

26th April 2022

Draft Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA) held on 26th April 2022 at 7:00pm at the Bowls Club, the Leys, Witney.

1	Apologies were received from Janet & Harvey Leach (Newland), Andy Church (Newland), Rob Amos (Windrush Place). There were 50 people in attendance.
2	Acceptance of minutes of the AGM held on 21 st September 2021. Whilst the minutes were agreed as a correct record of the AGM held on 21 st Sept 2021, the matter regarding Lynn Jones and a site rep position at Lakeside was discussed and explained by the Chair. For the record, the Chair stated he had misunderstood the situation and that this would be recorded in these minutes. The issue was resolved and the Chair would contact Lynn Jones to discuss the position of Projects Coordinator at the Lakeside site.
3	Matters arising from the previous minutes Hailey Road toilet Brian Bloomfield advised that a survey had been sent out to all plot holders asking whether they still wanted the composting toilet. Of the 25 surveys returned, only two plot holders wanted the toilet to remain and only one of those was prepared to be involved with the cleaning. The rest of the respondents were happy for it to be removed. Eight Hailey Road tenants were in attendance at the meeting and all were in agreement that the toilet should be removed. The toilet was offered to other site reps but no site wanted it.
4	Chairs Report A warm welcome to you all and thank you all for a superb turn out. Coming out of lockdown I have seen the renewed vigour and enthusiasm from our tenants across all sites to get on with “growing your own” produce, especially as food prices continue to increase, which is trend expected to continue in the near future. As well that, coupled with the “wellbeing/feelgood factor” allotmenters get from working their plots, this globally followed hobby continues to grow in popularity (no pun intended); indeed, the number of people we now have on the waiting list in Witney says a lot for this notion. With WP fully up and running, we have 4 very well served sites with a membership gusting around the 270 mark. However, a waiting list of over 230 people means that we could really do with further allotment sites in Witney. The situation with the global climate crisis means that we as allotmenters have a responsibility and an opportunity to “garden in the right way” and take the appropriate steps to improve our green footprint. In this regard and as an example I commend to you all to look at some of the amazing amount of information and literature available in many formats to gain even further understanding on what we can do to help save our planet. This is my second year as Chair of the WAA and I do not cease to be amazed by the innovation and hard work our members put into tending their plots. This is supported by our fantastic Committee, who are very often assisted by a willing group of

	<p>volunteers from across the sites, and who all work tirelessly to keep our sites running smoothly. Much work behind the scenes ensures that you can all pursue this as one of your chosen hobbies safely and securely. In close liaison with WTC, we continue to try to make improvements on each site. WP is now fully functioning and requires little if anything to improve the infrastructure or amenities on site; apart from the orchard which is slowly taking shape. Lakeside, our biggest site continues to produce a few challenges, but these are overcome by the hard work of the site reps and volunteer tenants. We are working hard to place an orchard on Lakeside, with funding drawn down from WODC to assist with both orchards at Lakeside and WP. Hailey Road has had a new perimeter fence erected on 3 sides of the site and we are in discussions with WTC to improve the 5-bar wooden gate entrance. The Newlands site has few if any issues and is a shining example of a well-run and very happy allotment site. Further ongoing improvements include 2 high security Asgard sheds to be purchased jointly between WTC and the WAA, one for each of Lakeside and Hailey Road sites.</p> <p>So as I move into the concluding part of my opening address, it would be remiss of me not to publicly thank the willing group of volunteers who help make the WAA what it is. My personal thanks to Diane Newsham and Andy Church, our secretaries, Rachel our Treasurer, our site reps Dave, Mary, Barrie and Brian; Bob who remains as our Kings Seeds rep but in a co-opted position, Paul our Webmaster and the many willing volunteer tenants who relentlessly work hard to support our elected committee members. Last but not least, I would also like to extend our sincere thanks to WTC who have given the WAA their absolute support to help keep the sites running smoothly.</p> <p>May I wish you all a very productive and rewarding growing season, stay safe and continue to build on the corps d'esprit that abounds across the WAA.</p> <p>Thank you all for listening.</p>								
5	<p>Treasurers Report</p> <p>Thanks were offered to the large number of tenants (over 90%) who have paid on time this year.</p> <p>Current Balance</p> <p>1st January 2021 – 31st December 2021</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Opening balance</td> <td>£ 9,174.74</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Closing balance</td> <td>£10,414.42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total rental income</td> <td>£ 5,565.00 (amount we must hold in reserve through the year)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total expenditure</td> <td>£ 4,325.32</td> </tr> </table> <p>The expenditure is broadly consistent with previous years, with water costs being the largest outlay at around 40% of our expenditure.</p> <p>This year's increased balance reflects the rental income received because of the inception of Windrush Place, where whilst income has been received, but as a new site there has been very little expenditure. Costs will be incurred later this year for water bills etc.</p>	Opening balance	£ 9,174.74	Closing balance	£10,414.42	Total rental income	£ 5,565.00 (amount we must hold in reserve through the year)	Total expenditure	£ 4,325.32
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	<p>The current financial situation means that the WAA is able to continue to meet the water bills on behalf of the tenants and will not be asking the AGM to review the rental fees for 2023.</p> <p>This position will be reviewed in a year's time to see if an increase is required in 2024.</p>
6	<p>Election of Officers and Committee members to serve for 2022/2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chair – Barry Jessel b. Treasurer – Rachel Barber c. Secretary – Diane Newsham, Andy Church d. Site Reps – Barrie Fenton – Newland Brian Bloomfield – Hailey Road Dave Barber – Lakeside Mary Killick - Lakeside Esther Leach – Windrush Place <p>The above officers and committee members were all re-elected following a vote from all members present; 29 votes in favour were recorded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Disputes panel (minimum of 4) Sue Sibley, Colin Newitt, Judith Le Goode and Matt Nind are happy to continue. To ensure we have succession contingency, the Chair asked if anyone else would be prepared to join the disputes panel so that we ideally have 6 people to cover the four panel members required. Maxine Scanlon (Windrush Place) offered to join the panel. The WAA is still seeking a further volunteer to take the total number of members on the disputes panel to 6. <p>The Chair thanked Peter Killick for his time on the disputes panel.</p>
7	<p>Items for discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Addressing of unkempt plots If plot holders fall behind with upkeep of their plot, other plot holders may be able to help and support them as a really overgrown plot will affect others. Site reps will be keeping a look out for people who are struggling, but tenants can also bring to the attention of the site rep or committee members plots that are unkempt. Should a tenant intend on being away for a prolonged period, it would be appreciated if they could let their site reps know in advance, so the WAA is kept informed and who will try to get the support of fellow tenants to tend the absent tenant's plot b. Fallow plots With the large number of people on the waiting list, it was stated that plots should not be left fallow. If plot holders are going away for a long period of time, rather than leaving the plot fallow, it would be better to consider giving up half of the plot or all of the plot and then going back on the waiting list.
8	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provision of skips

