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**Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA)
held on 3rd April 2023 at 7:30pm at the Bowls Club, The Leys, Witney.**

Item	
1	Apologies Rachel Barber, Tanya Mulraine-Allen
2	Acceptance of minutes of the AGM held on 26 April 2022 Whilst the minutes were agreed as a correct record of the AGM held on 26 th April 2022, the ownership of a fence at Lakeside was questioned and discussed – see below.
3	Matters arising from the previous minutes A question was asked about the accuracy in the minutes of the details of the ownership / responsibility for the fence on the right-hand side of the Lakeside site. Angus Whitburn from Witney Town Council explained that the fence is owned jointly by the landowner and WTC but the entire road is private with plot holders having a right of way over it. The removal of the gate was discussed and Angus confirmed that it was at the request of the landowner. Plot holders felt that it affected their access to the site and the Lakeland site rep suggested an alternative place for the new gate that is due to be fitted under the refurbishment work being carried out by WTC in the near future. The Chair agreed to talk to the WTC about this and feedback to the tenants.
4	Chair's Report Good evening everyone, a warm welcome to you all and thank you all for making the effort to attend this year's AGM. I mentioned lockdown in my report last year and whilst the seriousness of that pandemic period may appear to have passed, the virus still continues to pervade our lives and in some cases quite seriously. Against this, I am glad to say that our allotment membership continues to thrive, with around 280 tenants across our 4 sites and 200 on the waiting list, it is evident that this is a lifestyle hobby that many people are certainly enjoying. However (yes there's always a however), having said this I continue to be dismayed at what could be simply construed as arrogance when I see numerous plots not been tended in accordance with the WAA Terms and Conditions and quite honestly, sometimes left in a pitiful state. So, as we move forward into the 2023 season, we will be taking further steps to remove WAA membership from tenants who simply cannot be bothered to tend their plots; this is a situation I have to say that annoys those studious tenants who actually care about their gardening passion and tend some lovely looking plots, which I am glad to say are in the majority. This situation is even more incredulous given the backdrop of increasing food prices against financial uncertainty, where grow your own can really help out. This situation I hope you will agree, cannot continue given that the majority of tenants wholeheartedly abide by the rules and utilise the privilege of owning an allotment to their best advantage. So, as I move on from my "rant", I can report on more pleasant and positive outcomes for the WAA. For instance, our continuing liaison with local schools where children are visiting some of our sites, all properly supervised may I add, and who are benefitting from the knowledge and experience of helpful tenants who are promoting the education

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of our children on where and how produce actually comes from. We have provided financial assistance for raised beds and gardening equipment to some schools and we are actively involved in helping schools to encourage the growing and tending of produce within their own school grounds; some are even using that produce in cookery lessons. We are also now affiliated with the ICE project for the disabled, who have been provided with accessible raised beds on the Windrush Place site. An example of just two fantastic community-minded activities upon which we will continue to expand. I can also report that the orchards are now in place at Lakeside and Windrush Place and our thanks go to WODC for their financial support to the WAA to provide those. WTC have now also passed the funding to re-fence Lakeside, Hailey Rd and Newlands sites with fencing commensurate with that at Windrush Place; new gates will also be fitted. All great progress to make our sites, better, safer and more secure for our tenants. Can I please emphasise the need to lock gates behind you, both upon entry and exit to your sites; I know that this is a perennial problem at Lakeside.

Moving on, it is always a nice thing to say my sincere thanks to an extremely hard-working committee, I would like to say that we are always looking for like-minded tenants to support our committee. Many of our committee fit in WAA responsibilities against busy family commitments, demanding day jobs and of course tending their own plots, which of course have to be of an exemplar standard! My thanks go to Rachel Barber for her outstanding commitment to the WAA as Treasurer, but who is now handing over the financial reigns to Tanya after 8 years of diligently doing the books. To Diane, our brilliant Secretary, who has had to put up with her fair share of “challenging” e-mails, but who continues to stoically be a pillar of support to the committee. Esther, who has worked studiously to make sure the waiting list is absolutely up to date, having sifted out tenants who have moved away without informing the WAA and to do a deep dive on contact details, which has allowed us to reduce the waiting list to around 200 people. I have to say that Esther brings a huge amount of wisdom to our committee meetings. And to Andy Church who was Assistant Secretary but who has now stepped down from this duty; so if you fancy taking on the Assistant Secretary role, please let us know. Our Site Reps, Dave and Mary at Lakeside, Brian at Hailey Rd and Barrie at Newlands sites – you have all done an amazing job, dealing with some pretty difficult situations and I am sure the whole membership extend their sincere thanks to you all for your unstinting hard work and dedication. To Bob, who continues as a co-opted committee member looking after the Kings Seeds log-ins account and our site warden at Windrush Place, Steve Stokes, who does a fantastic job of keeping our lovely new site looking just that...lovely! Paul Downes, our website master who has the patience of a saint with the numerous “last minute.com” requests to add items to the website.

We welcome to the committee two new members, firstly Tanya Mulraine-Allen, who cannot be with us this evening due to family commitments; Tanya joins us as our new Treasurer. And Rosie Trinder, who takes over as the Site Manager on Newlands, our warm welcome to you both. Barrie Fenton will be moving into the Site Warden role at Newlands, so is not completely cutting ties with the committee. Our warm welcome, goodbyes and thanks to you all for helping make the WAA run so smoothly.

Finally, whilst some people might consider the WTC as our enemy, they are indeed not; we have a great working relationship with Angus and his team who do their utmost to assist us with the running of the sites and who is here this evening. Indeed, WTC are still currently looking for further suitable sites for more allotments, but as yet have not located anywhere. Our thanks Angus to you, your team and the wider WTC for your continued cooperation, advice and sometimes mediation in more delicate matters – thank you.

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	<p>So, it just remains for me to wish you all a safe, productive and enjoyable gardening season in 2023 and that you manage to grow some lovely produce for you, your families and friends to enjoy.</p>								
5	<p>Treasurer's Report</p> <p>The Treasurer's report was delivered by David Barber, who had been co-opted as Treasurer at the last committee meeting on 6th March, as Rachel Barber was unable to attend the AGM.</p> <p>The 2022 accounts have been closed and are ready to go to the auditors.</p> <table><tr><td>Closing balance</td><td>£11,214.82</td></tr><tr><td>Rent reserve</td><td>£ 5,628.00</td></tr><tr><td>Grant income</td><td>£ 500.00 (Community orchard)</td></tr><tr><td>Working capital</td><td>£ 5,086.82</td></tr></table> <p>The total expenditure for the year was £5,327.60 which was around £1000 higher than last year. We have yet to be fully charged for water on the sites.</p> <p>The balance in the account, as of 6th March, is £10,689.86 but there are two outstanding bills to the NSALG and TSO bills to be paid.</p> <p>Rent payments for 2023 have started to be paid into the account.</p> <p>The 2023 accounts are in the process of being set up and when completed will be ready to hand over to Tanya Mulraine-Allen, who is taking over the Treasurer role for the WAA.</p>	Closing balance	£11,214.82	Rent reserve	£ 5,628.00	Grant income	£ 500.00 (Community orchard)	Working capital	£ 5,086.82
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6	<p>Election of Officers and Committee members to serve for 2023/2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Chair – Barry Jesselb. Treasurer – Tanya Mulraine-Allenc. Secretary - Diane Newsham (Andy Church Joint Sec resigning)d. Waiting List coordinator – Esther Leache. Site Reps – Hailey Road - Brian Bloomfield Lakeside - Mary Killick / Dave Barber Newland – Rosie Trinder (Barrie Fenton resigning) Windrush Place – Barry Jesself. Site Wardens – Newlands – Barrie Fenton – Windrush Place – Steve Stokesg. Committee Membersh. Disputes panel Sue Sibley, Colin Newitt, Judith Le Goode and Matt Nind <p>The above officers and committee members were all re-elected / elected following a vote from all members present: 32 votes in favour were recorded.</p> <p>It was noted that the Disputes panel was not used in 2022 as some of the disputes were such that they went beyond the remit of the panel, with legal advice sought with a view to court proceedings to resolve some of the disputes that arose.</p>								

Items for discussion

a. Site security and securing all gates

The importance of plot holders ensuring that they lock all site gates on entry and exit was discussed, as there has been a rise in many sites locally having machinery taken from site.

Combination locks should always be tumbled rather than left with the combination in place – not only does this leave the site unsecure, locks can easily be removed or lost.

It was requested that tenants remind other plot holders about the importance of securing gates if they notice that they are not locking gates.

A Lakeside tenant requested that a sign be supplied and fitted reminding people to lock the gate.

If there are persistent offenders who do not secure the site, plot holders can advise their site rep or the Chair who will be happy to follow this up.

b. Hedge cutting

Newland hedges have been partially trimmed but will need to be completed after the nesting season.

The Chair explained that WTC had undertaken an audit of all plots, at the request of the WAA, so that the WAA could then police the sites and ensure that the standards expected by WTC are maintained.

One Lakeside tenant expressed concern at the tone of the letters sent to plot holders whose plots needed attention, particularly if they had only just taken over the plot. The Lakeside site rep said that plot holders were able to contact WTC with their concerns and that if they had contacted WTC to explain their situation, they would have been given more time to bring the plot up to standard.

The Chair said that he would send a letter of apology to the plot holder concerned

Angus from WTC said that the trees on the hotel side of the Lakeside site had been tidied and now looked much better.

He explained that if a hedge encroaches on to a plot, it is the plot holder's responsibility to maintain the hedge line. This has partly come about because, over time, some plot holders have extended their plots towards the boundary.

Angus also made it clear that paths alongside plots are the responsibility of the tenants. During the audit, around 25 tenants were advised that their paths were overgrown and needed to be cleared and he was pleased to say that most of these had been resolved.

Angus also added that the works on the fences and gates to bring the standard into line with Windrush Place site would be beginning in the week commencing 24th April.

c. Plot fees and water bills

Some of the money held in the WAA bank account is earmarked to cover water bills when they are received.

Plot fees for this year have not been increased again and examples of charges in other parts of the country showed that charges on WAA sites were very reasonable.

Because Windrush Place has such good facilities, the Chair proposed that the WAA increase the plot fees at Windrush Place to bring them in line with charges levied at Lakeside, as follows:

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	<p>The original cup awarded to the overall winner cannot be traced and a replacement cup has been purchased from Witney Trophy Centre. When the engraving has been completed it will be passed on to Catherine Kennedy who will keep it until the AGM in 2024.</p>
10	<p>Any Other Business No items were raised.</p>
11	<p>Closing Remarks and thanks The meeting was attended by 51 members from all four of the WAA sites as well as a representative from WTC.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone present for attending and hoped everyone would have a successful growing season</p>

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Chairman of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA)