

Minutes of the TGAA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at 8.00pm on 27 March 2018 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); Peter Jarvis (pest control); Jonathan Clark (website, machinery and skips); Chris Beckett (shop); Michael Wheale (compost) and 18 TGAA members.

Apologies from: Julia Aston Smith; Thalia Carr; Mary Gurr; Clare Hollander; Gillian and Stuart Skyte.

Minutes of the 2017 AGM

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

Matters arising

Very welcome drinks 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

Since the last AGM, there had been two meetings of the committee in November 2017 and February 2018.

Allotment site As well as reinforcing the path between the Port Meadow gate and the new ramp, David Haynes put up a fence next to the old pond. Simon Bonfani – who trained at Waterperry – radically pruned the communal orchard and also tamed the bee-friendly beds. Simon charges £25 an hour and is keen to take on both pruning and general gardening work. For his contact details, see the TGAA website. His email: simonebonfani@googlemail.com. With thanks to Jonathan Clark and Michael Wheale (who raised the palisade of the new gate), the new gate is working well. To deter casual intruders, brambles will be planted either side of it once the water level falls. JC and MW also built well covers for the new wells dug for us by Network Rail contractors. Several well covers need mending.

Railway works The final path surface on the new railway footbridge turns out to be provisional for a two-year period and there are already signs of erosion.

Car parking Contrary to concerns expressed at last year's AGM, parking by non-TGAA members has not been a problem but an eye will be kept. However stray litter has been a problem so a bin would be useful.

Mowing More mowers for the mowing team would be welcome. Paths are in a bad state largely due to damage by moles. Everyone can help to give mowers a smoother ride by filling in ruts in the paths with surplus turves.

Harvest Supper Thanks to Bob Crabtree for organising the welcome drinks at the harvest supper and everyone else who helped set and clear up. This year's harvest supper will be on Saturday 17th November 2018.

Trees The council did a fantastic job clearing the vegetation growing through the perimeter fence but have yet to act on the willows on the Port Meadow boundary which urgently need pollarding. Work to cut down trees on individual plots undertaken by the Oxford Tree Company produced welcome chippings and firewood.

Allotment history The Oxford & District Federation of Allotment Associations is celebrating its centenary in 2019 and has asked each allotment association in the federation to write a short history of its allotment site.

Treasurer's report

The accounts for 2017 were circulated. The Treasurer thanked Jim Moore for auditing the accounts. TGAA's main sources of income were fees of £5185, profit of £428.31 from the shop and a one-off payment of £3,500 negotiated by JC from Carillion. This more than covered the £600 it cost to repair the damage to the path caused by Carillion. Because of this exceptional payment, the accounts show income as greater than expenditure but this is likely to be reversed this year partly because of exceptional expenditure on tree work. To keep the finances in a healthy state and allow us to engage someone to clear overgrown plots before being re-let, it was proposed that we should charge a non-refundable joining fee of £30 to new members. This was voted in by a majority with two abstentions and since the AGM, the first joining fee has been charged.

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 and Burford Garden Company. Membership cards issued before the AGM will expire on 1 May 2018. 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 and swap Members brought, swapped and bought plants at the allotment shop during normal shop hours in May which worked well and added about £80 to shop profits. The swapping element was particularly popular so we'll do the same in May 2018.

Updating rules New rules have been formulated for the planning of fruit trees including a requirement for trees to be planted no less than 2 metres from a communal path or another person's plot, for overhanging branches to be pruned back and for recently-planted but badly-positioned trees to be moved. The rules on sheds and other structures will be updated to give a maximum size of 10ft by 15ft for polytunnels along side the maximum size for sheds of 7ft by 5ft.

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. There are currently sixteen people on the waiting list.

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. The sit-on mower is now four years old so we may soon need a new one.

Pest Control

Foxes are largely keeping the rabbit population under control but other rabbit deterrents are available on request. Rats are still a problem not least because they seem immune to poison. Installing owl boxes is still an option.

Communal compost and bonfire

The communal compost and bonfires are hugely popular and very much valued waste disposal facilities. The compost heaps are now turned over by a big JCB three times a year. Members are encouraged not to put compostable matter on the bonfire pile as green matter and soil do not burn. Blighted potato tubers and tomatoes should be put in the council food waste.

Allotment shop

Thanks to Chris Beckett who took over running and stocking the shop in September 2017 and best wishes and thanks to Tim Halliday who had to step down due to ill health. Thanks too, to the eight-strong band of shop helpers who volunteer for shop duty from March to October. Since the change in management, suppliers to the shop have changed and a rack has been installed for the various rolls of fabric which are now very clearly labelled. The shop has also acquired a blow torch to melt the edges of ground cover to stop it fraying. Email shop@trapgroundallotments to get access to this service. The shop will not be stocking seed potatoes next year as it is possible to get the same price and a better selection at Yarnton.

Photo competition

Suggestions for the theme for this year's photo competition were colour, gluts, rubbish and water. Colour won the majority vote.

Any other business

Memorial bench Plot sharers of the late Sue Howarth have acquired a bench in her memory which will be fixed in place once the weather has improved.

Dogs have become quite a problem. Members will be given another reminder that dogs should be kept on leads at all times. If the problem persists, consideration will be given to not allowing dogs on the allotment site.

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

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm