

ODFAA Annual Report to the AGM March 2016

ODFAA works

- to promote, support and safeguard the welfare of Allotment Associations in Oxford;
- to provide links to administrative advice and support;
- to act as an invited arbitrator where necessary on any internal allotment disputes;
- to represent Associations and offer support if necessary in any dealings with Oxford City Council and other public bodies.

Information on ODFAA/OCC and the Allotment Liaison Meeting for new members

The ODFAA Committee met in May, August, November and March, the last three with OCC Officers.

We usually meet a few weeks before the Allotment Liaison Meetings (ALM) which are in September January and April. We discuss concerns raised by associations and organise the ALM.

ODFAA prepare the paperwork, the agenda, do the minutes and keep the web site updated. OCC

Parks are responsible for the reactive maintenance budget and oversight of the leases and rules.

We share chairing ALM. In 2014 ALM agreed that the main contact would be by email. A hard copy will be posted to the nominated committee member of an association without email. 34 of the 35 operating sites in the city are ODFAA members.

Generally the Allotment Liaison Meetings (ALM) and ODFAA meetings run concurrently. ODFAA's AGM is to elect officers and the committee and is held prior to the April ALM meeting. Distinct Federation issues raised by members can be dealt with as agreed before or after an ALM.

All of the operating Oxford City Council allotment sites, and most of those on other land, have devolved management. They are generally unincorporated associations with trustees who hold the lease. The associations are managed by an elected committee in accordance with the lease and agreed constitution/rules. Some sites have other landlords.

Oxford City Council Information Stuart Fitzsimmons is Head of Parks. Parks hold the reactive maintenance and grants budget and council responsibility for allotments. The budget is the rents from Allotment land so this is largely neutral OCC funding. Stuart and / or Ian Thompson, the Parks Operational Manager usually attend ALM meetings. The email contact for Parks is

<parks@oxford.gov.uk> Mark Lygo, <cllrmygo@oxford.gov.uk> is the City Councillor who holds the council allotment portfolio. He attended 1 ALM meeting this year. We asked him some questions about the capital budget but we received no reply. Corporate Assets have responsibility for site rents and allotment leases. Ruth Whelan was responsible for managing the 2014 rent review. Your association should have a copy of your lease. If not or for any lease queries contact WHELAN Ruth <rwhelan@oxford.gov.uk>

ODFAA databases are available for update at each ALM meeting. We keep the following databases: Allotment Association Contacts, Membership/Plot/Rent details, Site Facility and Condition survey.

This data is available for use, on request, with our permission, by Oxford City Council. John Lardner is responsible for keeping this information updated. Please make sure your association lets ODFAA know of any changes of trustees, officers, committee members and site information.

Grants and Finances

2015/6 Allotment Budget was: £12000 for reactive maintenance; £978 is ring fenced for the allotments competition; £3900 in grants. This money is generated by the rents paid for allotment land. It is only available to contributing associations. Expenditure is agreed at ALM so that finances are transparent. OCC will report fully in the 2015/15 reactive maintenance budget. The following information was reported and ratified by our meetings.

2015 Grants In early March 2015 we were informed that there was 6,500 in the reactive maintenance budget and this could not be spent by Parks on the focussed areas. This was corrected as being 5,500. We agreed to circulate another round of grant application keeping the previous format. The following awards were made

Inclusive access: Cripsey Meadow/6 raised beds/1,772

Eden Drive/ /£300

Signage Old Marston Mill Lane/Sign/ £150

Eden Drive/ Sign/ £225
 Barracks Lane/ Sign/£866
 East Ward/Sign/ £461
 ODFAA/Sign/£500 (to repeat sign design suitable to roll out to associations)
 Water Harvesting Eden Drive/ water butts/ £423
 Lenthall Road/butts/£608
 Plot clearance Lenthall Road /Plot clearance/£234
 Total grants paid March 2015 were £5,540 i.e. the remainder of the 2014/5 allotment budget.

Subsequently the April ALM voted for the 2015/6 grant money to be used for security, water collection, plot management, green waste management, site management and accessibility, in that order of priority. Parks organises and distributes the grant forms which are sent out to associations in May. They are returned in early August so that the grant awards are discussed at the committee meeting by ODFAA and OCC and then proposed for ratification to the September ALM meeting. ODFAA/OCC recommended to the meeting that we pay all the April applications by using some of the reactive maintenance budget which at that time had no known demands. The ALM meeting agreed to this. Cheques were posted in October. During discussion it was clarified again that the reactive maintenance budget money is there to meet **OCC lease responsibilities** for site emergencies. Any underspend identified in January is used for the grant projects as agreed by the members in April. (Association /Project Area /Grant Amount)

John Garne Way / Water Tubs /£248
 Minchery Farm / New window for shed/ £168
 East Ward / New front gate /£720
 St Clements (Pullens lane) / Fencing/£1000
 Eden Drive / Boundary Fence / £1674.00
 Brasenose Farm / Fire extinguisher / £68.65
 Lenthall Rd/ Fencing / £732
 Cripsey Meadow / Badger trail monitoring cameras / £313

These grant applications totalling £4,676.65 (the excess came from the 2015/6 Reactive Maintenance budget) were agreed by the September 2015 ALM:

At the ODFAA/OCC committee meeting in March 2015 we agreed a firmer timetable so the money was spent wisely and in time

- April report on budget allocation and spend for previous and present year
- April ALM decide on Grant focus
- May Grant forms issued by OCC
- August Grant forms returned prior to meeting of ODFAA/OCC Committee
- September ALM Meeting ratifies Grant awards
- January ALM Reactive Maintenance Budget released for grant allocations
- This would be agreed at March Committee meeting if not needed for emergencies.

In January 2016 we were made aware of two outstanding issues for the reactive maintenance budget and thus the budget use could not be confirmed as there were continuing legal issues. It was early March again before this was raised and money released. This raised as an ALM matter.

As usual in February/March I consulted OCC budget info for allotment information. This year there was no allotment line? I consulted the finance team who said this was probably due the restructuring of Parks into Direct Services? James Marriott, a Senior Management Accountant for OCC confirmed that the 2016/17 revenue budget for Allotments has been set at a very similar level to recent years, with planned expenditure of £20,400 broken down as per the summary table below.

Allotments Budget 2016/17		
Account	Account(T)	Approved budget
B	Premises	13,630
D	Supplies & Services	6,770
	Total Expenditure	20,400
K	Income	- 18,530
BA11	Allotments General	1,870

James confirmed that a budget of £61,000 is included within the Council's approved capital programme for 2016/17 based on an overall assessment of planned repairs and maintenance needs across our allotment sites. SFs plans for use of the 34,500 form last year have retained and increased this. As this budget has only recently been reinstated following the deferral of a number of capital projects, due to a shortfall in funding, the detailed schedule of works do need to be agreed. Ian Thompson and Stuart Fitzsimmons, will clarify proposed use for the for the capital Allotments budget in more detail. Please do let us know of any successful **external funding** your association received. We aim for our minutes to record the contributions associations have led in improving OCC allotment sites.

ALM items

A-Is it possible/wise to keep the cut-off date in January as agreed previously. One of these issues was known about at the beginning of 2015 and the other in September.

B IT/.SF will clarify report on the 2015/6 expenditure

C the ALM meeting needs to agree the direction for the 2016 – 2017 grants and budget.

ODFAA /OCC recommend

D External Funding record

Oxford City Council Planning and Allotments- allotment provision

We continue to encourage all associations to be aware of developments and participate in planning consultations. We recommend all associations have a **committee member signed up to the Oxford Planning Finder** service so that they receive automatic email notifications about any plans in their postcode. **We received this assurance from** NTWIGG@oxford.gov.uk on 21st April 2015 copied to WINFIELD Jane; CASTLE Julia about OCC Allotment Strategy

Dear Wendy

I note your previous correspondence in relation to the loss (and replacement) of 8 allotment plots at Minchery and the loss of a gross area of 6,500 sq. m of unused statutory allotments at Barton. Oxford City Council supports this high level of cooperation with ODFAA to enable redundant statutory allotment land to be used for much needed housing in the city. The Council confirms that if demand for allotments rises in the future we will work with ODFAA to consider whether there is appropriate land to address this demand.

It is the Council's ambition to ensure the balance is maintained between the pressures of housing demand and the allocation of land for allotment purposes and hope to be able to continue to work with you in ensuring the efficient management of the allotment provision in Oxford.

I hope to be able to meet with you again shortly to discuss the next projects which may impact on the allotment provision at Horspath Road and Brasenose Farm and work in close partnership with ODFAA to continue to successfully deliver Oxford City Council's housing and allotment strategy.

Regards Nick Nick Twigg MRICS | Major Projects & Development Manager | Oxford City Council |

I have spoken with Nick recently as we are not being kept updated and there have been a number of unanswered queries to him, Jane Winfield and David Ashworth through the year. David has now left OCC. Julia immediately responded and this project is making good progress thanks to Mike Halliwell and Headington Allotment Association. Nick has assured us of updates before our meeting on Minchery Farm (Alan Wilde), Barton Fields (Jane Winfield) Brasenose (Julia Castle) and Horspath (Jane Winfield) with the latter we are still waiting for clarification on an OCC contribution to allotment improvement as compensation for the loss of statutory land. Horspath is not social housing.

Brasenose

In June 2015 June 2nd 2015 ODFAA were asked by the association to support a small change of use as in the interests of Brasenose Allotment Association in the context of Oxford City Allotments. ODFAA welcomes the plan for Oxford City Council to re-instate a section of designated land as allotments.

On 17th March 2016 Julia reported that

At Brasenose all is agreed in principal for the new store and fencing with a small section being surrendered to allow more parking (as we have discussed), the legal documents for this are currently with Mike Halliwell and he is checking them with a solicitor friend of his. I hope that this will be finalised shortly. Please let me know if you have any queries on this Julia

Barton Janette Washington reported in January That Barton Fields committee had a recent meeting with the developers and they confirmed what had already been agreed with the exception of the toilet - we have had a rethink and are looking for a compost toilet the details of which we gave them. We

are awaiting a date for a site meeting (to which ODFAA is invited). Hope that's helpful. Janette Washington Barton fields.

Minchery Farm SF was going to report having viewed this? ODFAA Requests for information were met with more questions which seemed to suggest the manager was not aware of the inspector ruling re allotment provision.

Horspath Where are we? Cannot find a planning app but NSALG were consulted re designated land. Davis Ashworth did not as agreed send us the application nor the response. ODFAA agreed with NSALG that this should result in some compensation of other allotments (in accordance with Allotment Law)?

Lease / 2015 new Rent was first paid in March 2016

We completed this process with the agreement at the ALM meeting in January 2015, ahead of schedule, and memoranda were distributed. All were returned. Ruth continued to work with two sites to resolve assignment issues. We encourage **all committees to ensure they have a copy of their lease** so that they are fully aware of their responsibilities and OCC Allotment rules.

Thanks are due to all associations who worked so well together to achieve this excellent result. We have continued to work with associations to develop the use of budgets and share experiences of cost. Here is an update of some allotment costs (per 10 pole/250sm as collected in January 2016 Bath, £84.3 /Brighton, 75 / Bristol, 75 / Enfield, 95 / Hounslow, 65/ Richmond upon Thames, 142/ Swindon, 49.5,york, 60 , Average, **£80.62**. After the April meeting, if all members update, we will again be able to produce an average cost plot across ODFAA.

Insurance

Associations are asked to ensure that their Federation membership is up to date before May 1st this year if they wish to benefit from the insurance held in the name of the Federation. All OCC sites must have cover as part of their lease and the named vehicle for Zurich Public Liability which includes Employer Liability.

It is now necessary for each ODFAA member to be listed on the schedule **and this cannot change in the intervening period**. Zurich now include their volunteer insurance in with Public Liability so we can be confident our volunteers are protected whilst working on out sites within the terms and conditions of the lease and rules. The insurance policy is held and paid for by ODFAA's but it is re paid for by OCC, as required by many leases. It means that non-OCC sites that are Federation members can use it. As Oxford City Council have a larger insurance package with Zurich we get a good deal from this liaison.

ALM item Associations must follow the instructions re insurance from John.

Allotment Competition 2015

In the 2015 Competition there were 44 individual plot entries from 10 allotment sites. This was a down from 51 in 2014 and 74 in 2013. The Best Kept Allotment Site section, which had an increase in prize money, was entered by 10 sites, including 3 that had no individual entries. The Award Ceremony continues to be a very enjoyable evening for allotment holders across the City to meet and celebrate allotment gardening. We encourage allotment associations to take part as it takes a lot of organisation and has a cost. The January 2016 meeting was asked to clarify continuing to support and manage the allotment competition. Our archives show that the competition was started by ODFAA in 1930s and during that time it has always needed encouragement. Generally less than half the sites enter even when it was managed by the then OCC allotment officer. The prize giving evening, apart from being very enjoyable, gave allotment holders the chance to talk to people from other sites and the chair felt it was important to be a public face to our councillors. The competition was a joint venture with OCC, who stated they could not continue with it after 2007 unless ODFAA did the management. It is now obviously much cheaper as managed by volunteers.

ODFAA participation in managing the competition in 2016 was put to vote and the vote was to continue with 22 for 2 against and 6 abstentions. This gave a clear majority in favour of carrying on. Two other topics concerning the competition rules were voted on:

(1) That sites entering the Best Kept Section must enter a minimum of two individual plots from that site.

(2) That a new section for individual entries for small plots that are less than half the area of a standard 10 pole plot(> 125 sq. m) be introduced. Both motions were carried by an overwhelming show of hands.

