	£	£	£
Administration officer	23,698	-	23,698	18,407
Insurance	1,070	-	1,070	1,028
Grass & hedge cutting	19,918	522	20,440	25,021
Deposits returned	-	1,480	1,480	740
Free plots and honorariums	765	-	765	800
Licences	2,053	-	2,053	66
Independent examination fee	350	-	350	350
Admin support & office costs	6,028	-	6,028	5,997
Upgrade of sites	23,232	-	23,232	3,429
Repairs & maintenance	14,445	-	14,445	15,069
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	71	-	71	23
Water	3,568	-	3,568	5,484
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,727	-	2,727	2,427
Event costs	100	-	100	50
Sundry expenses	-	-	-	82
Total payments	98,025	2,002	100,027	78,973
Net of receipts/(payments)	(9,328)	(1,034)	(10,362)	(1,769)
Transfer between accounts	-	-	-	-
Balance brought forward	49,912	35,599	85,511	87,280
Balance carried forward	40,584	34,565	75,149	85,511

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Notes to the Accounts for the year ended:

31st December 2024

1. Basis of accounts

The Trustees have taken advantage of section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 and prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

2. Restricted funds

Fund name	Purpose					
Deposits	Deposits which may be refundable if plots are returned in a responsible state					
CYC	Contribution towards tree pruning					
Carr Allotment Association	Donation for projects on their site					
		Balance b/fwd	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer between funds	Balance c/fwd
Unrestricted Funds		49,912	88,697	98,025	-	40,584
Restricted Funds						
Deposits		35,599	55	1,480	-	34,174
CYC		-	522	522	-	-
Carr Allotment Association		-	391	-	-	391
Total Restricted Funds		35,599	968	2,002	-	34,565
Total Funds		85,511	89,665	100,027	-	75,149

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Approval of accounts for the year ended

31st December 2024

The report and accounts were approved at a meeting
of the trustees held on

5.3.25

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees



Signature

LISA TURNER

Name

TREASURER

Position (e.g. Chair etc)

5.3.25

Date

YORK ALLOTMENTS CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1174306

Accounts

York Allotments CIO

Charity Number 1174306

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2023

outsource

Charity accounts preparation &
independent examination service

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Trustees' Annual Report

To: 31st December 2023

Charities Full Name: York Allotments CIO

Registered Charity Number: 1174306

Introduction

2023 was the sixth year of YACIO's management of the allotments and the penultimate year under the lease granted by the City Council in 2017. The priorities for Trustees through 2023 remained primarily as before: improving the administration and management of the allotments to provide a better service to existing and new tenants; maintaining allotment sites and undertaking a programme of gradual improvement including reducing the number of unused plots and overgrown trees and hedges; revising policies and procedures to ensure the YACIO operated in a fair and open way in accordance with its charitable objectives. In addition, with income almost entirely from allotment rents, trustees had to consider the impact of inflation on YACIO's financial sustainability. Another consideration, with the existing lease nearing its end, was the terms and duration should it be renewed. In particular, trustees were aware, should a new lease be granted, that YACIO would need to become both more resilient and develop a longer term view of its activities and purpose.

Administration

Administrator

Trustees continued to engage the services of a part-time self-employed administrator. Following changes made in 2022 this was on the basis of a contract until November 2024 (the expiry date of YACIO's current lease) with annual fee increments linked to inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. On average the administrator worked 20 hours per week but there were considerable peaks and troughs with longer hours required at the start of the year following the issue of rental invoices to tenants. The cost of providing administrative services at £18,407 was broadly similar to 2022.

IT Systems

We continued to make use of the Colony allotment management system provided by MCPC to manage most administrative tasks, for example maintaining tenant and plot records, generating invoices and producing reminder letters. The license for the Colony software incurs an annual fee of £1,890, a relatively small proportion of YACIO's overall expenditure. As in previous years the majority of tenants made use of the online payment facility provided by Colony to pay rental invoices. Unfortunately, there continued to be performance issues with the system, the most serious of which was the loss of interoperability with the invoice payment (PayPal) software following a system upgrade by MCPC. This occurred in the early part of the year when a large number of rental payments were being made online. Because the fault was not immediately apparent a significant number of rental payments were received without corresponding updating of the database. As it was not possible to easily identify tenants who had and hadn't paid it was necessary to introduce time-consuming remedial measures. This resulted in a significant administrative burden and delay to the process of sending invoice reminders and the re-letting of plots for which no rental payment had been made.

Trustees' Annual Report

These issues, which were beyond YACIO's immediate control, had both a financial and reputational cost. As a result trustees through Treasurer Lisa Turner sought compensation from MCPC securing complete waiving of the software license fee for 2023. Although this provided reasonable recompense, trustees continue to have concerns about the reliability of the Colony software and the commitment of MCPC to its maintenance and development. Tentative steps to consider alternative systems have been taken, but a change would be a major undertaking the feasibility of which requires careful evaluation. Trustee Helen Butt continued to take primary responsibility for managing YACIO's website. As well as ensuring the website was maintained and updated Helen introduced a number of enhancements designed to improve the experience for users including an online concession application form and changes to the contact form to reduce the incidence of spam.

Policies and Procedures

Some modifications to policies and procedures were made during the year. With one exception these were mainly in response to specific events or incidents and were of a minor nature and did not necessitate changes to the revised Tenancy Agreement introduced in 2022. Issues considered included how to deal with tenancies when the plot holder was in a nursing home or imprisoned, establishing clear criteria for the clearance of overgrown plots vacated at the end of a tenancy and how to deal with tenants who had been repeatedly issued with non-cultivation warnings. Where appropriate these issues were discussed with Site Secretaries. When changes impacted on documentation, trustee Simon Wild continued to oversee amendments. The Site Secretary Handbook was updated during the year.

The most significant policy change decision made during the year concerned the rental concession arrangements inherited from the City Council. Since taking on management of the allotments trustees had been aware that the cost of obtaining and renting an allotment was quite high in comparison to other local authorities. We were concerned this was a potential barrier to those on low incomes, an obstacle only partially alleviated by the concession arrangements in operation. These, while not entirely age based, largely benefited those in receipt of the state pension who accounted for the vast majority of concession holders.

These concerns led trustees to undertake a review of concessions. This was also informed by an awareness that the high rate of inflation was likely to increase YACIO's costs significantly so that the previous aim of not raising rents during the lease period was no longer financially sustainable (see further Finance). After much consideration trustees therefore drew up a revised concession schedule for implementation from January 2024. This removed the age and other existing concessions and replaced these with eleven benefit based concessions. The concession rate, previously 40%, was increased to 50%. These changes were made alongside a 4.1% increase in overall rent rates.

An outline of the proposed changes was endorsed by the majority of members present at the AGM and communicated to tenants later in the year via email and the newsletter. A relatively small number of comments have been received, mostly negative but also some positive. Trustees are well aware this is a controversial change that is not popular with some affected tenants. However, we believe the new concession arrangements are inherently fairer, being based on income rather than an age entitlement.

Policies and Procedures

Site Secretaries continue to play a key role as YACIO's representative on each site. Trustees are particularly grateful for their continuing support. As in previous years trustees held three in person meetings with Site Secretaries including one at Holgate in the summer. All sites had a Site Secretary in place throughout the year. The only newcomers were Norah Godfrey at Glen and Gary Flakes at New Lane.

Trustees' Annual Report

Governance

Annual General Meeting

The fifth AGM, and only the third to take place in person due to Covid restrictions, was held on 25th March. About 30 members were in attendance. In accordance with the Constitution limiting trustee tenure to three years, Maria Lewington-Gower and Adam Myers stepped down as trustees but were re-elected for further terms. In addition, Heather Whittaker was elected as a full trustee. In the open forum that followed the formal AGM trustees presented an outline of the possible changes to rent and concessions to be introduced from 2024. There was considerable discussion after which an indicative vote was taken that showed a clear majority in favour of the changes trustees were considering. A further issue raised by trustees was whether members wished trustees to pursue a new lease with the City Council. There was a clear consensus that a new lease should be negotiated.

Trustees

During the year there were no permanent changes to the offices held by trustees or the specific areas of responsibility they covered. Tony Chalcraft continued as Chair, Helen Butt as Secretary and Lisa Turner as Treasurer. Further roles and responsibilities were: Administrative Supervision: Helen Butt; Association Liaison: Adam Myers; Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower (except in periods of absence); Documentation: Simon Wild; Newsletter and Website: Helen Butt; Risk Assessments: Heather Whittaker; Site Maintenance: Colin Smith; Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft.

After returning from a period of absence Maria Lewington-Gower was given further leave of absence due to maternity. Maria had a son in November and will be returning as a full trustee in 2024. Following Heather Whittaker's election as a full trustee at the AGM there are eight trustees, one short of the constitutional provision of a maximum of nine. Heather has assumed special responsibility for risk assessments, safety and animal welfare. Trustees, five of whom have been in post since the inception of YACIO, are well aware, especially with the prospect of a new lease, of the need to find both an additional trustee to raise the number to the full complement and make provision for the recruitment of new trustees should existing trustees wish to retire.

Operations Management

Trustee Colin Smith ably led on all matters relating to operations management, that is allotment site maintenance and upgrades. This included coordination with the contractor carrying out grass cutting and hedge trimming and management of all repairs and improvements. Much of the latter, especially repairs and renewals, was largely carried out by handyman/gardener Dave Ruddock, assisted by colleague Phil. Trustees are especially grateful to Dave and Phil. They provide an efficient and cost-effective service, without which a range of external contractors would have to be engaged.

Contractor (Grass and Hedge Cutting)

Prior to the start of the year the site maintenance contract had again to be rendered due to the failure of the operator to adhere to specification. A new contractor Aspects Horticultural Services was appointed. The cost of the new contract was considerably in excess of that for the previous contractor but was judged reflective of both inflation and the level of service to be provided. In addition, due to cost savings following non-payment of the previous contractor because of breach of contract, it was possible to finance some additional hedge cutting at the start of the year. Grass and hedge cutting

Trustees' Annual Report

costs during the year were £25,021, the largest single item of expenditure during the year. This sum was considerably in excess of 2022's £12,273 but needs to be considered alongside lower than expected payments to the 2022 contractor and the additional hedge cutting carried out by Aspects Horticultural Services at the start of the 2023. Overall, although there have been a few issues with grass cutting, feedback from site secretaries and tenants on the performance of Aspects Horticultural Services has been positive.

Repairs and Upgrades

Most other site maintenance, for example repairs and renewals to gates, fences and noticeboards, rubbish removal and clearing overgrown plots is undertaken by our handyman/gardening team. Overall £15,069 was spent on repairs and maintenance carried out by the team during the year. A further £3,429 was spent on the upgrade of sites. In practice there is some overlap between these two budget headings. Of the latter heading, £1,480 was for tree clearance work mainly carried out at Holgate and Low Moor in the latter part of the year by a new contractor. Trustees are aware that a significant amount of money is spent on repairs and maintenance. A particular concern is the cost of clearing plots that have been neglected by tenants. As already mentioned, clarifying policies on this issue is currently ongoing.

Managing trees on sites, especially at Low Moor and Scarcroft, continues to be a particular focus. The aim remains to carry out a long term programme of tree management both for safety reasons and to prevent a backlog of work building up that could be costly to finance in the future. Although some work has been carried out in recent years, notably at Scarcroft, there remains much to be done. Not as much money was spent on tree work during the year as had been planned. This was the result of a number of factors including finding suitable contractors and agreeing the scope of work. Trustees recognise that tree maintenance is a considerable risk in terms of safety and costs and plan to progress further work in 2024 and beyond.

One notable improvement during the year was to the public right of way that bisects Scarcroft allotments and is used by many tenants to access their plots. The path was resurfaced by contractors Jacksons as a community benefit as part of the road improvement scheme on Tadcaster Road. Trustees are grateful to Jacksons, and the Scarcroft Association and City of York Council who were instrumental in facilitating this much needed upgrade.

Finance

Full financial data is available separately to this report. In summary the financial position, both for the year and the future is favourable. YACIO carried forward £85,511 comprising unrestricted funds of £49,912 and restricted funds, made up of tenant deposits, of £35,599. The total carried forward is slightly lower than the £87,280 in 2022. In the last few years income has generally exceeded expenditure allowing a reserve to be accumulated. Trustees were satisfied that this was more than adequate and set a deficit budget for 2023 of £10,000. For various reasons, for example the non-payment of IT system supplier MCPC's license fee due to poor performance, the excess of expenditure over income was far lower than budgeted at £1,029.

During the year £40,000, mainly comprising tenant deposits, was placed in an interest bearing account with the Unity Trust Bank, a specialist bank providing services to charities and other non-profit organisations.

Trustees' Annual Report

Looking ahead, it is anticipated income for 2024 will be in excess of that for recent years due to concession policy changes and the 4.1% overall rental increase. The amount of additional income is difficult to estimate at the time of writing, but an increase of £5,000-£7,500 might be expected. Set against this are anticipated cost increases of at least 5% and the possibility of unexpected costs such as urgent tree work or other essential maintenance. Trustees are very aware that having rents as the only source of income is high risk and that attention needs to be given to the potential to develop other income streams.

Performance

At year end there were 1,537 lettable plots (1,515 2022). Of these 72 were vacant (about to be let to new tenants) and 125 were under notice.

During the year 183 tenancies ended. 141 were ended voluntarily by the tenant, 46 following a warning notice from YACIO. 38 tenancies were terminated by YACIO, 28 for non-cultivation and 10 for non-payment. 4 tenancies ended due to the death of a tenant.

170 new plots were let during the year.

At year end there were 3,294 applicants on the waiting list. In December 2022 the number was 3,018. It is important to note these figures represent the total number of applications, not the total number of people waiting for a plot. This is because each person registering may choose to apply for a plot at up to three different sites. It is not known, or easily possible to establish from the Colony system, how many of those joining the waiting list make multiple applications. 962 (31.6%) of the 3,294 applications on the list at the end of 2023 were made during the calendar year. Again, this is the total number of applications with each person registering having the option to apply for up to three plots.

In considering the waiting list it should also be noted that Site Secretaries continue to report that a large number of applicants do not respond to invitations to view plots on reaching the top of the list. This, in part, may be due to the length of the lists with many of those waiting having changed circumstances before a plot is offered. It is therefore highly likely that the waiting list overestimates the number of people actively wanting a plot.

Risks and Security

Administrative Risks

Trustees are aware of a number of non-financial issues that remain risks for YACIO. Administratively, the main concerns are reliance on the services of one part-time self-employed administrator and the MCPC IT system, which, as already highlighted, caused considerable disruption during the year. To partially alleviate these risks trustee Helen Butt has regular updates with the administrator and has also assumed further responsibilities for some IT functions in relation to the website. Additionally, trustee Lisa Turner has liaised with the administrator on aspects of the Colony IT system so that some functions could be carried out in the event of the administrator's unavailability. As has previously been outlined, trustees are also looking at the possibility of replacing the Colony system.

Trustees' Annual Report

Risk Assessments

Following work begun in the previous operating year, trustee Heather Whittaker, assumed responsibility for carrying out regular site risk assessments as well as aspects of health and safety and animal (livestock on allotments) welfare. In response to the initial risk assessment trustees categorised the risks identified according to seriousness and responsibility. If responsibility rested with YACIO remedial work was carried out by handyman/gardener Dave Ruddock where feasible. A further risk assessment exercise was carried out in the summer.

Security

As in previous years there were issues with vandalism and theft at a number of sites. Particularly serious problems occurred at Low Moor in the autumn with vandalism, shed break ins and arson that destroyed a shed. Holgate also experienced several bouts of vandalism during the year. In both cases there was contact with the police. At Low Moor, site secretaries and trustees investigated the possibility of engaging a security company to protect the site. However, the types of patrol or call outs that could be offered did not appear to provide the level of protection needed. At Holgate trustees agreed to fund a £1,500 extension to a fence. Other vandalism and antisocial behaviour was reported at Glen, Hob Moor and Scarcroft.

