



WOODLEY ALLOTMENTS TENANTS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
25th April 2022
The Oakwood Centre
7:30 p.m.

1. Welcome:

Vice Chair, Sarah Lane welcomed everyone to the AGM.

- 2. In memoriam:** Sarah relayed the sad news that Chairman Scott Golding had passed away following a short illness. She added that Mick Hatcher and Jeff Pitt had also recently passed away. There followed a minutes silence as a sign of respect and for reflection.

- 3. Apologies:** JA, KM, SS, PF, PL, JW, CW.

4. Confirmation of Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting:

The Vice Chair made a brief reference to the minutes, which have been circulated to tenants. These were passed as agreed.

Matters arising –

- The Constitution - has been updated following the recent successful EGM.
- Nails in the scalplings on C/D row – Barry Jackson followed this up a few days after the AGM and the nails were removed using a strong magnet.
- Co-opting for special projects e.g. John Anderson is co-opted on the Launchpad and Ian Butterworth on CCTV.
- Rat problem – this is not yet resolved. The matter is being discussed with the Council.

5. Election of Ordinary Committee Members

Brian Hughes introduced this item

- a) Ordinary Committee Members are elected every year. There are 5 allowed by the Constitution and there have been 5 nominations received.
- b) Brian asked the audience if there were any late nominations. None were received.
- c) He asked those nominated to introduce themselves.
- d) As there were only 5 nominations, voting was by a show of hands

All 5 were unanimously elected

The 5 Ordinary Committee Members are:

- **John Anderson**
- **Teresa Buley**
- **Tony Carter**
- **Barry Jackson**
- **Mike McNamara.**

WOODLEY ALLOTMENTS TENANTS ASSOCIATION**SPECIAL BULLETIN – 78****6. Presentation of Annual Report:**

Sarah Lane, Vice Chair, presented the Annual Report.

a) **Scott Golding** – The date of funeral and details will follow.

b) **AGM** - This AGM brings us back in line with the Constitution although it is a month later than anticipated due to Covid and the timing of the EGM which was arranged to discuss and vote on changes to the Constitution.

c) **New locks and keys** - These are now in place. There were issues at the start in getting familiar with the locks and keys. A few tenants had difficulty with the back gate where the chain was initially too short.
The new locks have now stopped people cutting through and prevented a lot of casual dumping on site - e.g. pallets and woodchip from unknown sources.

d) **New Tenancy Agreement** - The Tenancy Agreement is constantly being reviewed by WTC. The Committee has had two meetings with WTC since September and we have discussed ways in which the Tenancy Agreement could be further improved.

e) **EGM** - Following this meeting there is now a new Constitution which we are all following.

f) **Mailing list** - This is now compliant with the Data Protection Policy, with Opt in/ Opt out forms. Thank you to Mike McNamara for his work on this and for producing the Special Bulletins and Newsletters.

g) **Social Media** – We now have a new Facebook group set up after we lost control of the original one. We have just over 100 members and are trying to get as many tenants as possible signed up.

h) **Website** – The Council are currently in the process of updating the information about the allotments on its website.

i) **Communication with the Council** – There is now improved communication with Woodley Town Council and additional meetings are building a better working relationship with them.

j) **Waiting lists** - We have worked hard to reduce the waiting list and have come up with new initiatives including mini plots and starter plots. We have also split a number of 10 pole plots into 5 pole plots. The waiting list was going down but has recently started to go up again with more people joining it.

k) **Road repairs** – We had the largest turn out in 2021 and repairs were completed in record time. Thank you for helping with this. There are still some repairs to finish off but the previous repairs



broke the bucket on the Council tractor and we are waiting for this to be repaired before an extra session can be calendared.

l) **New tenants** – 19 new tenants have joined us over the last few months.

m) **Charity plots** – The Launchpad has restarted its Corporate Days which are the main income for the allotment fund. We are now welcoming corporate volunteers onto site again and have had visitors in February (half day), March (all day) and April (all day). Barry Jackson, John Anderson and Teresa Buley have been helping to supervise these days. Another half-day session has been planned for May.

We are looking for help with watering and to support the supervisors on days when corporate volunteers are on site. Please sign up if you can help.

Thank you to Barry Jackson, John Anderson and Teresa Buley for their continued work on the Launchpad plots.

