

Fairacres Road Allotment Association Annual General Meeting

20th March 2025 7.30p.m. St Alban's Hall, Chester Street, Oxford.

Present: Susanna Gimson, Mike Hudson, Rob Waygood, Harry Dixon, Punam Behl, Tony Woolstone, Clive Lindley-Jones, Claire du Feu, Jane King, Marc Thompson, Sue Clarke, Julia Hollander, Liz Hodgson, Melissa Rodd, Eric Clarke, Cathy Ferreira, Connie McDermott, Paul Knox-Clarke.

Committee – Tim Wolstenholme, Rosemary Cameron, David Morris, Margaret Thompson, Jo Burch.

Apologies: Anne Carter(co-chair)Polly Woolstone, Jocelyn Bell, Brian Hills, Jamie Castell, Chris Berry, Alex Norrish, Michael Hicks, Nick Bulloss, Jane and Simon Fisher, Emma Gascoigne, David Grundy.

1. Chair's Report: Tim Wolstenholme introduced himself as one of two co-chairs who had stepped in following Paul Hopkins' resignation. Co-chair Anne Carter was not able to attend because of a prior business commitment. The Committee formally recorded their gratitude to Paul for his time and work as Chair not just during the past year but in previous years and for his consistent practical support for the association.

2. Minutes of the 2024 AGM, previously circulated, were accepted as a true record with no follow-up questions. Proposer Rosemary Cameron, Seconder Clive Lindley-Jones.

3. Membership Secretary's report

Rosemary Cameron reported that there had recently been a flurry of activity with 13 new plot-holders. Three large plots had been split to create six smaller ones. There are 21 on the waiting list and the likely wait is around two years, never less than one. The person at the top applied on 20.11.23

The WhatsApp FRAA Chat Group has been great for people to get to know each other and for informal communication including site security, seed swaps and joint compost ordering (with thanks to Emma for this). All formal committee communications are sent by email, but sometimes reminders are posted on WhatsApp too.

A question from the floor raised the matter of rigour in pursuing unsatisfactory plot-holders and Tim commented that the Committee may be somewhat tougher in future, while appreciating difficult circumstances.

Jane King suggested reinstatement of allowing waiting-list people to choose to be listed as helpers while realising this would not lead to their taking over the plot eventually.

Tim thanked Rosemary for her vital work, a major part of the functioning of the allotment.

4. Treasurer's Report, previously circulated. Summary: 2024 accounts, 1 Jan-31 Dec

Balance 1 January 2024 8250

Section A Receipts and payments

	Month £	Year to Date £	
Receipts			
Plots @£25	-	1,350	
Plots @£40	-	1,040	
Plots @£55	-	110	
Plots @£65	-	130	
Other income seeds, etc		-	241
Unbanked prior year income		-	-
Sub total	-	-	2,871
Total receipts -	-	-	2,871
Costs			
ODFAA membership		-	(43)
Maintenance & equipment		-	(738)
Oxford Direct Services (Council)rent			- (156)
Castle Water	-	-	(452)
Subscriptions			
Charitable donations			-
Insurance			27
Unpaid check			18
Other			
Sub total	-	-	(1,344)
Total payments	-	-	(1,344)-
Net of receipts/(payments)	-	-	1,527 VALUE
			-
Opening cash funds Jan24		-	8,250
Closing cash funds	9,777	-	9,777

Mandatory and fixed costs amount to approximately £7.500 .

The accounts had been reviewed and verified by Jason Downing who was thanked for that.

There would be no rent increase this year but would be in 2026 for reasons that would be explained.

It was proposed by David Morris, seconded by Paul Knox-Clarke that the accounts be accepted and this was agreed.

5. Constitutional Change

Rosemary explained that some time ago the council requested that all allotments change their constitutions to become legal entities. She had volunteered to take this on, and she now proposed that we become a co-operative. She had had excellent advice from ODFAA (Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations) and Eden Drive Allotments, who became a co-op in 2023.

The steps are as follows:

1. ODFAA is our sponsor for the process.
2. We replace our current constitution with ODFAA's model rules, (circulated).
3. At the AGM there is a proposal to adopt the rules and become a co-op.
4. Once agreed, Rosemary will apply for us to become a co-op via the Financial Conduct Authority. There will be a £1 one-off membership fee for each plot, which will be added to the 2026 rent.
5. As the council will be issuing new allotment rules later this year, we make no change to our site rules for now.

There was discussion on the reason for the change, Rosemary explaining that too much responsibility had been placed on trustees. Paul Knox-Clarke confirmed that co-operative members will not hold responsibility other than for share capital. The Proposal by Rosemary was seconded by David Morris and unanimously agreed by a show of hands. Tim thanked Rosemary for having tackled this long-standing issue so effectively.

Additional Proposals –

1. That new members joining after September pay a small fee to enlist them as legitimate members until the spring rent demand. Proposer Tim, seconder Rosemary, unanimously agreed.
2. Second plots – it is proposed that a second plot cannot be permitted while there is a waiting list. After discussion it was agreed that there will be a cap of 5 poles, whether as two small plots or as a large one. Anyone with a small plot can be on the waiting list to exchange for a larger one. Proposer Rosemary Cameron, Seconder Paul Knox-Clarke. Unanimously agreed.

6. Security

Members would know of the recent theft through breaking locks into the shed and the anchoring locks on expensive equipment. It seemed likely that the gate had been climbed, and it was agreed that netting that had not been replaced might have deterred this. Mike Hudson kindly offered to acquire and fix chicken wire.

Rosemary commented that all allotments associations were suffering thefts, and one option would be not to own equipment, while Tim suggested it might be best to hire. Happily, a new member had offered to donate a strimmer he no longer needs.

Members were urged to be very rigorous with the gate (a new code being sent on 24th March) especially with sharing the code. Checking fences on the perimeter was the responsibility of those adjacent to them.

7. Election of Committee

Anne Carter and Tim Wolstenholme to continue as co-chairs. Proposed by Rosemary Cameron, seconded by Clive Lindley- Jones and accepted unanimously.

Other Committee Members were willing to continue.

However, as the Committee is small, and Anne is also Treasurer, the members were asked to consider joining. Especially a Treasurer was needed. No-one volunteered to be Treasurer, but Mike Hudson and Connie McDermott did offer to be plot-holder members. They were proposed by David Morris and seconded by Rosemary Cameron.

8. Plot-holder suggestions.

David Morris raised the issue of disposal of a large quantity of prunings in the orchard following a working party pruning. There was general discussion as to the merits of leaving matter to rot down against removing it to Redbridge in smaller quantities. A working party to build a proper log- pile was considered and the Committee will discuss this further.

David was thanked for his care of the orchard that is looking particularly attractive now.

Seed -sharing – at present this takes place on Whatsapp but would be a possibility at any social event.

- 9. Any other business - The Open Gardens, 22nd June** this year, will include visitors to the allotments. Volunteers will be needed to manage the event and nearer the time planning will be needed.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m with Paul Knox-Clarke kindly proposing a round of applause for the Committee.