

Minutes of the TGAA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at 8.00pm on 25 March 2014 at the St Margaret's Institute.

Present Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil McLennan (vice-chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis, (secretary and lettings secretary); Carol Jarvis (lettings secretary); Peter Jarvis (pest control and plant sale); Jonathan Clark (website, machinery and skips) and around 17 TGAA members.

Apologies from: Bee Hillier; Clare Hollander; Vibeke Mannion; Kevin Moreland; Faye Pring; Gillian and Stuart Skyte; Honour Tomkinson; Michael Wheale.

Minutes of the 2013 AGM

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

Matters arising

Drinks and nibbles At the 2013 AGM it was suggested that drinks and nibbles should be provided and they will be at next year's AGM.

Old pond The old pond should have been dug out last summer. However it will now be dug out once Network Rail's works are completed.

Hand-powered angle grinder. It had been suggested that the TGAA acquired a hand-powered angle grinder but this proved impossible. However later in the meeting it was agreed that we would buy an electric hand grinder and bench as we now have an electric generator.

Aristotle Lane bridge Network Rail (NR) submitted its planning application at the end of March 2014. Oxford City Council's (OCC) legal department has decided that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary. NR plans to increase the height of the footbridge to 3.5m (so that riders do not have to dismount when using the bridge) and proposes that the bridge will have solid walls with no windows. The plans will be available to view at a drop-in session on 10th April 2014 at Phil and Jim school. However, as there is an eight-week consultation period, the plans may change as it is not yet clear how the Freeman of Port Meadow will react to them. In addition to increasing the height of the bridge, NR intends to raise the path by the Port Meadow gate by 40cm to stop it from being flooded (so ensuring 365-day-a-year access as at their worst the flood water this year was no more than 36cm). The path itself will be widened – from its current 2.6m to 3m – and it will be a gentle slope with no platforms (which were originally proposed). NR hopes to replace the current bridge with a new one in a single weekend in late August and the level crossing will be kept open until all mitigation work on the new bridge, paths, ramp and parking is completed. It was agreed that we need to ask NR to ease the gradient at both ends of the railway bridge. Path surfaces will be of free-draining consolidated stone.

Link ramp NR has decided not to use the plans produced by Simon Beattie for direct access to the allotments from the western end of the railway bridge. Instead NR proposes to build a right-angled ramp from the western side of the bridge (as shown in the drawings displayed at the AGM). The ramp will be 1.8m wide with hand rails, a gradient of 1:15 and non-slip mesh surface. There will be a locked gate at the railway bridge path end of the ramp and there will be a flat platform by the gate.

Car park The new car park will have 12 spaces (rather than the 15 we would have preferred) to the left of the school with steps up. The parking spaces will be one behind another with a turning space at one end and with a permeable surface. There will be no gate to the car park so it could potentially be used as free parking by the general public. To prevent this, we will need notices warning non members not to park and will possibly require members to display their allotment membership cards to show that they are parking legitimately.

Chairman's Report

There had been three meetings of the committee since the last AGM.

Allotment site It was heart-warming to note that largely members keep the allotment site in good order which helps to make it a nice place to spend time.

Composting area John Ashby has let the committee know that he plans to pass the management of the composting area to someone else from March 2015. In the meantime, Michael Wheale, who has recently joined the committee, will provide John Ashby with help. The flood-prone area near the compost site is to have rubble added to it to raise its level and will be mostly grassed over and planted with bee-friendly plants.

Beekeepers The committee has agreed that there will be a beekeeper's tithe of one pot of honey per productive hive to be sold at the annual plant sale.

Thefts There were fewer thefts last season than the previous year but we still need to keep a record of any thefts and keep the police informed. Anyone who suffers a theft should let the committee know.

Trees We will be asking the council to carry on with the pollarding of trees on the allotment site.

Harvest Supper Stuart and Gillian Skyte have very kindly agreed to organise the harvest supper again this year and it will take place on Saturday 8th November 2014 at the St Margaret's Institute.

Hens. The committee has agreed that hens may be kept at the allotment site.

Treasurer's report

The accounts for 2013 were circulated. The Treasurer thanked Jim Moore for auditing the accounts. TGAA's main sources of income are fees of £4,495, proceeds of £1,180 from the plant sale and profit of £424 from the shop.

Maintenance of the site and machinery – including skips – takes nearly half our income. Over the past few years, we have been building up a reserve to be able to replace the ride-on mower which is on order. It is the committee's intention to spend more money on external labour to undertake tasks such as rubble spreading, digging out the old pond, dealing with the communal compost and improving well heads.

Secretary's report

Seeds We now have only one discount seed scheme with Dobies which adds just under £250 to the association's income as well as £30-worth of free seeds for the allotment shop.

Membership cards are not compulsory but are needed to benefit from discounts at Yarnton Nurseries and Burford Garden Company. Current membership cards expire on 1 May 2014. New cards will be available at the allotment shop and will be free if swapped for an old card but will cost £1 otherwise.

Plant sale Last year's sale made another record £1,180 and sadly was the last to benefit from the superb organisation by Carol and Pete Jarvis who were heartily thanked for their 20 years' of plant sale provision. Last year's plant sale also saw the introduction of a stall selling jam and pickles which will be repeated this year as it was such a success. This year's plant sale will be held on Sunday 25th May 2013. As well as needing donations of plants, seedlings, jams and pickles, volunteers will be needed to help manage the plant sale both before and after. More details of the jobs for which volunteers are required will be circulated at the beginning of April.

Lettings Secretaries' report

Despite there being 244mm of rain and January 2014 being the wettest since records began – with only one rain-free day - the recent plot inspection, which took place on 14 March 2014 showed that amazingly the water had gone down and that most plots are in surprisingly good condition. The waiting list has grown over the year and there are now 15 people on it. 20 people have taken on new plots this year and three half plots are in the process of being let. This year it was also sad to hear of the death of Victor Jakowski, one of the longest-serving plot holders.

Machinery, mowing and locks

Website Let Jonathan know if you have any suggestions for improving the TGAA website.

Shared equipment Members were reminded that, after being shown how to use it - they can borrow any of the shared equipment which includes a rotavator, tiller, strimmers and mowers. A new more substantial ride-on mower costing around £4,500 is on order as is a self-propelled mower which should be slightly smaller and easier to use than the current mower. There is also now a petrol-fuelled electric generator for members to use.

Mowing Thanks to the team of people who mow the main paths (and some small paths) every week. Tony Hollander is now in charge of the mowing rota on which there are a few vacancies. Members were asked to ensure that stray plastic and ground cover is kept well away from paths and that side paths are kept to a minimum width of one metre.

Locks The codes will be changing in early May.

Skip There was a vote in favour of getting another skip. Asbestos must not be put in the skip but should be taken to Redbridge. JC to check whether fibre glass can go in the skip.

Trap Trading

Thanks to Vibeke for all her hard work manning the shop and keeping it so well stocked.

Pest Control

The rabbit population is almost non-existent thanks largely to the foxes but if you need a rabbit trap, ask Pete Jarvis. Badgers are a problem but we just have to live with them. We have good relations with the council pest control people who have provided us with bait boxes and rat poison for use by members with rats on their plots.

Election of the Committee

Michael Wheale joined the committee in January 2014. The whole committee of nine was re-elected with thanks from the floor for the committee's work.

Any other business

It was suggested that we consider holding a seed-swapping event.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm