

DRAFT

EWAA Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday 14th September 2023

Apologies: George Murray, Mike Yeadon, Mike McNaboe, Sarah Pollard

Present: Jon Willis, Tony Flett, Dan Thorpe, Brigitte Henderson, Clare Ferguson, Simon Bazley, Jane Millar, Meryl Wilford

1. Minutes of March meeting and matters arising – approved.

2. Chair report:

- The preparation for the AGM has been the main focus of activity since our last committee meeting, especially the preparation of new rules and constitution. Thanks to George and Jane for leading this process.
- Pleased to report that the council contracted tree surgeons to deal with the overhanging willows along the cycle path. We provided access to the site over three days August 30-31 and the tree surgeons left a large pile of wood chip for use by plot holders.
- On September 2nd, Jane and I visited Cowmead allotment open day with the aim of seeing whether an open day might be a useful possible fundraising activity for EWAA. The open day consisted of stalls selling excess fruit, veg, and flowers donated by plot-holders; some bric-a-brac stalls and light refreshments. There was public access and visitors could look around the site by walking on the main tracks - not going onto any plots. I understand that this raised several hundred pounds and if it were done here it might also serve as a social event for EWAA.
- One trophy to be lent to Oxfordshire Museum. Clare and Chris liaising on handover and paperwork.

3. Membership report (Absent)

4. Treasurer report

- The End-of-Year financial statement has been prepared and will be presented at the AGM.
- After settling regular bills, expenditure has been principally for the following: £100 on machinery maintenance, £45 on toilet rolls, £39 on shop items purchased from Sylvester's Store, and £40 for hire of the apple pressing equipment.
- Shop sales have risen this year from turnover to £4,600, which compares favourably with the pre-covid sales of £3,302 in 2020.
- Keys are now treated as an asset rather than expenditure, because although some keys are lost, most remain in allotment and represent an ongoing asset.
- Barclays bank have requested updated information regarding the organisation, for which JW will contact individuals.

5. Shop report

- Shop opened at the beginning of September.

- New stock includes alliums for autumn planting, and windbreak/shade netting.

6. Rent rise proposal

- Discussion about the proposed rent rise to be presented at the AGM. BH argues that members may be surprised and shocked at a large rent rise following on the rent rise from last year. Rent has risen since 2018 when the charge for a full-sized plot was £25 p.a.
- Jon outlined the main reasons for the need for the proposed increase. Principally that, the new contract with the council will bring higher costs because OCC say they will increase rents and also because we will be liable for the upkeep of boundary fences. Utility costs for both water and electricity have also risen.
- We do not have sufficient volunteers for basic upkeep of the site at the required level and we may need to contract people in future to cover that work.
- Suggestion that in preparation for the AGM, a communication is prepared to inform people about reasons for the rent rise.

ACTION: MW and JW to meet 15-09-23 to prepare communication about rent rise.

7. Preparation for the AGM

- Documentation will be displayed in the shop from 11:30 for people to read before the meeting (outdoors) at 12.00
- One amendment has been received to date. We need to communicate that no more amendments will be accepted after Thursday the 21st of September.

ACTION: JM to post notification of the procedure and the deadline.

- Discussion about possible officer nominations and roles.

ACTION: SB to submit an amendment to increase the number of officers to 6, including the Shop Officer in the list, because the person in this role is a signatory on the bank account.

- Nominations needed for:
 - Chair
 - Deputy chair
 - Treasurer
 - Membership secretary
 - Communications/Secretary
 - Shop officer

ACTION: all current committee members and officers to let the Chair (MW) know whether or not they are able to continue in their role for a further year.

Trustees

Bridget Henderson and Clare Ferguson both offered to stand to be nominated as new trustees, which will allow Pat Mansfield to retire.

ACTION: MW & JM to prepare a communication to remind people that this is a voluntary organisation and we need volunteers! People to send in nominations for new committee members by **Thursday 21st Sept.**

8. Survey of members - initial findings

- JM will summarize at the AGM, including the following:
 - Total emails sent to the membership – 251
 - Total responses received – 91
 - Response rate – 36%
 - Many useful comments and suggestions
 - Gate security: general satisfaction
 - Shop: general support for having one
 - Path clearance: 48% favour volunteer workforce, 35% favour paying a contractor
 - Weeds: 57% were not concerned by weeds on their neighbours' plots
 - Time to help run the side: 40% said no, 39% wanted more detail, 7 new members offered their time
 - Deer: 92% are concerned

9. Apple pressing

- the Apple pressing will take place on Saturday 30th of September and Sunday October 1st from 1.00 – 4.00 each day. Volunteers are needed to help run the sessions (including MW, JM and BH)

ACTIONS: JW to collect hired equipment
DT & SB to get the press and other equipment out of storage

10. Skip hire

- Lockable skip has been hired for three weeks, delivery on October 2nd
- Decision needed on how to manage this, including loading sorting, etc. before communication sent out.

11. AOB

- There is an important meeting on **Tuesday September 19th** at the Town Hall at 7pm. It seems that the negotiations between ODFAA and OCC have broken down and this meeting is important. All invited to attend.
- The trees in the car park are getting too big and need to be cut back. The delivery lorry for the shop could not reach the gate.
ACTION: JM speak to Chris Gamblin as soon as possible
- Complaint about behaviour on the allotment. Discussion about the complaint received and infringement of the rules and next steps to be taken in process.

Meeting dates:

AGM: Sunday 24th September, 12.00 noon

Next committee meeting Thursday 9th November, 7.30pm