

FAIRACRES Allotment Association - AGM, 2014

Welcome and general introduction

Chair Jon Piggott explained that Darren Clahane would not give his planned bee talk to members after all. This is because there have recently been 3 attacks on the bee hives, increasingly aggressive. The last one (the previous day) had destroyed the hive. It means there will be no more bees on the Fairacres site.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Darren sent an e-mail to say that he had moved the hive to a friend's garden in Abingdon and that the bees seemed to be recovering. Interestingly, the empty hive that was left on the Fairacres orchard was attacked with sticks a couple more times over the next couple of weeks, at weekends and out of school time]

The assembled members voiced dismay that the chance of Fairacres hosting bees has been put paid to. We agreed that we need to be increasingly vigilant, watching out for strangers entering the site and even possibly our own members and their children committing violent acts on other peoples' property.

Minutes from last year - distributed and considered.

Corrections - Eleanor Hill asked (in an e-mail sent before the meeting) for Brian's apologies for absence at the 2013 AGM to be minuted. Christine Cox pointed out that she HAD been present at the AGM, though the minutes cited apologies for her absence.

Apologies for absence this year - Jenny Hislop, Jane and Simon Fisher, Dudley M, Rodas, Niki Sprong, Fiona Thomley, Lucy Watson, David Grundy, Ron Cosford, Diana Cosford, Clive Lindley Jones, David and Susanna Gimson, Eleanor and Brian Hill,

Secretary's report (Julia H)

JH asked for feedback on communication through the previous year. Jane C-S said there had not been too many missives - a good thing. The ones she received were always useful - eg. information about an Oxford Gardeners' Question Time that she attended.

It was agreed that the web-site was a useful communication tool, and that we should encourage people to communicate with the committee via the 'info' e-mail address. Any general comments for the membership can be disseminated via this address.

Jocelyn suggested feedback and communications within the Association could be done via a blog on the website. A closed group? Jon suggested that people e-mail to 'info' and this way the whole Committee will see things and pass them on.

Chair's report (Jon P)

Thanks to Jennie R who has taken time since stepping down as previous Chair to introduce Jon to Wendy S-S from the Oxford Federation.

Also thanks to Claire duFeu (departing Lettings Sec) and to Christine Cox (departing trustee after 3 plus 3 years).

Trees - JP reported that he was hopeful the Council would fulfill their commitment to cut back trees abutting the site in the near future.

Rent review - in feb 2015 we will hear what the Council has decided about rent. We have been told there is no intention of a 'land grab' and the 'inflation increase' in rent is planned as a way of standardising a currently very unequal system across the city. The Fairacres

site is already in the upper quartile of the list, so (fingers crossed) our increase should not be too onerous.

Fence - JP reported that the committee has looked into improving the long side abutting Council and Oxford Preservation Trust land by adding new hedging (eg. hawthorn) and employing a hedgelay. This is to keep animals off the site as much as we can.

Thanks to David Morris for stiring work improving the entrance to the site.

JP and DM have recently erected new staging in the polytunnel.

JP urged us to make use of communal tools stored in the shed - barrows, loppers, a ladder etc. There are some new tools stored in the shed by David Morris - donations from Sylvia who has recently moved away from Fairacres.

Thanks to Rodas for his demonstration of how to use the mower and strimmers

Thanks to David Morris for the apple fest

Thanks from the members present to Jon P for (over recent months) getting rid of the pile of cuttings etc. at the gate

Lettings Secretary's report (Jane King)

JK reported the following stats:

7 plots have been relinquished in the past year

We have 4 new members

4 people have expanded their plots

1 plot was vacated recently and is not yet allocated

When JK inherited the waiting list in november there were 56 people on it (plus, 8 people have since joined). This is notoriously the longest waiting list in Oxford.

JK rang around/e-mailed and wrote to all those on the list to check whether they still wanted a plot. She had no response from 9 (who had most probably left the area) and another 13 said they no longer wanted a plot. In this way she reduced the list to 34.

JK and JP have also undertaken to simplify and make logical the numbering system. Our plots are now renumbered and there are 40 new signs in the polytunnel, as well as stencils and spray paint, waiting to be put up (by individual members).

Treasurer's report (Stephen Kearsy)

The closing balance at the end of 2013 was £2,000

This is mainly thanks to City Council grants totalling £1,300 for fencing work.

The money is likely to go towards hedging, tree pruning (in collaboration with the Council) and renovation of the polytunnel.

In the budget, most figures are in line with the previous year. There has been a reduction in expenditure this year, mainly because there has been less need to replace stolen/vandalised equipment. We have not increased rent now for a number of years and see no need to do so this year.

SK pointed out that our insurance is a public liability only, organised by the Federation on our behalf. This costs each plot holder (plus less than 4 helpers) £2 per annum - a slight overcharge but including a set fee for accounting.

There has been good response to the chance of donating cash rather than being involved with working parties.

Amendments to Rules and Constitution

The amendments proposed by the committee were generally approved, with the following caveats:

RULES

8.2 the statement about insurers needs to be altered

8.4 'Plot holders are responsible for...' Needs rewording. Take out the question mark!

10.2 'Times'

CONSTITUTION

3.2 This needs altering because of the danger of the committee being inquorate.

Noticeboard

It was suggested that a copy of the association 'Dos and Dont's' be posted on the noticeboard.

Christine Cox currently has the key to this board - there is a possibility of duplicating it.

Membership

JP proposed that we introduce the new status of 'Associate Member' - someone who can act as proxy for a member (1 vote per plot) at meetings. This also requires an alteration to point 4.2 of the Constitution. This idea was approved.

Re-election and election of committee for 2014/15

Chair, Secretary and Treasurer were all nominated and seconded appropriately for re-election. Jane King and Tim Humphrey were also re-elected.

The following new members of the committee were nominated, seconded and welcomed:

Clive Lindley Jones

Sue Coles

Jane Fisher

Gaby Hock

Lynn Errey agreed to stand again as Trustee and David Morris was elected to replace Christine Cox who is stepping down.

Joan McCartney

Liz Hodgson asked for it to be recorded that Joan died recently - a much valued member of our community and an extremely active committee member in her time. More than 10 representatives from the Fairacres site attended her funeral.