**EWWA Committee Meeting Minutes**

**23rd January 2020**

**Chair:** Chris Clifford

**Minutes:** Charlotte Attlee

**Attending:** Pat Mansfield, Bridget Wheatley, Mike Yeadon, Clare Ferguson, Simon Bazley, Meryl Wilford

1. **Apologies:** Leo Young, Louise Evans, Zara Skitt, Jon Willis, Jane Millar, George Murray, Renata Rettalack, Grzesiek Gorski, Dan Thorpe

1. **Approval of minutes at last meeting**

Approved

1. **Chair’s report**
2. Plumber is lined up for work, awaiting potential dates. Broken toilet has been used although it’s been taped up.
3. City Council Works: Chris looking for a day in the week to meet with them
4. OUWG: Pat and Chris met with them on 19.01.2020 . There is a row of plots on

the middle road of the Howard Street side where plot holders have been cutting hazel and dumping rubbish on land backing onto OUWG. This needs dealing with.

Re plans for fixing underground water supply, no date as yet for scheduled work

1. **Treasurer’s report**

Jon sent Chris the figures. Worth noting that assets now amount to around £12,000 which includes value of stock and machinery.

1. **Membership report**
2. The 3 outstanding payments have been paid
3. There are 10 empty plots, out of those, 3 useable ones are available
4. 30 people are on the waiting list. Top of the list to be informed plots are available
5. Plot inspection date to be set for the end of March. Plot holders to be given a few weeks notice to bring plots up to standard
6. Mike to contact Jon re any outstanding rents that may have been missed
7. **Shop report**
8. Onions are now on sale as they are sprouting
9. Potatoes: they are being bought from a Hereford supplier and will be cheaper than last years - 6 boxes of 20 bags of blight resistant varieties- 120kg in total
10. It was agreed that getting in piles of compost and manure is a loser as not everyone pays for it. It was decided that bags of compost and soil improver will be sold from the shop this year.
11. Rota is up on the website, as a static list until August
12. Bridget Henderson used to remind people of their shop duty and will be asked to continue doing so
13. Shop not accepting cheques. Reminder of this needed to be sent to allotment holders by email. Sign to be put up by the till.
14. **Lease negotiations**

Clarifications by Q and A

Q. Are we negotiating the lease as an Allotment Association or as 3 parties - OUWG (Oxford Urban Wildlife Group) The Children’s Allotment and the EWWA?

A. It’s going to be complicated as we do want to change the relationship with OUWG and The Children’s Allotment

Q. What do the city council want?

A. An easy life! And 1:1 communication with ODFA (Oxford District Federation of Allotments)

ODFA collectively bargained on our behalf, where most discussions took place about the rent, not the form of the lease, pushing towards rents based on acreage.

There was a discussion on whether we want a lease or a license. We need to know what we want.

At the meeting on 21st January 2020 attended by Chris and Jane, it seemed ODFA were coming round to thinking that EWWA needs a lease to prevent day to day admin, maintenance etc.

Chris is concerned that we get to decide what we want.

Q. Do we have more rights as lease holders?

A. Yes. Only in certain circumstances such as major breaches can landlords make evictions.

With a lease, the land use is guaranteed for the period of time stated on the lease.

There are mechanisms within the law to allow for building, but also many safeguards to prevent this. A lease would give allotment holders a license with security of tenure.

Q. Can tenants evict allotment holders?

A. Rights of access may be an issue. A long term objective could be to change rights of access, lobby the council on that issue and use the opportunity to get other access issues sorted.

Q. Is there a problem with the right of access to the allotments from OUWG?

A. OUWG have their own keys for narrow access from the Boundary Brook footpath side, but have to use the EWWA right of way for larger vehicle access.

Q. Are all leases replicated?

A. We need to find out if that’s the case.

Q. Where are we with the lease of the last 20 years?

A. The current committee at ODFA weren’t on the board 20 years ago. There was clearly a change of Clause 16, 20 years ago where the city council, foreseeing various problems with community centres and other organisations, made the decision to push legal responsibility onto the leaseholders demanding that trustees give uncapped indemnity to the city council. The city council appears not to have removed the indemnity clause, but if there was to be a claim, there is an intervention that says that whoever has signed would not be pursued by the city council, but the assets of the allotment association would be taken away.

ODFA haven’t made any progress on the lease/ license issue. They want the views of associations as to which to go for.

The new chair of ODFA thinks we should become a limited business. This was thought by the committee to be a total non starter.

Q. Are we happy with the limits of liability and what’s the peril?

A. There could be an instance where a neighbour raised a case against the allotment, such as as negligence or nuisance (collapsed tree on a boundary, noxious substance on neighbouring land for e.g.) which is something that the insurers don’t cover.

Q. Can trustees be insured for public liability?

A. No

Q. Did the insurance question come up at ODFA meeting?

A. Not really although the principles were discussed.

Q. Has there ever been a claim?

A. Not in 20 years. But it is seen as a risk as it only takes one litigious neighbour with large financial resources to make a claim, with trustees having only one choice but to make a counter claim.

Q. Could we start as a cooperative?

A. We should look at those options.

Proposal:

1. Write a letter clearly stating what we would like as an association so that trustees can not be liable
2. Obtain an individual lease for the allotment
3. Support 3 trustees to not sign the lease and instead go for cooperative status

Q. Regards the car parks and rights of access, is there a secure border?

A. Fencing and gates would need to be erected by the council to make it secure.

Q. Is it just access and parking that we have access to and who owns the car parks?

A. We need to know who owns that land. It might not even be registered but the council

Should have records.

Q. As the long term future and timescale of The Children’s Allotments is uncertain , do we

need to specify something on a lease to protect our interests?

1. A new lease should reflect what’s in The Children’s Allotments 10 year lease held by Alice.

Q. Do we want it agreed in our lease any conditions for The Children’s Allotments?

A. The Children’s Allotments has designated allotment status with convictions.

A document written by Chris needs to go to ODFA within the next 2-3 weeks. A draft document will be sent by him to all committee members for revision before going out.

1. **Clarification of role responsibilities of officers**
2. Chris said committee members shouldn’t be spending more than 2 hours a week as officers
3. There is a need for a vice chair to step in when Chris is absent. Josie Bazley’s name was put forward for this position
4. Mike need more training on google with Jon. They’ll find time for this.
5. A small sub group is needed to iron out the problems with the website, WordPress, PlugIns and mailings, reporting back to Chris who is doing what and how. Meeting to be called in the next 2 weeks with Mike Harris, Richard, Simon, Meryl, Clare and Bridget for clarification on the systems, the role of the person who sends out emails and what is to go to the website. The group needs to review communications with emphasis on ability to communicate speedily with members when necessary. There need to be separate email lists for members, the committee and the shop.