Hope and Vision is a new charity on the allotment site, on plot K18b.

n) **Pop up Shop** – This was set up in collaboration with Huntley and Palmers Allotment Association. On the day, this was run by members of the Committee due to an unexpected Covid outbreak amongst the Huntley and Palmers helpers.

£140 of stock was sold and we are hoping to run another one later in the year. Thank you to the Council for supporting this.

o) **Seeds and Fruit bushes** – Thank you to Teresa Buley who has been doing an excellent job of selling seeds, fruit bushes and trees. These items can be obtained at a discount directly from Teresa.

p) **Covid** - Thank you to everyone for following guidance and being thoughtful about Covid when coming onto site.

q) **Community events** – We are now beginning to introduce more community events such as the Pop up Shop, an Apple Pressing day and of course Road Repairs.

Thank you to the Committee for the work that they do behind the scenes.

A special thank you goes to Brian Hughes who has done excellent work throughout his time on the Committee and most recently on the new Constitution. He is now stepping down and we wish him well in his retirement.

7. **Treasurer's Report:**

Kerri Evans, Treasurer, gave the report

The last report was given during the last AGM and covered three years as a result of AGM delays due to Covid.

For 2021, the main income received was massively reduced due to Covid.

All bank accounts are available for anyone who wishes to see them.

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2021

Carry forward - £3478.84

Income

- Launchpad invoices total £405.00
- There were no Plant sales due to COVID.

Expenditure included:

- CCTV Camera batteries £129.98
- BBQ/Refreshments £150.94
- Website £111.14
- Printing costs £293.36

2022

Carry forward - £3154.06

2022 is already looking better with more Launchpad corporate visits on the site. We are now in a strong monetary position.

Kerri asked for suggestions about how some of this money can be spent.

Money could be used for improvements on site such a memorial bench for Committee members who have passed away and also a memorial for Scott. These Committee members have spent many hours and often many years working on the Committee. Please email the current Committee with any suggestions for how our funds could be used.

Some money has been put aside for the pond project but we are still awaiting work on the drainage by the Council.

There is a new petty cash float held by Teresa Buley for buying and selling plants and seeds. The Committee are seeing how this works. In the main account, petty cash will be logged as one withdrawal out and one deposit in. Teresa Buley also will keep a record of individual transactions in a small ledger.

At the EGM it was mentioned whether the accounts should be audited independently. The Committee believes this to be a good idea and are contacting an accountant who will look at this for us.

Response:

- The tenant on plot K33 opposite the pond reported that the pond was a pain and that his allotment now flooded. This complaint will be dealt with in the next item.

8. **Plot vacancies**

Report by Mike McNamara

- At the beginning of the year there were 89 on the waiting list, the majority of whom had been on the list for 14 months. We have managed to reduce this number and the list now stands at 76, with a few people have dropping out.
- We have done a lot of work taking some of the smaller 5 pole plots and subdividing them to produce mini plots, and we have had one person who has recently taken on one of these.

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- c) We have taken a plot on G row and created starter plots. Again, one person has taken on one of these to try with a view to getting a larger plot in the future.
- d) We currently have 369 plots and the site is now one of the largest in Berkshire.
- e) There are 349 plots are in use with 20 vacant plots. There are only a few plots left: 3x10 pole plots, 7x5 pole plots, 7 mini plots and 3 starter plots.
We are continuing with viewings, with two on Friday and a few arranged for next week
- f) We are continuing to investigate creative ways to make more plots available to reduce the waiting list.
- g) Flooding - 2 plots remaining vacant are on L row where the flooding mainly occurs and they are still a bit squelchy underfoot.
Regarding the flooding situation, we have learned from the Council there is a culvert exit in the far left corner which runs all the way along Reading Road and under the gate. It is believed there is a blockage along there creating the flooding and causing it to get worse.
We have brought the issues of flooding up with the Council who have informed us they are looking into it but are restricted by the constraints of the budget. The area is overgrown, covered by brambles and not a project which the Committee can tackle on its own.
We have informed the Council that it will not be possible to let the vacant plots L8 and L14 until this problem is resolved

