

Minutes: Osney, St Thomas & New Botley Allotments Association committee

23 January 2019

Attending: Elizabeth, Sue, Sheila, Nick, Anne, Jude, Verity

Apologies: Cathy

1. **Minutes 13 December 2018** were agreed as accurate. *Action: Nick* to post them on the website.

2. **Matters arising** not covered elsewhere

- **Tree survey on TPM.** Janet and Jude surveyed trees that are on or near the border between allotment land and land managed by the Council and/or the Environment Agency. At the December Federation meeting, Nick showed the results to the City Parks Department, with the response being that only those trees deemed a risk were likely to be dealt with. The committee suggested sending the Council photos of unsafe trees, plus a formal letter setting out concerns. *Action: Jude.* There are several very large trees on plots (that is, trees which exceed the height of fruit trees planted before the rule on dwarfing rootstocks came into force). *Action: Jude* to write to ploholders to inform them of the need to remove large trees or to reduce their height to that of fruit trees on a normal rootstock. BM will do a similar survey. There are no trees causing concern.
- **Submission of Thames Water application for the grant** to fund the water-harvesting project on TPM. *Action:* Sheila to progress the application and to obtain a 'paying in' book
- **Stocking items for the shop.** Nick shared lists of items from 4 other allotment association shops. *Action: Nick and Cathy* will continue to discuss stock at the shop. The committee made suggestions: buy 5-metre-wide rolls of groundcover fabric; stock horticultural-grade square pots as they can be reused; create a 'deposit' space where surplus pots can be stored and offered to others. There was a short discussion as to which chemicals to stock and the possible site-wide ban on their use; no conclusion was reached.
- **Deposits and Working Parties.** Anne is preparing a paper for the 2019 AGM, in line with the discussion at the last meeting. *Action: Anne*
- **Site Asset Management:** A revised document was submitted for discussion, with costings for individual items and an estimated overall cost not exceeding £3000 (excluding tree management). The group was thanked for their efforts, with particular thanks to Roger Johnson. The committee suggested listing extras such as: extra fencing and gates; a shared polytunnel; replacing the current toilet with a 'wet room' type arrangement; installing raised beds in the Top Field for disabled gardeners; paying someone to lay the Botley Road hedge, in conjunction with the proposed wildflower meadow. *Action: all* to check costings, *Action: Anne* to reframe the document with roles noted, as well as names of current position-holders. BM will do a similar exercise. *Action: Nick* When the two asset management documents have been merged, the results should be submitted to the Federation.
- **'Welcome to your plot' document.** This is pending *Action: Jude and Elizabeth.* *Action: Nick* will send the former document to help drafting. Janet has said she wishes to contribute, as a recent 'new arrival'. Topics could include: alcohol and drugs, noise, neighbourliness, shop, toilet, noticeboard, where to find the rules, events and socials, website (and what's on it), responsibilities that come with a plot such as work parties, AGM, membership of an association. A 'what to do this month' blackboard was suggested - Pete and Cathy might have design ideas.
- **Update on The Bee Project.** Anne has formally linked the Association to this project and is looking for people to 'adopt' a bee hostel. Those willing will need to take a photo and send it to the organisers, three times per month. *Action: Anne* to create a notice, seeking volunteers.

3. **Report from TPM and BM on current issues / status of plots**

Jude reported for TPM.

- Community Service volunteers continue to come weekly, though often in very small numbers and working short days due to the weather. There are now 6 people sharing the role of liaison and Cathy creates a weekly task list.
- Around Christmas, people were breaking through the hedge at Tumbling Bay, sleeping on TPM, and occasionally, stealing from sheds and polytunnels. Patched or blocked holes prompted new ones almost immediately. Jude contacted local Councillors - Susanna asked the 'Rough Sleepers' officers to visit (they

reported no evidence of occupation in Tumbling Bay) and Colin Cook met with Gus and Jude to discuss the cost of security fencing, offering to fund the 'kit' from community grants. We are currently exploring labour costs, suitable contractors and other sources of grants to cover labour.

- Work on trimming the Botley Road hedge continues and if no work party can be organized, we will pay someone to complete the task because it cannot be allocated to 'Paybacks'.
- Vacancy stands at 6.5 (half) and 2 (full); requests for plots come in at several per month.
- Troughs need maintenance and leveling. One extra tank is still not plumbed in. *Action: Cathy* to add digging a trench to the new tank onto the 'Payback' tasks and order aggregate for the trench. When it is ready, Nick and Phil will connect the tank. *Action: Jude* to order some hardcore to fill potholes on the main drive.
- On BM, the communal polytunnel is useable, and rentals are about to start. There are 2.5 empty plots. Two long-term members recently died and their stories could be summarized for website. *Action: Pol and Nick.*

3. Report from the December 2018 Federation meeting

- Nick reported that lease renewal discussions continue, with ratification of the results due at AGMs in 2020 then becoming operational from 2021. One suggestion is to set a service charge on top of site rental to cover tree management.
- Centenary plans for 2019 are progressing, including a possible link-up between Oxford and Grenoble to celebrate 30 years of twinning. Competitions are planned for 2019, with prize money agreed. *Action: Nick* to circulate competition information when it becomes available and to include this matter at the AGM, because each Association chooses entrants.

4. Preparation for the 2019 AGM.

- *Action: Jude and Nick* to agree a date after Easter (21 April), depending on WOCA availability. *Action: Jude* to check WOCA dates, *Nick* to create a 'backward plan' to ensure documents/ nominations are circulated in good time

5. AOB

- The AGM should include an interactive session on using the website, doing more with it (sample question for interactive posters: 'What more should / could the website be doing?')

Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 13 March at 7 PM in Seminar Room 2 at WOCA.