

WITNEY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1 MAY 2013

Present: Andy Howells (Chair), Maggie Perrin (Secretary)
Margaret Eadle (Treasurer), Mark Richmond, Barrie Fenton, Mary Killick, Dave Mace,
Daphne Hill, Geoff Branner

Tenants: 52 tenants attended

1 Apologies: Ray Harris, Andy Hudson, Terry Lamacq, Tim Partridge,
Sue Wood

Andy welcomed tenants and Councillor Duncan Enright to the meeting and thanked the trustees of Cogges Farm for hosting the event.

2 Minutes of meeting held on 1 May 2012 were approved.

3 Matters arising – there were no matters arising

4 Chairman's Report – 2013

"It is now exactly thirteen months since the Witney Allotment Association embarked upon the self-management of the three Council owned sites at Lakeside, Hailey Road and Newland. You all – as tenants and thereby members of the Association – exercise control by appointing a Committee to act on your behalf. And you will shortly vote for those putting themselves forward to act in your best interests and ensure the continued enjoyment of allotment gardening in Witney.

It has been an honour, as Chair of that Committee this past year, to work with such a positive and enthusiastic team. They not only engage energetically in the decision making process but are always prepared (literally in many cases) to roll their sleeves up and get their hands dirty!

I want to give particular thanks to Maggie Perrin our Secretary who, as you might expect, carries the lion's share of the administrative duties – without whom nothing would ever get done! At this time of year Margaret Eadle, our Treasurer, is also particularly busy as rents are collected; recorded; and banked. She works closely with our honorary Auditor, Donna Keeber, who brings technical expertise and independent judgement to ensure our financial affairs are in order.

At various points through the year you might have observed committee members repairing water troughs; removing fallen trees; painting plot numbers; repairing gates; putting up notice boards and notices and so on! And I would like to acknowledge the contribution of them all: Dave Mace, Mary Killick, and Ray Harris at Lakeside; Daphne Hill and Mark Rickmond at Hailey Road; and Barrie Fenton at Newland.

But of course most of the work of keeping things tidy and in good repair is down to every one of you as you focus on your own plot and its immediate environs – and that's the way it should be. It helps keep rents low and, through active involvement, ensures sites are well maintained and, hopefully, improved year-on-year.

It is a measure of the success of our former Chairman, Geoff Branner, in negotiating our lease with the Town Council, that our expenses have been relatively low. As Geoff noted last year, most of the big expenditure items (such as boundary maintenance) remain with the Council. (The Council, for its part, is making a saving of at least £7,000 per year – that's the sum they had previously set aside for administration of allotments).

To illustrate the point those at Lakeside will see extensive work by Council contractors on the boundary with the hotel and flats. These works, scheduled for June, will reduce the risk of tree falls; improve drainage and enable pest control. There is no way the Association could have embarked on this work from its own funds –

even though we are well on the way to our target of holding the equivalent of one-year's rental income in reserve.

Vegetable gardening on allotments remains remarkably popular - but inadequate provision in Witney (as in most other towns and cities) means that the waiting time remains stubbornly high at around four years with 110 people currently on our list. There is always some turnover though and 23 new allotmenters have started over the last year to replace those who have left. (By the way, I wish to reiterate the Chair's comment last year that tenants who move away from Witney are ineligible to renew their tenancy. This is only fair to all Witney residents on the waiting list.)

There is some light on the horizon! A large allotment site appears in the approved outline plans for a new housing development in West Witney. Also the Mawle Trust has drawn up plans for the creation of a new site on the Cogges estate which it would hand over to the Council. Our Lease enables new provision to also come under the self-management of the Association. We are not in any way complacent though and we continue to make representation for new provision – most recently as part of a study of open space and recreation initiated by the District Council.

Finally I would like to again thank you for your support and participation in an active and purposeful association. It makes 'growing your own' both a sociable and an affordable activity in Witney for those lucky enough to have their own allotment garden. I hope you all have a great growing year!"

5 Presentation of Awards

Lakeside	Best on Site and Best Overall	Mr and Mrs Wilsdon Plot12
Hailey Road	Best on Site	Mr Curwood Plot 36
Newland	Best on Site	Mrs Smith Plot 18
Lakeside	Highly Commended	Mr Simons Plot 74
Hailey Road	Highly Commended	Mr Smith Plot 39
Newland	Highly Commended	Mrs Brett Plot 19

Andy proposed a vote of thanks to Judge Wendy Williams of Eynsham Allotments. Wendy visited the sites 3 times during the year before coming to her decision. Carried nem con.

6 Treasurer's Report

Accounts to 31 December 2012 have been audited by Donna Keeber and Andy proposed a vote of thanks for her work. This was seconded by Mary Killick and carried nem con.

Cash in hand and at bank	£3803.02
Monies paid out	£1559.55

The Association's main expense is water which is billed in arrears. The Association aims to hold a full year's rent in hand.

7 Election of Officers and Committee

The following officers and committee members indicated their willingness to stand again. They were proposed by David Hill HR9b, seconded by Caroline Brett, NL19 and carried nem con.

Officers

Chairman	Andy Howells
Secretary	Maggie Perrin
Treasurer	Margaret Eadle

Committee

Daphne Hill HR,
Kevin Hickman HR
Barrie Fenton NL,
Val Fisher NL
Dave Mace LS,
Mary Killick LS
Ray Harris LS

Mark Richmond resigned his place on the committee and was thanked by Andy for all his work on behalf of the Association during the past year.

7 Election of Disputes Panel

Tim Partridge LS,
Janet Garrison LS
David Barber LS,
Judith Legood NL
Mr Newitt HR

8 Rents for 2014

Andy proposed the following rents for 2014 as detailed in the spring newsletter.

Lakeside	Standard Plot £36	Small Plot £24.00
Hailey Rd and Newland	Standard Plot £18.00	Small Plot £12.00

The association will continue to offer discounts to Senior Citizens and those in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance.

Mrs Bruty LS51 objected to the Senior Citizens discount which she thought unfair. Andy Howells explained that such reductions were not subsidised by those tenants paying the full rate.

9 Security on Allotment Sites

Unfortunately the PCSO did not attend for this item.

10 Root Trainers

Martin Follitt gave a presentation on the use of Root trainers.

11 Witney Horticultural Society

Bill Hickman, Chair of the Witney Horticultural Society gave a short presentation and encouraged Association tenants to join the Society and exhibit at the Society's shows.

12 Any other business

12.1 Bonfires

A request from Andy Hudson LS 37A that bonfires be banned on Allotment sites was not supported but the committee will remind people to be more considerate, fires should not be left unattended and under no circumstances should materials be brought from home to be burned on site.

12.2 Weeds

With the approach of spring weeds are beginning to take hold on unattended plots, causing nuisance to neighbouring tenants. Andy confirmed that committee members will carry out a monthly inspection of each site to check if plots are being tended. Where there is evidence of plots not being worked tenants will be contacted and if there is no improvement will be given notice.

12.3 Pest Control

Mr Adams LS 47 asked if the association was going to organise some control of the rabbit population at LS. Andy replied that contact had been made with someone who had ferrets and Ray would be asked to follow this up as soon as possible.

12.14 Vandalism at Newland

In response to a query re the recording of vandalism at Newland, Andy asked that any incidents be logged on the Association website and that the local PCSO be informed via the non emergency police telephone number. He thanked Bernie and Barry for putting a spring closer on the gate.