

Lettsom Allotments Association Chair's report to AGM, November 2021

This is the first report of the trustees of Lettsom Allotments Association (LAA). As not all of us are aware of the structure of the LAA and the role of the trustees, I have included a brief timeline below.

Timeline / potted history of the setting up of Lettsom Allotments Association

The allotments were originally set up and managed by Camberwell Gardeners' Guild (CGG). They hold the lease to the allotments from Southwark council, pay the bills for insurance and utilities, and were responsible for managing the waiting list to join the allotments, allotment inspections etc. The day to day management of the allotment was mostly delegated to the allotment secretary/ies, who were allotment holders. Most recently Grant and Lizzie have shared this role.

In 2018 CGG told us that they wanted to stop managing the allotments, and asked us to set up as an independent organisation, so that we could manage ourselves and take over the lease and other responsibilities.

The allotment members set up a working group to investigate and evaluate different models for our own organisation. The group recommended setting up the allotments as a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which is the standard model for small charities including newer allotment associations. We registered the Lettsom Allotments Association as a CIO in December 2019.

We needed to provide named trustees to register as a CIO, so members of the working group volunteered to do this, and act as interim trustees until we could have a proper election of trustees at an annual general meeting (AGM) of the allotment holders. The first AGM was held on 2nd March 2020, and 9 trustees were elected – 6 were existing interim trustees and 3 were new.

Due to Covid it wasn't practical to start planning the next AGM until summer of 2021. To make sure that most allotment holders would be available to attend a meeting, we decided to hold the AGM this autumn.

What we have been doing

As we all know, lockdown started 3 weeks after the 2020 AGM, and various forms of restrictions on movement and meetings were in place for the next 15 months. For most of this time it was difficult to hold physical meetings, even outdoors at the allotment, although we did hold a few meetings online.

Most of our work this year has focused on day-to-day maintenance of the allotment, fundraising, and fulfilling the reporting requirements for the charity. This has included:

- Ensuring access to the allotment during the first lockdown in spring 2020 • fixing the gate lock and issuing keys
- maintaining and replacing shared equipment (new wheelbarrows, strimmer etc) • managing the waiting list, including collecting annual renewal fees from people wishing to stay on the list, and weeding out names from the list that are no longer interested • letting vacant

allotment spaces to new allotment holders

- carrying out plot inspections, collecting allotment fees, etc

On the fundraising side, we have:

- had a successful fundraising event in December 2020, which raised over £2,400, of which £500 was donated to the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers (SDCAS) • received a grant from London Borough of Southwark Cleaner Greener Safer award scheme of £2,124, most of which was earmarked for the apiary.

We have maintained relationships with some of the organisations that use the allotment and our neighbours, including:

- regular contact with Dog Kennel Hill School about their plans for use of their plot • a lot of contact with Lettsom Gardens Association, particularly around access during the lockdowns, and in working out a joint approach to Southwark council on lease negotiations (as LGA were also negotiating a new lease at the same time as us)
- the nursery over arranging repairs to the boundary walls between their site and the allotments

We have also set up the charity's bank account and submitted our first set of charity accounts and trustee report to the Charities Commission – thanks to our Treasurer, Lizzie, for her work on this.

Work that still needs to be completed

The Covid 19 measures have definitely made it more difficult for the trustees to progress some of the bigger priority tasks, particularly the transfer of the allotment lease from CGG. There were delays on our side, mainly because we wanted to make sure that our lease and the new lease for Lettsom Gardens were complementary, and also delays from Southwark, although they have recently confirmed that their legal team is reviewing the lease and will contact us soon.

We have also tried to look at some other areas, such as how to manage the waiting list, what might be appropriate plot sizes for plots that become available for new members, updating the membership agreements to reflect membership of Lettsom Allotments Association rather than the CGG, developing a “frog bog/pond” or similar wildlife area on the allotment, etc. However we haven't been able to make as much progress on these more complex pieces of work.

One thing we identified that may be helpful to new trustees would be to split the trustee and allotment management tasks and duties into clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which could be carried out by a mix of trustees and allotment holders, working in smaller groups. The allotment management tasks in particular do not need to be carried out only by trustees, so if there are allotment holders who would like to be involved (e.g. in inspections, working on the “frog bog /pond”, fundraising, maintenance etc), but do not want to be trustees, this could be organised through the small groups. This would also make the process of managing the allotment on a day to day basis more cooperative and inclusive.

As noted earlier, most of the trustee duties and responsibilities are simple, infrequent and should

not take up too much time. Mostly they involve attending meetings, making sure these are recorded accurately, and reported back to the allotment members (something we haven't always managed this year, although we have tried our best). I have included a short note of bullet points on the main trustee responsibilities as an attachment to this email.

Summing up

When we started as trustees 18 months ago we had a few priorities – transferring the lease and other responsibilities from CGG to the new charity, working out roles and responsibilities of new trustees, planning how to involve the allotment holders in the running of the allotment.

This was already quite a big workload for a new trustee group, and Covid effectively derailed it for 15 months. As some of the trustees certainly only planned to be in the role for a year, a certain amount of fatigue may have set in, and since the summer it has been difficult for us to get going with this work. So now is definitely the time for a fresh injection of energy and enthusiasm from allotment holders to pick up from where we have got to !

We need a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 9 trustees to manage the CIO, and I would urge as many of you as possible to consider standing as a trustee. Even if you do not want to be a charity trustee but want to be more involved in the running of the allotment, please stand for election – it would be good to know how many people are interested in giving up some of their time to help run the allotments, so that trustees and non-trustees can work together to share the workload.

Please refer to the attached notes on charity trustees' responsibilities, and feel free to ask any questions you may have on these at the AGM on 24th November.

Treasurers Report / Lettsom Allotments Association 2019-2020

The Accounts Lettsom Allotments Association generated its revenues from six sources: -

An opening balance from past fundraisers of **£1192.00**

- Donations
- Fundraiser/open day
- Waiting list subscription
- Cleaner Greener Safer Grant from Southwark
- Key sales

The fundraisers

There was a good turnout for the socially distanced Christmas Fundraiser which was held during the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020. The raffle and sale of produce eg jams and chutneys etc raised a profit of £2312 before izettle card charges.

The allotments purchased a card machine so payments could be taken with a card and mobile which increased sales considerably.

It was advertised and agreed that a donation of £500 would be given to the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers. This has been received by SDCAS and they were delighted with the support.

Thank you to all those who made this happen. The whole community looks forward to the event.

Council funding

In 2020 we claimed for Invoice 1. 2021 Invoice 2.

£160 remaining of the CGS grant to claim for the pond as of November 2021. See page 3.

Key sales

Keys were supplied and a new lock fitted. We now keep keys in reserve for new members. When members leave they can be reimbursed for returned keys.

Communal improvements

Bulbs were purchased to brighten communal areas in the Spring after the pandemic. Everyone enjoyed seeing the spring flowers. The gate lock barrel was replaced and repaired twice and new keys were distributed. Keys are kept in reserve. Keys are reimbursed if given back to the Membership Secretary.

Waiting list

There was an increase in applications due to the pandemic and people needing outside space. In December 2020 a form was designed for members to fill out with a GDPR opt-in to become part of the waiting list. An admin charge of £10 was introduced.

Lettsom Allotments Association Account to Year Ended 31/12/20

	Income	Expenditure	Balance at the bank
Opening balance as of April 17 2020 income from fundraising events in 2019.	£1,192.00		£1,192.00
Plot rental new plot holders	£127.50		
Fundraising income	£2,415.81		
Key income	£842		
Keys and gate repair outgoings	£0	-£1,000.35	
Donations	£41.00		
CGS Council Grant Invoice 1	£2,124.45	-£2,124.45	
Honey sale and compost donation	£16.70		
Tools reimbursement new wheelbarrows		-203.98	
Allotment bulb planting reimbursement RS		-£102.61	
Website hosting fee reimbursement		-£26.43	
Card machine charges	£0	-£34.80	
	£6,759.46	-3492.62	£3,266.84
Balance at the bank December 31 2020			£3,266.84