

## Fairacres Road Allotment Association Spring Newsletter, April 2015

**Dear All,**

This Spring newsletter falls hard on the heels of the 2015 Annual General Meeting on March 16th 2015. This was held at the Chester, in Chester Street, and many thanks to those who came and participated. For those of you who couldn't make it, the main content of this newsletter will be a summary of the AGM discussions, and how these may be turned into action in the coming months. Some of the items will call for action on your part, so it would be great if you could read and take note. You can give feedback or send any queries about any content to the committee, on:

[info@fairacresallotments.org](mailto:info@fairacresallotments.org) or to [lynn.errey@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.errey@gmail.com)

So below you'll find a summary of the annual Treasurer's report, Letting Secretary's report and Chair's report, followed by some information on changes to membership rules. You will notice in the newsletter various ACTION POINTS on other matters as you read. We would appreciate your taking them up. Here we go.

### **1. Steven Kearsely's Treasurer Report**

The main thrust of the report was why and how we need to save money. Stephen reported that Oxford City Council are still committed to maintaining the provision of allotments but are cutting their budgets. This means they will only do the minimum towards allotment maintenance in future. So to be able to balance our budget, we need to pay attention to three ways we use the allotments in future:

### **ACTION POINTS**

**Work to conserve water:** the cost of water is the association's major expense. To contain this, we are asking everyone to control the way we use hoses. That is, rather than leaving them to flow unattended on a plot, or worse, the path, we should direct them by hand where needed.

- **Hedge trimming:** recently you might have noticed the pile of chippings for our use, and the neat hedge borders. We spent £1000 for a tree surgeon to do this hedge trimming, to help us get off to a strong start in keeping a clear perimeter this year. Unfortunately we can't afford to pay for hedge trimming as an annual event, so we are asking members whose plot is bordered by a hedge to keep the hedges in trim, as they are at present.
- **Increase in rent per plot:** it was unanimously agreed at the AGM meeting that rents could be increased to £5 per pole (£4 concessionary) to meet the rising costs over time.

## **2. Lettings Secretary Report**

Jane King has put in a great deal of work as our letting secretary this year in keeping the waiting list moving, and ensuring that all who are listed are still actively seeking plots. Currently, there 36 people on the waiting list, with 7 plots vacant and ready to be taken up. There should be another plot inspection coming up in the spring so if you are thinking of giving up your plot let us know.

## **3. Chair's Report**

Jon Piggott reported the work done on the rent review, the purchase of plastic for refurbishment of the polytunnels, tree trimming, and contacts with the council re fallen trees. Jon was thanked for arranging the loads of wood chips, and clearing the space for this to happen.

Jon commented that although no general working parties have taken place, we did have one cleaning up the polytunnels. And soon we will need to call on people to help in relation to the orchard and the polytunnel. More of this below.

## **4. Constitution & Rules**

There have been a few changes in the rules to clarify membership status. It will be useful to read carefully through this section to see if it affects you or your helpers in any way. The changes are reproduced below.

*Section 5.2 Members of the Association are:*

- a) Sole Plotholders*
- b) Joint Members*
- c) Associate Members*

***“Joint Membership*** shall be open to two individuals linked by marriage, civil partnership, common law marriage or through family relationship such as parent child or siblings. Joint membership can be established when the plot is initially taken or through a notification to the treasurer when paying a rent demand. A “Joint Member” may become the sole allotment holder in the event of the dissolution of the relationship between the two individuals. In the event that the relationship is dissolved and that there is no agreement as to who shall retain responsibility for the allotment, the matter will be referred to the committee which reserves the power to let the allotment to neither party.

***Associate Membership-*** An associate member may be nominated to the Committee by a plotholder(s) to represent them/act for them in relation to meetings, working groups or other matters. An Associate Member has no additional status in relation to an application for an allotment in their own right nor are they automatically eligible to take over the allotment from the plotholder who nominated them.”

### **Other changes of Rules**

Amendment of Section 4.6 was agreed, so that the section now reads:

***“4.6 A plot-holder may not sublet his/her plot(s) or part of it, nor transfer their plot to another plot-holder or other person.”***

**A New Rule** was also proposed and agreed

***“All allotments shall be kept in a state of active cultivation – at any time at least 75% of any allotment shall show evidence of preparation or crop production. Failure to maintain***

*active cultivation may result in the plotholder being asked to leave or not being offered the opportunity to renew their membership.”*

Effectively this last rule will affect everyone, and means that if you have a registered helper, you need to help them be aware of how these rules also affect them. If you need more clarity about these rulings, email the committee on [info@fairacresallotments.org](mailto:info@fairacresallotments.org)

## **5. Your new Committee for 2015 (contact: [info@fairacresallotments.org](mailto:info@fairacresallotments.org))**

Our Chair re-elected for this year is Jon Piggott.

Our Treasurer re-elected for this year is Stephen Kearsley.

Our Lettings Secretary re-elected this year is Jane King.

