

# **Minutes of the Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association Annual General Meeting Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 7pm**

## **St Barnabas School Hall, Hart Street, Oxford OX2 6BN**

Present: Giovanni Albarno (plot 156 157 158), Manda Joyce (plot 72 70B), Jamie Forbes (plot 63), Wendy Skinner Smith and Rodney Smith (plot 40 40A 41 41A), Keith Holton (plot 131 32), Emilie Clauzier (plot 97), Bruno Viola (plot 53A), Annalisa Cecchi (plot 61B), Sarah Edwards (plot 120), David Feeny (plot 76), Alex Hollingsworth (plot 80B 81 82), Alison Campbell and Godfrey Cole (plot 13), Tia Sedley (plot 32), Sara Jones (plot 71 70A), David Edwards (plot 119A), Liz Haines (plot SF16), Louise Bruce (plot SF19/20), Luke Bryden and Joely Kellard (plot 147 BC, 146D), Claire Pike (plot 47, 48B), Henry Bailey (plot SF6), Virgil Clarke (plot 111), Wendy Ball (plot 159A), Emma Delap (plot 1A), Jeremy Hyde (plot 91 92).

1. Welcome by Chair – Wendy Skinner Smith welcomed all Members. She said she has been doing the role a long time and still enjoyed it. In her other role as Chair of the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA), she reported that a new 21-year lease is soon going to be negotiated for all Oxford allotments and in that vein, a lot of the evening's agenda would be about sustainability, and the responsibility of individual members, as well as the Committee, as custodians of allotments.
2. Apologies – Received from Richard Haigh (plot 16), Godfrey and Dot Stone (plot 46), Sheila Allen (plot 12), George Burnett-Stuart (plot 33), Dominica Luscombe (plot 101), Bill and Sue Johnston (plot 127).
3. Minutes of 2017 AGM and matters arising – Wendy asked for approval of 2017's minutes as a proper record. No problems were raised so approval was given.
4. Annual Accounts and report from Treasurer – Sara Jones, Treasurer, went through 2017's accounts, as previously circulated. She noted that spending decisions are made by the whole committee, with two signatories for payments and that the accounts had also been independently audited and signed off. The accounts were thus approved.

Sara said we hadn't spent quite as much as planned, as we haven't found someone to repair the paths (the job seems to be too big for a small contractor, and too small for a big contractor); more on this from Wendy later. £120k of external funding has come into Cripsey Meadow Allotments over recent years, creating assets that must be maintained. The Committee are working on an asset maintenance plan and its funding.

Moving on to budget, Sara explained that this was a working document that would change over the coming year. She said we are also looking out for grants.

In answer to a question from the floor, Sara acknowledged that we are showing as running a deficit; in future we shall split maintenance from regular, day-to-day running of the site, to make it easier to understand where under- and over-spends lie.

Subscriptions are not increasing this year.

5. Questions on the 2017 annual report (where not covered under item 7 below) – None. Passed as a fair report of our activities.
6. Welcome from Susanna Pressel and Election of Officers and Committee Members – Current Committee members all stood down, and Susanna took over the meeting. Susanna introduced herself and asked for any nominations, other than Wendy, for Chair. There were none, and Wendy was re-elected unanimously to applause.

Wendy again took over the meeting. Alex was elected as Vice-Chair. Sara was elected as Treasurer. Manda was elected as Secretary.

Remaining Committee members were elected unanimously en-bloc with the exception of Anna Benn who is standing down but will remain co-opted committee member to help with Orchards.

7. AGM items for information and discussion

1. Changing the timetable for subscriptions and using emails for all communications (Manda)

Manda explained that there were four changes that the Committee were proposing to make to Association procedures, given the prevalence of email and electronic banking. From next year, email would become the default for sending out annual invoices (with paper by special arrangement for individual members). As no-one now uses the 'Shed day' to pay their subscription, this facility would, from next year, be dropped. The timetable for late payment of subscriptions would become tighter, with late payment surcharge (£10) being applied immediately after the AGM. Finally, if members do not pay at all, their plot would be taken back at the end of March instead of the end of April (so that there wasn't a month of rapid weed growth and further deterioration of the plot).

In response to questions from the floor about how we would know which members did not have email, Sara clarified that there was only one, and he would definitely get his invoice on paper. Some concern was expressed that we did not deprive members of their plot if they were, for example, in hospital. Wendy reassured the meeting that we would continue to try to contact people and, as usual, be understanding of individual circumstances. But, in practice, those who need chasing for late payment tended to be established members (some 20 needed chasing by phone last year). Those who did not pay at all had usually left Oxford and forgotten to tell us.

Manda also mentioned that the Committee was working to ensure CMAA would be compliant with new data protection legislation, the General Data Protection Legislation or GDPR, which is coming into force May 25<sup>th</sup> this year.

2. Working party contributions and donations (Wendy)

Wendy showed a table of Working Party contributions since 2006. Most of the work is on clearing plots. She gave the example of one plot that was cleared at a cost of £400, re-let and two years later (by which time we have had only £75 income), the plot needed clearing again. She said this was typical of about 5 plots a year.

She also highlighted that 12 committee members account for half the WP hours and all other Members account for the other half. The number of members coming to WPs is stable but donations in lieu do not cover the equivalent in labour. The best solution is for members to turn

up to Working Party. (Susanna asked if we used Community Payback, but Wendy said we don't have a toilet near enough).

Wendy asked the floor, 'Do we increase the 'donation'?'

Virgil said that not everyone has time to be able to come to WPs, e.g. if working full time, their free time was needed on their plot, but that she would be happy to pay extra via donation. There was general agreement that an extra donation would be fair and reasonable.

Annalisa suggested encouraging people to come more to WPs. How? Reminder on Saturday? Does it have to be Sunday (do people go to Church?). Look at Saturdays? Look at Sunday afternoon? But is routine better?

Not everyone realised that there is a regular pattern to working parties – second Sunday in the month – and this should be promoted. The time could be highlighted more in the title of emails.

### 3. Introduction of a short summer audit (Alex)

Alex explained that we currently have two audits a year, and a process of warnings etc. But a plot can be OK on 1<sup>st</sup> audit in May, but by 2<sup>nd</sup> audit in October the plot can be 6 feet high in weeds. The proposal is to introduce a light-touch check around July. No letters would be sent to those that are OK, only those with major problems would be picked up.

He said this should reduce length of time other plot holders have to suffer neighbouring problem plots, and save CMAA the additional cost of delayed clearance.

Annalisa asked for audit dates, and they are to be published soon.

### 4. Composting all your green waste on your plot (Wendy)

Wendy said that the experiment of opening a communal compost plot to members would not be repeated as it was unmanageable.

Continuing on the theme of sustainability, Wendy said that all members should be composting. She spent last Sunday's WP going round the site and found that, of 235 plots, only around 100 have recognisable compost bin; half of which appear to be making compost. She gave out a one-page sheet on composting which she will also put into the newsletter. She said that CMAA has a communal shredder, and shredded material is useful for heating compost bin up quickly; we will try to offer at WPs for members to bring their shreds. Weed seeds and diseased material can go into bags first. Also pernicious weeds can be bagged until they go into a black sludge. We will be encouraging all to compost more.

It was noted by Liz Haines that Clipper tea bags are compostable.

### 5. Water harvesting on plots (Wendy)

Last Sunday, Wendy also counted water butts. There are 125 sheds onsite, but only 62 have usable water butts. Wendy has produced one page on water butts which will go onto website.

Communal water tanks are being used by members where they should be collecting their own water; communal tanks are supposed to be for emergency only.

We would like to see an increase in the number of sheds with water butts, and to increase the number of cascaded or syphoned butts.

