

FAIRACRES ALLOTMENT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019
7.30 March 21st Gladiators Club, Iffly Road, Oxford.

Apologies: Apologies were received from

Pete Cranston; Gaby Hock; Julia Hollander; Kay Millar; Jane Carlton Smith; Daniel Bone and Angeli Vaid; Liz and Andrew Thompson; Lissa Rodd; Katryna Pastacaldi; Sue Rowe; Rick Lamb; Jonathan Stockland; Monica Turner; Lucy Watson; Claire Du Feu; Brian Hills

19 members were present, including the committee

1. Matters arising from minutes of 2018 AGM:

- 1.1 There was an amendment to the previous minutes: the Treasurer's report had stated that the seed sale made £500 but did not indicate the profit made on the seeds, which was £29.57
- 1.2 An action recorded in last minutes remains outstanding, which was the proposed visit to Highgrove. Clive Lindley-Jones will look into this again and organise an outing with a longer lead time.

2. Officers Reports:

2.1 Treasurer's Report

Paul Hopkins thanked Jon Piggott who acted as auditor of the 2018 accounts.

As of the 31st Dec, 2018, there was a sum of £4510 in the bank. Of this, about £1600 was being held as plot holder deposits.

Major expenditures included replacing the Honda Lawnmower (£435) and buying water carts (£353).

Other major costs included rent to OCC £155.94 and £60 for insurance.

This year the treasurer sent out the invoices over the week-end of 12/13 January, with a return date no later than the 28th Feb. This pattern and schedule of invoicing will now be replicated each year. This new scheduling of billing was implemented to encourage better plot holder response to paying, and seems to have been successful. Last year at this time only 39 plot holders had paid, with the last payment as late as September! This year, only 2 have not paid, although they have until the 31st March to respond to last request letters.

2.2 Membership secretary report

Jane King reported that we have 90 plots with 70 members. There is a current waiting list of 25, with 6 removed who no longer wish to take up a plot. 5 plots are vacant and ready to be let. Jane King requested that changes of contact details or update of helpers' details should be sent to fairacres@gmail.com.

2.3 Chair's report

2.3.1 Thanks

Paul Hopkins thanked all the committee members for giving up their free time to serve the allotment association, and took the opportunity of thanking Polly Woolstone, who is not standing for re-election for next year. Polly has been an active committee member since 2016, and took on the responsibilities of organising the AGM venue, and supporting the chairman. She also acted as "Seed secretary" and has stated she is willing to continue in this role although no longer on the committee.

The Chair also thanked Jon Piggott and David Morris for always saying yes when he mentioned that he needed help, such as when repairing the polytunnel staging or putting up the notice board. Further thanks to David for the orchard being so well tended.

2.3.2 Water

In 2018 the Chair's biggest concern was the cost of water. Unlike other sites we did not ration water this year. From September 2017 to September 2018 we consumed over 350 Cu metres of water,

costing £485; this will increase if summers continue to be hot. It is further worrying that we cannot predict costs, since Castle Water, who bill us on behalf of Thames Water, have failed to read the water meter for years but rely on us to give an estimate.

We have been in credit with water for some years but soon this will no longer be the case. For this reason the Chair is interested in investing in a borehole, since this provides better quality of water and we may be able to get a grant from Thames Water.

Some challenges to a borehole may be: distribution of water; its location; whether we would connect it to the use of solar power; get rid of mains water.

A quote for the borehole to date has been approx. £1500 + VAT – The Community Payback scheme may be a source of labour.

This was seconded and agreed.

2.3.3 Leases

There are changes afoot in the way the Council manages the Allotment sites. Their legal department is busy revising the leases and this will in all probability impact the rent we pay to them.

The other change is that the role of trustee will disappear with committee members taking on the responsibility of lease holders. Also, Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA), who arranges our liability insurance, has said that the premiums will start to rise.

