

FAIRACRES ALLOTMENT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018
March 23rd 2018 Gladiators Club, Iffley Road, Oxford.

Apologies: Apologies were received from

Laura Bosley, Jean Burrell, Pete Shepherd, Diana Cosford, John Pybus, Dave Grundy, Stephen Cox, Cathy and Eric Ferreira, Lucy Watson, Rebecca Ungpakorn, Adrian Service, Liz Hodgson, Tabitha Marriage, Colin Buchan, Catherine Smith, Richard Lamb, Simon Smith, Liz Mitchell, Paul Medley, Jocelyn Bell, Simon Fisher

25 members were present, including the committee

1. Matters arising from minutes of 2017 AGM:

One outstanding matter arose from last year's AGM minutes. This was a question around training specific members to help upkeep of the orchard. This was not carried forward. Instead the committee organised a workshop of tree pruning for members who would in turn undertake to do some tree pruning in the orchard where required.

2. Officers Reports:

2.1 Treasurer's Report

Mark Evans reported that the bank was quite healthy considering recent expenditure. Current revenue from rents comes to about £2500 per year so we are still healthily in excess of budget. Seed sales brought in £500. Currently we have £4820 in account, including for some reason a credit balance of £470 for use of water. Given this rebate, it is unlikely that we will have much to pay much in the way of water rates for 2018.

So far annual rent had only come in from only 39 plot holders, so Mark invited others to rectify these arrears.

2.2 Lettings report

Jane King reported that we have 90 plots with 70 members. There is a current waiting list of 27 but of these 10 have postponed taking up a plot. 4 vacant plots are available but another one is coming up shortly. There is a need to keep up to date with contact details.

2.3 Chair's report

Paul Hopkins reported that Lucy Watson the previous treasurer had chosen to stand down. Fortunately Mark Evans was willing to take over. Paul also reported that our previous treasurer, Stephen Kearsey, had been ill and had had to resign. Paul reported that his health was getting stronger and thanked him for all the involvement and work he had put into the committee over the years.

Other items in the chair's report were

2.3.1 Expenditure to benefit plot holders:

A Mikita strimmer and polesaw had been purchased for the site. However, because it was potentially dangerous, specialist training had been given to some plot holders volunteering to be responsible for using it on the site.

A bench in the orchard had been refurbished, with a second bench purchased with grant money to go up near the main entrance once grass has been re-established there. Also in this area, a

new notice board had been erected for communal and committee use. Paul requested members to monitor for old notices.

A skip had been brought in for removal of rubbish on site. A second small one will be ordered in the spring but primarily for committee use to get rid of generalised (non plot specific) rubbish. Paul will advise if there will be room for plot-holders to add items in due course, but no green rubbish will be allowed.

More water carts have been purchased for easy storage of hoses.

2.3.2 A wild life pond had been proposed. Various views were expressed, such as the potential dangers of larger ponds for children, offset by the ease of maintenance of small ponds, although these have the disadvantage of drying out. David Morris suggested Dr Hessayan's book on Ponds and Wildlife for this. The general consensus however was that we have enough maintenance to do and although it is a lovely idea the maintenance issues are paramount. It was put forward that if a group of enthusiasts came forward who would wish to make and maintain a pond for at least 5 years, then this would get a positive vote. The allotment committee wanted to thank Liz for her research and proposal. Paul Hopkins sent out an email after the AGM summarising the proposal and views expressed and will invite other views before we proceed with any action.

2.3.3 Working parties had taken place this year, some well attended others poorly attended. There was discussion as to whether we should employ more outside labour, and if so, whether we would ask for a more realistically priced voluntary contribution for plot holders who did not wish to attend work parties, given that labour comes at around £10 per hour.

After note added by PH: The Chair said before making a decision on asking for an increase in voluntary contributions, he would monitor the situation over the next 12 months regarding working parties and employing external contractors

2.3.4 Health and safety matters: Paul outlined our obligation to OFDAA to provide a clear and transparent policy on this, but since it is complex, the committee are still working on it.

2.3.5 Communication issues: we are still working on efficient ways for plot holders to keep in touch with the committee and with allotment business. In addition to emails and notices, we have a website and the recent addition of a Facebook page. Pete Cranston has volunteered to do work on the website since it is very out of date. Pete has new software for it and hopes to get on to it in April. Paul said he was very supportive of the use of Facebook as a way of allowing members to communicate collectively on issues such as seed swapping, ordering manure, etc.

3. Social events .

3.1 Open gardens Jane Fisher discussed the upcoming open gardens event for Iffley Fields, running on Saturday June 30th, with the convent garden open as well as our allotments and individuals' gardens. Jane reported that those who had opened their gardens last time round found it a very enjoyable process. If anyone wants to open their garden please let Jane know. Jane also invited interested persons to volunteer to help with teas, cake making, child supervision etc. This is a good fundraiser for local charities so please let Jane Fisher know if you wish to help in any way.

3.2 September bring and share Discussion arose about a September allotment site social, probably the second Saturday of the month, and further organisation will be discussed in due course.

3.3 Group garden visit Clive Lindley Jones proposed a group garden visit trip to Highgrove for next year. We can go with smaller groups, and it would cost about £27.50 per head. Clive thought this could be a nice day for those who are interested. It would need to be organised by February.

4. The Election of officers.

Officers need to be re-elected each year, while trustees are appointed for 3 years and then need to be re-elected. No one attending the AGM wished to join us on the committee. David Morris was re-elected as a trustee.

5. AOB.

Jon Piggott mentioned the OFDAA centenary request for a page from each of the Oxfordshire allotments for its centenary celebration handbook. They are looking for a page of A4 with anecdotes. This needs to be in by September. Some members showed interest in putting something together.

David Morris asked for clarification about the correct health and safety procedures for using the pole saw. Currently we do not have a formal list of the people who have been shown how to use new equipment but this can be provided. Paul Hopkins observed that we cannot put an unfair burden on Rodas to do all equipment training and this responsibility needs to be spread. Jane King observed that some plot holders need regular updates on how to use machinery to mow their paths.

David Morris asked about possible member visits to other allotments, and how these might be organised. Jon Piggott observed that the OFDAA had tried running a series of open events at various sites, but the turnout had been very poor, possibly through insufficient information.

Jane Carlton Smith had been pleased that someone else had cut her hedge this year but wanted to know the ongoing situation. Lynn Errey observed that although this has been a successful working party, the issue of income versus outgoings on work still needed to be resolved, as a very small number of regulars were doing most of the work, and this was not sustainable.

The best day for AGM meetings was discussed and it was questioned whether Friday night was the best time. This will be considered before next year's AGM.

Minutes recorded by Lynn Errey (Secretary)