

Witney Allotment Association

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday July 15th 2015

Present: Mary Killick, Geoff Branner, Valerie Fisher, Barrie Fenton, David Mace, Timothy Brown, David Barber

1. Apologies
Lynne Berry
2. Minutes of the last meeting on Wednesday May 13th. Agreed as accurate.
3. Treasurers report
The current balance is £8,170.15. Water rates still to be paid from this balance.
No accurate figure available of balance currently owed to Thames Water.
4. Waiting list update and available plots
5 new candidates added to the waiting list since last meeting in May. 1 was removed from list as unable to make contact with them. He has since been re-added following contact.
2 re-allocations of plots at LS
9 letters have been sent out to persons not tending their plots.
2 have given up tenancies and 1 has died.
LS-50b. Plot given up. Cost to WAA £150 to clear plot.
Termination letter sent to tenant at HR who has been unable to tend allotment. To be offered a half plot or smaller (discussion regarding trial plots of single raised bed)
Waiting list total 60. HR 9, LS 17, NL 20 and 13 any allotment.
Current waiting times: NL 5 years, HR 2 years, LS under 2 years.
Discussion regarding allocations of full plots, half plots and quarter plots with option to progress on to a larger plot once proved they can adequately maintain their existing plot.
Sub committee formed to look at the process of moving from one plot size to another.
5. NL- Mr C's plot has been cleared by RM. No longer a concern.
NL-Mr H-Not tending his plot.
NL-Plot 8b and 9a-Not tending plots.
Termination letters sent to the above.
Discussion whether to divide the above plots from half plots to quarter plots and offer them to the current tenants as an alternative to termination. To allow 3 months to show progress.
LS- Photos shown of neglected plots. Termination letters sent.
HR- Photos shown of neglected plots. Termination letters sent.
6. Reports from site reps.
HR-Water butt leaking. DM asked to look at it. To liaise with GB
HR- Complaint received from local resident regarding rats coming from allotment. CJ to contact Council to obtain advice on managing and eradicating the problem safely.

7. Matters arising.

Cameras for site rep use- Should the site reps have cameras to use for photographic evidence of neglected plots as digital cameras provide times and dates when image taken? No decision reached as the current practice is to use mobile phone cameras.

GB led discussion about ways to build the community on the allotments. To enable allotmenters to get to know their fellow plot holders it was suggested that the WAA provide maps of the allotments at each site with a directory of names. All allotmenters will be asked to sign their names up on the directory. VF to contact council to obtain good quality maps. DM to make directories.

NL-Thanks to be sent to Mr Kitto for provision of new notice board.

Rent returns- Our tenancy agreement does not specify what to with returning rental paid if the plot is surrendered before the end of the year. It was agreed that rental would be returned on a pro-rata basis. This would be conditional on it being returned in a cultivated state ready to hand over to next tenant.

Seed catalogues- Due soon. Site reps at each site to organize distribution.

Any other business:

Obtaining more land for allotments- More allotments are needed. Representative from Town Council, Mr Enright, to be invited to next meeting to answer questions on the matter. CJ to research the ownership of plots at Bishop's Mill.

Keeping quail on allotments- A request has been made to keep quail on the allotments. The allotment act permits the keeping of 'Hens and rabbits'. 'Hen' is not clearly defined as 'chicken'. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, that we are all affiliated to, defines 'Hens' as 'Chickens'. The act also does not specify that the hens should be domestic poultry (quails are game birds). In principal there is no objection to the keeping of Quails but it will set a precedent for the keeping of other birds where the female is a 'Hen', this could include Turkey hens, Peahens or even Ostrich hens! WAA will refer the issue to WTC for a decision. The issue to be considered at the next Amenities Meeting in September. In the interim the person the request came from will be informed that the WAA will wait for the response from the WTC before permission is granted. MK to contact the National Allotment Association to get a firm definition of Hens.

Facebook groups. CJ reported on the social benefits of Facebook groups as a means of communicating with other allotment tenants. The NL group already in existence provides a good means of swapping plants/vegetables, sharing tips on pest control, offering allotment equipment to give away and to share the delights they are harvesting on their allotments. It was agreed that it is a good idea but would be best if each site had their own Facebook group rather than a general Witney one. CJ to administrate one for HR and TB and DB to do the same for LS. The main drawback is that the take up on the sites may be restricted as not everyone uses Facebook or has access to a computer.

Review of the current Tenancy Agreement- Our current tenancy agreement lacks specifics. The committee were provided with a draft Agreement provided by the National Alloments Association. Comments and discussion at the next meeting.

WAA Website- Website requires updating and making more user friendly. A volunteer to be identified.

Thanks given to DM for his assistance with strimming and grass cutting at LS. Remuneration offered to cover any costs incurred. It was suggested that the WAA provide strimmer for communal use. Insurance to be looked in to.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday September 24th 2015