2.3.4. Working parties

There have been several working parties since the last AGM, and overall attendance was quite good. It was previously mentioned that attendance varies according to the weather. Last year we seemed to easily fill a skip and there may be a skip later in the season, to match a Working Party.

At the last AGM we discussed the issue that working parties were composed of a small number of regulars, with other plot holders consistently absent. At present some opt to pay a voluntary contribution rather than engaging in the working parties, but the problem is this sum does not take into consideration the cost to the allotment committee of employing people to do the extra work needed. This is more in the line of £10-£15 per hour, and it has been suggested that the voluntary contribution should be raised to realistically reflect this, i.e. £20-£30 for two contributed hours, which is the minimum in the rules.

2.3.5 Communication:

Although there is still some work to be done on the website, this is now active and updated, with many thanks to Pete Cranston for doing this work. Feedback was that the site could do with more pictures. CLJ volunteered to upload some that he had taken.

This year there have been issues of communication from the Chair to plotters. PH now sends out emails via MS Outlook, but using GMAIL, since previously he would send out a group email on GMAIL and find that some would bounce back or be delivered after a substantial delay. Still to be established if the new system works.

Facebook does not seem to have had the take up from members as the Chair had hoped.

2.3.6

Constitution and Rules

Revisionary work this year had been done on the Constitution and Rules, since there had been some unnecessary duplication in places, as well as lack of detail in others. At times conflicting information had been included. This has now been rectified by the Chair.

2.3.7 Centenary and Plot competitions

There is no update of information on the Centenary and Plot competitions, but an upcoming ODFAA committee meeting may provide more details.

3. Votes on the motions

- 3.1 To raise the rent in 2020 to £20 for plots held up to 2.5 poles
To raise the rent in 2020 to £35 for plots held over 2.5 poles
This was seconded and passed.
- 3.2 That future rises in rent should not have to be approved each year at AGM.
This was not passed.
An amended proposal was that future rent rises would need to be approved at AGM but any interim requests to raise the rent could be addressed by an EGM. This was seconded and passed.
- 3.3 That a levy of £30 should be made to members not contributing to the working parties. This was not passed.
An amended motion was that members would be offered a choice of three alternative ways of contributing:
- An opt out payment of £30
 - Engagement in a working party
 - Option to offer two hours of labour outside of the working parties, and checking with the committee for a list of tasks that could be carried out in self-managed time.
- This was seconded and passed.
It was suggested that a list of tasks could be posted on notice board for this purpose.
- 3.4 To change the requirement in the Rules and Constitution for committee members to stand down after 6 years consecutive membership. Chair proposed that this be waived if people wished to continue to serve. This was not passed.
An amended motion was that committee members should continue to be elected at the AGM, but where a committee member has reached a limit of 6 years, that this could be waived for another year by vote via the AGM, and could be continued each year if necessary.
This was seconded and passed.

4. The Election of officers.

Paul Hopkins was proposed as chair. This was seconded and passed
Mark Evans was proposed as treasurer. This was seconded and passed
Lynn Errey was proposed as secretary. This was seconded and passed
Liz Hodgeson proposed that other members of the committee be retained. This was seconded and passed.

5. AOB.

5.1 Bees. Chris Upton was offering a Bee Log Tower at a greatly reduced price of £200, since his son was doing the work (and would normally charge considerably more). Advantages to having such a tower onsite would be that it would require no upkeep and did not pose any danger to individuals since it was high with bees having a flight path above the heads of passers-by. The allotment would benefit from enhanced pollination, as well as participating in the ecological protection of bees.

It was agreed that we would take up this offer, and that a grant application could be made to the city council even though this was time critical. It was also agreed to spend the £200 even in the case that we would not get a grant. Motion passed.

5.2 Numbers at AGM. Simon Fisher expressed concern that there were so few at the AGM and asked whether this was clashing with other events.

Date and time for the AGM to be announced closer to the time.
Minutes recorded by Lynn Errey (Secretary)