Other Activities and Developments

Associations

Trustees continue to engage with allotment associations. A well-attended meeting between trustees and association representatives took place in September. Topics discussed included the boundaries of responsibility between YACIO and associations as well as site specific issues and changes to the concession arrangements.

A particular association issue which began to be regularised during the year was the status of association trading huts and other structures in the context of YACIO's lease. It came to light that, with the exception of the trading hut at Low Moor given a ten year license by the City Council that was about to expire, none of the structures had a formal agreement in place. Starting with Low Moor YACIO have begun putting in place licenses for all association structures occupying plots which are included in the YACIO lease.

At Scarcroft the association is in the process of replacing the wooden trading hut with a new structure based on shipping containers. This is entirely led and funded by the association but YACIO trustees have discussed with association officers how this development might change the use of adjacent plots and benefit tenants on allotment sites not part of the Scarcroft and District Association.

City of York Council

Trustees continued to liaise with City of York Council on a variety of matters, including the procedure for drafting a new lease, with Operations Manager Dave Meigh. Following correspondence on issues relating to food poverty, food growing and allotment provision trustees also attended a meeting with Councillor Bob Webb. This provided a useful opportunity to exchange ideas and outline some of the issues facing YACIO, particularly the long allotment waiting lists.

Trustees' Annual Report

Newsletter and Blog

A newsletter for tenants continued to be produced roughly quarterly. This was distributed electronically, except for the January issue which was sent in print to tenants together with annual rental invoices. Trustee Helen Butt acted as editor. During the year a tenant also began writing a monthly blog highlighting seasonal tasks entitled 'Plotlines'. This is posted on the website.

Plot Competition

Following discussion at a Site Secretary meeting a small working group was set up to take forward a best plot competition based on that run by the City Council and last held about 15 years ago. This was more successful than anticipated, receiving 70 entries. Awards were made on an area basis for both best established plot and best plot newcomer plot. The city wide prize for the former category was won by Paula Smith from New Lane and the prize for the latter by Helen and Emma Chan at Bootham. Prize giving took place at a well-attended ceremony at Holgate in August. We are grateful to Rachael Maskell MP for attending and awarding the prizes. Trustees are also grateful to the organising group of Claire Pickard, Jane Thurlow and Heather Whittaker and all those who assisted with the judging.

Potential New Allotment Site and Related Developments

YACIO was reapproached during the year by an estate owning a part disused allotment site on the edge of a village within a few miles of the city centre. Following viewing of the site and discussion with the estate's agent, trustees agreed to pursue a possible lease. Negotiations on this are continuing at the time of writing. The site currently has a few remaining tenanted plots but is otherwise used for horse grazing. Some investment would be required to develop the site. Trustees are agreed that funds for this would primarily need to be obtained externally. The site represents an opportunity to provide new plots in an accessible location and could help reduce the waiting list.

In the latter part of the year YACIO took part in discussions regarding possible community use of a walled garden situated within the Fulford Cross site but not under our lease with the City Council. At this stage it is envisaged any YACIO involvement would be as a partner. Possible options YACIO might wish to develop include a demonstration area, a seedling raising facility and a training space.

Two training courses on fruit tree pruning were held during the year at Low Moor on the Kids' Community Allotment. The courses were open to tenants from all sites for a £5 fee and fully booked. YACIO are grateful to Louise Cantlay of the Abundance Project for part leading these courses. It is hoped that further training sessions will be offered in 2024.

Trustees' Annual Report

Future Issues and Plans

The most important immediate concern for trustees in 2024 will be securing a new lease from the City Council. It is anticipated that this will be granted, issues to be clarified mainly relating to the duration of YACIO's tenure and matters such as responsibility of boundaries and structures, for example trees alongside public roads or boundary walls that could be expensive to maintain.

With the small increase in rents and changes to the concession arrangements trustees anticipate that income will increase. It is hoped that this will avoid the need for further rent increases in the next few years, but this will depend on the amount of extra income the changes generate, the rate of inflation and whether any significant, unexpected, maintenance work is required.

The other pressing issue is the length of the waiting list. Ultimately this can only be addressed by the provision of new allotment sites. However, with the exception of the potential new site being explored, the opportunities for developing this are restricted by the lack of suitable land and funding constraints

Looking further ahead, trustees are aware that with a new lease a more strategic, longer term, view is required. We hope to take steps towards this in 2024. Particular issues for future consideration remain similar to those outlined in previous annual reports. These include:

- keep under review the efficiency and resilience in administrative and other routine operational activities introducing changes and enhancements as resources permit
- making fuller use of all available space at every site other than that required for access or conservation purposes
- making more use of the website to communicate with members and the wider public
- developing long term, site specific, tree and hedge management plans
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing and managing sites in ways that promote biodiversity
- developing closer relationships with site associations in order to support their endeavours and assist in the formation of associations covering sites where none currently exist
- providing increased advice and support, through training sessions and the website, for tenants, especially those taking on a plot for the first time, on effective use of their allotment
- supporting community group and other innovative growing activities on allotment sites
- developing and supporting initiatives that increase the role of allotments in promoting the overall well-being of tenants and the wider public, for example improving mental and physical health, alleviating social isolation, providing sustainable locally produced food, supporting the local economy, etc.
- considering the extent to which the charity can actively promote and campaign for additional allotment provision within the City of York area, possibly in collaboration with other non-YACIO managed sites, members of the public and any other interested parties

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of York Allotments CIO

I report on the accounts of: **York Allotments CIO**

For the year ended: **31st December 2023** Which are set out on pages 10 to 13

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act;
- or**
2. the accounts do not accord with those records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Karen Wood (ACMA)
Outsource independent examination service
The Hiscox Building
Peasholme Green
York YO1 7PR

08/04/2024

Date

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Receipts & Payments Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2023 Total	2022 Total
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	76,097	-	76,097	74,075
Fundraising & events	69	-	69	-
Bank interest	1,038	-	1,038	47
Total receipts	77,204	-	77,204	74,122
Payments	£	£	£	£
Administration officer	18,407	-	18,407	18,008
Insurance	1,028	-	1,028	287
Grass & hedge cutting	25,021	-	25,021	12,273
Deposits returned	-	740	740	1,108
Free plots and honorariums	800	-	800	925
Licences	66	-	66	1,890
Independent examination fee	350	-	350	300
Admin support & office costs	5,997	-	5,997	6,294
Upgrade of sites	3,429	-	3,429	8,292
Repairs & maintenance	15,069	-	15,069	12,888
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	23	-	23	41
Water	5,484	-	5,484	4,158
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,427	-	2,427	2,342
Event costs	50	-	50	-
Sundry expenses	82	-	82	25
Total payments	78,233	740	78,973	68,831
Net of receipts/(payments)	(1,029)	(740)	(1,769)	5,291
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
Balance brought forward	50,941	36,339	87,280	81,989
Balance carried forward	49,912	35,599	85,511	87,280

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Notes to the Accounts for the year ended:

31st December 2023

1. Basis of accounts

The Trustees have taken advantage of section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 and prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

2. Restricted funds

Fund name

Purpose

Deposits

Deposits which may be refundable if plots are returned in a responsible state

	Balance b/fwd	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer between funds	Balance c/fwd
Unrestricted Funds	50,941	77,204	28,233	-	49,912
Restricted Funds					
Deposits	36,339	-	740	-	35,599
Total Restricted Funds	36,339	-	740	-	35,599
Total Funds	87,280	77,204	78,973	-	85,511

York Allotments CIO

(Charity Number 1174306)

Approval of accounts for the year ended


31st December 2023

The report and accounts were approved at a meeting
of the trustees held on

6th February 2024

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees



Signature

LISA TURNER

Name

TREASURER

Position (e.g. Chair etc)

12.2.2024

Date

YORK ALLOTMENTS CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1174306

Accounts

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

Trustees Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended

31st December 2022

outsourcE

Charity accounts preparation &
independent examination service

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

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Trustees' Annual Report

From: 1st January 2022

To: 31st December 2022

Charity's full name York Allotments CIO

Registered Charity number 1174306

Objectives and activities

Summary of the purposes of the charity set out in its governing document

To provide or assist in the provision of facilities for allotments in the City of York and the surrounding area, in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.

Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts

To provide an effective and responsive administrative system for the allotments it manages (e.g. letting, rental collection, waiting list management, etc)

To ensure allotment plots are kept in good condition and sites well managed with grass, hedges etc. appropriately maintained

To balance income and expenditure to ensure financial sustainability

To avoid/limit rent increases while generating income surpluses sufficient to meet potential future costs and/or provide funds to improve allotment provision/sites

To publicise the availability of allotments and promote allotments as a leisure activity

To improve the knowledge and skills of plot holders to better use and manage their allotment

To improve facilities on allotments sites

To support allotment associations and encourage wider community engagement

To foster the innovative use of allotment plots and sites in ways that have wider social, health, economic and environmental benefits

To operate in a transparent and open way and ensuring that allotments are let and managed in an equitable manner and in accordance with legislation e.g. Equality Act (2010)

To ensure allotments are managed and used in a way that protects the environment and wildlife

The trustees consider that they have complied with their duties to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.

Introduction

2022 was the fifth year of YACIO's management of the allotments. The priorities for Trustees through the year were primarily twofold: to continue the process of consolidating and developing improvements to the administration and management of the allotments; to continue the process of strengthening and revising policies and procedures inherited from York City Council. In addition, trustees also began to look at wider issues such as how the natural environment of the allotment sites could be enhanced, what measures were necessary to provide significant and sustained improvements to facilities and services for sites and tenants and how allotment provision in the City of York could be increased. These latter initiatives were partly undertaken with an eye to the longer term. The seven year lease under which YACIO manages the allotments on behalf of City of York Council expires in autumn 2024. Trustees recognised, should a new lease be offered as hoped and anticipated, that YACIO would need to take a longer term, more innovative, view of its activities and role.

Administration & policies

Trustees continued to engage the services of a part-time self-employed administrator. On average the administrator worked 20 hours per week but there were considerable peaks and troughs with longer hours required at the start of the year following the issue of rental invoices to tenants. The cost of providing administrative services at £18,008 was broadly similar to that in 2021

Since the inception of YACIO the contract under which the administrator worked was renewed annually. To give both parties more surety (trustees and the administrator), after negotiations a revised contract was drawn up to operate from December 2022. New provisions included linking the rate of increase in the administrator's annual fee to inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index, assurances regarding continuity of operation in the event of unplanned absence and changes to the way certain tasks were carried out. The new contract runs for a two year period until the end of YACIO's current lease in November 2024..

We continued to make use of the Colony allotment management system provided by MCPC to maintain records, generate invoices, produce reminder letters, etc. The license for the Colony software incurs an annual fee of £1,890, a relatively small proportion of YACIO's overall expenditure. As in previous years the majority of tenants made use of the online payment facility provided by Colony to pay rental invoices. There continued to be performance issues, for example in extracting coherent data for monitoring and reporting purposes. This had an inevitable effect on administrative effectiveness. Despite these issues, trustees decided replacing Colony with an alternative system was not feasible in the short term due to constraints such as time, cost and the potential for disruption as data was migrated.

During the year, trustee Helen Butt took over responsibility for managing YACIO's website previously maintained by the administrator. As well as allowing the administrator more time to focus on operational and Colony issues, Helen used her professional experience and expertise to enhance the website including more frequent updating and beginning a redesign of its structure. In addition, Google Analytics was utilised for the first time to give trustees a better understanding of how the website was used.

A number of improvements were made to procedures during the year. One example was the change to the production of updates for Site Secretaries which were fixed for the same day each month to provide greater regularity.

In collaboration with the Administrator, Trustees, led by Simon Wild, continued to enhance and revise documentation designed to record and standardise administrative procedures. This included updating the Manual and Tenant's Handbook.

The new Tenancy Agreement drawn up during autumn 2021 following a consultative process with tenants and Site Secretaries became operational from the start of the year. Sent to all tenants with annual rental invoices in January, this met with hardly any comment or concern from tenants and has operated without issue through the year. As made clear when the revision was open to consultation, unless exceptional issues arise, trustees do not propose to make any further changes to the Tenancy Agreement during the period of the current lease from City of York Council.

Site Secretaries continued to play a key role as YACIO's representative on each site. Trustees are particularly grateful for their continuing support. As in previous years Trustee held three in person meetings with Site Secretaries including one at Green Lane which included a tour of the site. In addition, to facilitate better communication with and between Site Secretaries, a dedicated What's App group was set up. Efro Tooms stepped down as Site Secretary at Glen and Steve Cooke at New Lane. Trustees are grateful to Efro for assuming the role at a difficult time for the site and Steve for his long and diligent service. Both vacancies have been filled.

Governance

An AGM was held at Clements Hall on the 26th March attended by about 30 members. This was the first in-person AGM since 2019 due to the pandemic. Helen Butt was formally elected as a trustee on the advice of existing trustees, having been acting in the role for six months. In accordance with the terms of the Constitution, two Trustees, Colin Smith and Lisa Turner, stood down but were re-elected as Trustees.

There was a significant change in trustee responsibilities during the year. Colin Smith stepped down from the role of Secretary in favour of Helen Butt in September. Helen also assumed responsibility for supporting and supervising the work of the administrator. Colin's resignation allowed him to focus on his other main role as a trustee overseeing all matters relating to site maintenance and developments. Colin had served as Secretary from YACIO's inception. Trustees are extremely grateful for the time and effort Colin has committed, and continues to commit, to YACIO. It is no exaggeration to say that without Colin's efforts YACIO would not have been able to function successfully.

Other trustee responsibilities remained unchanged. Tony Chalcraft and Lisa Turner continued as Chair and Treasurer respectively. Further roles and responsibilities were: Administrative Supervision: Helen Butt (Colin Smith until September); Association Liaison: Adam Myers; Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower; Documentation: Simon Wild; Newsletter and Website: Helen Butt; Site Maintenance: Colin Smith; Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft. Maria Lewington-Gower took leave of absence for personal reasons from spring until the end of the year. During this time her responsibility for complaints was covered by other trustees on a rota basis. Potential trustee Heather Whittaker carried out a health and safety audit of sites in November.

During the year two members and one non-member expressed an interest in becoming a trustee. Following meetings with existing trustees Heather Whittaker, a tenant at Bootham, was invited to shadow existing trustees with a view to becoming a full trustee. Trustees are recommending Heather is formally elected as a trustee at the 2023 AGM. Assuming Heather's election there will be eight trustees. The Constitution provides for a maximum of nine so one vacancy remains to be filled.

Due to an error the lease from York City Council, which was only finally completed and signed off in early 2021, required further amendment. This process was completed early in the year. In December, under the terms of the lease, trustees met with Dave Meigh Operations Manager Public Realm (Strategy and Contracts) for the annual review meeting. A key issue discussed was the granting and terms of any further lease to YACIO for management of the allotments from November 2024. Further discussions on this matter are expected with trustees' views outlined in Future Plans (below).

There were only a handful of complaints during the year, far fewer than in 2021. Most of these arose from disputes between tenants. All were resolved satisfactorily with no tenancy terminations resulting from a complaint. Following review of the handling of a specific complaint trustees undertook a reworking of the Complaints Procedure to make it more explicit with regard to notification and formal warning.

In comparison with previous years there was limited engagement with councillors or officers of City of York Council, apart from Operations Manager Dave Meigh. However, a group of trustees did meet with York Central MP Rachael Maskell, at her invitation, during the summer. Discussion extended to matters such as allotment waiting lists and provision across the city. Trustees are grateful to Rachael for her time and interest.