In the past skips were supplied by Witney Town Council, not the WAA, but were withdrawn as they were filled with non-allotment rubbish. The WAA will look into providing a skip to Hailey Road in order to dispose of the composting toilet.

b. Letters regarding weeds

The WAA are working with Witney Town Council to monitor plots across WAA sites and warning letters will be sent to plot holders whose plots have fallen below the expected standard.

Weed letters have been re-written and approved by the Committee. Follow up letters will be sent if no progress or improvements are made. If the situation continues the tenant will forfeit their plot. This process will happen within a season.

c. New gate at Lakeside

A tenant had recently asked if the gate at Lakeside could be widened to allow for large deliveries, but subsequently a new gate has been installed by Witney Town Council.

Angus Whitburn, the Witney Town Council representative who attended the AGM explained that the new gate has been installed because the road is owned at the allotment end by Witney Town Council and by a private landowner at the other end. The gate was installed at the request of the private landowner as he wished to make it clear that it was not a public right of way, but private access for allotment holders and the private landowner.

It was noted that feedback from local residents assumed that the gate was put up by the allotment holders and it was requested that Witney Town Council made it clear that this was not the case.

Lakeside tenants were disappointed that the new gate had not improved the security of the site and the Lakeside rep suggested that the WAA would have been prepared to contribute to a gate that would improve security if they had been approached by the Council. The gate may eventually be coded but is open at the moment.

Angus explained that the gate was put up quickly because of pressure from the landowner. If the WAA wanted to contribute towards a more substantial gate to improve security, Angus explained that it would take six months for this change to be agreed and implemented. This will be investigated.

d. Lakeside

The Lakeside boundary was discussed and whether a fence would be erected on the boundary adjacent to the hotel. Angus agreed to look at the boundary in question as there is currently a dispute over who owns the ditch between the hotel and the allotment site. The ditch should be cleared out annually – BJ agreed to contact the Council to follow up on this.

Trees are also an issue as some are encroaching on plots. The trees are on the other side of the fence, but the Council can cut back anything that comes over the boundary. It was suggested that the Council needs to encourage the landowner to maintain their boundary.

e. Postcodes for allotment sites

It was requested that postcodes were available for allotment sites for deliveries and also for emergencies. These will be displayed on the site noticeboards along with the relevant What3Words that will identify the location. DB to action.

f. Defibrillators

The Chair hopes to be able to arrange for defibrillators to be installed on each of the WAA sites and will be in dialogue with Witney Town Council.

g. Hailey Road security

Hailey Road has a five-bar gate that does not prevent people from entering the site to walk dogs etc. The WAA are in discussion with Witney Town Council to remedy this problem. The WAA wants to be a part of the solution and will be happy to contribute if necessary. Further dialogue to be had with the Council to try to resolve this matter.

h. Hailey Road

It was mentioned that the areas outside of the Hailey Road site were not being mown as frequently and this was leading to weeds around the Hailey Road boundary. Oxfordshire County council are responsible for roadside verges and have reduced the frequency of their maintenance to save money. It was noted that tenants may have to resolve the situation by cutting problem areas themselves.

i. Equipment and storage

Discussions took place regarding equipment available at sites. BJ explained that two new Asgard sheds were being made available for Lakeside and Hailey Road and that, until these were in place, for security reasons no equipment would be purchased. Although health and safety is not the responsibility of the WAA when a tenant is using the equipment, it was agreed that we would contact the NSALG for further advice regarding liability. Any equipment supplied would need to be maintained which could cost around £1000 per year over all sites. This would have to be financed via plot fees and may lead eventually to an increase in plot fees, although it was noted that plot fees are very reasonable and have not risen for at least three years. Some members did not feel that they would want to contribute in this way as they had their own equipment and others were concerned that some plot holders would not ensure that equipment was returned or left in good condition for the next person to use it. Barrie Fenton explained that on Newland they had a register that people had to sign when they were borrowing equipment. It was stated that equipment was needed for communal areas as people cannot be expected to use their own equipment for this. Further consultation with members will take place and the ongoing equipment purchasing plan will be placed on hold.

j. Constitution

The changes in the Constitution were approved with 29 votes.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the discussions.

The meeting was attended by 46 members from all four of the sites as well as WTC.

B Jessel

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Chairman of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA)

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