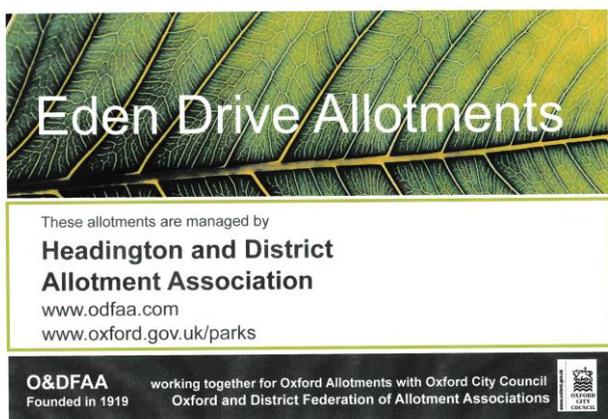
Entrants in this year's Allotment Competition enjoyed the presentation of awards. This is the eighth year that Oxford's Allotment Competition has been organised jointly by the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations and the Parks Department of Oxford City Council. The objective of the competition is to celebrate the achievements of Oxford's allotment gardeners. The judges were looking for plots that grow a wide range of vegetables all year round, together with seasonal soft fruit. The emphasis is strongly on the quality of the crops and the overall productivity of the plot, and not on having immaculately manicured plots, although most of the winners had very few weeds. Last year one of our judges was unwell and Tina Mould stepped in for OCC. This year Tina will do this again and we have added a new independent judge. Helen Prower has been a keen vegetable gardener for many years. She is a Committee member of the Eynsham Horticultural Society. Helen won Best Vegetable garden in 2013 and has since been a judge for the society.

In discussing celebrating allotments a member suggested we try other ways. Perhaps a day when all the sites were open to councillors and members of the public. WSS felt ODFAA could pursue this as well as a good idea. The past history of advertising and attendance at open days was mixed but we had not tried to arrange a single day. *ALM meeting Can we organise for all associations to be open on a day, possibly during National Allotments Week (8-14 August 2016), as a city wide allotment event.*

New Allotment signs

At our Allotment Liaison Meeting in September 2015 members viewed the following sign which we have developed for use by allotment sites in response to a call from associations to refresh the old allotment signs, many of which are either missing or in need of repair. We have made some amendments based on comments at the meeting. Given this is an OCC template we will not be able to re design for each association and the only section associations could change are the name of the site and the managing allotment association.

Fate intervened at the last moment days before the January meeting when OCC 're-styling' called this in and we had to start again. We have now reformed it as an ODFAA sign and hope we can now make progress with this on the same terms as before. A decision will need to be made for those associations who had greater funding for signs that have been waiting for this development



We hope to be able to re-sign most if not all associations in the city?

Supply A3 aluminium sign £45 + vat each
Supply A3 aluminium sign with fitted channels and post fixing clips £57 + vat each
Supply A2 aluminium sign £57 + vat each
Supply A2 aluminium sign with fitted channels and post fixing clips £69 + vat each

We propose to match fund the £500 contributed by the allotment budget to encourage all to participate. This is an ODFAA AGM and ALM agenda item.

ODFAA Development plan

We continue to try to progress with this.

ODFAA's Web site is now in its third year. The costs are very moderate and Wendy tries and mostly succeeds in keeping it updated. It has minutes, reports, contacts and photos. It does not have a forum or members web page as this needs a further commitment of time which is not available.

ODFAA Talk 2015 was the United Nations Year of Soils. Tim and John organised an O&DFAA TALK. Understanding Your Soil: formation, function & fertility By Chris Bird, M. Hort (RHS) Lecturer in Horticulture Sparsholt College, Hampshire. This was held on Tuesday 24 November at 7.00pm in the Old Library at Oxford Town Hall. This was well attended and that the speaker gave an excellent talk focussing on allotment gardening. We had arranged refreshments but the Town Hall Catering did not deliver until too late.

Discussion sessions we continue to try to this format for the ALM meeting so that more people can contribute and share ideas. Last year we had a session on Finance and one on developing signage. In September 2013 we asked members to start this process by identifying their main concerns. The committee reviewed the suggested topics

For 2016/17 we aim to organise the following

- **An evening talk with an outside speaker to discuss risk assessment**

A lot of useful advice on this and other management issues are contained in the set of Allotment Regeneration Initiative leaflets that were distributed to all associations at previous ALM meetings by OCC. For those associations who did not receive these documents or have mislaid them a member reported they were on line. (Wendy could subsequently find only a summary of the project **not the individual advice sheets?**) Perhaps Stuart could get some copies made if associations would like a copy?

- **An evening talk including composting/crop rotation**
- **An ALM discussion evening on watering**

OCC new allotment page web site

Comments please. We pointed out IN January that only half were there. They have now added an A_Z but only half listed on this first page? The overall map has disappeared. It is useful for residents to see and understand distribution. It would have been useful if ALM had been consulted?

ODFAA and EA Flood Alleviation Channel Meeting Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

**This was submitted on behalf of ODFAA to the consultation.
See attached minutes**

