

**2016 Officers** **Chair** Wendy Skinner Smith 48 Helen Road OX2 0DE [wendy@wendyskinnersmith.co.uk](mailto:wendy@wendyskinnersmith.co.uk) (Cripsey Meadow)  
**Treasurer/Vice Chair** John Lardner 8 Snowden Mede, OX3 7TQ, [johnlardner@hotmail.com](mailto:johnlardner@hotmail.com) (Eden Drive) **Minute Secretary** Nick Jackson 68 Edwin Court, Binsey Lane OX2 0QT [najackson@btinternet.com](mailto:najackson@btinternet.com) (Osney, St John & New Botley)  
**Co-opted members** Tim Treacher 51 Western Road OX1 4LF [teachers@phonecoop.coop](mailto:teachers@phonecoop.coop) (Spragglesea Mead and Dean's Ham) Ian Sheppard 3 Cutteslowe Park Cottages, OX2 8ES [shep0204@hotmail.com](mailto:shep0204@hotmail.com) (Cutteslowe)

## O&DFAA 2016 Annual Report to the AGM on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2017

O&DFAA 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 O&DFAA/OCC and the Allotment Liaison Meeting

**The O&DFAA Committee met** in April, May, August, December and March, the last three with OCC Officers. We meet a few weeks before the Allotment Liaison Meetings (ALM) which are usually in September, January and April. The committee discusses concerns raised by associations and organises the ALM. O&DFAA committee members work as follows. Wendy prepares the meeting paperwork, the agenda, the web site, receives problems/complaints and liaises with councillors, planning and asset management. John keeps our accounts, renews insurance, holds databases and organises events. This year Wendy was away from Nov to March and many thanks are due to the committee and John Lardner for covering the chair's work. Nick does the minutes and has been liaising with EA about The Flood Alleviation scheme. Tim organised events and the competition, the latter with Ian's help. We are saying farewell to both this year.

**OCC Parks** are responsible for the informing associations of ALM meetings, reporting and managing the budget and booking the rooms. They are responsible for tree safety. In the 2014 ALM we 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. OCC manage the reactive maintenance budget and oversight of the leases and rules.

**O&DFAA and OCC share charring ALM.** 34 of the 35 operating sites in the city are O&DFAA members. The Allotment Liaison Meetings (ALM) and O&DFAA meetings run concurrently. We work together to ensure the budget is fairly distributed to help associations be maintained and develop. All associations aim to be financially independent.

**O&DFAA'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.

**Devolved management.** Oxford City Council allotment sites, and those on non-OCC land, have devolved management. They are generally (unincorporated) associations (in practice if not in reality) with trustees who hold the lease. The associations are managed by an elected committee in accordance with their OCC lease and agreed constitution/rules. Some sites have other landlords. OCC leases are up for renewal in 2021.

**Oxford City Council Information** Stuart Fitzsimmons is Head of Parks. OCC Parks hold the reactive maintenance/grant budget and has responsibility for allotments usage. 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 contact for Parks is [parks@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:parks@oxford.gov.uk)

**Councillor Linda SMITH** [cllrsmith@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:cllrsmith@oxford.gov.uk) is the City Councillor who holds the council allotment portfolio. Linda has attended all but one of our meetings since she took over the portfolio and she awarded the prizes at our Allotment Award evening.

**Corporate Assets** have responsibility for site rents and allotment leases. Alison Hay [AHAY@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:AHAY@oxford.gov.uk) is now the contact for leases. Ruth Whelan who managed our 2014 rent review has now left. Your Committee **should have a copy of your lease.**

**O&DFAA databases** are available for update at each ALM meeting. We keep: 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 updates John [johnlardner@hotmail.com](mailto:johnlardner@hotmail.com) about any changes of trustees, officers, committee members. Site information is updated with a paper check annually.

## Grants and Finances

**2016/7 Allotment Budget** was: £12000 for reactive maintenance; £978 was 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 on the 2016/17 reactive maintenance budget. The following information was reported and ratified by our meetings.

**2016 March Reactive maintenance /Grants.** In March 2016, we were informed of unused Reactive maintenance budget and this was released to the Allotment Grants fund. We have an agreement with OCC that the reactive maintenance /rent money should be used annually for allotments. There were nine applications for grants. SF reported there was £4,194 available but this could be increased by a further £2,000. One application was refused as outside the terms of reference. The following list shows the resulting awards in March 2016.

(Association /Project Area /Grant Amount)	
East Ward for fencing and security-----	£2,016.00
Eden Drive for fencing and security-----	£1,834.00
Pullens Lane for fencing and security-----	£1,000.00
Kestrel Crescent for padlocks and chain-----	£224.00
Barracks Lane for fencing and security-----	£750.00
Bartlemas Close for new lock-----	£120.00
Cripley Meadow for raised beds and a fire waste bin---	£598.00
Lenthall Road for mains water isolation valves-----	£750.00

The total allocated in grants was £6,524.00. O&DFAA/OCC recommended to ALM 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.

**The April ALM voted** for the 2016/7 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 O&DFAA and OCC and then proposed for ratification to the September ALM meeting. The following grants were confirmed by the ALM in September and paid in October 2016

(Association /Project Area /Grant Amount)	
West Minchery Farm for Plumbing for Water Trough to replace standpipe -----	£168
St Clements/Pullens Lane –2 new water supply points -----	£1200
John Garne Way – Shelving for shed storage -----	£234
Barracks Lane – Match funding to establish BBQ/play area and wildlife zone -----	£675
Cuttesslowe – refurbish existing polytunnel match funded bid - -----	£900
Cripley Meadow – Orchard area - tree strimmer guards, 3 trees, tags - -----	£579
Lenthall Road for water extension - -----	£450

The bid total was £3858. SF agreed to use reactive maintenance budget for excess. Two bids had been lost in the OCC system. They were reviewed by Parks to see if they could be met. During ALM discussion SF clarified 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.

Our general timetable is as follows:

April ALM decide on Grant focus/

May Grant forms issued by OCC /

August Grant forms returned prior to meeting of O&DFAA/OCC Committee/

September ALM Meeting ratifies Grant awards/

January ALM Reactive Maintenance Budget released for grant allocations

There will be a further list at the Meeting for the March 2017 payments.

2016 OCC Capital fund for Completing Fencing

Insert information from IT

James Marriott, a Senior Management Accountant for OCC confirmed that the 2017/18 revenue budget for Allotments has been set at a very similar level to recent years, with planned expenditure of £20,400. SF and IT will report on spending of the £61,000 in 2016's Council's approved capital programme. This was based on an overall assessment of planned repairs and maintenance needs across all our allotment sites.

Please do let us know of any successful external funding your association received. We aim for our minutes to record all the contributions associations have had in improving OCC allotment sites.

*ALM item 1/2/3*

*O&DFAA /OCC recommend no clearance/ no fencing/ no machinery. Will support project to improve your site. General site maintenance should be budgeted for within your member contributions.*

**Oxford City Council Planning and Allotments-** 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.

**Brasenose** in 2016 O&DFAA were asked by HDAA to support a small change of use in the interests of Brasenose Allotment Association. Presently a new shed and fencing are being installed.

**Barton** Janette Washington reports that despite a meeting with the developers in 2016 none of the agreed improvements to the site have been started.

**Minchery Farm East** is now Denny Garden Allotments. This allotment site had been out of allotment use for some years and was given up for social housing on condition of a small section being retained for allotments. Work on this land was finally started last summer and O&DFAA negotiated with OCC for fencing, a shed, path and water supply. This was compensation for the release of the Horspath site. A draft lease is ready for when the work is completed.

**Horspath** *Planning permission will be granted for outdoor sports facilities and associated indoor club facilities and wind turbines at the Horspath Site. In addition, cemetery use may also be suitable on part of the site subject to remediation and mitigation measures. Planning permission will not be granted for any other uses. Any built development associated with the sports and club uses should be located on the area which is not Green Belt unless it is an essential facility for outdoor sport and that it can be demonstrated that it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in it as set out in national planning guidance.*

### **Insurance**

Associations are asked to ensure that their Federation membership is up to date 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 cover is the Zurich Public Liability which includes Employer Liability.

It is now necessary for each O&DFAA 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 our sites within the terms and conditions of the lease and rules. The insurance policy is held and paid for by O&DFAA's but it is repaid 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 to follow the instructions re insurance.*

### **Allotment Competition 2016**

Entrants in this year's Allotment Competition enjoyed the presentation to the award winners by the Cllr Linda Smith, the councillor with responsibility for allotments, at the Town Hall on Tuesday 27 September.

This is the ninth 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 look 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.

There were 56 entrants from 11 different allotment sites across the City. In addition, the judges, Tina Mould and Helen Prower, judged entrants in the Best Kept Allotment Site Competition, which 8 of Oxford's 36 allotment sites entered.

The winners of the Challenge Trophy, the overall award, were Ian and Helen Matten from the Lenthall Road Allotment Association. Second was Deisa Holden from the John Garne Way Allotment Association and third was David Allen from the South Ward Allotment Association. Eleven entrants were highly commended.

The Alderman Knight Shield for the best kept allotment site was won by the Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association, second and third were the Cutteslowe and the Barracks Lane Associations. The Eden Drive Association won the new award for the Most Improved Site.