Operational Management

Colin Smith, as well as acting as YACIO's Secretary and supporting and supervising the administrator for a large part of the year, ably led on all matters relating to maintenance and repairs

Prior to the start of the year the site maintenance contract was re-tendered. A new contractor, All Aspects Gardening Services was successful replacing White Rose Gardening Services which had held the contract since YACIO took over responsibility for the allotments. Despite initial enthusiasm and progress All Aspects struggled to meet contract requirements falling behind schedule on grass cutting and failing to complete hedge cutting. As a consequence full payment of the annual contract fee was withheld resulting in a saving of £2,727 and the contract terminated. A new contractor, Aspects Horticultural Services has been engaged for 2023 on a one year contract. The cost is significantly higher than that paid to All Aspects but includes one-off hedge cutting and is reflective of inflation over the year. Trustees hope that the new company, which carries out grounds maintenance for a number of schools, will deliver a better service.

The site maintenance contract is primarily for grass and hedge cutting. Much other work, such as repairs to gates, fences and noticeboards, rubbish removal and clearing overgrown plots, etc. is undertaken by our handyman Dave Ruddock, sometimes assisted by Rich. Trustees are grateful for the effective and responsive service provided. There was also considerable expenditure on tree work during the year. Overall £12,888 was spent on repairs and maintenance and £8,292 on the 'upgrade' of sites. In practice there is some overlap between these two budget headings. Trustees are aware that a significant amount of money is spent on repairs and maintenance. A particular concern is the cost of clearing plots neglected by tenants. Trustees are in the process of working with Site Secretaries to draw up clearer criteria where YACIO clearance should be offered and where a new tenant should be expected to do this without assistance.

Managing trees on sites, especially at Low Moor and Scarcroft, was a focus through the year. The aim of trustees is to carry out a long term programme of tree management both for health and safety reasons and to prevent a backlog of work building up that could be costly to finance in the future. Work was carried out at Scarcroft early in the year guided by Castle Tree Surgeons focussed on preventative work to trees that could present a safety hazard as well as limited felling to improve the viability of shaded plots. A smaller amount of work was undertaken at Low Moor. Further work is planned, especially at Low Moor, where a full tree survey, to be conducted in conjunction with the Association, is planned. Trustees are very aware that tree maintenance is a considerable risk in terms of safety and costs, which requires a long term view.

Performance

There is some difficulty extracting data from the Colony system so it is not possible to obtain full data on either the number of plots let during the year or the total number of persons on the waiting list.

At year end there were 1,515 lettable plots. Of these 68 were vacant (about to be let to new tenants) and 87 were under notice.

The waiting list stood at 3,018 at year end. It is important to note this represents the total number of applications, not the total number of people waiting for a plot. This is because each person registering may choose to apply for a plot at up to three different sites. It is not known, or easily possible to establish from the Colony system, how many of those joining the waiting list make multiple applications. However, even if everyone made three, which is very unlikely, the waiting list would stand at 1,006. It is, however, possible to obtain a breakdown of the waiting list by sites. This shows that every site has more applicants than the number of lettable plots. The site with the highest number of applications to lettable plots is Wigginton Terrace at 5.9 per plot followed by Fulford Cross at 5.5 per plot. The lowest is Low Moor at 1.06 (this figure is largely due to the very large number of plots at Low Moor - 277).

In considering the waiting list it should also be noted that Site Secretaries continue to report that a large number of applicants do not respond to invitations to view plots on reaching the top of the list. This, in part, may be due to the length of the waiting lists with many of those waiting having changed circumstances before a plot is offered. It is therefore highly likely that the waiting list number overestimates the number of people actively wanting a plot.

Four newsletters were issued (three via email; one in print) during the year. These elicited a few queries and suggestions from tenants.

Risk Management

Trustees have considered a number of risk management issues.

A significant risk is the reliance on one contracted self-employed administrator. Steps were taken during the year to reduce the risk. These included the revised administrator contract requiring assurances of continuity of service in the event of absence through stand-in help and plans for trustees to have familiarisation sessions with the Colony management system to enable them to better perform standard tasks if necessary.

Dependence on the MCPC Colony IT system is a further significant risk. There remain performance and reliability issues especially in relation to interoperability with other systems such as PayPal. Trustees also had concerns about MCPC's ability to keep underlying software updated, particularly in relation to the website. This necessitated intervention by Helen Butt on YACIO's behalf.

Trees are another significant risk both in terms of health and safety and finance. Some work was carried out as part of a developing tree management programme but further work to identify trees in need of remedial work is required. There have also been issues at some sites, especially Wigginton Road, where a neighbouring property owner has refused to take responsibility for potentially dangerous trees.

Following an incident with a low level water butt a review was undertaken of butts across all sites. As a result it was decided that the minimum height for all butts would be 75cm. Remedial action has been taken to bring this policy into effect. In addition, to ensure ponds are constructed safely in respect of depth and siting, tenants are now required to complete an authorisation request before a pond is excavated.

YACIO continued to provide public liability insurance covering all operational activities and trustee responsibilities. However, the cover was revised during the year to reduce costs. Tenants have been notified of the changes.

As a result of the revised insurance cover YACIO is required to carry out regular risk assessment. A full risk assessment of all sites was carried out by Heather Whittaker in November. The resulting report is now under consideration by trustees with the various issues identified to be prioritised for appropriate action.

To guard against unexpected repair or other issues requiring significant expenditure Trustees have agreed a Reserves Policy of £20,000.

Other Developments

- **Anti-social Behaviour, etc:** overall this appears to have been less of an issue than in 2021. However, there was a case of arson at Low Moor, ball bearing pellet damage at Glen and vandalism at a number of sites including Hob Moor and Holgate
- **Associations:** there was limited engagement with associations during the year. Developments included the 'revival' of the Bootham association and some engagement with Scarcroft regarding a possible community plots in connection with the replacement of the trading hut.
- **Best Plot Competition:** A working group is looking at reviving a version of this competition, previously held annually by City of York Council, across all YACIO sites.
- **Bonfires** were banned for a period during the summer drought for safety reasons
- **Concessions Policy:** trustees had long felt the concessions policy on rents inherited from City of York Council needed review. In particular, there was concern about the fairness of the age and low income concessions, as well as the former's impact on YACIO's finances. After discussion a review was begun, a process still in progress at the time this report was compiled. The intention is to consult members on a revised concessions structure at the 2023 AGM
- **Environment/Wildlife:** a group of trustees met to consider how the natural environment of sites could be protected and enhanced. An appeal for interested members to join the group to begin the process of drawing up plans was placed in the newsletter.

- Finance: as in previous years the financial situation was stable. Trustees had budgeted for expenditure to exceed income on the basis of surpluses in previous years and a financial reserve judged adequate. However, for various reasons, such as non-payment of the maintenance contractor for failure to meet contractual obligations, expenditure was less than planned resulting in a surplus of income over expenditure of £6,399. Because of the favourable financial situation trustees considered a rent increase was unnecessary for 2023. YACIO has not increased rent levels since taking over running of the allotments in 2017.
- Improvements: there were no Site Bids this year. However, various YACIO funded or implemented work was carried out. Examples include fencing at Holgate (as part of the community orchard/aplary project), a new gate at Hospital Fields and tree management at Scarcroft.
- Maintenance: Work was carried out at most sites. Signs were also replaced with more durable versions.
- Trading Huts: Scarcroft Association are in the process of planning for the replacement of their trading hut. In the process of discussion with City of York Council it became apparent that there was no lease or other agreement for this hut, while the agreement with City of York Council for the trading hut at Low Moor had expired. Trustees feel the arrangements for these, and any other association structures, need regularising under the terms of any revised lease from City of York Council.
- Wigginton Road Development: there was ongoing sporadic engagement with City of York Council regarding the proposed housing development on the scrapyard adjacent to the site and how this would impact on tenants, particularly in relation to retaining parking spaces.

