

Osney, St Thomas & New Botley Allotments Association Committee Minutes 8 February 2022 (Held using Zoom)

Attending:

Nick Jackson (Secretary, BM)

Anne James (TPM, Committee Chair)

Verity Wilson (TPM)

Cathy Stewart (Treasurer, TPM)

Paul Robinson (TPM)

Pól Ó Ceallaigh (BM)

Juliette Sargeant (TPM)

Apologies:

Jude Carroll (TPM)

Lizz Wilden (TPM)

Beth Hogben (BM)

Previous actions:

• Talk to Bo and Sean on plot 110 about getting more involved in TPM issues	Simon	Overtaken
• Ensure gates are open on Sunday morning for shop access (Jude to talk to Cathy)	Jude	Completed
• Anne to organise a shared TPM picnic	Anne	Completed
• Bank Holiday weekend for Botley Meadow BBQ - Nick to send out invitation email	Nick	Completed
• Review and classify current rules as enforceable and unenforceable, perhaps using red, amber, green etc.	Anne, Paul & Juliette	Ongoing
• Review rules on 50% cultivation after next rental period.	Nick & Jude	Ongoing
• Publicise idea of Honorary Membership and invite nominations	Nick	Ongoing

Welcome & apologies:

- Both Sue and Simon are stepping down from the committee – we can discuss committee make-up under item 5 later, in terms of gaps and succession planning

Matters arising:

- **Minutes of 19 July 2021** accurate. **Action:** Nick to post redacted versions of minutes on website
- TPM mowers still causing problems – these are not being hired out any longer. Individuals are forming small groups and buying mowers between them
- BM members access to shop – issues now resolved with gate opening hours
- Huge thank you to Jude for coordinating the clearing of rubbish from plots
- TPM Summer party feedback – went really well. Huge thanks to Tim Kiggell who put in a great amount of work. Well attended – need to do more of these events. Need to reinstate TPM subgroup and get some dates in diaries soon. Need to make sure these don't clash with BM BBQs (dates not set yet)
- Honorary membership – deal with later under agenda item

Finance update:

- Bank balance quite healthy at £14,865.63 as of 8/2/22.
- Shop ticked along nicely over Christmas – not a huge amount of sales
- John Lewis/Waitrose has awarded Association a community grant of £500 – need to decide how to divide this between BM and TPM. Suggested $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ - agreed.
- They would like a photo opportunity – the usual with a big cheque, and a small write-up of how we plan to use the funds.
- TPM plan to re-wild a plot that is constantly flooded (work already started). BM plan to use funds to provide irrigation system for the communal polytunnel
- No major payments other than the rent to OCC
- Utility bills – electricity: we've caught up with the bills that they hadn't sent us for several years. Water bills still high on TPM but water project will make a difference once completed
- Large amount of money carried over each year. Some of this is legacy grant money 'earmarked' for completing the TPM water project

- Cathy & Nick had discussed the accounts previously and decided to recommend to the committee that we consider shifting some of the surplus across to what is currently called the 'Trustee account' to act as a 'sinking' or maintenance fund account for the Association (and add by a small amount each year)
- We already know that given its financial situation it is unlikely that OCC will be in the position to award allotment grants in the future and certainly won't be able to complete large capital projects such as repairing or replacing fencing – and that these costs will likely fall to individual associations. This is why we recently undertook the asset register survey of the two sites. Therefore it would seem prudent to build up a reserve for these contingencies
- **Action:** Nick & Cathy to decide how much money to move across from the main account
- Vote of thanks to Cathy and the whole team running the shop. It was noted that moving across to card payments has made things considerably easier than before
- **Action:** Cathy & Nick to work on proposal for enhancing the shop with bulky item storage facility and bring it to the next committee meeting

BM update:

- Not much to report – everyone behaving sensibly
- Communal polytunnel – coming up to when we would be renting it out again. Some running repairs needed and longer term it will need strengthening and probably recovering it in the next few years
- BM currently have 1½ vacant plots

TPM update:

- TPM thinking that maybe some communal polytunnels on TPM would be a useful community resource. **Action:** Juliette to do a pros/cons piece on TPM communal polytunnels. **Action:** Nick to add as an agenda item for next committee meeting
- 7 half plots currently vacant – Gus showing people around as they enquire
- No major issues – several legacy plots have been cleared
- Still some issues with gates – but overall much better than situation before with padlocks
- Nick has not heard back from OCC/EA after TPM was visited by officers concerned about river bank erosion. Following the visit Nick had emailed the relevant members with river bank plots to advise them of issues

Reviewing committee roles and duties:

- Jude wishes to stand down for at least a year
- Cathy has always said that she would stand down after we had moved to cooperative status – but is happy to continue as Treasurer until then. Juliette volunteered to assist Cathy
- Raised issue that jobs needing doing don't necessarily fit with skills of available committee members
- Need to be better at getting message across to members that we operate as a collective – and that members make the Association work, not just the committee. Would also guide us in terms of promoting the idea of cooperative status to members.
- Paul has stepped up to volunteer to mow the main paths – works well with his time constraints
- **Action:** TPM sub-group to review all activities that need doing on TPM and decide which are committee 'roles' and which are 'functions' that could be carried out by non-committee members
- **Action:** BM committee members to do the same for BM
- **Action:** both groups to bring reviews back to the next committee meeting for discussion, and also consider potential new committee members

Facilitating special interest conversations within the community:

- Tobias' recently formed organic group is a good example of special interests

- How best to promote similar activities – there is a lot of knowledge out there among members but how best to share this with new starters, without a huge amount of extra effort on top of existing committee responsibilities?
- Could come up with a list of the likely topics (composting, Dahlia propagating etc.) we could try and find members who would be able to host small demonstration groups. Could also film these and pop these on the website to avoid other members deluging the original demonstrator with additional questions later on
- Suggestion that individuals could host ‘open plot’ Sundays (when the shop is open) where they could welcome small numbers of others to come along and see what they’re doing and ask questions.
Action: Juliette to make a start by compiling a ‘straw-man’ list of likely topics and circulate to committee members for them to add topics they think of
- **Action:** Nick to add this as an agenda item for the next committee meeting
- Anne asked about the WhatsApp groups. Pól & Nick are also on TPM group (~130 people); Cathy is also on BM group (34 people). We can use these groups to circulate the topic lists with members

Update from Oxford & District Federations of Allotment Associations:

- OCC legal department are dragging their heels over the new lease and rules as OCC staff have been fully committed on Covid-related work
- ODFAA still holding out on a few issues such as large capital requirements for allotments
- Meeting again in March and the Allotment Liaison Meetings will resume in April
- Incorporation as cooperative – status on hold as we are waiting to hear back from National Allotment Society to see if we can use a modified version of their rules to qualify as Coop

Allotment Rules:

- Need to consider which of our specific rules need to be appended to the forthcoming updated OCC allotment rules.
- **Action:** Anne, Juliette and Paul volunteered to review and classify current OSTNB rules as enforceable and unenforceable, perhaps using red, amber, green etc.
- **Action:** Agreed to separately review rule requiring 50% cultivation (Nick in conversation with Jude).

Planning for the AGM:

- Need to set a date and decide venue (or Zoom)
- Worth looking at later on – late May or early June – Covid rates might have dropped by then.
- If we were to have a physical meeting then it would probably need to be outside, in the summer. Might also be possible to link it with an outdoor social event (e.g. BBQ)
- **Action:** Anne will check with WOCA to see whether there is a distancing policy in place for the main hall, and if so then what maximum numbers would be

AOB:

- Tree planting event – 6 March – LCWO asked if we would publicise this
- **Action:** Cathy to send out message to WhatsApp group members about committee roles

Next meeting:

- Nick to Doodle poll for next meeting – late March/early April (pre-Easter)