

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023

**Draft Minutes of a meeting of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA) Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 at 6:30pm at Barry's house.**

Item	Discussion	Action
1	<b>Apologies</b> Esther Leach, David Barber	
2	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b> The minutes of the meeting held on the 5 <sup>th</sup> June were accepted as a true record of the meeting and will now be published to the website.	DN
3	<b>Matters arising</b> JC has informed the committee that she wishes to step down from her role as Deputy Chair. The committee expressed they were sad to hear this and accepted her resignation.  Although the bank has been provided with the necessary paperwork, the changeover of Treasurer is still in progress. BJ and TA to visit the bank to try to resolve the situation.  MK confirmed that there is no-one willing to take on the role of Site Manager for Lakeside and that MK and DB are both Site Reps.  Witney Town Council have stated that they do not wish to have any involvement with updating the Ts and Cs of the WAA which will now be amended and updated by the committee. DN contacted the NSALG for their templates but these reflect our current Ts and Cs which were originally written in the 1950s, so require updating.	
4	<b>Treasurers Report</b> TA was concerned that the handover was not going smoothly but was reassured by the committee that this was out of her control and understood the difficulties she was facing in providing up to date balances and details of tenants who had yet to pay their plot fees.  It was agreed that there needs to be a better level of transparency for the WAA accounts and budget. Going forward, at every meeting the Chair will have sight of the latest bank statement and this will be signed by both the Chair and Treasurer at each meeting.  The outgoing Treasurer is to be requested to provide accounts to the end of March 2023 to the new Treasurer as soon as possible and ideally before the next meeting in August.  To allow the new Treasurer to move forward in the meantime, an opening reserve figure will be used until such time as the accounts are agreed. The figure will then be revised as necessary once the accounts are available.  TA to advise MK of any Lakeside tenants still to pay this year's rent.	TA

5	<p><b>Waiting list and available plots</b> There are 218 names on the waiting list at present.</p>	
6	<p><b>Site Reps Reports</b></p> <p><b>a. Hailey Road</b> BB reported that, like Newland, the old gate is still to be removed by the contractors who fitted the new gates.</p> <p>BB also expressed frustration that the requested code change to the new gate has still not happened – AW has advised that WTC cannot do this and it can only be done by the supplier. DN will chase AW again re this and Newland.</p> <p>The new vehicle gates look very good but it does not have a lock at present so is being left wide open.</p> <p>Plot *** was recently let to a new tenant who has not carried out much work to the plot or planted anything. BJ agreed to speak to him by telephone to remind him that he needs to make improvements to the plot.</p> <p>There are two or three other plots that are causing mild concerns to BB but he has spoken to the plot holders and will monitor the situation.</p> <p><b>b. Lakeside</b> MK reported that since DB had used the group email to remind plot holders of the importance of locking the new gate at the top of the lane, it appears to have only been left open once.</p> <p>The broken padlock has now been mended.</p> <p>MK expressed frustration at plot holders use of the lock on the new double gates installed by WTC. The padlock is often put on upside down making it difficult to tumble or it is not being tumbled at all.</p> <p>DB wanted to bring to the attention of the WAA and WTC that persons unknown have formed another access point from the field adjacent to Lakeside onto the road. WTC are aware as CRC had already advised that this was brought up in a WTC meeting on 26 June.</p> <p>Three termination letters have recently been sent out and two of the plots have been returned to the WAA and re-let. The third plot holder was given more time to clear their plot as they had been unwell. They then asked if they could keep one half of their plot but this was declined as the plot had already been re-let to new tenants. The plot holder was offered a different half plot or to wait for the next available half plot, but both offers were declined. There is therefore a half plot available to the next person on the waiting list.</p> <p>MK advised that a plot holder has established a Facebook group for Lakeside and that when a tenant moaned about the committee etc, other plot holders defended the committee and suggested that social media was not the place for those comments.</p> <p>MK walked around the site today and, apart from two plots who will be sent emails about weeds, the rest of the site was looking very good. This shows that the proactive approach of contacting plot holders whose plots were falling</p>	<p>DN</p> <p>BJ</p>