The winners of the age sections were: under 35 years Kilian Garrec and Emilie Clauzier from the Cripsey Meadow Association, 35 – 59 years David Spriggs (Barton Fields), seniors aged 60-69 Johann Guschtsca (Elder Stubbs), and seniors over 70 years Diana Cox (South Ward).

Six new ploholders, who had started their plots in this year, received awards for special effort. They were Megan Harcourt, Mahmood Sadigi and William Kay, all from Barracks Lane Association, Rosanne McEwan-Smith (Cripsey Meadow), Edmund Herzig and Ana Novakovic (Cutteslowe) and Ran and Man Limbu (Lenthall Road).

The prize giving evening, apart from being very enjoyable, gave allotment holders the chance to talk to people from other sites and O&DFAA feel it is important as a public face to councillors. O&DFAA have been involved with this on and off since the 1930s so it would be good to continue.

There will be **no competition in 2017**. We do not have enough committee members to manage it and no members came forward in 2016 to benefit from Tim's training in his final year.

O&DFAA participation in continuing/managing the competition in 2016 was put to vote. There was 22 for, 2 against, and 6 abstentions. This gave a clear majority in favour of carrying on. The competition is a joint venture with OCC, who stated they could not continue with it after 2007 unless O&DFAA did the management. It is now much cheaper as managed by volunteers.

We have retained the paperwork base for the competition so that with some work it can be reinstated. We hope that with an increase in committee members and some training we will be able to reopen the competition in 2018.

## New Allotment signs



O&DFAA signs are now on 30 of the 35 sites in the city. The signs are made of aluminium and all sites could order one free A3 size sign, with or without fixing channels. The sign project started two years ago with a £500 grant from OCC to develop a new allotment sign. Wendy did the design at no cost so we used this OCC grant money along with O&DFAA funds to offer every site a free sign. 30 sites took up the offer of a sign. We also offered the opportunity to purchase extra signs. This was taken up by 5 associations who paid £826.40. Since the accounts were finalised the printing bill of

£2772.40 has come through. O&DFAA has contributed £1446 from our funds which are made up from money paid in annual subscriptions – a payback to all sites that took the offer.

**O&DFAA Development plan/EVENTS** We continue to make progress with this. We take suggestions from the AGM/ALM and work these into the ALM meetings and additional talks. O&DFAA's Web site [www.odfaa.com](http://www.odfaa.com) is now in its fourth year. The costs are very moderate and Wendy tries to keep it updated. It has minutes, reports, information, contacts and photos. It is an open site so available to all committee members and members. It does not have a forum nor members web page. This needs more commitment of time than is available.

**Water Harvesting** This was an ALM discussion evening. Nick Jackson gave an excellent talk with slides at the ALM in September. He has since worked with several sites on improving their water harvesting. The presentation is on the web site.

**O&DFAA Talk November 15th 2016** All members were invited to an O&DFAA TALK on Organic Matter: Sources, actions & reactions. Why is Soil Organic matter important for your crops? The talk was given by Chris Bird, M. Hort (RHS), Lecturer in Horticulture, Sparsholt College, Hampshire, On Tuesday 15 November at 7.00pm in the Old Library at Oxford Town Hall. It was a free event open to all. Tim and John organised this. This was well attended with about 40 members from 17 allotment sites.

**Risk Assessment /Health and Safety** guidance was part of the December ALM. A paper from the now disbanded allotment regeneration initiative was re circulated. Mary Cooper, a committee member from John Garne Way, did a presentation on the Health and Safety documentation she had drawn up for HDAA. She outlined the procedure that had been introduced 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 .I will try get this on the web site when I have some time.

The **OCC Pest Control Officer, Mike Humble**, came to the January O&DFAA meeting and gave the following advice about rats – Infection with Weil’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 or fleshy part of fruit or veg. You need to 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. They are 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 cycle 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.

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.

**ALM item suggestions for development talks this year. Can anyone offer a specific skill/ knowledge that will illuminate our members?**

**EA Flood Alleviation Channel** Cripsey, like Trap Grounds, Osney St Thomas, Botley Meadow, Upper Wolvercote, Cowmead and Spragglesea Mead allotments are all in the Thames ‘Flood Plain’. Any rise in the groundwater level eventually effects most plots. The Environment Agency continue to do presentations of The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. You can stay updated by following <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reducing-flood-risk-in-oxford-and-abingdon> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-flood-alleviation-scheme-community>

There was a meeting last week in West Oxford which Nick Jackson attended and there will be more in May at Lake St community centre, intended to field Cowmead allotment information. This is a major project and it seems to have secured its funding? EA are aiming for final approval in 2018 and for construction to begin later that year.

Please read and print only if you want a copy at the meeting.