Questions

- The tenant on H29 asked if a specific percentage of the plots needed to be given to Reading residents since the land belongs to them. He also asked who can apply for a plot.
Mike McNamara replied the Committee are not aware of any allocation for Reading residents and understood that anyone who is local can apply with non Woodley residents paying more in rent.
The same tenant suggested that since WTC controls the waiting list they could also be allocating a percentage to Reading residents.
The Committee agreed to look into this.
- The tenant on C15 reported that it seemed to be taking a long time to reallocate abandoned plots.
Mike McNamara replied that this question will be dealt with in the next item - plot inspections. He added that although we are still trying to reduce the waiting list, once the remaining 20 plots are allocated that will be it. However, in future when we see someone giving up a large 10 pole plot we may split this into 2x5 pole plots which would be both more manageable for new tenants and further help to reduce the waiting list.
WTC and the Committee are also discussing measuring the size of plots. There is inaccuracy in the overall size of individual plots and over next 18 months we will be re-measuring all plots. Rents have already been set for 2023 but for the future the Council would like to know about the size of individual plots before deciding on future rents. 10 pole plots are 25x8-9m or 100x30ft.

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We are also looking at bringing currently non-lettable plots covered in brambles back into cultivation. We haven't put forward any firm proposals as yet as we are aware there is a balance to be kept between areas for wildlife and allotment plots.

If this plot recovery goes ahead we would be looking for help to clear the brambles.

9. Plot inspections

Report by Mike McNamara

- a) The new Welcome Pack has been sent out to all tenants by email and new tenants are given a hard copy. Within the Welcome Pack there is a back section covering the criteria for plot inspections.
- b) The Council has produced a new Tenancy Agreement for 2022. This redefines the requirements for tenants to overcome an issue last year with a plot holder who questioned what was required. This led to a discussion within the Council at Committee level and resulted in plot inspections being temporarily halted until the new much clearer TA was put in place. You have now all had a copy of this new document which defines what the expectations are and we have replicated this information in the plot inspection section of the Welcome Pack. We have also placed this section on plot Inspections in a separate document for tenants to read.
- c) During plot inspections we are looking for progress on the plot, with tenants wanting to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers and to do this successfully.
With over 70 people on the waiting list, it's only fair that those who currently have allotments utilise the ground for what it has been created for. Hopefully the Plot Inspection document provided, which includes pictures, will give tenants a clear idea of what we are looking for.
- d) First inspections will take place at the end of April/beginning of May.
- e) As a result of these first inspections, the Committee have decided to send out information about how to improve to any tenant whose allotment does not meet expectations. Tenants will then be given a short time to improve and comply.
- f) If there is no/ little improvement these plots will be referred to the Council who will then take appropriate action.
- g) Photos of every plot have been taken in January and at the end of April/beginning of May to help the Committee to objectively evaluate progress.

Questions

- The new tenant on plot K25a asked when the rubbish left on her plot by the previous tenant would be removed by the Council.
Mike McNamara replied that WTC were coming round at the end of April and at this time rubbish should be placed at the front of the plot ready for removal.
He drew attention to a number of plots that had not been worked for almost a year. Some plots the Committee has been notified about and information from these tenants has been taken under consideration. We are fully aware of all the plots which currently appear to be abandoned.
- The tenant on plot F33 asked if it was fair for tenants to have more than one plot when there is a long waiting list.

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Mike McNamara replied the Committee has now stopped plot swops and plot splits - where a friend takes over part of the plot. The only exception is if a person takes a starter plot in which case they will remain at the top of the list for a larger plot. This has been discussed and agreed with the Council at a meeting in February.

Gill Germain also confirmed that the Council will not offer current tenants a second plot until the waiting list is down to zero.

Kerri Evans reminded tenants to contact the Committee if they have any problems managing their plots for e.g. family reasons, illness.

Mike McNamara added that the Committee would support tenants who wanted to reduce the size of their plot if it proved too much.

10 Any Other Business.

a) **Tyres** – From photos of plots taken in January, the Committee have noticed tyres on some of the plots. The new TA states the tenants should not store vehicle parts on site, this includes tyres. Tenants are now being approached to remove the tyres on their plots. Tyres are non-decomposing waste and an environmental pollutant. Over time they have been shown to release toxic chemicals such as heavy metals and hydrocarbons into the soil. Tyres are now banned on a number of allotment sites. All tyres must now be removed. They can currently be recycled at Reading tip.