Issues and Challenges

Disputes between individual tenants, or groups of tenants, continued to occupy a good deal of trustee time but not to the extent of previous years. While reported issues of anti-social behavior was also at a lower level than 2021, this remains an ever present threat to tenants and YACIO as an organisation

Although trustees have been able to avoid any increase in rents since YACIO took over the running of the allotments, whether an increase can be avoided for 2024 is uncertain. We continue to be almost totally reliant on rental income which hovers at around £74,000 annually. Inflation will lead to increased costs during 2023, for example the administrator's fee and new maintenance contract. Trustees anticipate, and have budgeted for, expenditure to exceed income by £10,000 at year end. A factor in determining rent levels for 2024 will be any changes made to the concessions policy but it is likely that at least a modest rent increase will need to be implemented. Consultation with tenants on both the concessions policy and rent levels will be undertaken before final decisions are made on charges for 2024 and beyond.

The length of the allotment waiting list remains the most significant challenge. Although this can be partially managed by letting half or smaller sized plots to new tenants, this alone will not meet demand. Ultimately, current demand can only be met through the provision of new allotment sites.

Future Plans

In many respects YACIO remains an organisation preoccupied with managing day-to-day operations. Planning for the future has taken a backseat. However, trustees are aware a more strategic, longer term view is required and it is hoped to make substantial steps forward in this regard during 2023. Tentative potential plans remain as outlined in previous annual reports. These include:

- increasing efficiency and building greater resilience into administrative and other routine operational activities to enhance services to tenants and responses to Site Secretaries
- developing clearer criteria when clearance of neglected plots by YACIO is justified and speeding up the process
- making full use of all available space at every site other than that required for access or conservation purposes
- making more use of the website to communicate with members and the wider public
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing and developing taking forward plans for sites that are sustainable and promote biodiversity
- developing closer relationships with site associations in order to support their endeavours and assist in the formation of associations covering sites where none currently exist
- providing advice and training, especially for new tenants, on making effective use of their allotment
- supporting community and other innovative growing activities
- developing and supporting initiatives that increase the role of allotments in promoting the overall well-being of tenants and the wider public, for example improving mental and physical health, alleviating social isolation, providing sustainable locally produced food, supporting the local economy, etc.
- considering the extent to which the charity can actively promote and campaign for additional allotment provision within the City of York area, possibly in collaboration with other non-YACIO managed sites, members of the public and any other interested parties

Financial review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period

A surplus has been made ensuring the charity has healthy reserves

Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held
£20,000 as detailed in the reserves policy

Amount of reserves held
£50,941

Reasons for holding zero reserves
N/A

Funds materially in deficit
None

Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern
None

Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document

How the charity is constituted Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members

Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees

Reference and administration details

Charity's full name York Allotments CIO

Other names the charity is known by YACIO

Charity's principal address Popeshead Court Offices
Peter Lane
York

Postcode YO1 8SU

Names of the trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Tony Chalcraft	Chair		
Lisa Turner	Treasurer		
Colin Smith	Secretary		
Adam Myers			
Simon Wild			
Marie Lewington - Gower			

Names and addresses of advisers

Type of adviser	Name	Address
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**Independent
Examiner**

Karen Wood ACMA
Outsource Accounting Services & Independent Examinations
Hiscox Building
Peasholme Green
York, YO1 7PR

Bankers

The Cooperative Bank

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature



Full Name LSA MELONIE TURNER

Position TREASURER

Date 1. 3. 2023

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of York Allotments CIO

I report on the accounts of: **York Allotments CIO**
for the year ended: **31st December 2022** which are set out on pages 8 to 10.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2 the accounts do not accord with those records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Karen Wood (ACMA)
Outsource independent examination
service
The Hiscox Building
Peasholme Green
York YO1 7PR

02/03/2023

Date:

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Receipts & payments accounts for the year ended: 31st December 2022

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2022 Total funds	2021 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	74,075	-	74,075	73,935
Bank interest	47	-	47	10
Total receipts	74,122	-	74,122	73,945
Payments				
Administration officer	18,008	-	18,008	18,365
Insurance	287	-	287	1,853
Grass & hedge cutting	12,273	-	12,273	15,000
Deposits returned	-	1,108	1,108	505
Free plots and honorariums	925	-	925	725
Licences	1,890	-	1,890	1,890
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
Admin support & office costs	6,294	-	6,294	5,478
Skip hire & upgrade of sites	8,292	-	8,292	3,460
Repairs & maintenance	12,888	-	12,888	12,344
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	41	-	41	-
Water	4,158	-	4,158	4,345
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,342	-	2,342	2,318
Sundry expenses	25	-	25	95
Total payments	67,723	1,108	68,831	66,678
Net of receipts/(payments)	6,399	(1,108)	5,291	7,267
Transfer between accounts	(8,787)	8,787	-	-
Balance brought forward	53,329	28,660	81,989	74,722
Balance carried forward	50,941	36,339	87,280	81,989

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Statement of assets and liabilities at:	31st December 2021
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	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
Assets				
Cash at bank and in hand				
Current bank account	50,250	-	50,250	51,371
Deposit account	291	36,339	36,630	30,244
Paypal	374	-	374	374
Petty cash	26	-	26	-
	50,941	36,339	87,280	81,989

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
Liabilities				
Independent examination fee	350	-	350	300
	350	-	350	300

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Notes to the accounts for the period ended: 31st December 2021

1. Basis of accounts

The Trustees have taken advantage of section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 and prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

2. Restricted funds

Fund name	Purpose				
Deposits	Deposits which may be refundable if plots are returned in a responsible state				
	Balance B/wd	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer between funds	Balance C/fwd
Unrestricted Funds	53,329	74,122	67,723	(8,787)	50,941
Restricted Funds					
Deposits	28,660	-	1,108	8,787	36,339
Total Restricted Funds	28,660	-	1,108	8,787	36,339
Total Funds	81,989	74,122	68,831	-	87,280


The transfer between funds represents the monies received as deposits that have been shown in the accounts as rents in previous years.

Approval of accounts for the year ended: 31st December 2022

The report and accounts were approved at a meeting of the Trustees held on:

1st MARCH 2023

Date



1.3.2023

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees

Date

LISA MELONIE TURNER

TREASURER

Print name

Position (e.g. Chair etc)

YORK ALLOTMENTS CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1174306

Accounts

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

Trustees Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended

31st December 2021

outsourcE

Charity accounts preparation &
independent examination service

York Allotments CIO

(CIO Number:1174306)

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Trustees' Annual Report

From: 1st January 2021

To: 31st December 2021

Charity's full name York Allotments CIO

Registered Charity number 1174306

Objectives and activities

Summary of the purposes of the charity set out in its governing document

To provide or assist in the provision of facilities for allotments in the City of York and the surrounding area, in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.

Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts

To provide an effective and responsive administrative system for the allotments it manages (e.g. letting, rental collection, waiting list management, etc)

To ensure allotment plots are kept in good condition and sites well managed with grass, hedges etc. appropriately maintained

To balance income and expenditure to ensure financial sustainability

To avoid/limit rent increases while generating income surpluses sufficient to meet potential future costs and/or provide funds to improve allotment provision/sites

To publicise the availability of allotments and promote allotments as a leisure activity

To improve the knowledge and skills of plot holders to better use and manage their allotment

To improve facilities on allotments sites

To support allotment associations and encouraging wider community engagement

To foster the innovative use of allotment plots and sites in ways that have wider social, health, economic and environmental benefits

To operate in a transparent and open way and ensuring that allotments are let and managed in an equitable manner and in accordance with legislation e.g. Equality Act (2010)

To ensure allotments are managed and used in a way that protects the environment and wildlife

The trustees consider that they have complied with their duties to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.

Introduction

2022 was the fourth full year of YACIO's management of the allotments. The priorities for Trustees throughout the year were essentially threefold: to consolidate and develop improvements to the administration and management of the allotments; to continue the process of strengthening and revising the policies and procedures inherited from York City Council; and, although this was less of a factor than in 2020, mitigate and adapt to the constraints imposed by the continuing Covid pandemic.

Administration & policies

Trustees continued to engage the services of a part-time self-employed administrator. On average the administrator worked 20 hours per week but there were considerable peaks and troughs with longer hours required at the start of the year following the issue of rental invoices to tenants.

The administrative contract is renewed annually. Following discussion in the autumn it was decided to offer the administrator an interim six month contract to give trustees time to review administrative functions, including trustee input and oversight. This process is ongoing at the time of writing.

