

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Minutes of the AGM held on 11th March 2008

1. Welcome by Chair: Wendy welcomed members attending with a slide show of all the allotment plots.

Members present: Patsie Franks, Tim Bone, Caro Fickling, Alex Hollingsworth, Gina Cowen, Virgil Clarke, Belinda Allan, Sue Perry, James Allan, Carolyn and Richard Dutton, Dave Simms, Tony Clear, John Sivell, Sam Bickersteth, Sheila Allen, Wendy Skinner Smith, Andrew Honey, Jane Eagan, Jamie Forbes, Mr Edwards, Alison Campbell, Cyril Pead, Donna Han, Victor Elms, Doke Ostle, Robin Ostle, Jeremy Hyde, Louise Pike, Tom Flynn, Ann Dawson, Mateo Mier-y-Teran, Jo Holliday, Suzanne Straebler, Helen and John Lowe, Brendan Dotson, Chelsea Anttila, Miranda Carnegie, James Sergeant, Mark Doran, Ros Weatherall, Jane Wilson, Bernie Fry, John Langsbury, Richard Gilson

In attendance: Councillor Susanna Pressel, Ray Tse (Thames Valley Police)

2. Apologies: Tim Bradshaw, David Rundle, Paul Cullen, Melissa Gemmer-Johnson, Jane and Simon Mollison, Diana Parker, Lisa Johnson, Patsy Halliday, George Burnett-Stuart, Maddy Slaven, Paul Cullen, Felicity Parker

3. Minutes of AGM held on March 15th 2007: approved after adding John Langsbury to list of members attending.

Matters arising: none

4. Accounts: copies of the audited accounts were circulated. The treasurer pointed out that the accounts were prepared on a money in/money out basis which was appropriate for a small association and that the aim should be to use the money for regeneration etc, just keeping enough to pay the rent to the council. There were no questions. The proposal that the accounts should be accepted was agreed. The Secretary would thank Ken Jones for verifying the accounts.

Budget: the treasurer said that the rent due to council could be increased this year but it was hoped to postpone that as most associations had set the level of their subscriptions already. Members who could not attend a working party were encouraged to donate £10 instead but this was voluntary. A member suggested that the date of the working party and the sort of work to be done should be put on website.

Alison Campbell was thanked for her work as treasurer.

5. Annual Report: The Chair outlined regeneration work completed this year and plans for the coming year's work and showed some photos of new fence, digger at work, wood chip, composted material and green waste piles and the badger gates. Mostly plots were now let as soon as they had been cleared. She referred to the July floods and subsequent cancellation of Open Day, lunch on communal area in August, plans for car park and current problems of getting a skip in. She referred also to problems relating to SEB dismantling of fence and their eventual agreement to do something about replacing correct grade of rabbit fence and trapping rabbits which had got in while fence was down. The university had also been persuaded to clear up on their side of the fence and to remove a fallen tree which was being used for unauthorised access.

6. Elections: (all officers and committee members were elected unopposed)

Chair: Wendy Skinner Smith – nominated by Sheila Allen

seconded by Ros Weatherall

Vice Chair: John Sivell – nominated by Wendy Skinner Smith

seconded by Alison Campbell

Secretary: Sheila Allen – nominated by Wendy Skinner Smith

seconded by John Sivell

Treasurer: Alison Campbell – nominated by Wendy Skinner Smith

seconded by John Sivell

Other committee members: Tony Clear, Jamie Forbes, Alex Hollingsworth, Bernie Fry – re-elected

James Allan and Donna Han were also proposed, seconded and elected.

Alison reminded members that the committee could co-opt people during the year.

7. Items for discussion from Annual Report:

a) Proposed reclamation for 2008/9: the disused land would be fenced at some time but we would not be allowed to reclaim it ourselves as the pits left by bottle digging were dangerous.

b) Changes to the constitution:

Add in A): “The committee is charged with pursuing the objectives of the association and administering the site” (currently only implicit). Agreed.

Remove from L) “or put his case to the committee in person”. This change was rejected.

The recommendation that the additional advice on complaints procedure drawn up by Melissa Gemmer-Johnson for the committee should be published on the website was agreed.

c) Graffiti on shed: Dave Simms and John Langsbury agreed to do this and association would provide materials.

d) Amendment to shed rule on height: agreed that it should be 8 feet.

e) Responsibilities of members:

There had been 2 incidents this year when the work of the committee had been interfered with. Members should support the work of the committee or risk losing their membership.

f) Cripsey Island:

The Chair prefaced the discussion with the statement that our advice from the council (allotment officer) was that our present lease issued by Oxford City Council to the Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association pays no reference permitting the right of way to any third party. It clearly states and forbids the association from doing so. To do so it would technically put us in breach of their lease agreement. Consequently it was not a matter for our discussion. We were advised to comment on the needs of Cripsey Meadow with regard to Cripsey Island as the decision about the lease was for the council to make.

John Sivell presented a report on the committee/working party visit to the island and on the management plan which was needed. This report is published on the web site. John was shocked at the state of the trees, damage by barbed wire, accumulation of rubbish in Fiddlers Stream, green willow logs by the ditch, inappropriate tree management resulting in damage to existing fruit trees and conifers casting shade, and he pointed out the potential for coppicing, pollarding and retaining some native planting alongside orchard development which would bring it into our lease. He also recommended a 3 year management plan.

Other members who had visited the island agreed with John’s assessment that the island was in serious need of management. They supported the development as an orchard and could see it as a real asset for to all Cripsey Meadow members. Another member who had visited the island advised caution as she thought there was a lot of work and the association needed to be clear that it could do it if it took on the lease. It was clarified that the island had to be a productive, cultivated space to come into our lease and insurance. This open access and greater sustainability was thought to be the main benefits.

Sam Bickersteth, who is a member of Cripsey Meadow and one of the 7 people making a new proposal to lease the island, made the following points. He introduced Mr Todd who was in the meeting. Mr Todd was the sole named person on the previous lease. Sam suggested he spoke for the islanders. This was not possible as Mr Todd was neither invited nor a member but the meeting agreed he could be available at the end of the meeting if anyone had questions. (No one did). Sam continued with comments on the islanders proposal. His comments included : the problem of access was a failure on the part of the council to deal with it before drawing up lease; the importance for

conservation and biodiversity that it should remain relatively wild; the contentious clause in the island lease was “for horticultural use”; the island’s potential for mitigating flooding should not be forgotten; reasonable that some people come forward to help with management but not that all allotment members should have access; a balance needed to be struck between intensive use of allotments and keeping the island as natural as possible and tree cover should not be reduced. Doubt was expressed that the island mitigated flooding as the water comes up from underneath. 4 members spoke for keeping the island as it is.

Finally a vote was taken on the proposal: “We, the AGM of Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association, would support taking the lease of Cripsey Island as an extension of the Association lease” with 29 in favour, 9 against and 3 abstentions.

Year 1 of the management plan was discussed but not voted on.

7g) Trustees:

It was agreed to defer a decision on this issue in view of the fact that it was to be discussed by the Federation.

7h) Member’s submitted concern – bamboo:

A member had asked that bamboo should be banned from the site in view of its invasive nature. After discussion the meeting decided against banning it but agreed that it must be managed, ideally with mown grass all round it and that it must be managed as with other plants within our rules.

8. AOB: members were urged to sign up for OxClean on Sunday 16th March.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm after refreshments.

These minutes were agreed as a fair record at AGM 10 March 2009