Our Trustees are David Morris continuing, and Jane Fisher, who was appointed to replace Lynn Errey.

Our Secretary newly elected this year has two heads, belonging to Lynn Errey & Clive Lindley Jones. They will be joint secretary to replace Julia Hollander who is standing down.

(Many thanks to Julia for all the brilliant newsletters of the past, we will try to live up to the standard you set!)

The rest of our committee this year are Sue Coles and Gaby Hoch ongoing, along with new committee members Chris Upton, Tabitha Marriage, Nikki Sporrang and Polly Wolstenholme. Tim Humphries is coming off the committee but has agreed to continue to help out with the website.

## **ACTION POINT**

There was a question at the AGM about having someone in the role of social secretary. As all the people named above have their own roles to play on the committee, there isn't anyone at present to fill this role. But if you are good at organizing things and fancy sharing with one or more people this role, then suggestions or ideas, eg apple day or bring & share events, will be gratefully received .

## **6. Site security**

Although badgers and moles have been a nuisance on some plots in the last year, our current fencing security isn't really up to such expert invaders! On the other hand, we can do something about the issue of human security.

In the last year, there were three kinds of threat to site security. These were 1. Gate security 2. Safety of plants in the polytunnels 3. Produce security on the orchard.

## **ACTION POINTS**

1. **Gate Security:** Most of you will have come across an instance when the gate has proven either to be unlocked and unattended, or badly secured, ie with the lock left open and hanging. This is frustrating for those who care about site security because the rules clearly state that the gate **should be locked at all times**. This message was reinforced at the AGM. So if you notice someone having breached this security, please have a word.

**The locking system:** At the AGM, Jon Piggott reported having been offered

a lock and key system at a very reasonable price, which might replace the key-less lock we currently have. The convenience of this would be that people would have to relock the gate to retrieve their key, thus ensuring more security. The inconvenience is that if you happened to be passing and want to go in, you would need to have a key on you whereas the current system, though less secure, is more convenient.

At the AGM, there were 9 in favour of a new lock and 9 against, with the chair declining to use his casting vote. David Morris suggested that we should nevertheless purchase the lock and key system now and keep it in reserve, but that neither key nor combination lock would be effective without putting the peg **back in the hole**. Sometimes we all need to observe the need to dig the gravel out of the peg hole too.

#### **ACTION POINT**

Members are STRONGLY REQUESTED TO KEEP THE GATE LOCKED AT ALL TIMES.

#### **2.Safety of plants in the polytunnels**

Last year quite a few people noted damage to their plants or even their seedlings disappearing!! The best we can do here is to ask people to supervise children if they are in the polytunnel, and also to be vigilant that people going in have business doing so.

#### **ACTION POINT**

It will be a lot easier to monitor who is in and out of the polytunnel if everyone's produce is **clearly labeled with their name and plot number**. If you can't demonstrate that you have got plants in there or are clearly preparing to put them in there, there is no reason to be there.

#### **3.Produce security in the orchard**

Last year some of the trees were entirely stripped of fruit overnight, clearly by someone who was unaware or ignoring that we have a sharing system whereby David Morris puts out produce when it is ready for plot holders to help themselves.

#### **ACTION POINT**

For the health of the trees, and also for fairness, we ask people not to pick fruit directly from the trees themselves.

### **7 . Orchard.**

David Morris who has done much of the work with the apple trees has called for a few helpers to look after the fruit trees. 2 or 3 volunteers are needed to take on the more physical side of things to maintain the trees in the way they should be. These unusual kinds of trees, originally obtained by Patsy and George M are largely heritage trees, valued for their special, unusual varieties. We have a responsibility to maintain them as a memorial to Patsy.

**ACTION POINT**

Chris Upton has volunteered to assist but we still need one or two people who are interested. Please email [info@fairacresallotments.org](mailto:info@fairacresallotments.org) if interested

**8. The Polytunnels**

The skins of the polytunnels need replacing as they are torn and ineffective. We have purchased the new plastic but will need 2 working sessions in sequence, to do the work. This will be 1. A party to dig around the polytunnels to free up the old plastic and prepare the foundation for the new plastic. If we have 4-5 people for this it shouldn't take more than an hour or two. 2 A group of 4-6 people to pull the new skin on and secure it. Again, not hours of work

**ACTION POINT**

If you use the polytunnels, or intend to use them, we would appreciate your volunteering your time. People have already offered a lot of time and labour to make the polytunnels possible as a resource, so please do your bit if you use them and offer to help with the refurbishment.

We will be sending round an email soon asking for volunteers, perhaps for working days on the 11<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup> of April or the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> of April. In the meantime, if you have a preference for dates to help, email Lynn on [lynn.errey@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.errey@gmail.com)

**Other stuff.** Joan & Paul McCartney's sundial has been given to us and will be set up it behind the notice board.

That's it for now. Best wishes, and feedback appreciated.  
Lynn Errey for the Fairacres Allotment Committee