	<p>below expected standards has paid off.</p> <p>DN and CRC are to visit Lakeside with MK – date to be arranged.</p> <p><b>c. Newland</b></p> <p>RT reported that over the weekend of the 20<sup>th</sup> June, two padlocks were stolen from the site. Emails have been sent to all tenants reminding them of the importance of scrambling the padlock when entering or leaving the site. A new padlock has been fitted.</p> <p>The rotavator has been serviced and BF is arranging collection.</p> <p>RT reported that she is monitoring a couple of plots that have in the past been well maintained but do not appear to have much being grown at the moment. RT will speak with them to find out if there are any problems and offer advice if necessary.</p> <p>Councillor Rachel Crouch visited Newlands on 27<sup>th</sup> June. She took pictures of the gate that still needs replacing and the boundary that needs higher fencing. She has added this to the agenda of the next WTC meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p>She suggested the WAA contact AW again over the removal of the old gate that has been replaced on the Kingsfield Crescent entrance and to get the back plate fitted to the new gate. DN sent an email on 27<sup>th</sup> June asking AW to chase this or to advise us of who to contact at the company who installed the gate. To date there has been no reply from AW – DN will chase again.</p> <p>BJ agreed to contact Madley Park School about plans to get involved with the WAA in the Autumn.</p> <p><b>Windrush Place</b></p> <p>Only one plot is still causing concern – the tenant has worked half the plot but will be reminded to bring the other half up to a suitable standard. BJ has spoken with the tenant and will email the plot holder again.</p> <p>A working party has recently laid a weed membrane over the orchard area and covered it in bark chippings. The area now looks very good.</p> <p>A tenant who has recently given up his plot had a brand-new tiller that he wanted to sell. BJ purchased it for £100. It is stored in the Asgard shed at Windrush Place but is available to be borrowed by any of the sites.</p> <p>A plot holder who is a welder by trade is making a site barbeque using a one hundred-gallon drum for the site.</p>	<p>BF</p> <p>DN</p> <p>BJ</p> <p>BJ</p>
7	<p><b>Items for Discussion</b></p> <p>Further discussion to be held on whether a plot taken up during the allotment year is to be charged the full amount of rent. MK would like clarification on rent charges for mid-allotment-year take-up of plots. It was agreed to carry this item over until the Treasurer handover has been fully completed. DN to add to agenda for next month's meeting.</p> <p>BJ proposed that all new tenants will be subject to a three-month probationary</p>	<p>DN</p>

period. They will have three months to get 75% of their plot cultivated and/or prepared and the rest as weed-free as practically possible. If they meet these criteria, their Tenancy Agreement will then be made permanent; if not, then a warning is to be given by the Site Lead to remind them of the agreement. This was agreed by the committee members present.

A further discussion was held on the eviction process and it was agreed that the current system of writing three separate letters had not worked and was out-dated. A new mechanism, whereby a tenant will be given one month's notice to sort out their plot to avoid eviction, will be ready to be voted in by the committee at the next meeting. This has already been discussed with WTC, who are fully supportive of this process.

The current Terms and Conditions appear to be stacked against the WAA committee. The committee recognised that we have to adhere to the laws but, at the same time, the Ts and Cs should not hinder the committee and there should be the ability for the committee to use their discretion in exceptional circumstances.

Request from Paul Jenkins (plot holder at Lakeside)

1. Please can we have a 24/7 camera surveillance on the said gates to show which parties are in fact contravening the agreement, if not actually breaking through the wooden fences on the sides of the gate or stealing the padlocks, which allotment owners have no need to do.

2. Please can allotment holders as a body investigate, and if possible, protest at the possibility of the (redacted) owner selling the access roadway to the Moors developers at some exorbitant price to line their pockets and negate vehicle access to the allotments, thus eventually leaving the abandoned allotment land for further development after WTC sell it off as unusable allotment land. It does seem rather coincidental that the gate has appeared since the plans for the development of the Moors have been forced through.

Request from Jennifer Angless (plot holder at Lakeside)

3. Is there a possibility a small coded pedestrian gate could be placed on the Witney Lake border fence?

4. DB would like to discuss the recent planning application by the landowner at Lakeside and the impact this could have on WAA.

The items 1 – 4 above are all to be taken to the WTC meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July by CRC. DN to send copy of minutes to CRC.

DB would like to bring to the attention of the WAA and WTC that persons unknown have formed another access point from the field adjacent to Lakeside onto the road. CRC confirmed that WTC are aware as this was brought up in a WTC meeting on 26 June.

TA and PL would like to see the 2022/23 accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023 and balance sheet as at 31st March 2023 prior to audit.

As included in the Treasurer's report, the previous Treasurer is requested to provide 22/23 accounts up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 by sending them directly to TA and PL with the Chair also copied into the correspondence.

DB is requested to ask the former Treasurer to carry this out.

BJ to follow this up with a formal letter to RB.

CRC  
DN

DB

		BJ
8	<p><b>Structure Applications</b> There were no structure applications.</p>	
9	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> Draft newsletter from JC is to be shared with the committee. The committee will help to provide content for the newsletter, such as MK and BF visiting Carterton and Swinbrook to judge their best plot competition.</p> <p>MK advised that the site reps at Carterton and Swinbrook have nominated their best 10% of plots and those will be the only plots that they will need to look at. They had been given certain criteria to judge the plots and we will use these criteria when they reciprocate and judge our plots.</p> <p>CRC advised that the depot at The Leys is being moved and there are some benches that are being removed and may be suitable for use on WAA sites. BJ said they could be taken to Windrush Place and CRC will try to organise delivery with the WTC, from where other sites can collect them if they wish.</p> <p>A date for next year's AGM was also discussed and was provisionally set for either 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> April. BB will be unable to confirm that the Bowls Club will be available on either of those dates until September.</p> <p>BJ advised that WTC have said that the WAA could use their premises for the AGM and, although the upstairs of the Corn Exchange would be too small, the hall downstairs would be large enough.</p>	CRC
10	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b> The next meeting will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> August at 6.30pm at Barry's house.</p>	

*B Jessel*

B Jessel

Chairman of the Witney Allotments Association (WAA)