There was a discussion about tyres left on site by previous tenants. The tenant on plot C31 has 12 tyres which were left by a previous tenant. The Committee agreed to contact WTC to ask about removal.

b) **Glass panes** – There is currently a lot of broken glass on site after the recent storms. Broken glass is a significant hazard to the plot holder and their family. A recent tenant found panes of glass buried under soil. Given the damage from recent storms, the Committee are looking for new greenhouses to be fitted with Perspex rather than glass.

c) **Brambles** – There are significant areas of overgrown brambles e.g. those close to the road and next to plots L12 and L3. The Committee has asked the Council to help but are also asking for volunteers to help to start cutting them back. If you can help, please sign up.

d) **Notice board area** – Please try to keep it tidy. Anything that might be of use to other tenants should now be advertised on the notice board and on our Facebook page. Items can then be collected from your plot. Do not leave anything next to the notice board.

A lot of broken items have left by the notice board in recent weeks. It should not be left for the Committee to clear this rubbish away.

e) **Sale of fruit bushes, bulbs and seeds** - Teresa Buley informed tenants that she is able to buy fruit bushes, bulbs and seeds at a reduced cost. Details about these purchases are published on the notice board, the website and Facebook. When the time comes to order seeds, tenants will have a couple of weeks to look at the Dobies catalogue before the final order is sent in.

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f) **Grass cutting** – The tenant on L21 asked when the Council are coming round. The Committee informed the meeting that WTC cut the grass twice a year, when the grass gets long. As the grass is currently very long, the Committee will contact the Council to arrange for the first cut.

g) **Water pressure in the tanks** - The tenant on C33 has been informed by a plumber that the water pressure isn't good enough for the number of tanks on site. The tank on D34 has very low pressure. He also asked for a bucket promised at a previous meeting to wash vegetables. Brian Hughes replied he has a supply and will provide one for D34. Sarah Lane also reported another tank on G row with a leak. The Committee will contact the Council about the issues with the water.

h) **Skips** – The tenant on D14 asked why we only have skips once a year and if they could be sited at the bottom end of the rows as it is a long way to take rubbish to the communal shed. Sarah Lane replied that the Committee has approached the council to supply more skips. Kerri Evans asked for volunteers to supervise the skips. She explained that if we have skips in different places we will need more tenants to volunteer to man the skips to prevent fly tipping.

i) **Pallets** – The tenant on D14 asked if deliveries of woodchips and pallets could be spread around the site so everyone can have equal access. The Committee agreed to arrange this.

j) **Fires** – The tenant on D14 was disappointed that fires were only allowed between October 1st and April 30th. Tenants were reminded that with more plots being let there were more fires and more smoke pollution for surrounding properties to deal with. There has to be a compromise.

At a Council meeting last year, a number of Council members wanted to ban bonfires completely but the Committee argued for continuing to allow them so tenants can continue to burn infected plant material and pernicious weeds. With a new planned skip day in August, there is now an opportunity to use this to collect some green waste.

k) **Launchpad Corporate Days** – The tenant on C33 asked if these dates could go on the notice board so those tenants not on Facebook have the opportunity to volunteer. The Committee agreed to this request.

l) **Facebook group** - The Committee reminded tenants at the meeting that our new Facebook group is called **Woodley Allotments Tenants Association at Reading Road** and can be found at: <http://tiny.cc/2vlruz> or by scanning this QR code.



The meeting was closed at 8.52pm

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Actions

Item	Description of action by the Committee	
6. Annual report	Inform tenants of the arrangements for Scott's funeral	
8. Plot vacancies	Discuss with WTC if there is a specific % of the plot allocated to Reading residents	
10. AOB	Discuss if WTC will remove tyres from plots where they were left by the previous tenant	
	Ask the Council to arrange for the maintenance team to cut the grass which is now very long	
	Brian Hughes will provide a bucket for washing vegetables next to the water butt on D34 and any others that requested one.	
	Ask the Council to arrange for skips on site over the May Bank Holiday.	
	Discuss the leaking tank and low water pressure with WTC.	
	Committee to arrange for woodchip and pallets to be delivered around the site so all tenants have access.	
	Committee to advertise Launchpad Corporate Days both on the notice board and on Facebook so that more tenants can see the information and volunteer to help.	

Many thanks

Sara Lane –Vice-Chair

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