6. How members manage waste on site (Good Waste Guide) – Manda drew the meeting's attention to a CMAA Good Waste Guide that she had written, in two sections – one on the facilities available on site, and the other an A-Z of waste materials and what to do with them. A draft went round with the AGM materials, and the finalised version would soon be published on the website.

Jeremy mentioned that paint tins, tyres etc that people should not put in the skip, and Manda had included in the Waste Guide a list of all the items that it is illegal for us to put into the skip.

7. Fences and path update – Alex gave an update, following on from his item at year's AGM. The majority of paths are back and in the right place and, where Audit picks up path problems, letters are sent reminding people to address them. We are still working on reclaiming about 10 paths. Alex said, if you are not sure, ask; if worried about neighbour planting in the path, tell us.

We are also asking people to remove fences and we take un-managed fences out when people leave. In response to a question from the floor, Alex clarified that we are not banning fences or introducing a 'no fence' rule (young children and dogs can wander) but we are strongly advising that they come out. He also said that fences are not required under our insurance cover.

8. CCTV on the site (Emma Delap) – Emma explained that we currently use CCTV cameras onsite to monitor badger incursions. Over the last year there have been incidents including the theft of a bag by the gate, a camper coming on site from a neighbouring island and fly-tipping in and around the skip. So we are planning to use cameras more, not all the time, but where there is a particular concern. She confirmed that signs will go up where we need to do it.

Annalisa mentioned that fake cameras had worked as deterrents in other locations and may be worth considering.

There were no adverse comments.

9. Bonfires. How do we sustain them? – Emma gave a reminder to be considerate of onsite and offsite neighbours when burning onsite. So far, complaints Castle Mill residents have come to us, but, if people go to Council, we could be banned from having bonfires onsite at all.

Other associations have had to ban members from having fires. Guidelines are online but are obvious, dry material, not tyres, paint, plastic etc, no accelerant.

Emma said that the Committee asks members to compost as much as possible, use the communal burning area, burn when wind is away from Castle Mill and burn your material when you bring it to the communal area (when the wind is in the right direction).

Also, if the wind is in the right direction, on WP day, we will have a fire in the communal area. Sarah added that, if people only have a small amount to burn, they will soon be able to use an incinerator which we are going to buy, for use next to the big communal burning area.

If poor bonfires are a persistent problem, we may have to prevent members from burning on their plot. Wendy said that, on Twenty Pound Meadow near Abbey Rd, they have banned burning on individual plots because of complaints.

Claire asked if the Committee follow up inappropriate burning; they do. And members can also comment if they see other members burning inappropriately.

#### 10. Information on Castle Mill Flats work schedule

Wendy said that, at 5:05pm today, she got a call from University with the latest update on Castle Mill, so the situation is still fluid. It is clear that we are going to have a building site next to us. We have been waiting since last July to get details and negotiate.

The contractors will be taking out our fence (as badgers can climb our current fence we will benefit from its replacement). Planters and bike sheds will go over the badger run, so the new Castle Mill will be closer to us.

For about 18 months we will need to accommodate some disturbance on that side, and there will be no routine car access for some plots along the Castle Mill side (we will aim to help with deliveries). At a meeting last week with the University, we requested improvement to our paths to enable their work, and wider site path improvements as a quid pro quo for the disruption. Wendy had guessed around £10k for the path improvement work she had in mind, but their estimates ranged between £30k and £60K plus contractor costs and VAT. Negotiation will continue.

A tripartite agreement between the University, Oxford City Council and CMAA, will be required. It will include onward maintenance of trees on our boundary, badger run etc. They are working on one block at a time. The whole badger run must be done first, as it must be finished by end October (animal conservation). Temporary fencing will go in, and scaffolding skirt supports will be on our side.

We will keep members informed, and write individually to members affected by loss of vehicular access once the limitation of access is clear.

#### 8. Any Other Business

None.

The meeting closed at 20:45.