

THE MARLOW ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the thirty-fourth Annual General Meeting, held in Liston Hall, 8th November 2017 at 7.30pm.

Members and guests present: Chair – Ms D Bagge, Secretary - Mr P England, Treasurer - Mrs M Talbot. Committee - Mr B Kilner-Smith, Mrs S Miller, Mr S Pickard & Mr F Tillier. New Committee Member Peter Cooper, to be voted in at this AGM.

Mr R Bailey, Mr A & Mrs D Bennett-Rice, Mr M Blunkell, Mr R Bradley, Mr I & Mrs H Brown, Ms L Bunt, Mr B Carter, Mrs R Crow, Mr R De Coverley, Mr P Edmonds, Mrs D & Mr M Elliott, Ms A Ford, Mr N Garside, Mr J Holland, Mrs Y Holland, Mr D & Mrs L Howell, Mr R Maidment, Ms M Misakova, Mr C Naphthine, Mr J Prowse, Ms L Quinn, Ms F Rabson, Mr A & Mrs N Ross, Mr R Ross, Mr P & Mrs J Smith, Mr J Stilliard, Ms M Vann, Mrs R Wolton. **Special Guests** - Mayor Cllr. Jocelyn Towns, Town Clerk Hilary Martin.

Introduction by the Chair, Denise Bagge - *Good evening and welcome to all members of the Marlow Allotment Association. How many here from Foxes Piece? How many from Hanging Hill? (a show of hands from each group) I am Denise Bagge, as the Chair of the Association I would like to introduce our current committee members: Peter England Secretary of the Association; Maren Talbot our Treasurer; Sylvia Miller who is the main representative for Hanging Hill; and Bill Kilner Smith also from Hanging Hill. The main representative for Foxes Piece is Fred Tillier; and Scott Pickard is also from Foxes Piece. Welcome also to our guest(s) for this evening – the Town Mayor, Councilor Jocelyn Towns and Town Clerk Hilary Martin. The Town Mayor will address us shortly and I am sure she will be keen to hear your views and answer any questions.*

Apologies for absence announced by the Secretary Peter England: Mrs A & Mr C Bowles, Mr M Deri, Mrs S Gaunt, Mr G & Mrs S Greenhouse, Mrs S Harley, Mr R & Mrs N Hockly, Mr T Holland, Mr G Lomas, Mr B Masser, Mr C O'Connell, Mrs H & Mr S Tolmie.

Address by the Chair: *Just to remind you how the evening will run. The first half will deal with the work of the Allotments Association which includes a report from Peter England on the sites and from Maren Talbot on our finances. Then from about 8.30pm the Town Council will take over for the prize giving of this year's Town Council Allotment Competition and the Mayor's prize for the plots with the most unusual feature. Does anyone know when the allotments at Hanging Hill were established (around 1910) and the allotments at Foxes Piece (around 1920) – and we want to keep them for another 100 years. We all know that the best way to do that is to keep them fully used and under active cultivation. We have healthy waiting lists at both sites and in the course of this year the committee worked to encourage new tenants to take up allotments and to try to ensure that they understand the work involved. Following a suggestion at last year's AGM, thanks to Mr Edmonds, we ran an open day at Foxes Piece allotments in June. 13 adults (including 4 people currently on the waiting list) and 3 children came to Foxes Piece. The people who went on the tours said that they now had a "better understanding of the work and time involved" in caring for an allotment and appreciated the "warm welcome" by the people giving the tours. The Association would like to thank all of the people who contributed in different ways - some providing vegetable plants to encourage newcomers to start growing; some acting as tour guides on the day and others helping with the Association stall run by Sylvia at Higginson Park on 11 June. It was a lot of work and the committees view is that if this is done again the tours would just be directed at people on the waiting list. Do members here think that it is worth doing again for people on the waiting list? (Small show of hands) Is anyone prepared to be a tour guide next year? (a show of 5x hands) How about at Hanging Hill as well (a show of 2x hands). An exhibition was held in Marlow library to raise awareness about allotments, we offered free packets of seeds with the Town Council phone number attached to encourage new tenants to apply. We have put up posters in the town car parks and in Liston Hall, & Sylvia has given talks on seasonal gardening jobs and other allotment news on the local radio. We continue to develop the website with information and news items about the allotments. How many have used the website? (Small show of hands) I would like to invite Scott Pickard to give a brief update regarding the website.*

Monica Vann complained that the Chair had not acknowledged the Tenants Forum which she runs and said that this is not mentioned anywhere. Sylvia Miller confirmed that there are notices up on both sites giving full details to tenants & it is always mentioned in the newsletters.

Address by Scott Pickard: Scott quoted the statistics of usage for the website, requesting all present to complete and return the questionnaires handed out at the start of the meeting, which will give valuable feed back and new ideas.

Address by Mayor Cllr. Towns: Jocelyn Towns gave thanks for the invitation and mentioned that she was looking forward to awarding the prizes to the well deserved & hardworking gardeners. After carrying out tours of both sites Jocelyn was amazed at the fantastic & well tended plots and really enjoyed the tours, confessing she herself does not have 'green fingers'. The Mayor went on to state that over the coming year MTC plan to continue with repair & replacement of fencing at both sites and soon will commence repair to the damaged trackway @ HH.

Questions: John Holland asked why is the rent to increase wef 2018 by 10%?

The Mayor replied this was to cover increased running costs, this figure still remains lower than other sites in the area Bernard Carter stated that with the additional charge for water levy it means that costs have increased excessively over recent year by large percentages. He asked how much more is being spent on the sites? What are we getting back in relation to capital invested?

The Town Clerk, Hilary Martin replied that she will address these matters & respond when the information is available.

Furthermore she undertook to comeback to MAA with information about the other allotments in the area that had been used to compare with Marlow.

Neil Garside mentioned that the cost of a plot works out to be £1.25 per week which is excellent value for money and a mere drop in the ocean compared to the benefits.

Peter Edmunds mentioned his concerns regarding impending development problems with car parking imposed by Red Kite restricting usage for tenants parking along the roadside, He requested protection for tenants rights.

The Mayor will look into the problem.

Martin Blunkell mentioned that the area by FP is classed as a Highway and Red Kite cannot put restrictions on others usage of this. There are proposed developments for additional parking from MTC which may help alleviate this.

The Mayor agreed that at present Marlow has a parking problem.

Peter Edmunds mentioned the problems with piles of leaves in the road not cleared by MTC as he would like to have them for the allotment.

Sylvia Miller advised that she had been gathering up the leaves along the roadside to compost on the allotments as they are a valuable commodity.

The Chair asked if a decision had been made yet regarding the derelict play area beside the Doctors surgery & Foxes Piece Allotments.

The Mayor advised that the next Assets meeting is planned for 21st November and hopes to be able to supply an update after that meeting.

The Chair asked if this area could be used for allotments, she went on to state that it is the position of the Association that allotment land should not be taken away.

The Mayor stated that the decision will be whatever is best for the people of Marlow.

Minutes of the 2016 Annual General Meeting. – Proposer : David Howell, Seconder : Lyn Child.

Matters Arising.- There were no matters arising.

Secretary's Report.

