

Draft Minutes for the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations

Allotments Liaison Meeting 30th March 2023

Attendees:

Federation Committee:

Nick Jackson (co-Chair)

Phil Baker (co-Chair)

John Lardner (Treasurer)

Jane Millar (Officer, Website)

Roy Leach (Officer, Disputes)

Julia Brocklesby (Officer)

Jon Willis (Minutes Secretary)

Oxford City Council

Chewe Munkonge – (City Counsellor and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks)

Richard Waple (Corporate Property)

Caroline Chanides (Green Space Development)

Associations:

Barracks Lane – Liz Bentley

Bartholomew Road – Raju Lall, Neil Holt, Julie Stone

Bartlemas Close – Samia Shibli, Tracy Crossman

Barton Fields – Carolyn Davis, Julie Cordery

Brasenose Farm – John King, Colin Sherwood

Court Place Farm – Jane Wilson

Cow Mead – John Hastings

East Ward – Jon Willis, Jane Millar

Eden Drive – John Lardner, Paul Roblin

Fairacres Road – Paul Hopkins

John Garne Way – Alan Cooper, Mary Ashford

Kestrel – Roy Leach

Lenthall Road – Lorin Watt

Marston Ferry & Blackhall – Lucy Ball, Edward Bradley

Osney, St Thomas & New Botley – Nick Jackson

Risinghurst – Jenny Bowles

St Clements – Phil Baker

Sorrel Road – Donna Dickson, Andy Dickson

South Ward – Emma Tinker

Spragglesea Mead – Tony Cox

Thompson Terrace – Julia Brocklesby

Upper Wolvercote – Zeb Turner-Johnson

Van Diemens Lane – Susanne Marburg

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Phil Baker as Chair opened the meeting and welcome those attending, including Caroline Chanides and Richard Waple from OCC, and Councillor Chewe Munkonge.
- Richard Waple explained that his role at OCC was to negotiate the template lease with ODFAA, and resolve the issues around Minchery West / Denny Gardens. It is an interim position, so it is important to resolve issues quickly.

2. Minutes and Matters arising

- Tracy Crossman pointed out that she was incorrectly referred to as 'Tracy Chapman' in the minutes.
- Jane Wilson (Court Place Farm) reported that the only problem they have with converting to a Community Interest Company is that as they had to appoint directors, the committee ended up shrinking in size, which they need to correct somehow.
- Phil Baker (St Clements & District) asked if previous positive reports of converting to Metro Bank and alternative utility companies had been sustained and members replied it has been a great improvement.

3. Chairs update

- After a very long period of inactivity there has been good progress on the lease negotiations with Richard Waple, the main sticking point now being responsibility for maintenance of gates and fences. A potential solution is for associations to agree to maintain the condition of the fences etc as of start of lease, but that fences in very poor condition should be repaired by the OCC before the start of the lease. Legal advice is being taken. After some discussion about who should be responsible for which boundaries (for example Eden Drive shares a fence with the JR), it was agreed that this needs to be clarified as part of the individual associations lease negotiations, particularly because the plans need to be acceptable by the Land Registry.
- Grants are likely to be restored as before, where all allotment rent collected by OCC will be used to reimburse ODFAA for public liability insurance, with the remainder split 50:50 between grants and OCC tree work on site. The plan is to make the grant allocation process to individual associations more equitable than before and it will be adjudicated by ODFAA and Caroline Chanides.
- It will be necessary for sites with electricity to submit safety reports now, and every 5 years, to OCC covering date of installation, extent of use and current status. **Action for affected sites.**
- A separate email will be sent out by ODFAA Committee detailing the current state of negotiations. **Action for ODFAA**

4. Questions to OCC

- OCC was asked about the need to cater for increased demand for allotments, given increased interest, increased population of the city and potential loss of allotment land at South Ward due to continual problems with the neighbouring traveller site. Botley Meadow could potentially be expanded given that its adjacent to OCC owned, former allotment, land. Caroline Chanides requested updated information on our waiting lists to be able to inform OCC decisions. **Action for sites and ODFAA.**
- Tony Cox (Spragglesea Mead) asked whether their association's decision not to incorporate would be an issue when signing the lease, given that they do not have a legal entity. A long discussion of leases and licenses ensued. OCC is seeking legal advice and will report back to ODFAA. **Action OCC.**

5. Site Reports

- Court Farm noted that they have rights of way through their site, and will be looking for advice from OCC on controlling access.
- East Ward reported that there had been an arson attack on one shed, and break-ins to numerous other sheds. This seemed to be a common problem with other associations, particularly at Blackbird Leys. ODFAA did publish guidelines 5 years ago (available on website at [Allotment Security](#)). **Action Jane Millar.** Wolvercote has unsecure boundaries, which Richard Waple (OCC) suggested should be dealt with as part of the lease negotiation (see above). Other sources of funding might also be used, such as local councillor funds, or the community infrastructure levy.
- In a discussion of water harvesting, Caroline Chanides suggested that OCC grants could be used (as has been done in the past), or apply to Thames Water, as Botley has successfully done.
- Emma Tinker (South Ward) was concerned about the timing for the new lease, given the issues they have. Richard Waple (OCC) agreed it was high priority, and expected it to be agreed by this summer. Phil Baker emphasised there were two related problems: the duration of a lease for South Ward and the ability of the Association to fulfil all its terms and conditions, irrespective of its duration.
- The 2020 OCC asbestos report, concerning council owned buildings, will be shared with ODFAA, and distributed. OCC will conduct a full survey of council owned buildings, but it's not a priority. **Action OCC**

6. Web sites and communications

- Jane Millar explained that the website that the website had become extremely hard to update because the technology is now very old. She recommended moving the website to a replacement platform that is easy to use, and which provides functionality that is now standard. She asked that if anyone knew of a volunteer, e.g. student in search of a project, who could help with this, they should contact her.

7. Future attractions: Allotments Competition/Potato Fair

- Allotments Competition 2024 – Phil Baker and other members believe it would be sad if we stopped doing it, but it does need re-configuring and volunteer(s) to organise it. Please contact ODFAA if interested. **Action all sites.**
- Potato Fair 2024 (possibly expanded cover other produce / tools / etc). Again, this needs ideas on scope and volunteer(s) to organise. Please contact ODFAA if interested. **Action all sites.**

8. AOB

- None