

5<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Minutes of a meeting of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA) Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 6:30pm at Julie's house.**

Item	Discussion	Action
1	<p><b>Apologies</b> Barry Jessel, Tanya Allen</p>	
2	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting</b> The minutes of the meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> April were accepted as a true record of the meeting.</p>	
3	<p><b>Matters arising</b> There were no matters arising.</p>	
4	<p><b>Treasurers Report</b> Although TA and DN visited the bank to complete the necessary paperwork, the bank sent further paperwork that needs to be signed by BJ and returned to complete the handover. This will be completed when BJ returns from his current work commitments.</p> <p>RB has paid an estimated water bill for Lakeside which was very high and it was agreed that meter readings should be taken as soon as possible. RB also sent the water bill for Newland which needed no payment as the site remains in credit. DN will pass on these to TA.</p> <p>Because the change-over is still in progress, TA could only provide the current balance in the bank account as at 5<sup>th</sup> June.</p> <p>Balance stands at £12,087.96</p>	<p>BJ</p> <p>DB</p> <p>DN</p>
5	<p><b>Waiting list and available plots</b> At present there are 212 people on the waiting list – this number has increased as we have recently had several new applications for plots.</p>	
6	<p><b>Site Reps Reports</b> <b>a. Hailey Road</b> BB advised that he has carried out a preliminary weed walk and will be contacting BF to accompany him on a further inspection. The initial inspection highlighted two problem plots – one is an existing plot holder who will need to be sent a warning letter and the second is a new tenant who does not appear to have made very much progress with their plot. Two plots causing concern from previous meetings are much improved. There have been several new plot allocations and most new tenants are on site on a regular basis and making good progress with their plots. BB is to clarify which HR plot holders have still to pay this year's fees before chasing the tenants. Because of the Treasurer handover, lack of access to bank account and therefore details of unpaid rent, BB feels that some of the names he has been given may have already paid. BB reported that the lock to the new gate does not have the same code as</p>	<p>BB</p>

the other gate and that the vehicle access gate has no lock at all. This has been reported to AW at WTC and was also noted by Councillor Crouch at the meeting.

**b. Lakeside**

DB and MK conducted a walk around the site which led to 15 plot holders receiving emails about the upkeep of their plots.

Most plots have been improved following these emails but a second inspection has been completed and this has led to three termination notices issued to tenants who have not improved their plots.

Some of the plot holders contacted were unhappy with the tone of the emails and we acknowledge that we have received the feedback.

A litter of five feral kittens was discovered on the site but have now been moved from the original spot by the mother. Sunshine Cat Rescue will be contacted with a view to them being caught and removed from the site.

The lock to the new gate has been broken and DB will look at it and hopefully be able to repair it.

The lock to the kissing gate has been vandalised and, when it is replaced, it needs to be more robust.

DB

DB reported that he has seen people walking around the site who are not plot holders. When spoken to they left the site but it is another example of the lack of security at the site if gates are left open by plot holders or locks not tumbled.

**c. Newland**

A plot holder has spoken to RT about the WAA providing some shelving for a sharing area on the site to enable plot holders to swap plants etc. Other site reps advised that an old table serves as a good sharing area on their sites.

The plot holder also asked about setting up a site Facebook page. Social media pages can be problematic if they are not used in the right way. JC advised that they have a Hailey Road group that is used solely for organising social events and offering plants etc to other plot holders. Positive comments only are permitted and no detrimental comments are allowed. It was suggested that the plot holder might like to set up her own Whatsapp group with plot holders who were interested in joining.

Plot \* was, historically, split into three smaller plots, The plot holder in the middle plot has also got another half plot on the site and the other two plot holders would like the plot divided into two rather than three now. It was agreed that if the middle section becomes vacant in the future, they will be given first refusal of the plot.

RT reported that a water trough on site had been very slow to fill but BF had managed to repair it by unblocking a blocked valve.

A wood shredder was requested by a plot holder but the committee were unable to agree to this as Health and Safety concerns were raised by some committee members.

