

Minutes of the TGAA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at 8.00pm on 26 March 2019 at the St Margaret's Institute.

Present Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil McLennan (vice-chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis, (secretary and lettings secretary); Roger Mumby-Croft (lettings secretary); Jonathan Clark (website, machinery and skips); Michael Wheale (compost) and 28 TGAA members.

Apologies from: TGAA Committee members Chris Beckett (shop) and Peter Jarvis (pest control); TGAA members Liz Cairncross, Chris Goodhall, Mary Gurr, Bee and Richard Hillier, Carol Jarvis, Jonathan Lambe, David Lowe, Meg Movshon, Faye Pring, Gillian and Stuart Skyte, Suzanne and Guy Williams.

Minutes of the 2018 AGM

These had been distributed by email and were approved at the meeting.

Matters arising

Excellent wine and nibbles were provided before the meeting as at last year's meeting. Thanks to Sally and Neil for organising the refreshments and to those who helped with the washing up afterwards.

Chairman's Report in conjunction with the Deputy Chairman

Since the last AGM, there had been two meetings of the committee in October 2018 and February 2019.

Allotment site The predicted erosion of the footbridge path did not materialise largely because of the dry weather but we need to keep an eye on it. A hand-crafted tool has been attached to the lock on the newer allotment gate which has helped to make the handle easier to turn. A welcome litter bin has been installed in the allotment car park which is still largely problem free. Prickly plants (brambles, roses and pyracanthas) have been planted next to the allotment fence to deter intruders. Rather than cutting back brambles overhanging the main path, it would be preferable to wind them in to create a thick bramble hedge. The bee-friendly raised beds have been levelled and the wood recycled. The vacant ground will be used to extend the communal orchard. Several well covers need mending. Several plot holders suffered losses of solar panels and related equipment in what were clearly targeted thefts.

Mowing Volunteers for mowing team are urgently needed. Plot holders are asked not to let their plots encroach on the main paths which need to be kept wide enough for the ride-on mower to be able to negotiate them.

Harvest Supper Thanks to Bob Crabtree for organising the welcome drinks at the harvest supper and everyone else who brought lots of lovely food and helped set and clear up. This year's harvest supper will take place on Saturday 9th November 2019

Trees The council has pollarded the willows on two sides of the allotment perimeter but the rest will have to wait as will non-willow trees on the Port Meadow boundary which are in need of attention.

Fruit-tree pruning and communal orchard The January apple pruning session with Chris Lanczak, orchard manager and pruning expert at Waterperry Gardens was a great success and much appreciated by those who attended. The committee has therefore decided to make it an annual event. It has also arranged for Chris to host a session on stone-fruit (damson and plum) tree pruning on Saturday 4th May 2019 from 9.30 to 12.00. A maximum of 20 places on the session will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis with a non-refundable charge of £5 per person.

Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA) Trap Ground Allotments have contributed to the history of Oxford allotment sites which will be published by the ODFAA in 2019 to mark its centenary.

Allotment water supply A time-limited discussion was held to ascertain how much of a problem the current water supply is seen to be, whether members would be prepared to pay for improvements (on top of plot and membership fees) and what expertise and manpower they would be prepared to contribute to any improvement project in order to keep costs down. NMc and CB were heartily thanked and warmly applauded for the extensive work they had done researching water supply solutions at other allotment sites, coming up with a proposal – at a cost of just over £15,000 - for the Trap Ground site and for drafting a consultation

document which was sent to members in advance of the AGM. There was general agreement that replacing our reliance on water from wells and making water available within easy walking distance of each plot would be very welcome improvements which members would be prepared to pay extra for. It was also agreed that people should be encouraged to install water butts on their sheds and that anyone putting up a shed after the date of the AGM should make a water butt an integral part of it. NMc and CB will be joined by volunteers with the necessary expertise to form a water sub-committee to look in more detail at the current proposal in order to present a fully-costed proposal for discussion at the October 2019 committee meeting and approval at the 2020 AGM.

Treasurer's report

The accounts for 2018 were circulated. The Treasurer thanked Jim Moore for auditing the accounts. TGAA's main sources of income were fees of £4,638.50 and profit of £692.11 from the shop. The fairly substantial increase in expenditure on works – up to £3,334.20 from £1,985.56 in 2017 – was mainly down to extensive work improving the communal compost together with pruning of the communal orchard. By contrast, expenditure on machinery and site maintenance was half what was spent the previous year. The closing balance at 31st December 2018 was a healthy £12,628.56 but not enough to finance the current water supply proposal in full as we need to keep a minimum of £6,000 in reserve in case of mower failure. Doubling fees could raise £2,300.

Secretary's report

Seeds: It is still possible to order seeds at a 50% discount from Dobies as there is no cut-off date for seed orders. Catalogues and order forms are available from the allotment shop.

Membership cards are not compulsory but are needed to benefit from discounts at Yarnton Nurseries, Burford Garden Company and - new this year – Cassington Nurseries.

Membership cards issued before the AGM will expire on 1 May 2019. New cards are available at the allotment shop.

Plant sale and swap Members brought, swapped and bought plants at the allotment shop during normal shop hours in May which worked well with the swapping element proving particularly popular. We'll do the same during all shop opening hours in May 2019.

Lettings Secretaries report

There are now 47 whole plots, 134 half plots and 24 quarter plots. The bad weather has delayed the usual spring inspection which will take place some time in April. However, plot holders of plots that are clearly in need of attention will be contacted before the inspection. There are currently 39 people on the waiting list which includes existing plot holders who want to take on an additional half plot. The lettings secretaries currently have discretion to allow an existing member 'in good standing' to queue jump but this was widely felt to be unfair. There was general agreement that while there is a waiting list existing plot holders will now not be able to have more than one whole plot and queue jumping will not be permitted.

Website and machinery

Website Let Jonathan know if you have any suggestions for improving it.

Shared equipment The equipment is there to be used and was serviced in November so should be in good order. To find a keyholder, go to the website or check the allotment noticeboards.

Pest Control

Foxes appear to be failing to keep the the rabbit population under control but there have been no requests for rabbit traps. Rat poison is available but there has been limited interest. The allotment site was deemed unsuitable for an owl box but a suitable tree was found on Burgess Field.

Communal compost and bonfire

David Haynes has done an excellent job in replacing the third compost bin with a more robust structure expected to last for another five to ten years. Members are asked to put weeds in the communal compost bins rather than on the communal bonfire as the function of the bonfire is to burn stuff which cannot be composted.

Allotment shop

Thanks to the eight-strong band of shop helpers who volunteer for shop duty from March to October and to Chris Beckett who keeps the shop well stocked. Although the shop sells plastic ground cover, a plea was made to use cardboard and grass clippings instead.

Photo competition

There were in the region of 50 excellent entries in last year's photo competition on the theme of 'colour'. This year's theme is 'texture' with prizes of shop vouchers of £20, £10 and £5 for the first, second and third prize winners respectively.

Election of the Committee All committee members were re-elected with thanks from the floor for the committee's work.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm