

EWAA AGM Minutes 13.10.2024 – to be approved

Location: EWAA Shop

Acting - Chair (for meeting only): Josie Procter

In attendance: Jim Ruddock (135B), Maurice Leen (84), Charlotte Attley (144), Bridget Wheatley (144), Christine Flett (211A), Antoine Flett (211A), Sophia Leroy (88B), Michael McNaboe (91A), Jane Millar (147), Meryl Wilford (4B), Pat Mansfield (114, 150), Josie Procter (6A), George Murray (12), Jane Nimmo-Smith (138A), Emelia Cole (151), Amy Douglas (134B2), Iuliaa Koemets (115B), Nenad Vranjes (73), Sarah Pollard (199A, 198A), Bridget Henderson (86), Vicky Bell (211B), Rosemary Cameron (137B), Janita Good (14/15/16), Penny Murray (201A), Steve Twine (49), Susan Heeks (18), Sue Stanton (218), Chris Rumble (129). = 28

149

Proxy votes = 4

Total votes = 32

- 1. Apologies:** Simon Bazley (6), Stewart Young (77), Colin Gammon (141), Chris Clifford (14,15,16), Nina Allen (7a), Jon Willis (20), Helen (125), Daniel Thorpe (90), David Ingledew (95), Zoe Bicat (194a), Charlie Wilson (212b), Stefano Maio (115a).

Josie Procter (6A) as acting Chair for the meeting welcomed the members of the largest site in East Oxford. The meeting was declared quorate. Josie pointed out that there is currently no Chair; indeed there is a general lack of volunteers for the various Officer and Committee Member roles and so those attending the AGM might hear some appeals for help in various ways during the course of the meeting.

2. Approval of minutes - 2023 AGM and 2024 EGM

There was a successful AGM last year, and EGM in March 2024. The draft minutes for both need to be approved. Josie asked if there were any comments. None were received.

George Murray (12) proposed that the minutes of the AGM be approved; Meryl Wilford (4B) seconded. The minutes of the AGM taken on 24.09.2023 were approved by unanimous vote.

George Murray (12) proposed that the minutes of the EGM be approved and Tony Flett (211A) seconded. The minutes of the EGM taken on 17.03.2024 were approved by unanimous vote.

3. Update on a new lease from Oxford City Council

George Murray (12) gave the update. He reported that there is some consternation that the on-going process has taken a step back. Discussions have been in progress since 2020; and we nearly had agreement, with the ODFAA (Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations) negotiating on our behalf, but there were issues with elements of the lease to which we objected, as did other groups. The work on the change of constitution that was approved in March remains valid, as the Committee though is considering how to change the governance structure for the EWAA. Currently we still have 2 trustees who each carry a significant liability burden. George expressed thanks to Janita Good for her help with explaining the legal aspect of the various alternative options that the

Association could choose from. Going forward, the association is likely to be governed and managed more like a standard charity; the decision about whether or not to move to an incorporated structure, and no longer have trustees, and if so, which type of structure to adopt, will come before the members for approval next year. There is the question of what order to do this in, that is before or after the lease has been negotiated. The Council has proposed a one year lease so this is an issue. This applies to all the allotments within the Oxford area.

Janita Good (14,15,16) clarified that we could become an incorporate body before signing the new lease, if the details of the tenancy document are not agreed soon.

George asked if there were any questions.

Jim Ruddock (135b) asked what the current situation is. In response, Janita Good (14/15/16) explained that the lease was being held over. The lease has lapsed and is in renegotiation, and there is the complication that there is allotment law and land law at play, but it is most likely though that its status is "held over". The fact that the Council is accepting rent suggests that the site is not at risk. The land is not mentioned in any of the Local Planning projects or proposals, so it is unlikely that the land would be taken for housing.

Pat Mansfield (114, 150) added that working with FCA is a good idea. There is the question of indemnity; having individuals being held financially accountable makes it hard to appointing new trustees. FYI - In mid 90s, the Council called a meeting and insisted that there needed to be a full committee for the Association to remain in existence.

Jane Millar (147) reassured the members that the Council could not take the land; it would have to go to the Secretary of State for a change of land use to be granted. This applies to all allotment associations in the area. The issues lie with the Council and change of personnel which has led to a lack of continuity in the process. We pay rent but are not the main source of their income!

4. Membership Report

For the full report see [attached document](#) below.

George Murray (12) reported that 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 the membership reports.

Currently there are 175 members, which is up from 164 from the last AGM, with an occupancy rate of 97%. The current vacant plots are all very overgrown and hard to let.

The current waiting list stands at 24 people but was over 50 this time last year. There have been 11 allocation meetings which has speeded up the allocation process with 37 new allotmenters joining the Association in 2023/24.

There have been two plot inspections (a third one will take place in late October), with in a small number of evictions for persistent failure to meet the cultivation requirements despite a number of warnings. As always, leniency is shown to people who are facing challenging circumstances.

Four vacant plots have been cleared to give new plot holders a more realistic chance of starting to grow crops.

George asked if there were any questions.

Rosemary Cameron (137b) said that she would be happy to help with clearing brambles off plots as part of a work party. Her offer was welcomed.

5. Treasurer's Report

For the full report see [attached document](#) below.

The report was submitted by the Treasurer, Simon Bazley. In his absence its key points were summed up by George Murray (12).

In summary, the outgoings of the Association are in excess of its income. The expenses of rent, utilities, skip hire, and other associated expenses came to £5,100.63. As yet no payment has been received from the Children's Allotment for their share of the utilities that they use. Even so this is unlikely to reduce the shortfall (£729.18 for this year, 2023-24) that exists between the expenditure and the income received from rent, which was £4,817.50 for the year now ending. The outcome of this is that an increase in plot rents is proposed as a way of closing this gap. The reserve account stands at £4,667.50 (which is a fall of more than 50% over the last 5 years). The report stressed the need to build up reserves for costs not covered by the Council, as it is unlikely that OCC will cover expenditure associated with the Shop building or the fencing in the future, as it seeks to reduce all costs/liability on itself.

The details of the proposed rent rise set the charges for 2024-25 at:

- 10 poles (full sized plot) - £48.00
- 5 poles (half plot) - £24.00
- 3.3 poles (third of a plot) - £16.00
- 2.5 poles (quarter plot) - £12.00

The shop made money over the year, with a gross profit of £1,821.39 on an annual spend of £5,933.78. This is thanks to Jane Millar for her oversight of the shop and its stock. And to all volunteers who take turns on the Shop Rota on Sunday mornings, and to those members who buy from the shop rather than a commercial supplier. It is purely due to this profit made by the Shop trading that we do not need to recover the loss made this year, by putting up the rent further.

Questions were invited from members.

Bridget Henderson (86) asked for clarification about the cost of water. In 2019 it cost much less than it did in this year's accounts. She wanted to know what the reasons for this could be and asked whether the usage could be checked. This is minuted to be held over as a question.

Pat Mansfield (114/150) commented that the tap in the toilet is often left running, and suggested that a push button tap should be fitted. It was agreed that this was a good point. Action on this passes to the Committee.

Bridget Wheatley (144) asked why the electricity charge was so high.

It was confirmed that the Children's Allotment pay for usage but nothing had been received to date. It was agreed that clarity is needed about both the usage of water and electricity and this has been minuted for later clarification.

*** Approval of 2023-24 accounts**

George Murray (12) proposed that the accounts for 2023-24 be approved; seconded Tony Flett.

The proposal was approved by unanimous vote.

6. Proposal for rent rise and rent date

Jane Millar (147) – confirmed that the proposal is to increase the 10-pole plot rent from £40 to £48 and other plot sizes pro rata, a 20% increase; this is a big jump but rent did not cover costs this year and we need to avoid further losses and work to build up the reserve to a healthier level. She also outlined recent unforeseen emergency expenses such as repairs to guttering and a burst pipe. In the past the Council had helped with grants (such as for replacing the piping to the water butts) but this sort of financial support would be unlikely in future.

George Murray (12) added that to accompany the rent demand for the coming year all members will have to sign the new license that accompanies the new constitution and rules. Anyone can also make an additional donation to the EWAA if they would like to, to help bolster its financial stability. This followed some discussion about paying more, such as £50 per 10-pole plot.

George pointed out the members who find it difficult to pay should speak to the Secretary in confidence to request a discretionary rate. We do not have an automatic concession as those who can afford the cost are helping by paying the full amount, which supports those who are more in need.

Bridget Henderson (144) suggested that they push the smaller plots as they can be very productive; it was agreed that this is the general trend.

*** Vote**

The proposal to increase the rents as outlined was proposed by Tony Flett (111A); it was seconded Meryl Wilford (4B).

For the proposal: 23 in room and 2 proxy votes,

Against the proposal: none in room; 1 proxy

Abstention votes: 3 in the room and 1 proxy

The proposal was carried.

7. Proposal to amend C.9 of the 'Rules and Cultivation Requirements' regarding Use of Hosepipes

For the full wording, see [attached document](#) below.

Meryl Winford (4B) clarified that this was not to encourage people to start using hosepipes. There is a need to respond to a number of requests to make access to water easier -- some members have plots quite a distance from a water butt, or suffer health issues. The details are in the proposal. There might be concern that this could increase water consumption but on the question of equity the Committee thought it should be discussed. There will be a trial period of one year but the rules need to be changed for this period. So the matter must be placed before the members for their views, and their vote.

There was some discussion about increasing the number of water butts but this would be prohibitively expensive. We will need to upgrade the taps to allow the hosepipes to run at the same time as the tanks is filling; there would be no funds to support hosepipe users, so they would need to provide their own hoses.

Janita Good (14/15/16) asked whether the site had been surveyed about the drop in pressure and whether there could be leaks. The council may still be responsible for the water supply.

George Murray (12) confirmed that a survey is a good idea and should be part of the lease going forward. It is minuted that a survey would be good idea.

There followed some discussion about water-harvesting. Some plot-holders show good practice and maybe they could share it. It was also pointed out that watering is not necessarily the best way of preserving moisture.

There were questions raised about the times stipulated and whether they could be changed, but the wording could not be changed at the AGM. The vote can only be on the proposal as it stands.

* Vote

Proposal read out; proposed by Pat Mansfield (114/150); seconded by Jim Ruddock (135b)

For the proposal: 15 in the room; 4 proxies.

Against the proposal: 5 in the room.

Abstentions: 7 in the room

Amendment stands on trial basis for a year; it will be revisited in a year.

8. Election of Officers & Committee Members 2024-2025

Thanks for all the efforts of committee and volunteers was proposed – the members then offered a votes of thanks.

All officers and committee members were selected unopposed ([see attached list](#)). Congrats to all!

Vicky Bell (211B) has offered to become a committee member. She would have to be co-opted at next Committee Meeting (November).

Jane Millar (147) added that there had been no Chair for over a year, and we are still short of a committee member. The areas of greatest need are communications, such as the notice boards; anyone able to offer their skills in areas like marketing or website maintenance would be very welcome. She added that there are only six committee meetings a year.

9. AOB

None.

A vote thanks to shop volunteers was proposed by Josie Procter (6A) and approved.

Thanks was given to Josie Procter for chairing the meeting.

The meeting then closed.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR THE EWAA AGM 13 OCTOBER 2024

Overview

Note: 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 the membership report.

There are 175 members, which is up from 164 from the last AGM, there is an occupancy rate of 97%. The current vacant plots are all very overgrown and hard to let.

The current waiting list stands at 24 people and at its peak in the last year stood at over 50. The oldest name on the list requested a plot in May 2024.

Activity during the year

There have been 11 allocation meetings that have taken place.

We have welcomed 37 new allotmenters in 23/24, which has included both first time growers and experienced old hands. Despite the challenging year for growing it has been great to see so much enthusiasm and productivity.

There have been two plot inspections (a third one will take place in late October), which has resulted in a small number of evictions for persistent failure to meet the cultivation guidelines despite a number of warnings. As always, leniency is shown to people who are facing challenging circumstances.

Four vacant plots have been cleared to give new plots holders a more realistic chance of starting to grow crops.

George Murray

Membership Secretary

12 October 2024

EWAA TREASURERS REPORT (2023-2024)

Site Finances

The total gross cost (so far) of running the whole site last year was £5,110.63. I have as yet not received any payments from the Children's Allotment, so the ultimate figure will be marginally lower, but we need to be able to cover costs based on our controllable income.

The total income received in rent last year was £4,817.50. Given our base rental charge was £40 per plot, this gives an indicative number of plots as 120 (accepting the actual number will be higher because some plot holders legitimately didn't pay the whole charge, and some plots were vacant). We haven't actually maintained a fund, to cover the deposits for all keys, should everyone seek to regain their deposit at once (that would be £3600 if we did), so with that caveat in mind, I've included key deposit returns as a site cost, even though it technically isn't.

That gives a net cost for the site of **£427.18** after rent. Or to put it another way, on a rent of £40 per plot we actually needed £42.59 to break even.