We continued to make use of the Colony allotment management system provided by MCPC to maintain records, generate invoices and reminder letters, etc. As in previous years the majority of tenants made use of the online payment facility provided by Colony to pay rental invoices. There continued to be performance issues: for example limitations on reporting and temporary loss of functionality following software upgrades. These had an impact on administrative effectiveness.

A number of improvements were made to procedures during the year. A simplified system of warning letters for 'non-cultivation' was introduced alongside a modified 'end of tenancy' process. These changes were initiated as part of ongoing efforts to improve cultivation standards and reduce the number of severely neglected plots.

Another policy change during the year was the introduction of a clear 'Co-Tenancy Policy' designed to clarify the procedures relating to the addition of another person to an existing tenancy.

In collaboration with the Administrator, Trustees continued to enhance and revise documentation designed to record and standardise administrative procedures. This included both the 'Manual' and the 'Tenant's Handbook'. During the year it became increasingly clear that improving and clarifying procedures was made difficult by ambiguities and outdated clauses in the Tenancy Agreement inherited from York City Council. Apart from one change in 2021, this had not been modified since YACIO took responsibility for managing the allotments, or indeed for many years. As a result Trustees decided to undertake a full review of the Tenancy Agreement with a view to both updating and clarifying the terms.

To take this forward an initial draft was drawn up and a tenant consultation process undertaken through email submissions and Zoom sessions open to all tenants. Following helpful comments a revised Tenancy Agreement was completed to come into effect from the start of 2022. Unless unexpected issues arise, Trustees do not anticipate further changes to the Tenancy Agreement during the remaining duration of the lease from the City Council (e.g. no changes for 2023 or 2024).

Site Secretaries continued to play a key role as YACIO's representative on each site. Trustees are particularly grateful for their continuing support. As in previous years Trustees held several meetings with Site Secretaries (via Zoom). New Site Secretaries were appointed at Glen and Howe Hill. At the end of the year Paul Graham stepped down as Holgate Site Secretary after many years in the role. YACIO are particularly grateful to his long service in the role and the contribution he has made to community initiatives on the site such as the Carriage Garden. Replacement Site Secretaries have been recruited. In addition, two additional assistant Site Secretaries were recruited at Low Moor to support the existing Site Secretary with the running of this large site.

Although the pandemic did not impact as significantly on administration of the allotments as in 2020, Trustees remained aware that some tenants, for example due to self-isolation or shielding, were unable to maintain their allotments as normal. Although most standard activities, such as new lettings continued, some planned developments were not fully implemented. In particular, Trustees did not follow up on the implementation of a more structured programme of plot inspections that had been planned pre-pandemic.

Structure and Governance

Due to the pandemic and resulting restrictions it was again decided not to schedule a face-to-face AGM. Instead this was held online in April with about 30 tenants attending. In accordance with the terms of the Constitution, two Trustees, Tony Chalcraft and Simon Wild, stood down but were re-elected as Trustees for further three year terms.

Despite publicity in the newsletter there were only three expressions of interest in becoming a trustee. Helen Butt (Holgate) was recruited as a potential trustee during the summer and after attending a number of meetings was co-opted to the Board in October. Trustees are recommending Helen is formally elected as a Trustee at the 2022 AGM.

At the start of the year the lease from York City Council had still to be formally signed off. This process was completed early in the year. However, an error on the part of the Council in defining its duration necessitated a further amendment. As provided for under the terms of the lease, Trustee met with Dave Meigh Operations Manager at the Council for a review meeting in July.

Through the year Trustees formalised a structure for taking lead responsibility on specific functions and issues. In addition to the posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer (Tony Chalcraft, Colin Smith and Liza Turner respectively), Trustees took on the following roles: Administrative Supervision: Colin Smith; Association Liaison: Adam Myers; Complaints: Maria Lewington-Gower; Documentation: Simon Wild; Site Maintenance: Colin Smith; Site Specific Issues: Tony Chalcraft. In addition, at the end of the year, Helen Butt took on responsibility for the Newsletter and Website.

A total of 17 formal complaints were made during the year. All of these were dealt with internally although a few did involve correspondence with councillors and an MP. Following a specific issue, Trustees undertook a re-working of the Complaints Procedure to make it more explicit. This work is ongoing at the time of writing.

Operational Management

The Site Maintenance contract was re-tendered during the year. 12 companies were contacted and three bids received. White Rose Gardening Services, which had held the contract since YACIO took over running the allotments, was unsuccessful. However, the company initially awarded the contract was unable to proceed, resulting in the contract being awarded to All Aspects Garden Maintenance. The company formally takes up the contract from January 2022.

The Site Maintenance contract is primarily for grass and hedge cutting. Much other work, such as repairs to gates, fences and noticeboards, rubbish removal and clearing overgrown plots, etc. is undertaken by our handyman Dave, sometimes assisted by Rich. Over £12,000 was spent on repairs during the year, well in excess of the initial budget. However, many of the 'repairs' were, in effect, improvements, some of which might otherwise have been met from the Improvement Bids budget.

Perhaps the most serious operational issue to arise during the year was a broken drainage pipe at Howe Hill resulting in the flooding of a number of plots. Ultimately YACIO had to engage the services of a drainage contractor to remedy the problem. Although the cost of this was much less than originally feared, unexpected problems such as this can result in significant financial loss to YACIO (see further Risk Management).

Colin Smith, as well as acting as YACIO's Secretary and supporting and supervising the administrator, ably led on all matters relating to maintenance and repairs.

Improvements

The decision was made to budget £10,000 for Site Improvements. Bids were invited from sites and a number received. It was decided to cap bids at a maximum of £500. In total £2,960 was spent on bids, far less than the allocated budget. However, as mentioned previously, a number of repairs carried out could be considered site improvements as upgraded facilities (for example new replacement noticeboards) were provided. The actual expenditure figure therefore significantly underestimates spending on improvements.

Performance Management

There is some difficulty extracting data from the Colony system so the following figures may not be completely accurate.

As at year end there were 1,315 lettable plots. Of these 80 were vacant (about to let to new tenants) and 57 were under notice.

There were 1,588 people on the waiting list for a plot. This appears to be a significant increase from 2020. However, it should be noted that Site Secretaries report a large proportion of those on the waiting list do not respond to invitations to view plots on reaching the top of the list. This, in part, may be due to the length of the waiting lists with many of those waiting having changed circumstances before a plot is offered. It is therefore highly likely that the waiting list number overestimates the number of people actively wanting a plot.

Four newsletters were issued (via email) during the year. These elicited a few queries and suggestions from tenants.

Risk Management

Trustees have considered a number of risk management issues.

A significant risk is the reliance on one contracted self-employed administrator. Trustees are currently evaluating a new administrative contract. How to alleviate this risk is one of the key factors under consideration.

Dependence on the MCPC Colony IT system is a further significant risk. System upgrades resulting in temporary loss of functionality has created performance issues. There are also issues with regard to flexibility and the ability to extract data. Trustees have begun preliminary research on possible alternatives but are aware that system migration is also not without risk and costs.

The unexpected drainage problems at Howe Hill highlighted YACIO's potential vulnerability to unexpected damage necessitating expensive repairs. A particular concern is the large number of trees on some sites. Storm damage or the need to urgently fell some of these for safety reasons could require considerable expenditure. As a result Trustees are aware of the need to develop a tree management policy.

To guard against unexpected repair or other issues requiring significant expenditure Trustees have agreed a Reserves Policy of £20,000.

YACIO continued to provide public liability insurance covering all operational activities and trustee responsibilities.

Site and Community Developments

Maintenance and improvements were carried out at most sites. Issues impacting on sites also arose. Some of the most significant of these are summarised below:

Holgate: relatively minor vandalism occurred. The Association produced an ambitious plan for the development of an aply and community orchard on derelict plots adjacent to the site entrance for which external funding was sought and obtained.

