

DRAFT Minutes of the Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association AGM 21st March 2021

Present: David Feeny, Di Newell, Melody Grubaugh, Dot Stone, Godfrey Stone, Jacqueline Richold, Bernard Cadogan, Tim Bone, Patsy Franks, Stuart Faulkner, Susanna Pressel, Na Li, Marianne Julebin, Jo Hynes, Dana Marceta, Louise Bruce, Robert Bruce, Claire Pike, Alessandra Nolasco, Sam Woor, Tia Sedley, Edward Macdonald, Maryam Gohari, Sara Jones, Chloe Wood, Annie Parker, Rachel Reeves, Rodney Smith, Dominica Luscombe, Karrine Sanders, Rodney Smith, John Clarke, Godfrey Cole, Jean Haigh, Richard Haigh, Simon Mollison, Jane Mollinon, Carrie Turner, Jackie Thompson, Manda Joyce, Wendy Skinner Smith, Alice Sprinkle, Jamie Forbes, Julia Popescu, Sarah Edwards, David Edwards, Jeremy Hyde, Christine Melia, Phyllis Starkey, Keith Holton, Emma Delap, Ilias Kounatidis, Alex Hollingsworth, Jamie Hartzell, Alison Campbell.

1. Welcome from Chair – Wendy welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reminded us that just over a year ago, we just managed to have our last AGM in person before the Covid lockdown. We sanitised things and as far as we know no one became ill! In the ensuing year, we managed to keep the site open and on the whole members followed the rules. Wendy said she has had a much easier preparation for the AGM this year as Julia is managing the Zoom for us - thanks to her. Today Wendy will hand over to the new Committee and as of tomorrow will be gardening, and sometimes helping with communal shredding.

2. Apologies for Absence – Manda reported that the following members had sent their apologies - Diana Parker, Sheila Allen, Sarah Hendriks, Fatos Barnes, Toby Jones, Arabella Warner, Aga Rzas, Doke Ostle, Robin Ostle, Elizabeth Ince-Peters, Dexnell Peters, Reneth McKenzie, Stephen Carratt, Kath Roberts, Anna Marshall, Konstantina Isidoros, Alison Shaw.

3. Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting – Wendy asked if anyone had any comments or questions about last year's AGM minutes. There were none. She called on members to vote to approve the minutes using the Zoom polling function. The motion was carried.

4. Annual Accounts and Budget, Report from Treasurer – Treasurer Jamie Forbes said that the accounts were similar to the last few years, the only real difference being the increase in paid site work which took into account the lack of working parties. But he said the amount did not exceed contributions members made in lieu of working parties. Mowing and strimming were similar to previous years. We spent £1.2k on re-surfacing the paths and we plan to put the same amount of money in in the next year or two. Onsite sales were mostly black plastic to cover people's plots, and we also sold some scrap fencing as a one-off. No fundraising was possible due to Covid. Key deposits will stay roughly the same (he noted that some people leave their key deposit as a donation to funds when they depart).

A question was asked, what was the Grant? Wendy replied we had two grants – one from ODFAA/OCC when we applied for funds for the track, and we also received £20,000 from Oxford University. We spent some of this on water harvesting which is what we had intended to use it for.

The vote to accept the 2020 accounts was taken and the motion carried.

5. 2020 Annual Report – Wendy asked members if there were other questions on the Annual Report, circulated at the end of February. There were none.

The vote to adopt the 2020 Annual Report was taken and the motion carried.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members – Wendy said that usually Susanna Pressel does this but today this would be Wendy's last and only job. We received nominations and seconds for Alex Hollingsworth to stand as Chair, and for the rest of the Committee as listed in the Agenda. The vote was taken en bloc.

The vote to elect the Committee was taken and the motion carried.

Wendy congratulated the new Committee.

