**EWAA AGM Minutes**

**25th September 2022**

In Attendance:

Smilja Vinicic (133b); Dan Thorpe (89b); George Murray (12); Jane Millar (147);Pat Mansfield (114); Nina Allen (7a); Stewart Young (77); Tony Flett (210); Chris Flett (212b); Bridget Henderson (87); Chris Clifford (14); Simon Bazley (8a); Susan Heeks 218); Helen Edwards (125); Jane Nimmo-Smith (138a); Juliette Addenbrooke (120); Emma Webb (122a); Meryl Wilford (4b)

Apologies: Michael McNaboe

Chair’s Report

1. Lease Negotiations
   1. Chair reported that since last AGM there was a limited update on the lease negotiations, which had been delayed due to staffing issues at Oxford City Council. An EGM will be called when there is a further update on the lease.
2. Trustees:
   1. There are currently three trustees, vs a legal minimum of 2.  Chris Clifford, Pat Mansfield and Meryl Wilford. Chris Clifford has resigned, and EWAA thanks him for his service. We are looking for volunteers to become trustees.
   2. There was a request to define the role of trustee
      1. The role of a trustee is defined by English Property Law
      2. The council is the landlord, and the trustees are the tenants, on behalf of the 140 plot holders
      3. Trustees take an interest in the running of the site to ensure its smooth running
      4. Trustees make sure the committee meets and manages effectively
      5. Trustees ensure that the financials of the site are in order.
   3. There then followed a debate around the theoretical liability of a trustee for example in the event that a potholder caused damage to a boundary, or boundary property. It was agreed that this had not happened on any allotment in ODFAA in living memory, however addressing the smooth running of the site should naturally prevent this.
   4. There then followed a debate around the longevity of the role of trustees: Chris Clifford pointed out that the trustees were a function of the terms of the current lease, and that on renegotiation of the lease they might not be required should EWAA become a co-operative, or incorporate.  Simon Bazley pointed out that ‘directors’ or similar to trustees would be needed regardless of the status of EWAA, it was agreed to revisit this once we had an update on the status of the lease.
   5. Following a question from the floor, it was agreed that along with the minutes, the following should be circulated, as not everyone had familiarity with the terms
      1. What do trustees do?
      2. What do the vacant committee member posts do?
      3. What is an AGM? (And therefore also an EGM)
      4. What happens at the committee meeting, where is it and who can come along?
   6. Chairs report continued: Shop has remained shut in the absence of a shop officer and has been missed, and changed the dynamic of the site.
   7. New keys were cut in November and since then we have seen reduced theft and pilferage
   8. 2 skips were provided which coincided with plot inspections
   9. Work with OWG has continued on boundaries. This has improved the site, as has the diversity of wildlife - eg slow worm sites.
   10. Asbestos removal is now complete, ending a 20 year problem.

Jane Millar proposed a vote of thanks to Meryl Wilford, EWAA Chair.

**Treasurer’s report**

Key expenditures:

£2.5k was spent on new locks and keys

Water butts and water project were completed

£4900 total expenditure for the year leaving a £1486 deficit

**Proposal for rent increase**

Annual rent is proposed to increase on the following grounds

* + The maintenance grant from the council of £500/ year has now ended
  + It is a challenge to get people to attend work parties, so in order to keep the site running, the committee would like to pay some people to do basic maintenance.
  + There has been no increase in rent foe the last 4 years
  + Oxford site rents are some of the lowest in the country, and EWAA is the lowest in Oxford.
  + Proposal is: An increase for £25 to £30 plot per annum for a full plot, and 1/2 and 1/4 plot costs to increase in line with this. Concessionary rates remain unchanged.
  + Questions from floor
    - Jane Nimmo Smith asked if the lease change would affect the site rent, the response was that it would be minimal
    - Stewart cited the general economic situation and opposed the rent increase
    - George pointed out that concessionary rate including for hardship remained the same,
    - Jane Millar pointed out that rents may be too cheap for people to value their plot for those that are in comfortable employment (not on concessionary rates) and this may be contributing to some plots being unworked/ abandoned
    - Sue asked if it was possible to keep the rent lower for those who attended work parties, after a debate it was agreed that this wasn’t a technically workable proposal due to the high degree of admin and proof required.
    - George pointed out that the rent increase was particularly needed to replace the lost maintenance grants (city council cuts) for skilled projects like the water butt project/ pipe project
    - Josie pointed out that more notice was required for work parties if a higher attendance was required for basic site running, and not all plot holders realised that they usually fell on the same dates each year.
  + Meryl Wilford proposed and Dan Thorpe seconded. The proposal was passed by 16 votes for vs 1 vote against and 1 abstention.
  + **Membership report**
    - 60 people on waiting list, 12 plots available 7 plots let
    - Stewart proposed an informal optional mentor system, or sign on plot to help new plot holders. Committee to look into it.
    - It was proposed that there be a community day at the shop, once a month with coffee which might help new plot holders. Committee/ new shop team to look into it
    - There was a debate on increasing efficiency of plot turnover where people had been allocated plots but then not touched them which generated the following proposal
      * Plot holders who have accepted a new plot, must reach 25% cultivation in the first two months or they forfeit the plot
      * If you are not in a position to accept the plot when offered it and meet those cultivation rules, you return to the top of the waiting list.
      * This was proposed by George, seconded by Pat and passed by 16 for, 1 against and 1 abstention

**Election of new committee**

The following officers were proposed for election and / or re election by Chris Clifford and seconded by Simon Bazley

Chair- Meryl Wilford

Treasurer- John Willis

Membership Sec – Mike Yeadon

Shop Officer- Jane Millar + team of Juliette, Helen Edwards, Vicky Bell and Jane Nimmo Smith

Comms Officer- Clare Ferguson

Machinery – Tony Flett

The following post remain vacant

Secretary

Vice Chair

Emma Webb was proposed as a new committee member by Jane Millar and seconded by Simon Bazley and duly elected.

Meryl to circulate job descriptions with AGM minutes to try and fill roles, along with a note saying that any plot holder was welcome to attend committee meeting which are the second Thursday every other month - November/January/ March/May/June/September

Josie Procter proposed a vote of thanks for the committee for their work over the year.

DATE OF NEXT AGM 24th September 2023

AOB:

Stewart asked if there was an apple day this year - it was agreed that apples had come earlier this year than apple day normally is so no apple day this year.

Sue queried the rules on plot cultivation and shading and it was requested she raised specific points with membership secretary for resolution.

Work party dates: Sunday November 6th 2022, Sunday Feb 5th 2023, Sunday March 26th 2023, Sunday 24th September 2023. It was asked if there could be a work party on weekdays as not everyone can help on a weekend, but unfortunately the committee is unable to facilitate this. It was agreed to circulate the dates of the work parties.