This year we achieved a total of 148 members, which was our 2nd highest. During the year 8 gave up their tenancies at Hanging Hill & 8 at Foxes Piece. Against this we welcomed 9 new tenants at Hanging Hill and 11 at Foxes Piece. Currently we have 3 vacancies at Foxes Piece & 9 at Hanging Hill. The waiting list of those ready to take on a plot stands at 22 for Foxes Piece & six for Hanging Hill, as well as a few existing tenants who would like a second plot for a family member. In respect of tenancy renewals, as our AGM is a month earlier this year any figure given today would not provide us with an indication of what the picture will look like at the end of this month when renewals should be in. At Hanging Hill further fencing is required along the Berwick Road Perimeter. The extent of the problem was revealed during the winter when a small volunteer group cleared the overgrown area alongside the fence line removing a great deal of often heavy debris, some of which appears to have come from the back gardens of houses on the other side of what was once a fence – no doubt long before the present residents arrived. Much of the line remains unfenced and the precise line of one section needs to be established. Work to complete the muntjac deterrent barrier at the north end of the Hanging Hill site was completed. Following the explosion when a water main running under the site burst, Thames Water effected the repairs but in doing so caused unsightly damage to one path in particular as well as some damage to the main track. They compensated directly 2 tenants whose plots were affected & promised to make good the rest of the damage, but so far nothing has happened other than repairs to one of our water lines which they had also damaged. At Foxes Piece we still await information from the Town Council on the proposed fate of the ex children's playground. Our concern is that any development of this area does not affect the integrity of the allotment site. Minor fencing repairs took place during the year and bollards were erected along the area adjacent to one of the new water lines to guard against potential damage by vehicles over running. An open day was held in the summer at which a few potential tenants from the waiting list were able to confirm their ongoing interest. Barbecues were held at Hanging Hill in May and June, a barbecue & bonfire in September & a bonfire on November 5th. Attendance at these events has been disappointing & your committee has discussed how to respond to the situation. At a later point this meeting we will have the opportunity to debate the issue. The National Society (NSALG) seed scheme makes an important contribution to the Association's finances and catalogues are available here. Prices compare very favourably with other suppliers. The discount at Toad Hall Garden Centre is unlikely to continue as it is out of line with their policy but the discount at Hunts continues. Chicken manure pellets at a competitive price again sold well and this has become a regular offer. Rabbit manure is also available on request at no cost, although donations are always welcome. Wood chippings, delivered to Hanging Hill, are available to tenants of both sites.

During the year your committee met 5 times. I should like to thank members of the committee who have made the Secretary's job easier. Sylvia at Hanging Hill and Fred at Foxes Piece for contacting and showing round so many prospective tenants, Denise for chairing the committee, organising the open day and the promotional display in the library, Maren for looking after our finances and the seeds scheme, Sylvia for taking minutes and Scott for his work on the website. I should also like to thank the volunteers who continue to help out on the triangle project, as well as those who contributed to the winter work at Hanging Hill. There are other people who have given us their time and effort in a variety of ways. So thank you to all of them. During the year we published 4 Newsletters. Our emailing list has increased but there are still more than 50 Newsletters delivered by hand, so I should also like to thank the loyal team who deliver them. Finally I should like to thank the Mayor for attending and Marlow Town Council for booking this facility for us.

Proposer: Neil Garside Seconder: Ruxandra Crow.

Treasurer's report

Maren Talbot presented the financial report, copies of which were available to those present, and pointed out the highlights. One of these was the total income from donations alone of £169.38, and she thanked those that had contributed to this. Membership continues to increase each year, however, it should be borne in mind that all of the MAA membership money received pays for our subscription to the National Society (NSALG). This means that all our outgoings such as website costs, notice boards and events insurance are financed by other activities such as gains from donations, sales of Kings Seed and Chicken Manure Pellets. The net gain for 2016/17 amounted to £62.80, compared to £5.64 the previous year. Maren emphasised the importance of submitting seed orders to her by the 10th November in order for MAA to claim additional early discount. Proposer: Monica Vann Seconder: Lynn Quinn

The Chair asked if members understood that £3 of their membership fee is currently paid to the National Allotment Association. The Committee believes that it is important to have this membership because the National Association represents the interest of allotments at the highest level and gives advice and support to allotments particularly where they may come under threat. However this does mean that in this past year the small amount that the Association had to meet the costs of things like the website and insurance for events had to come from donations. On 1 November 2017 the membership fee went up to £4.00 which means that for the coming year the Association will have about £1 a member to do things on your behalf – but this is still very tight. The Chair then put forward a proposal to increase membership subscriptions from 1.11.2018 from £4.00 to £5.00 and asked for those against, 3x hands were raised and then those for the increase, all remaining present voted in favour of the increase – result majority of members present voted in favour of the subscription increase to £5.00.