RT has received a complaint about a smoky bonfire that was lit on a windy day. The plot holder stayed with the fire but the complainant was unhappy

	<p>about how smoky it made the site. It was agreed to send the plot holder an email explaining the rules around having bonfires as laid out in the Ts &amp; Cs.</p> <p>The rotavator needs maintenance work carried out on it and now that SS has a full-time job, BF &amp; RT were unsure who to contact. DN to check the minutes of last year's meetings to find the name of the other company who originally priced against SS.</p> <p>A new gate has been installed at the Kingsfield Crescent entrance but, unfortunately, it has no stop plate so it has a tendency to swing open both ways and catch people's fingers. WTC have been advised but it was also agreed to put a notice up on-site warning tenants and on the website. The old gate is still on site, waiting to be removed by WTC. Only one gate was ordered by WTC, they are intending to supply another one but it has not been ordered yet so we have no timescale as to when it will be fitted.</p> <p>Plot *** has had a lot of work carried out. The plot holder's health issues mean he is struggling to get on site but around half has been planted by other family members and so progress is being made. The WAA had offered the tenant an accessible plot at Windrush Place but he was adamant that he wanted to keep the plot at Newland.</p> <p><b>Windrush Place</b> There are two tenants who have been sent warning letters about their plots. One plot is much improved, with weeds removed and more planting in place. The second plot has made some progress but there is not sufficient weed control and the tenant will be informed of this.</p>	<p>DN</p> <p>DN</p> <p>RT DN</p>
7	<p><b>Items for Discussion</b> The alleged incident of a tenant using abusive language to a committee member was discussed and it was agreed that the next step was to convene the Disputes Panel to make an independent judgement on the issue. BJ to contact the Disputes Panel members to arrange the date for the Panel to sit. It was agreed that the Disputes Panel member from the site involved would not be able to sit on the Panel on this occasion. The procedure needs to be completed by the end of August.</p> <p>A discussion took place around whether a whole year's plot fees should be charged to a new tenant if they take over a plot part the way through the year. DB proposed that rent should be charged on a pro rata basis and it was also suggested that, if a tenant takes over a plot after December, they are encouraged to pay the next year's plot fees with the pro rata charge for the current year. A vote was taken and was agreed by a majority of committee members.</p>	<p>BJ</p>
8	<p><b>Site Management of Lakeside</b> The need for a site manager for Lakeside was discussed and DB &amp; MK said that although they had actively canvassed for more help, none was forthcoming. MK stated that she was fully aware of DB's commitments and was happy to carry on with her duties in the absence of other volunteers. DB apologised that he had been tied up with other things and said that, while he is open to an additional site rep, he will try to assign more time to assist MK.</p>	

	<p>Communications to all Lakeside tenants have suffered due to the lack of group e-mails and tenants have complained of a lack of group communication at Lakeside.</p> <p>DB explained that this was partly due to his personal laptop needing replacing. Once he has his new laptop, he will update the distribution list and improve communication at Lakeside. DB does not feel it is the site reps responsibility to advise of community activities and that plot holders should still expect some communication on the site noticeboard.</p>	
9	<p><b>Structure Applications</b></p> <p>Lakeside Plot 54, Greenhouse – within size limits.  Windrush Place Plot 27, Greenhouse – within size limits.  Windrush Place Plot 30, Greenhouse – within size limits</p> <p>As all structures were within the agreed limits they were approved by the committee.</p>	
10	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Councillor Rachel Crouch (CRC) visited the meeting to introduce herself to the committee.</p> <p>Following her recent election to the Town Council, she has been given the responsibility of Witney’s halls, cemeteries and allotments and, in that capacity, would be happy to attend the beginning of each WAA meeting to gather any feedback and to be a direct link between the WAA and WT councillors</p> <p>The committee agreed that this would be very beneficial to the WAA and were happy that CRC is sent copies of the minutes of the WAA meetings.</p> <p>JC has offered to do a quarterly newsletter to cover all four sites. She will include anything from site reps and it will be posted on the website. It could also be displayed on site noticeboards and sent out by site reps.</p> <p>A request was made that, when sending emails, it is important to consider who is copied into the emails and only include people who are absolutely necessary.</p> <p>The incident that is to be dealt with by the Disputes Panel has highlighted that the Ts &amp; Cs and the constitution need to be reviewed. It was agreed that this is a topic that should be discussed in the near future. Several points were mentioned including clarifying what is meant by 75% cultivation and improving and simplifying the terminology used.</p>	
11	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 at 6.30pm at Barry’s house.</p>	

*B Jessel*

B Jessel

Chairman of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA)