EWAA AGM Minutes 2025 – to be approved

Date: 12.10.2025

Location: EWAA shop, Cricket Road.

Acting Chair (for meeting only): Josie Procter (11)

Minute Taker: Jane Nimmo-Smith (138A)

In attendance:

Nicola Jones (20), George Liddell (97), Kevin Lyon (112), Simon Bazley (11), Jim Ruddock (135), Michael Harloe (71), Vicky Bell (211B), Stewart Young (77/78), Christine Flett (210), Tony Flett (210), Colin Gammon (141B), Sarah Pollard (199A), Paul de Villiers (143B), George Murray (12), Amy Douglas (134B), Mohammed Nayheemaldin (no longer a plot-holder), Maurice Leen (84), Paola Sassi (84), Pat Mansfield (114), Lydia Wainwright (10), Claire Stentiford (136A), Emelia Cole (151), Bridget Henderson (86/87), Chris Salamone (19B), Steve Twine (149), Rachael Riach (58A), Renata Retallack (7A), Michael McNaboe (91A), Sean Robinson (4A), Carl Morrow (4A), Nenad Vranjes (73), Jen Henderson (10/11A), Chris Taylor (10/11A), Sarah Moynihan (19B), Rosemary Cameron (137B), Susan Heeks (18), Sarah Armour (113LF), Katrina Viloria (113LF), Jane Nimmo-Smith (138A), Josie Procter (11), Jane Millar (147B), Mo Leen (84), Jon Willis (20) = 43

Apologies:

Meryl Wilford (67), Chris Clifford (14), Janita Good (15), Marguerite Wallis (117), Harriet Akkouche (113B), Bridget Wheatley (144), Karen Spiller (121), Charlie Wilson (212B), Elaine Townson (120), Daniel Thorpe (90), Louise Capstick (69), John McNulty (69), Hugh Warwick (74) = 13

1. Introduction

Josie gave a quick introduction, welcoming everyone in attendance at the meeting and giving thanks to the outgoing committee members and trustees for all their hard work over the past year. She was Acting Chair for the meeting only and a new Chair would be elected later in the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes-2024 AGM

Josie asked if everyone had read the minutes from the last AGM and if they had any comments or corrections. It was pointed out the plot number for Steve Twine was incorrect and should read 149 (not 49). With that change, Josie proposed approval of the minutes and they were duly approved**.**

3. Membership Report – George Murray (Membership Secretary) gave his report for the past year.

This is always a moving picture as plot holders decide to give up their plots and there is not always time to re-let between their resignation and the writing of the membership report.

There are 176 members, which is up by 1 from the last AGM, with an occupancy rate of 96%. Just to remind you that this is one of the biggest Allotment Associations in Oxfordshire with 1,329 poles of land that can be let.

Some of the vacant plots are in very poor condition and will require considerable work to remove the weeds and scrub. We now offer new people on the waiting list the opportunity to look at these plots immediately and if they wish to take one on they can get avoid having to go to the bottom of the waiting list. The current waiting list stands at 37 people. The oldest name on the waiting list is from April 2025. Since the last AGM 73 people have joined the waiting list. During the last year, emails were sent to 59 people on the waiting list and we have welcomed 26 new allotmenteers in 2024/25. Two plot inspections took place with a number of reminders being sent to plot holders to manage their plots or leave – this has led to a number of plot holders leaving.

Josie offered her thanks on behalf of the Committee and the Association to George for his hard work over several years.

4. Treasurer's Report – Jon Willis (Treasurer) gave his report for the last year.

The main sources of income are from the shop (£993 trading profit) with sales of £7,808 over the year (much the same as the year before) and the rents from plot-holders (£6,014, which represents a rise of 20% on the previous year). Expenditure was £2,925 which represents rent to the Council, utilities, skips and some sundry expenses. The Children's Allotment has now paid the outstanding water bill of £1300 from the previous year. In the current and deposit accounts there is currently a combined sum of £13,158. Taken with the balance brought forward of £4,399, the overall assets of the Association amount to £16,113 (of which £2,954 is represented by stock).

Since the OCC is looking to reduce costs, the Association is very much on its own to fund such expenses as tree care, fencing, plumbing, site maintenance and paid contractors on site. This requires the Association to have a good amount of surplus in the bank accounts to cover such expenses, including any that are unanticipated.

Questions were invited from the members:

Colin Gammon (141B) asked about land rent. Jane Millar explained that the Association would be paying back rent for this. Simon Bazley (11) asked how much it would be. Jane Millar explained that it would be in increments. Pat Mansfield (114) asked whether inflation would be included. Jane Millar said it would be whatever standard rate the OCC used.

Josie Procter proposed the approval of the accounts and they were duly approved.

5. Update on new lease with Oxford City Council – Jane Millar

Jane explained by way of background that the Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA), on behalf of its 33 member associations, had been in negotiation with Oxford City Council for 5 years. The OCC wanted all the allotments in the area to have a standard lease (allowing for local variations based on such aspects as rights of way, etc) lasting a period of 21 years. The OCC delegates responsibility to each allotment association for the running of its own affairs locally. Delays to the process of negotiation of the new lease had been caused by Covid, Council restructuring, local elections, all of which led to a lack of continuity in the process. In August there was a meeting for all the Allotment Associations in the Town Hall, which was attended by members of the Committee for the EWAA, and there will be another one on October 21st. This suggests that progress is being made.

In our lease the trees on site are the responsibility of the Association; the trees will be inspected every 3 years (this has just been done). Approved tree surgeons have to be used for any work. Our boundary is well-defined by the metal fencing. It is the responsibility of the Association to fund any repairs to this going forwards.

Questions were invited from the members:

Colin Gammon (141B) asked whose responsibility it was to look after the trees that border on the cycle track. Jane explained that this would be Oxford Direct Services' responsibility. Simon Bazley (11) asked for clarification about the shop building since it was built in the first instance by OCC. Jane Millar explained that OCC would have ultimate responsibility for existing buildings but certainly would not fund a replacement building if the need arose. As a point of note, an asbestos survey had been carried out and identified a non-hazardous form as a component in the cement roofing panels (as is fairly typical for a building of this type and age). Susan Heeks (18) asked about the large willow trees at the back of her plot. She was advised to send a message directly to the Committee.

6. Update on Incorporation – Jane Millar.

Jane gave a recap on how the Association is run, with trustees (2 or 3) and a committee. The role of the trustees is to oversee the overall management of the committee. The trustees signed the lease with the Council and bear a significant level of both public and personal liability in the event of, say, a fire on the site spreading to an adjacent property and causing damage there. The Council would recommend moving away from this model to one which does not have trustees, through incorporation whereby the legal entity would take on this responsibility and sign the lease with the Council.

The options for incorporation are: a Cooperative (this requires a high level of participation, which does not suit the Association as it stands); a CIC – Community Interest Co. (this requires community engagement, which again does not suit the Association as it stands); a Small Company Limited by Guarantee – this is the model the Committee has been working on. Company law is well-established; it is easy to set up a company, it is flexible in how it is run and because annual accounts have to be lodged with Company House, it is open and transparent. The Committee is also keen to avoid a two tier system with directors making decisions and the committee doing all the work. There is a need to maintain democratic principles. Janita Good, plot-holder expert in company law was nominated to join the Committee for the coming year, and her expertise and advice will be invaluable. An EGM of the Association will be called in order to take a vote once the details of the incorporation proposal are finalised.

Questions were invited from the members:

Susan Heeks (18) asked for further clarification about a CIC. Jane Millar explained that it is a relatively new idea (such as at Hogacre Common Eco Park, Court Farm Place Allotments and Thomson Terrace Allotments) and requires input to the community from the CIC in question.

Michael Harloe (71) pointed out that it is perfectly possible to structure a limited company (on the Small Company model) as a democratic organisation, giving the committee the authority to replace its directors (he speaks from experience).

George Liddell (87) expressed the view that the Small Company model had no shares and was limited by guarantee. Jane Millar agreed, saying that the maximum liability would be £1 per member. Pat Mansfield (114) thanked Jane Millar for her clear explanation, and asked if it was possible to make the whole Committee with the Officers directors. Further discussion followed about accounts and a formal annual report being part of this model.

Josie Procter reminded members that they were welcome to attend meetings of the Committee to understand more about the process and the implications.

Colin Gammon (141B) asked whether the AGM or EGM might be by Zoom. Josie Procter asked for the possibility of hybrid meetings to be minuted and considered by the Committee.

Susan Heeks (18) asked for further clarification about the need for the change. Jane Millar explained that there was currently only 1 trustee (not 2/3). The existing model is outmoded and finding trustees is hard.

7. Proposal –Rent Rise of £5 per plot regardless of size (proposed by Mo Leen).

Mo explained that because the Association is now responsible for covering maintenance and improvement costs and liabilities, there was a greater need for a larger contingency fund. For example, only one of the mowers was currently working, and none of the strimmers. Also, there would be some legal costs associated with the incorporation. For clarification:

Plot Size	Current rent	New rent
10 poles	£48	£53
5 poles	£24	£29
3.3 poles	£16	£21
2.5 poles	£12	£17

Questions were invited from the members:

Claire Stentiford (136A) asked why it was a flat rate per plot rather than pro rata, according to size of plot. Mo Leen explained that small plots contributed to expenses through needing more keys and time taken by the membership secretary in dealing with more members for small plots.

Michael Harlow (71) asked whether index-linking rents might be a useful way and less painful as a means of setting the rents. Mo Leen pointed out that costs rise regardless of the national economic situation. For instance, the rent for the site was quite low and might be significantly raised by the OCC in future.

Josie Procter reminded the meeting that members of the Association could apply to the discretionary fund in cases of hardship. George Murray added that this should be by email to the membership secretary. The Association should have as wide a demographic as possible. Simon Bazley (11) added that it was possible to pay more if one wanted.

The rent rise was put to the vote, proposed by Mo Leen and seconded by Jon Willis.

For 41 (in the room) and 5 proxy = 46

Against 1 (in the room) and 1 proxy = 2

Abstentions 0

The motion was passed by a majority vote.

8. Election of Officers and Committee Members

Josie Procter introduced this part of the meeting by pointing out that there was no deputy-chair or secretary on the list of proposed officers and committee members for the coming year. Any volunteers can be co-opted at a committee meeting.

- List of the nominations for **Officer and Committee roles 2025** from members who are volunteering to join the 2025-26 committee that will manage the site.
  NOTE: Two members had withdrawn their nominations so that no more than seven people were proposed as ordinary members, and a vote was not required

Harriet Akkouche Plot 113B	Committee Member
Mo Leen Plot 84	Chair
Mike McNaboe Plot 91A	Committee Member
Amy Douglas Plot 134B	Committee Member
Janita Good Plot 15	Committee Member
Lydia Wainwright Plot 1C	Membership Secretary

Bridget Wheatley Plot 144	Committee Member
George Liddell Plot 97	Committee Member
Daniel Thorpe Plot 90	Committee Member
Jon Willis Plot 20	Treasurer

All the proposed officers and committee members were approved by the meeting.

Jane Millar clarified the range of activities of the committee – padlocks, water, mowing, admin of the website, posters, minutes, emails, attending committee meetings etc.

Questions were invited from the members:

Stewart Young (77/78) asked if the committee members received a discount in the shop. Jane Millar clarified that they did as also did shop volunteers.

Susan Heeks (18) asked about the work parties. Jon Willis explained that they took a lot of organisation and very few people in fact attended. When power tools were required, outside contractors were used. Mo Leen added that the committee was already over-committed with the lease and incorporation.

George Liddell (97) said that he would be happy to perform the role of Deputy Chair. It was pointed out that he could be co-opted at the next committee meeting in November.

Bridget Henderson (86/87) suggested a vote of thanks to the committee members for the work over the last year, and congratulations to the new committee members.

9. AOB

Jen Henderson (10/11A) said that she would prefer manual work parties to continue (without power tools). Pat Mansfield (114) said that maybe we could do our own as and when. Jane Millar pointed out the issue of disposing of any rubbish that resulted. Susan Heeks (18) suggested leaving a pile to rot down. It was pointed out that this would take a very long time.

Josie Procter suggested that this should be discussed further at the next committee meeting.

The meeting then ended.