The Chair asked if the annual payment of £124.00 for event insurance was good value for money, as the turn out this year had been “disappointing”, with a continual low take up, only 1 or 2 tenants from FP site attending. Do we continue with the events? David Howell told those present that he supports the events and would like to encourage more events, he proposed a Saturday tea & coffee morning @ HH to enable tenants from both sites to meet up & chat.

The Chair then asked for input, Richard Maidment asked for more publicity, Richard Bailey offered to carry out a talk, Peter Smith gave his support for the events, Mikala Misakova asked for more publicity, Martin Blunkell suggested that events are run in relation & co-operation with the Horticultural Society, Peter Cooper suggested that it may be possible to get cheaper events insurance. Scott Pickard asked is it necessary for events insurance, Ruxandra Crow asked is it only for bonfires, Peter England confirmed that we do need insurance for all events. Scott Pickard then asked that if David ran his tea/coffee morning he should not need insurance. Sylvia Miller advised that if an event is carried out by MAA without insurance and there was an incident or accident then all Committee members could be held liable for compensation personally, likewise if David ran his coffee morning as an independent meeting, the he could be personally liable for any accident. David Howell & Lyn Child attempted to mention suggestions for fundraising but the Chair advised that there was enough input. At this point Sylvia Miller requested the Chair allow her to defend this matter, which she agreed to. Sylvia Miller handed out to each row some copies of the Rules and Regulations for MAA stating that she is strongly against the cancellation of the events insurance as by not providing events for members to attend if they choose do to so, it would then mean that the Committee are not adhering to one of the principal rules of the Association. As the funds collected over the last 2 years from Donations have covered the insurance, this means that members are not paying for this from the subscription fees paid to MAA. Sylvia Miller also mentioned plans in the coming year for monthly social meetings either on one of the sites or at a location for be confirmed, and she will try to ensure there is adequate publicity of these to allow members from both sites to attend.

The Chair notified all present that after many years serving the Committee, Bill Kilner Smith has decided to stand down this year, she thanked him for all that he had done over the years and asked for those present to give him a hand of applause. Peter England mentioned a note of thanks to Bill who has agreed to continue distributing the newsletters, as he has always done.

Peter England thanked all the volunteers that help with the delivery & distribution by hand of the newsletters for tenants that are not on email, mentioned that Ian Harris has given up his allotment plot but will continue with the delivery of newsletters, so a special mention of thanks to him.

Elections to the committee

The Chair put forward the Committee nominations in turn, naming each in turn asking for a show of hands in favour of each member. There was a majority by those present for each Committee Member these are:

Chair – Scott Pickard	Proposed: Peter England	Seconded: Sylvia Miller
Secretary – Peter England	Proposed: John Holland	Seconded: Yvonne Holland
Treasurer – Maren Talbot	Proposed: Sylvia Miller	Seconded: Denise Bagge
Committee Member – Fred Tillier	Proposed: Neil Garside	Seconded: Mike Hopper
Committee Member – Sylvia Miller	Proposed: Denis Bird	Seconded: Heather Tolmie
Committee Member – Denise Bagge	Proposed: Robert Frost	Seconded: Charles Knocker
Committee Member – Peter Cooper	Proposed: Maren Talbot	Seconded: Peter England

Close of meeting. The Chair stated there was no other business and after the presentation of the prizes in the Best Kept Allotment Competition, the Mayor Presented her Awards for the most Unique Feature at each site which were Mr & Mrs Lomas at FP & Mr & Mrs Bird @ HH, Bernard Carter requested the details of what feature was awarded the prize @ FP & was told it was the unique & impressive onion storage by Mr & Mrs Lomas. The Chair closed the meeting at 9.00pm.