7. Thanks to Wendy – Alex led our thanks to Wendy. He said that she started gardening her plot in 1976 and joined a new committee in 2003. Her valedictory piece in the newsletter a couple of months ago explained some of the challenges she had faced, that had included a high-profile court case. Cripsey Meadow could have ceased to be an active allotment site, it was at such a low point. Wendy stepped up with great vision, energy and determination, and with her powers of persuasion and cajolery achieved that vision. Alex remembered a time when there were only about 35 actively-managed plots now we have around 261! Wendy led liaison with the Castle Mill project and the development of the South Field. Probably the biggest complement to Wendy is that, when Alex said he was standing as Chair, people said to him 'you're brave, trying to fill Wendy's boots'. Alex said that he could not aim to fill Wendy's boots; it's actually going to take about half a dozen of us on the Committee to do what Wendy did single-handed. In summary, he said Cripsey Meadow allotments would not be there now if it were not for Wendy. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude and members have expressed this in their generous donations to Wendy's collection. Jamie updated us that the final size of the pot for Wendy was £975!

Wendy thanked members for their generous gift. She said that she and Rodney had got fed up with grape juice from their vines and they have grubbed up all but one. Her leaving gift will be used to buy more cherries, and soft fruit with magpie defence. She said how much she looked forward to having her grandchildren on her plot again, and will be happy to talk allotments to all. She also looks forward to us all having a party in due course!

8. Annual Report Items

Lease renewal – Alex said that Manda had written a clear summary of the background and what the options are in the Annual Report. He gave a brief overview: in the first 100+ years of the Association it has been like a private club with trustees responsible, but exposed to legal liability if things went extremely wrong. All associations are facing this. We intend to set our association up as a separate legal entity at the same time as we are negotiating our new lease with the landlord (OCC). We have looked at options – it boils down to two, a limited company (easiest and cheapest) or a co-operative (more challenging than foreseen). We are asking this AGM to vote to agree to the principle, entrusting the committee to do more work on the options, with a later meeting this year to offer the detail to members to vote on.

We are also asking for a second, procedural, vote, to allow the current association to be wound up.

There was a kind offer from Jamie Hartzell and Carey Newson who offered to share experience of community benefit societies, noted.

A question was asked about who the shareholders would be. Alex replied that if a company by guarantee, there would be no shareholders. But if a co-op there would be shareholders, the exact details to be fleshed out.

The two votes in this item were taken. For the first, in principle to become incorporated, 97% voted yes, with 3% against.

The second vote – to add dissolution clause as worded on the back of the agenda - 100% yes.

Alex re-iterated that the Committee would spell out options and our preferred solution later in the year and put it for final vote at another General Meeting.

9. AOB

a) Bonfires – Alex summarised the situation: when lockdown first happened, our Landlord, the City Council issued a blanket ban on allotments as Covid is a respiratory disease. The blanket ban was later lifted but the Committee took the view that we should not permit bonfires on plots, just the communal bonfire when the wind was in the right direction and supervised. Even so, one communal fire did engender a complaint! There have been others at other sites around Oxford.

Until we can be sure we are not going to get complaints from our neighbours we need to keep the current arrangement, as repeated complaints may lead our landlord to enforce a full ban.

b) When are we going to restart working parties? Alex said that many of us enjoy the communal aspect of working parties and that, as soon as compatible with national/local guidance, we will go ahead.

c) A question was asked about sharing seeds and plants – Alex would like to see if we can add this to our online presence. We do have this by the gate informally.

d) A question was asked if anyone had experience of digging a well – someone responded directly to the questioner in the chat and Alex had a couple of names that he said he would email after. Committee member Sarah Edwards (via chat) reminded everyone that new wells needed to be notified to the Committee so that they could be added to our well map, for safety reasons).

d) Any thoughts on managing rat population? Alex said please don't use poison, affects other wildlife. Sadly rats love compost heaps and so do we.

There were no more AOB items.

Alex thanked everyone for attending; he hoped the social element of AGM and working parties would return soon.

Meeting ended at 15.50.