



# Osney, St Thomas & New Botley Allotment Association

## 2017 Annual General Meeting

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016 – 7:00pm refreshments – business starts at 7:30pm

West Oxford Community Association, Botley Road (next to the Twenty Pound Meadow site)

Dear Association Members.

Your Committee would like to invite you to attend the forthcoming AGM where we will have much to discuss, and at which you will have your opportunity to put your questions to the outgoing Committee.

### **Election of the new Committee:**

We had a couple of vacant spaces on the committee this year and struggle to convince new members to join. Whether you have recently joined or have been a member for a while we would really like to ask you to think for a minute about volunteering for the Committee. Duties are light when shared out between us and as we say each year, the Association will only survive and flourish if people are willing to give some of their time to serve as Committee members.

We need to elect a new committee to serve for 2017-18. According to the constitution, this should be made up of 10 members representing the Twenty Pound Meadow site and five representing the Botley Meadow site. Together with this invitation you should have received a nomination form. If you would like to stand for election – please return this to the Association Secretary **before March 30<sup>th</sup>** by email to [secretary@westoxfordallotments.org](mailto:secretary@westoxfordallotments.org) or by post to: Nick Jackson, 68 Edwin Court, Binsey Lane, OX2 0QJ.

### **Presentation of the Accounts and Rent Review:**

The meeting will discuss the financial situation of the Association over the last year and also the recommendation to keep the rent per allotment plot the same this year as for 2016-17. However, members are reminded that the cost of utilities (electricity and especially water) are increasing year on year. In addition, Oxford City Council have reviewed the rent they charge each allotment association and our rent payment to them increased in September 2016.

### **Updating the Association rules**

A number of issues have arisen during the year that have necessitated a review of the Association Rules. Together with this invitation you will have a list of the proposed changes which we would like to consult you on.

### **New Initiatives:**

On several occasions during the year the Committee has discussed what more we, as an Association, could be providing to our members. We would like to take the opportunity of the AGM to ask you what more we could be doing. We encourage all suggestions for activities – as well as how to take them forward.

The Committee hopes you will be able to come to the AGM in April. If you can't make it and would like to make your feelings known, please send them to the Secretary at: [secretary@westoxfordallotments.org](mailto:secretary@westoxfordallotments.org)

With best wishes.

Association Secretary

**AGENDA: The Osney, Botley and St Thomas' Allotment Association AGM 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

<b>Agenda items</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>1. Welcome and Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Apologies for absence</li><li>→ Minutes of AGM 2016 and matters arising</li></ul>	Report and record
<b>2. President's Address</b>	Report orally
<b>3. Secretary's report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Site safety &amp; security</li><li>→ Publicity – website, leaflet, newspaper/newsletter articles</li><li>→ Bonfires, waste collection and fly tipping problems</li></ul>	Report orally
<b>4. Treasurer's report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Presentation of accounts and budget</li><li>→ Grants applied for and won</li><li>→ Rental payment procedure</li><li>→ Apportioning spend between the two allotment sites</li><li>→ Use or not of Honoraria</li></ul>	Report, questions and discussion
<b>5. Report from the Association Shop</b>	Report orally
<b>6. Rents and setting rent levels</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Rental payment procedure</li><li>→ Plot inspections &amp; tightening up on cultivation requirements</li><li>→ Plot numbering and path reinstatement</li><li>→ Fines for late payment</li></ul>	Report, questions and discussion
<b>7. Changes to the Association Rules</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ General and specific changes recommended by the Committee</li></ul>	Report, questions and discussion
<b>8. Better management of Twenty Pound Meadow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Work parties and use of Community Payback Team</li><li>→ Splitting plot allocation responsibilities</li><li>→ Open discussion</li></ul>	Report orally
<b>9. General site improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Legacy plot issues</li><li>→ Water harvesting project</li><li>→ Road improvements</li></ul>	Report orally, questions, discussion, suggestions
<b>10. Any other Business</b>	
<b>11. Election of new Committee / officers</b>	

## **Minutes of the AGM, Osney, Botley and St Thomas' Allotments Association – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

Chair: Nick Jackson as acting Chair, as designated by Anne James

Secretary: Nick Jackson

Treasurer: Sid Siddle

Apologies received: Nia & David Short, Ally Stott, Phillip Saffery, Ashley Mitchell, Ken Gasser, Karen Jeffrey

1. **Minutes** from the AGM on 26 February 2015 and from the EGM on 25 March 2015 were agreed as a true record.

### **2. President's address**

Susanna Presell stated she was delivering her 20th address as President. She praised recent developments, and commended the committee for their hard work.

### **3. Secretary's address:**

2015/16 had been a 'good year'. Reasons included minimal flooding, a hard-working committee with representatives from both sites, and substantial shop takings (see Treasurer's report). 6 people from Botley Meadow were awarded prizes from the Federation with £20 Meadow members encouraged to enter in future. Other successes included positive consequences from the ditch clearance project such as substantial clear-up the fence line on £20 Meadow and removal of 8 large trees. Both of these were thanks to Council involvement and the hard work of several plot holders. However, the presence of badgers and a high-voltage power cable along the proposed ditch line have meant postponing further work.

Nick asked plot holders to make further contributions to the Association. More people could give email addresses, making notices easier and less costly in terms of postage and hand-delivery. Plot numbering is often absent and after the September renewal, the committee will consider creating signs and charging plot holders for their installation. Bonfires on £20 Meadow continue to trigger complaints, often because those setting them are not adhering to guidelines posted on notice boards. Plot holders are asked to check wind direction and time of day and are reminded that if complaints continue, the Council, as landlords, may impose a full ban.

One on-going 'legacy' problem on £20 Meadow has incurred costs of £1300 towards partial plot-clearance before resorting to work parties and voluntary rubbish removal. This plot remains a problem, as do should current holders not maintaining plots in line with their tenancy agreement. Leaving any clean-up activities to the Association will inevitably feed into future rent calculations.

The committee will remain aware of the issues and the opportunities described above in 2016/17.

### **4. Treasurer's report**

The report is attached. The following points were made in respect to the loss of £40 on the total year's budget, despite a rent increase in 2014/15 to try and create a 'cushion' for future projects:

- The shop has made a very large profit of £725.
- Rents returned more revenue in 2015/6 than in 2015/16.
- The rent due to the Council will increase by a small amount – due in September 2016.
- Honoraria were not claimed.
- Water costs have gone up more than expected.
- Skip hire and clearance costs accounted for more than the cost of rent to the Council.

Questions from the floor concerned:

- **Water costs?** A: the weather may be one reason plus Thames Water has increased their rates. Suggestion: review how quickly tanks refill, especially in areas where high use is common.
- **Shop takings being so strong?:** A; results were down to many plottolders buying goods, 'heroic' help with unloading deliveries and especially Maura who grew all the plug plants at no cost. A formal thanks was given to Sally Roberts, Felicity Wenden and Maura Allen. Suggestion: More help is needed and more people are encouraged to volunteer for shop-related tasks.

A budget for 2016/17 was presented plus a paper which laid out the case for a rent review. A vote on the issue saw all but one of those present in favour of an increase to £25 for a full plot, with no abstentions. A statement that allotment rents 'are subsidizing the Council' in that they exceed Council outgoings in maintenance and support was made. Councillor Susanna Pressel agreed to investigate.

An informal discussion also addressed the proposal of an additional project to replace mains water with water from the river. This would need detailed consideration and would probably cost in the range of £5-6000. Funding would probably be through grants and match funds triggered by a special reserve fund (to be created).

## **5. Proposed changes to the Constitution**

The wording of rule 5 to be changed so that 'in writing' explicitly includes email. Passed unanimously.

Rule 17b changed to read:

*It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary to maintain records of meetings and decisions; to conduct correspondence on behalf of and in the name of the Association; to deal with the calling of meetings and the conduct of elections; and more generally to supervise the everyday administrative affairs of the Association on behalf of the Committee. It shall be the overall responsibility of the Secretary to maintain membership records, while the everyday responsibility of maintaining membership records and the allocation of plots may be delegated to a Field Secretary (from the existing Committee) for each of the two sites within the Association*

The proposed change reflects how large £20 Meadow and Botley Meadow are and the complexity of their day-to-day management. In the new version, overall responsibility remains with the Secretary but Field Secretary posts are created for both sites. Decisions by a Field Secretary, such as plot allocations and maintenance expenditure, would be treated as recommendations until agreed by the Secretary or where appropriate, by the Committee. Agreement would be either at a meeting or by email. Discussion of this proposal noted that changes would result in inconsistencies in other rules, specifically rules 31-36 which currently state decisions as being a committee responsibility.

Suggestion: that the constitution wording be made consistent and then validated by the Committee.

The changes were agreed by a unanimous vote in favour with one abstention.

Rule 8 describes several roles attracting an honorarium. However, none have been claimed for several years.

Suggestion: The committee should discuss this matter and if they are so minded, should propose re-designating roles as voluntary at the 2017 AGM.

## **6. Site Management issues**

Safety, especially for children, is a concern due to the continued presence of open wells. The committee is asked to log them, and to require that they be filled in. Covers were not seen as sufficient.

The pruning of the hedges along Botley Road continues to be an issue. No Council help will be forthcoming. The Site Secretaries will monitor upkeep.

Padlocks on the £20 Meadow main gate are occasionally problematic – and had caused problems on the day of the AGM. A new lock has been ordered.

Waiting lists are in place for both sites. Botley Meadow has 3.5 plots vacant. On £20 Meadow, a short list remains but plot allocation by the Site Secretary continues.

A short response to the proposed flood alleviation scheme has been submitted, noting especially consequences of a proposed bund for Botley Meadow. Planners have said they will take the point into consideration for future plans.

Fly-tipping is an ongoing problem on £20 Meadow, despite signage against the practice; it seems to have been resolved on Botley Meadow. A suggestion that a deposit be collected and returned when a plot is vacated was seen as impractical.

## **7. Election of officers and members of the committee**

Susan Hutchinson was thanked for her efforts in updating membership details.

Nick Jackson was elected unopposed as Secretary.

Sid Siddle was elected unopposed as Treasurer.

4 nominees from Botley Meadow were elected: Phil Sampson, Steve Laurence, Nia Short and Pierre Riteau.

8 nominees from £20 Meadow were elected: Jude Carroll, Sue Spencer-Longhurst, Elizabeth Newberry, Sally Roberts, Gus Fagan, Eric Bate, Anne James, and Verity Wilson.

One position remains open and members were encouraged to come forward for a co-opted place.

The meeting closed at 8:45.

# Proposed changes to the Allotment Association Rules:

## General changes to the rules:

1. Substitution throughout of 'Secretary' by 'Association Secretary' to clarify where the rules refer to the Association Secretary and not either the Field Secretaries or Committee Secretary. *(applies to rules 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 21, 30 and 61)*
2. Replacement of gender-specific terms (he/she, his/her) with not gender-specific alternatives. *(applies to rules 22, 28, and 34)*
3. Inclusion of 'civil partner' in the list of relations/associations when dealing with changes in plot tenancy. *(applies to rules 36 and 37)*

## Specific changes to rules:

### Rule 5: Notice of General Meetings:

#### Current rules state:

- (5) The Secretary shall give at least 14 days' notice of the time and place of any General Meeting, whether Annual or Extraordinary, by circulation in writing (including email) to all tenants (at their last notified or last known address) and by posting on the notice boards at the Association's allotment sites.

#### Proposed rule change:

- (5) The *Association* Secretary shall give at least 14 days' notice of the time and place of any General Meeting, whether Annual or Extraordinary, *by email to all tenants*, and by posting on the notice boards at the Association's allotment sites. *The quorum for any General Meeting is 10% of the membership as at the date when the meeting was called.*

**Explanation:** most members have supplied email addresses, but many have not. Sending out hard copies of AGM notifications costs the Association in postage and committee members do not have the resources to hand deliver as in previous years. We therefore propose to remove the obligation to contact members by post calling for a General Meeting. Until now, the rules have not mentioned meetings needing to be quorate, as happens with other Associations.

### Rule 6: Application of the Rules:

#### Current rules state:

- (6) These rules have been approved by a General Meeting. No alterations, additions, or amendments shall be permitted without the consent of a General Meeting convened in accordance with these rules. For the purpose of these rules a General Meeting may be an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting

#### Proposed rule change:

- (6) These rules have been approved by a General Meeting. No alterations, additions, or amendments shall be permitted without the consent of a General Meeting convened in accordance with these rules. For the purpose of these rules a General Meeting may be an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting. *Where changes as to how rules are applied become necessary, the Committee shall agree these operational issues and take any consequent rule changes to the next AGM.*

**Explanation:** issues arise during the year that require the Committee to take prompt action – an example of this was the case of bonfires on Twenty Pound Meadow. We need it to be recognised that the Committee have the authority to interpret and apply, in a realistic manner, rules to ensure the successful operation of the Association, as our mandate is to ensure we continue to operate as a going concern in between AGMs.

**Rule 17: Delegation of Committee responsibilities:**

**Current rules state:**

(17) (b) It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary to maintain records of meetings and decisions; to conduct correspondence on behalf of and in the name of the Association; to deal with the calling of meetings and the conduct of elections; and more generally to supervise the everyday administrative affairs of the Association on behalf of the Committee. It shall be the overall responsibility of the Secretary to maintain membership records, while the everyday responsibility of maintaining membership records and the allocation of plots may be delegated to a Field Secretary (from the existing Committee) for each of the two sites within the Association.

(c) It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to Chair meetings of the Committee, and to Chair General Meetings of the Association

**Proposed rule change:**

(17) (b) It shall be the responsibility of the *Association* Secretary to conduct correspondence on behalf of and in the name of the Association; to deal with the calling of meetings and the conduct of elections; and more generally to supervise the everyday administrative affairs of the Association on behalf of the Committee. *The Association Secretary may delegate the responsibility to maintain records of meetings and decisions to a Committee Secretary (from the existing Committee).* It shall be the overall responsibility of the Association Secretary to maintain membership records, while the everyday responsibility for membership records, allocation of plots, *and organising general plot maintenance* may be delegated to a Field Secretary (from the existing Committee) from each of the two sites within the Association.

(c) It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to Chair meetings of the Committee, and to Chair General Meetings of the Association, *unless they delegate this responsibility to another Committee member*

**Explanation:** allows Committee to share tasks between members, and defines roles and responsibilities.

**Rule 27: Censure of Association members:**

**Current rules state:**

(27) The Committee may censure in writing any tenant whom it finds to have been in breach of the rules in any adjudication under cl 21 above

**Proposed rule change:**

(27) The Committee may censure in writing *and/or by email* any tenant whom it finds to have been in breach of the rules in any adjudication under cl 21 above

**Explanation:** some Association members do not provide home addresses and the only contact details we have are email addresses.

### **Rule 28: Eviction of Association members:**

#### **Current rules state:**

- (28) The Committee may evict a tenant, depriving him or her of membership of the Association, in the event of an outrageous, defiant, or repeated breach of these rules. Without prejudice to the generality of this principle, a tenant counts as being in repeated breach of these rules if
- (a) he or she refuses to implement a ruling of the Committee under cl 25 or 26 above after two written notifications of that ruling, delivered not less than 14 days apart, where the second contains a warning of the Committee's intention to evict if the ruling is not implemented within 14 days; or
  - (b) he or she has been censured twice under cl 27 above within any twelve-month period; or
  - (c) he or she is convicted of any criminal offence in connection with the use or occupancy of his or her plot, or taking place upon any of the Association's sites

#### **Proposed rule change:**

- (27) The Committee may evict a tenant, depriving *them* of membership of the Association, in the event of an outrageous *or* defiant breach of these rules – *i.e. an (outrageous) breach significantly more serious than a minor infraction of the rules, or an action taken or continued in defiance of a Committee ruling.*
- A tenant may also be evicted in the event of a repeated breach of these rules.* Without prejudice to the generality of this principle, a tenant counts as being in repeated breach of these rules if
- (a) *they refuse* to implement a ruling of the Committee under cl 25 or 26 above after two written notifications of that ruling, delivered not less than 14 days apart, where the second contains a warning of the Committee's intention to evict if the ruling is not implemented within 14 days; or
  - (b) *they have* been censured twice under cl 27 above within any twelve-month period; or
  - (c) *they are* convicted of any criminal offence in connection with the use or occupancy of *their* plot, or taking place upon any of the Association's sites.

**Explanation:** the rule needed clarification of what was deemed outrageous or defiant, and separating these from repeated breaches of the rules.

### **Rule 30: Communicating the outcome of disputes and complaints:**

#### **Current rules state:**

- (30) Where the Committee arrives at a decision under cll 24, 26, 27 or 28 above, the Secretary shall promptly notify all parties to the dispute or complaint, in writing, of the substance of that ruling. Where the ruling is of general importance to tenants its substance shall also be posted on notice boards at the Association's sites, but without any information that would enable the parties to be identified.

#### **Proposed rule change:**

- (30) Where the Committee arrives at a decision under cll 24, 26, 27 or 28 above, the Secretary shall promptly notify all parties to the dispute or complaint, in writing *and/or by email*, of the substance of that ruling. Where the ruling is of general importance to tenants its substance shall also be posted on notice boards at the Association's sites, but without any information that would enable the parties to be identified

**Explanation:** some Association members do not provide home addresses and the only contact details we have are email addresses.

### **Rule 31: Allocation of plots:**

#### **Current rules state:**

(31) Vacant plots on the Association's sites shall be allocated by the Committee. Subject to cl 32 and 33, the Committee shall allocate plots to new tenants in the order in which their names appear on a single waiting list to be maintained by the Secretary. The Secretary shall add new names to this waiting list in the order in which applications for plots are received. The Committee may from time to time establish procedures for applications to be made, including by publishing an application form.

#### **Proposed rule change:**

(31) Vacant plots on the Association's sites shall be allocated by the Committee – *and the direct responsibility for allocating plots may be delegated to the Field Secretaries*. Subject to cl 32 and 33, *plots will be allocated* to new tenants in the order in which their names appear on *waiting lists to be maintained by the Field Secretaries*. The *Field Secretaries* shall add new names to the waiting lists in the order in which applications for plots are received. The Committee may from time to time establish procedures for applications to be made, including by publishing an application form

**Explanation:** to facilitate allocation of plots this responsibility is usually delegated to field secretaries at each site. Each site maintains a separate waiting list and any arbitration/oversight is provided by the Association Secretary.

### **Rule 58: Bonfires on Association sites:**

#### **Current rules state:**

(58) Bonfires are permitted, but must be used for the burning only of garden waste and innocuous materials that have served allotment-related purposes (such as old timber or canes, or cardboard boxes). At all times consideration must be shown for other users of the site and for neighbours of the site who may be affected by drifting smoke, depending on the time of day and wind direction. Noxious matter such as plastic, polythene, paint, or surplus chemicals must never be burnt on the Association's sites.

#### **Proposed rule change:**

(58) Bonfires are permitted, but must be used for the burning only of garden waste and innocuous materials that have served allotment-related purposes. At all times consideration must be shown for other users of the sites and for neighbours of the sites who may be affected by drifting smoke, depending on the time of day and wind direction – *in accordance with the Oxford City Council Code of Practice for Bonfires on Allotment sites and Section 79(1) (b) of the Environmental Protection Act (1990)*. *For this reason, on Twenty Pound Meadow bonfires are only permitted on the designated communal area at the north-west end of the site*. Noxious matter such as plastic, polythene, paint, or surplus chemicals must never be burnt on the Association's sites

**Explanation:** to formalise the changes to bonfire rules as applied to Twenty Pound Meadow and provide explanation of our legal obligations surrounding this issue.

**Note:** A limited number of copies of the rules will be available on the night, are available on the Association website, and are displayed on the noticeboards at each allotment site



## Osney, St Thomas & New Botley Allotment Association

Please fill out this form if you would like to apply for any of the Association Committee posts: Association Secretary, Treasurer or Committee Member.

Post applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Signature (if hard copy)	Plot number (BM-xx or TP-xx)

### Background

Please write a few words in the box below about why you would like to apply for the post, mentioning any skills or experience you think would be relevant:

### Proposer and Secunder

	Name	Signature (if hard copy)	Plot number (BM-xx or TP-xx)
Proposer			
Secunder			

Please return the completed form either by email to [secretary@westoxfordallotments.org](mailto:secretary@westoxfordallotments.org) or hard copy to the Secretary at 68 Edwin Court, Binsey Lane, Oxford, OX2 0QJ **before March 30<sup>th</sup> 2017**.