

2017 1 24 ALM

Draft minutes of ALM meeting held at Oxford Town Hall on Tuesday 24 January 2017

The meeting was preceded by a question and answer session with the OCC Pest Control Officer, Mike Humble. [Notes at the end of the minutes].

Present:

Barracks Lane – Andrew Fairweather-Tall, Megan Harcourt, Bartlemas – Alastair Mallick, Barton Fields – M.S.Evans, J.Woodman, Cowmead – John Hastings, Cutteslowe – Ian Sheppard, East Ward – Stewart Young, Jon Willis, Elderstubbs-Phil CReame, Fairacres Road – Jon Piggott, Fairview – Catherine Gundry, Priscilla Grant, Brasenose Farm – Bill Edwards, Ron Chambers, Eden Drive – Mike Halliwell, Tony Harris, John Lardner, John Garne Way – Mary Cooper, Lenthall Road – Colin Sharp, Marston Ferry – Gillian Morriss-Kay, Old Marston Mill Lane – Jim Head, Osney – Nick Jackson, South Ward – Sharon Murray, David Allen, Spragglesea Mead – Tim Treacher, Michael Walker, St Clements Pullens Lane – Phil Baker, Trap Grounds – Tony Hollander, Upper Wolvercote – Liesel Osman, Van Diemens Lane – Susanne Marburg, Kestrel Crescent – Roy Leach, Minchery Sarm West – Clive Bevan.

Apologies – CLLR Linda Smith, Virginia Wallis & Jonathan Clark – Trap Grounds, Zeb Turner-Johnson – Upper Wolvercote, Eric Perkins – John Garne Way, Sorrel Road – Bill Wright.

Meeting was chaired by Stuart Fitzsimmons

Minutes of meeting held in October were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising

Signs - The committee were congratulated on the distribution of the new site signs. Signs for 2 sites are awaiting collection from John Lardner

Water Harvesting -It was queried whether information on the opportunity to visit the New Botley site to see water harvesting had been circulated. This had been overlooked and information would be circulated soon.

Fencing - Stuart Fitzsimmons stated that the work on the agreed sites was in progress and had to be completed by 25 March. In discussion it became clear that several of the sites that were expecting work to start had not been informed. SF agreed to inform the sites on the following day of the exact position and progress with the work

In a wider discussion SF restated that the £60,000 budget available this year had been used to complete, as far as was possible, the secure fencing of sites that had not been included in the previous major refencing programme in 2007. There had been no commitment to always use very high quality, palisade, metal fencing.

Andrew Fairweather-Tall requested that it should be minuted that sites not selected for fencing this year or in 2007 should be prioritised if money became available in the future.

Budget

The Reactive Maintenance section of the budget had not been spent yet, but, unlike in previous years, it was unlikely that any would be left to spend late. It had been provisionally committed to remove asbestos from a shed on the Lenthall Road site, as in this case the asbestos was an OCC

responsibility, and to remove the dangerous bridge on the Kestrel Crescent site. Money had also been used from this budget to cover the shortfall in money for the grant applications in September.

In the unlikely event of there being any surplus money becoming available, associations would be informed by email in late February and would be asked to submit projects to the same specifications as set for bids in summer 2016.

AOB

1. South Ward raised the major problem that they had now with fly tipping in the entrance road to the site, which now prevented vehicle access. Repeated contact with OCC had resulted in no effective results. Action on the problem appeared to have been lost in a negotiation, site is managed by OCC but it and access road falls in Vale of White Horse area.

2. On the general point of what associations should do to get action on fly tipping, SF said the OCC website had a phone number to call. *(It now appears that there is no number on the OCC website and only an online report can be filled out - TTT checked on 25.01.2017!)*

3. Brasenose stated that the site has a problem with camper vans parking overnight on their access and then leaving litter. They stated that the police can take no action. SF agreed to take action through OCC.

4. The White House Project on East Ward site had now ceased, leaving an abandoned area with 2 large polytunnels. SF agreed to contact OCC Corporate Property Department.

5. It was asked why sites could not have rubbish from allotments collected in green bins by OCC. SF stated that the only possibility for collection of allotment waste was a trade waste contract. In general, plot holders should remove their own waste and if necessary sites should occasionally hire a skip.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm, but continued with a presentation by Mary Cooper on Health and Safety documentation she had drawn up for HDAA. She outlined the procedure that had been introduced on the John Garne Way a year ago, where the first annual review had just been completed. A copy of the papers outlining this scheme was distributed to all associations attending the meeting .

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 4th April again at the Town Hall at 7.15pm, and is preceded by the ODFAA AGM at 6.30pm.

The meeting was preceded by a question and answer session with the OCC Pest Control Officer, Mike Humble.

His general comment was that legislation was now much more restrictive. Any action had to be preceded by a survey of the problem. The use of poisons by untrained operatives was now unlikely to be legal.

Muntjaks –the only deer not protected. Hunting by a licensed marksman was the only possibility for reducing numbers. Strong, high (1.8m) fencing is needed to exclude them from allotments. Pest dept do not deal with.

Rats – Infection with Vial’s Disease on allotments is most unlikely. Rats need a source of food, need to drink every day and are neophobes (don’t like change). The key to their control is to be careful with food in compost bins, Tops and peelings OK but not whole/fleshy part of any fruit or veg, cover water to prevent them from drinking on the site. Frequent turning of compost helps to reduce their activity, as they don’t like change. Attracted by bonemeal as it contains animal fat. They eat hard plastic – need to gnaw. Live trapping needs humane disposal.

If a site has a major problem the OCC Pest Service will do a free survey. If it is necessary following that survey, they have a service to kill rats using poison bait in bait boxes, which involves 3 visits in a 3-6 week and costs £120 plus VAT. They can provide a continuing contracted service, making 8 visits per year at a cost of £70 per hour plus VAT.

Dead rats found on allotments should be double bagged securely and put in a household waste bin for OCC collection.

Badgers are completely protected and very little can be done to deter them. In discussion, it was raised that electric fencing had been used with considerable success to protect specific crops, eg maize, on some sites, notably Cripsey Meadow. The use of electric fencing must be done with H&S guideline adhered to, both in respect of human dangers and domestic pets. Feeding badgers has made badger problem worse, too many for land to support.

Squirrels are difficult to control on allotments. Shooting will have little effect. Trapping is difficult because of the potential to trap and kill other species.