- YACIO agreed to provide £1,000 to help part fence the area.
- **Low Moor:** vandalism late 2020 and early 2021. Following liaison with the Association a security company was engaged by YACIO to patrol the site. Issues arose regarding the 2021 tenancy change specifying hedges be maintained at 1.5 metres. There were also issues relating to plot inspections and the use of ground cover materials. The possible impact of resident only parking in Kilburn Road on the site was also a matter on which YACIO made representation to the City Council
- **Scarcroft:** it came to light that the Association was letting car parking on site to the adjacent York Croquet Club. Following discussions and correspondence with the croquet club this arrangement, which was potentially detrimental to allotment tenants use of the car park and contrary to the terms of YACIO's lease, was terminated
- **Wigginton Road:** led by Lisa Turner, liaison continued with the developer proposing housing construction on the Dennings scrap yard adjacent to the site. The objective was to safeguard access and parking for the allotments and secure benefits for tenants. Official representation was made on the planning application. The matter is ongoing.

Collaboration with allotment associations was to some extent put on hold during the year, partly due to the pandemic. However, a useful meeting between YACIO trustees and association representatives led by Trustee Adam Myers was held at the Hempland Lane site in May. It is intended to renew liaison and collaboration with associations in 2022.

Issues and Challenges

Disputes between individual tenants, or groups of tenants, continued to occupy a good deal of Trustee time. Dealing with and resolving formal complaints was also a significant issue. Special thanks are due to Trustee Maria Lewington-Gower for overseeing the complaints process.

Anti-social behaviour and vandalism continued to affect sites particularly, as previously mentioned, at Low Moor. This is an ever present threat and one to which YACIO may need to respond at any time.

As in previous years the financial situation was stable, the year ending with income and expenditure almost balanced. As a result Trustees decided, as for 2021, that no rent increase was necessary for 2022. It is the hope of Trustees that no rent increases will be required for the remaining two years of YACIO's lease from the City Council (2023 and 2024) although this cannot be guaranteed. YACIO is currently almost totally reliant on rents for its income. The prospect of relatively high inflation in 2022, which may impact on costs, is a particular concern.

The length of the allotment waiting list remains the most significant challenge. Although this can be partially managed by letting half or smaller sized plots to new tenants, this alone will not meet demand. Ultimately, current demand can only be met through the provision of new allotment sites.

Future Plans

In many respects future planning was put on hold during 2021 because of the uncertainties resulting from the COVID pandemic and difficulties in holding face-to-face meetings. Plans outlined in previous reports remain largely in place. These include:

- further increasing the efficiency of administrative and other routine operational activities to enhance services to tenants and be more responsive to Site Secretaries
- further developing and speeding up the programme of plot clearance (where plots have become unlettable due to neglect) to ensure that we are making full use of all available space and maximising rental income
- upgrading the website including improvements to presentation and ease of navigation
- further considering the policy on rent concessions in light of overall fairness to all groups and in the context of the charity's
- increasing tenant awareness of environmentally sustainable growing and developing management plans for sites that are sustainable and promote biodiversity
- developing closer relationships with site associations in order to support their endeavours and assist in the formation of associations covering sites where none currently exist
- providing advice and training, especially for new tenants, on making effective use of their allotment
- supporting community and other innovative growing activities
- developing and supporting initiatives that increase the role of allotments in promoting the overall well-being of tenants and the wider public, for example improving mental and physical health, alleviating social isolation, providing sustainable locally produced food, supporting the local economy, etc.

As already outlined, the increase in the allotment waiting list is a major concern. Considering how to respond to this, especially the extent to which the charity can actively promote and campaign for additional allotment provision within the City of York area, is an important and urgent future planning issue for Trustees. Similarly, as other allotment sites within the city also have lengthened waiting lists, liaising and collaborating with other allotment providers is a further issue for consideration.

Financial review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period

A surplus has been made ensuring the charity has healthy reserves

Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held
25% of annual turnover as detailed in the reserves policy.

Amount of reserves held
£53,329

Reasons for holding zero reserves
N/A

Funds materially in deficit
None

Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern
None

Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document

How the charity is constituted Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members

Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees

Reference and administration details

Charity's full name York Allotments CIO

Other names the charity is known by YACIO

Charity's principal address Popeshead Court Offices
Peter Lane
York

Postcode YO1 8SU

Names of the trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Tony Chalcraft	Chair		
Lisa Turner	Treasurer		
Colin Smith	Secretary		
Adam Myers			
Simon Wild			
Marie Lewington - Gower			

Names and addresses of advisers

Type of adviser	Name	Address
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Independent Examiner	Karen Wood ACMA	Outsource Accounting Services & Independent Examinations Hiscox Building Peasholme Green York, YO1 7PR
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Bankers	The Cooperative Bank
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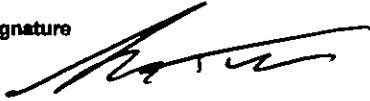
Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature



Full Name LISA MELONIE TURNER

Position TREASURER

Date 6.3.2022

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of York Allotments CIO

I report on the accounts of: **York Allotments CIO**
for the year ended: **31st December 2021** which are set out on pages 8 to 10.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

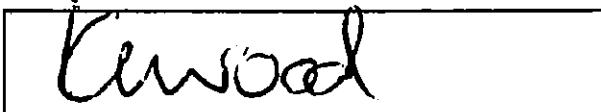
I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2 the accounts do not accord with those records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Karen Wood (ACMA)
Outsource independent examination
service
The Hiscox Building
Peasholme Green
York YO1 7PR

06/03/2022

Date:

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Receipts & payments accounts for the year ended: 31st December 2021

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2021 Total funds	2020 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Rents	73,935	-	73,935	68,317
Fundraising & donations	-	-	-	35
Bank interest	10	-	10	106
Total receipts	73,945	-	73,945	68,458
Payments				
Administration officer	18,365	-	18,365	18,745
Insurance	1,853	-	1,853	1,936
Memberships & subscriptions	-	-	-	-
Grass & hedge cutting	15,000	-	15,000	14,500
Deposits returned	-	505	505	345
Free plots and honorariums	725	-	725	685
Licences	1,890	-	1,890	1,402
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
Admin support & office costs	5,478	-	5,478	5,816
Skip hire & upgrade of sites	3,460	-	3,460	574
Repairs & maintenance	12,344	-	12,344	6,052
Trustees' expenses & meeting costs	-	-	-	37
Water	4,345	-	4,345	6,755
Bank charges & paypal fees	2,318	-	2,318	1,951
Sundry expenses	95	-	95	45
Total payments	66,173	505	66,678	59,143
Net of receipts/(payments)	7,772	(505)	7,267	9,315
Transfer between accounts	-	-	-	-
Balance brought forward	45,557	29,165	74,722	65,407
Balance carried forward	53,329	28,660	81,989	74,722

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Statement of assets and liabilities at:

31st December 2021

Assets	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total funds £	2020 Total funds £
Cash at bank and in hand				
Current bank account	22,711	28,660	51,371	42,153
Deposit account	30,244	-	30,244	30,234
Paypal	374	-	374	2,335
	<u>53,329</u>	<u>28,660</u>	<u>81,989</u>	<u>74,722</u>

Liabilities	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total funds £	2020 Total funds £
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
	<u>300</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>300</u>

York Allotments CIO
(CIO Number:1174306)

Notes to the accounts for the period ended: 31st December 2021

1. Basis of accounts

The Trustees have taken advantage of section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 and prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

2. Restricted funds

Fund name	Purpose
Deposits	Deposits which may be refundable if plots are returned in a responsible state

	Balance B/wd	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfer between funds	Balance C/fwd
Unrestricted Funds	45,557	73,945	66,173	-	53,329
Restricted Funds					
Deposits	29,165	-	505	-	28,660
Total Restricted Funds	29,165	-	505	-	28,660
Total Funds	74,722	73,945	66,678	-	81,989

Approval of accounts for the year ended:	31st December 2021
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The report and accounts were approved at a meeting of the Trustees held on:

2.3.2022

Date

6.3.2022

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees Date

LISA MELOWIE TURNER	TREASURER
Print name	Position (e.g. Chair etc)