On addition to that, we had an (optional) spend of £302.00 throughout the year, on skips. Factoring that in, the cost per plot is £45.11

The total loss on the site, for the year, was then £729.18.

The EWAA Reserve (savings) fund, was left untouched, and so, including the interest gained (at a rate of 1.5%) on that account, this year, that stands at £4,667.50. That is down from roughly £10k 5 years ago.

It is with that in mind, that the Committee proposes to increase the Rent by 20% from £40 to £48, which would suggest that next year, the site more or less breaks even (but doesn't fully recoup the loss made this year).

Shop Finances

The shop was an astounding success this year, making a gross profit of £1,821.39 from a yearly spend of £5,933.78. So please can we congratulate Jane on that. It is purely with that in mind, that we don't need to seek to recover the loss made this year, by putting up the rent further.

Moving forward it would be good to rebuild the EWAA reserve, bearing in mind the direction of travel of the landlord (Oxford City Council), is to strive to reduce all costs/liability on itself. Repair of any of the fences/Shop would cost thousands of pounds and whilst in the past, the Council has paid for those, I don't think we can rely on that in the future.

Summary

To finish, I'll just say, at the time of writing this, the amount in the EWAA Savings account stands at £4667.50 and the amount in the EWAA Community account, stands at £1820.50.

Site Finances for the year

Year 2023-2024		
Utilities	- £2,950.92	
Elec		-£1,459.56
Water		-£1,329.12
GSM Internet		-£60.00
XtreamLabs		-£102.24
Site Maintenance	- £1,298.45	
OCC Rent	-£777.26	
ODFAA	-£84.00	
Childrens Allot	£0.00	
Costs Summary		-£5,110.63
Indicative No Plots on site (from last year's rent)		120
Indicative Cost per Plot		-£42.59
Indicative Cost including Community spend		-£45.11
Rent Income	£4,817.50	
Key Deposits	-£134.05	
Whole Site Profit/Cost		-£427.18
Community (Skips)	-£302.00	
Savings Transfer	£0.00	
Site Total	-£729.18	

Shop (Profit-Cost)	£1,821.39	
Suppliers		-£5,933.78
iZettle		£7,865.89
Online Payment		£69.00
Charity Collection		-£179.72

EWAA Total	£1,092.21	
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AGM 2024 PROPOSALS

There are two proposals that will be put to the vote at the 2024 EWAA AGM:

1. Proposal to Increase the Rent

To set the charges for 2024-25 at:

- 10 poles (full sized plot) - £48.00
- 5 poles (half plot) - £24.00
- 3.3 poles (third of a plot) - £16.00
- 2.5 poles (quarter plot) - £12.00

2. Proposal On the Use of Hosepipes

Amendment to EWAA Rules and Cultivation Requirements

Section C, Plot Maintenance Requirements, point 9

Current wording:

Not use hosepipes attached to the EWAA mains water supply without written permission from the committee.

Proposed rewording:

Members may locate a personal water butt no larger than 250 litres within the boundaries of a single plot, and may fill this between the hours of 8 pm and 6 am from a hosepipe connected to the nearest tap, giving due consideration to other ploholders. Hoses must NEVER be left on lanes or paths. Anyone wanting to use a storage container larger than 250 litres will need to request permission from the Committee.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICER & COMMITTEE ROLES – 2024 EWAA AGM

Name	Role	Proposer	Second
Jon Willis Plot 20	Treasurer	Meryl Wilford Plot 67	George Murray Plot 12
George Murray Plot 12	Membership Secretary	Jane Millar Plot 147	Mike McNaboe Plot 91A
Chris Clifford Plot 14	Deputy Chair	Janita Good Plot 15	Amandine Lepers- Thornton Plot 13
Mo Leen Plot 84	Secretary	Paola Sassi Plot 84	Jane Millar Plot 147
Meryl Wilford Plot 67	Committee Member	Jane Millar Plot 147	Jon Willis Plot 20
Daniel Thorpe Plot 90	Committee Member	Tony Flett Plot 211a	Jane Nimmo-Smith Plot 138A
Mike McNaboe Plot 91A	Committee Member	Dan Thorpe Plot 90	Jane Millarfle Plot 147
Tony Flett Plot 211A	Committee Member	Sarah Pollard Plot 199A	Dan Thorpe Plot 90
Jane Millar Plot 147	Committee Member	George Murray Plot 12	Meryl Wilford Plot 67