

Co-Chair	Phil Baker	St Clements & District	Officer - Disputes	Roy Leach	Kestrel Crescent
Co-Chair	Nick Jackson	Osney, St Thomas & New Botley	Officer - Website	Jane Millar	East Ward
Minutes Secretary	Jenny Wright	Barton Fields	Officer	Leonard Bowora	Court Place Farm
Treasurer	John Lardner	Headington Eden Drive	Officer	Julia Brocklesby	Thompson Terrace

2021 Winter Newsletter

As the Covid pandemic persists (almost a year on), the Committee sends our best wishes to all of our members. For the foreseeable future we will continue to hold committee meetings using videoconferencing but meeting in person is still not possible with the continuing restrictions on social gatherings. We hope to hold an online Allotment Liaison Meeting soon.



Speaking of virtual meetings, ODFAA hold a Pro License for [Zoom](#) that allows meetings to run longer than the (free version) 40 min meeting limit. We have used this to allow at least one affiliated Association to hold their AGM and would like to offer this facility to any of you wanting to do the same. If you are interested then please contact [Nick Jackson](#) for more details.

Update on new Leases and Rules:

We have now received the 1st draft of the new lease agreement from OCC. Unfortunately this contains numerous glitches resulting from changes in OCC personnel dealing with the lease (not up to speed on what was agreed previously). ODFAA will be returning the first draft with our corrections and expect to share with Associations shortly. The 1st draft was not accompanied with the updated OCC rules for allotments, and we have queried this.



We would like to reinforce the ODFAA position as negotiator with OCC on your behalf, and to clarify that **we can only report and respond to Association Committees** – unfortunately we do not have the resources to respond to queries from lots of individual members.

When we first started negotiating with OCC (back in the mists of time!) they confirmed that in the unlikely situation of leases not being fully agreed by their expiry date then the old leases/licence would continue.

Likely process steps envisaged (without firm timeline):

1. 1st response from ODFAA committee to OCC – **completing now**
↳
2. Headlines from Lease shared with Association Committees and comments back (preferably within a fortnight) – would Associations prefer Zoom meeting or happy to provide written responses?
↳
3. Anticipate either 2nd draft version of Lease from OCC, or meeting with OCC to hear their response
↳
4. Further response from ODFAA to OCC as necessary, either written or by meeting
↳
5. Details of disputed items accepted/changes sought shared with Association Committees
↳
6. Hopefully agreement from OCC, and final draft version with ODFAA recommendation shared.
↳
7. Hold a meeting of Association delegates to ODFAA to 'vote' on acceptance/or not.

Allotment Associations – future model structure options

It would greatly assist us in supporting you and with our ongoing negotiations if affiliated Associations could let us know in which way you anticipate signing the new lease, i.e.:



1. You plan no changes to your structure – you want to remain an **unincorporated organisation**, in which case you will need to nominate two individuals (Trustees/Signatories) who will sign your lease on behalf of your Association (and are prepared to take on a limited degree of liability for any issues that arise)
2. You plan to change your structure – you want to move to become an **incorporated organisation** (either as a company or a Coop – please indicate which one), and the lease will be (nominally) signed by one of your Committee officers or a Director (if different) – with any future liabilities resting on the Association and not any individual. If you have decided to change your structure it would be helpful to us if you could let us know how far you have progressed towards this – e.g.
 - Have you put the proposition to your members?
 - Have they voted to proceed?
 - Have you contacted NAS for sponsorship to become a Coop? etc.

If you or any of your members have concerns about the NAS Coop Rules or the model Memorandum for Companies, please email Co-Chair, [Phil Baker](#).

3. You have **not yet decided** which option you prefer

Can you please complete the attached form (tick the appropriate boxes in the Microsoft Word document) and return it (email [John Lardner](#)) by **Sunday 7th February** at the very latest.

We would like to remind you that the ODFAA website has a [section devoted to key documents](#) providing background and information on the choices and mechanics of incorporation as either a limited company or cooperative society. We have **recently added** some useful documents that are relevant to the new allotment leases and associated allotment rules:

- Guidance notes on Association **'winding up' and asset transfers**, if incorporating. This can be a fairly bureaucratic process but, if followed, it will ensure a fully transparent audit trail for handling current assets and, hopefully, a smooth transition to new memberships for all the plot holders.

It is a formal requirement, for both Companies and Coops that Membership has to be confirmed if plots are to be kept (and new ones taken on). In the case of Coops, the Share issue/purchase is also mandatory. **If incorporating this is an essential read.**

- Guidance notes on **'livestock' on allotments** – under the 1950 Allotment Act, the keeping of hens and rabbits is permitted on allotments and viewed as an allotment holder's right, so long as they are for the tenants own use and not for business or profit.

This guidance also covers bee keeping (keeping bees is left to the discretion of the individual Allotment Association Committees).

If there are other questions or concerns not covered in the website materials, please get in touch; just bear in mind **we cannot provide actual legal advice.**

Other news:

Insurance: we have had contact with Zurich Insurance recently in preparation for the next twelve months' cover starting on 1st May.

Important for those moving to Coop or Company status: Zurich see no problem with some sites changing their operating or business name when the new lease starts as the individual site policies are sub policies of the overall ODFAA purchased policy.

So our understanding is that when '*Hazy Fields Allotments Association*' becomes '*Hazy Fields Allotments Cooperative Association Ltd.*', Zurich will simply issue a new certificate with the new name on it.

However, Zurich will need the usual proposal forms completed by **MID MARCH**. The treasurer will be sending the forms out in the next few days.

Covid-19: The National Allotment Society updated their Covid-19 [advice and information](#) on 5th January. They are working to support plot-holders and associations so that they can continue to work their plots and manage sites in a safe and secure manner during the pandemic. Bear in mind that once we get to springtime and the weather improves OCC may repeat their request regarding **restrictions on bonfires** so it might be worth looking at what needs burning while you can.

OCC Contact Details: Oxford City Council is currently reviewing the content of its webpages, and it has been identified that there are several contacts attached to associations that have now become out of date.

To ensure continuity and data protection for members, OCC is asking that each Allotment Association's committee sets up a **generic email address** (e.g. secretary@westoxfordallotments.org) that can be the first point of contact for members of the public, and that OCC can publish on their webpages. OCC is also asking that you review your individual site's webpage and liaise with your committee to ensure all information is current. Please contact [Michael Woods](#) at OCC with your amended details.

