

Owlsbury Quarterly Association Meeting 23rd April 2009 at Crowborough Town Hall.

1. Present

Graham Brown, Carol Forster, Rosalind Marriott, Josephine McChrystal, Sandra Rouse (Cllr. Paul Adams and fourteen OATS members also attended).

Terry Ferdinands, Jo Hobden, Diane Lewis and Alan Hooper were unable to attend the meeting.

2. Introduction to OATS and what it is doing for its members

Graham gave a brief history of the formation OATS its intentions to help to facilitate the development of the site as a working community allotment.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2009

3.1 Vehicle access

Graham has spoken to the CTC about vehicle access to the site – personal cars etc. are not allowed within the fenced allotment area. CTC plans to attach a padlock to the gate.

3.2 Rabbits

There is a gap underneath the gate which will give access to rabbits. Action is needed. It was suggested that a slab of concrete could be placed under the gate to prevent the further erosion of soil.

4. Update from CTC on facilities

4.1 Water

Southeast water will connect between 25th and 1st May which will make the single pipe active. Beenys will complete the site installation by the end of May. Graham is going to enquire if the rest will all be standpipes or cattle troughs. Graham is to check if CTC are still intending to absorb the water charge. In the short term the CTC bowser will be left on the site alongside the existing bowser.

4.2 Parking, sheds and toilets

There is no current update on planning permission.

Toilets:

Installing toilets will create a drainage problem. The cost of installation may or may not be carried by CTC – this is to be discussed at a later date. As discussed before, this will be subject to planning decision.

Graham is to confirm with David Foot and Linda Butcher whether or not it is appropriate to send a representative to discuss the planning with WDC.

Car park:
As above.

A question was raised by a member about the long-term plans for the site and the possible ramifications for parking and toilet provision. Graham pointed out that OATS is concerned but outlined the ideas previously aired i.e. a communal orchard and smallholding, educational possibilities and an eco-burial site.

This led to a general discussion about the possibility of the apiarist society having hives on an area of the site. There was great interest and enthusiasm expressed by the members present.

Sheds:

The issue of the small plot size was raised with relation to fitting a shed on one. There was general discussion about the feasibility of having smaller tool boxes or larger communal buildings. It was pointed out by members that smaller buildings would not have the necessary capacity for wheelbarrows and other larger items.

One member suggested that part of the building on the yard adjacent to the site might be free for storage and that OATS might be able to negotiate to use it. The general feeling in response to that seemed to be that most members would prefer their own storage area or one belonging to the site.

Graham suggested that a communal body of wheelbarrows could be purchased and housed in a communal building.

There was a reminder that there is currently a wheelbarrow for communal use on plot 58.

5. Vacant plots

There are currently some vacant plots which are being re-assigned.

A number of people have expressed an interest in having a second plot; it was advised that they ask for their names to be put on the list for re-assigned plots.

6. Gates and access

A member brought the issue of closing the gate at the end of the day if you are the last plot-holder on-site to attention. The last member is to 'lock-up'.

This led to a discussion about the potential locking of the fence gate. A member suggested that the lower gate should also be locked and members given a key, as trespassers may become a problem. The combination lock idea brought up in previous meetings was aired – this met with approval. There was concern that there would be a threat of theft come harvest time. There were also concerns raised that caravans may be brought onto the site. It was suggested that a removable bar be fixed across the gate to prevent this.

It was pointed out that any combination code would need to be sent out by David Foot, as not all allotment holders are OATS members.

This led to a discussion over to what extent privileges will be denied to non- OATS members. The Newsletter will contain information about the benefits of joining OATS so that all are aware.

A notice board will be going up, of which OATS will have use of 50%. This will be useful for notices such as those offering the sharing of hired machinery and telephone numbers could be provided for contacting relevant parties.

7. Constitution

The final copy has been produced by Alan Hooper.

Graham will e-mail this to all members for approval. There will be a cut-off date of two weeks; if there are no objections in this time the constitution will be passed.

8. Dog fouling

There have been reports of fouling on the site. Dogs are prohibited in the tenancy agreement. It is unclear if this extends to the whole field or just the allotment area.

9. Bank account

Sandra Rouse the Treasurer for OATS has resigned and relinquished her plot due to personal commitments.

Shirley Croughton has volunteered for the post of Treasurer and will collect new forms from Nat . West. Graham Brown and Ros Marriott are to act as signatories.

10. Social Secretary

It was decided that the role is not currently necessary.

The garden events held at West Dean Gardens near Chichester were suggested as a possibility for a group trip. Whilst the members present were interested in the events, it was suggested that an organised trip would be overly ambitious and that the dates would be circulated via the Newsletter.

Other more local events were deemed to be more feasible. Graham is continuing to negotiate a possible trip to Lynne's Organic Farm.

11. Any other business

11.1 Garden Organic:

The company offer a £30 fee can be paid for group membership.

An OATS member who is also a member of Garden Organic offered to find out about local branches of the organisation and how they may be able to support us.

11.2 Grass strips:

Responsibility questioned by a member. Borders are the plot owners responsibility. However, in some area they are reported to be rutted and dangerous. This needs to be brought to the attention of CTC. Graham is to contact David Foot to ask if the land can be levelled.

11.3 Pallets

Graham has access to a large quantity of free pallets for anyone who is interested to make use of.

12. Next meeting

The Association meetings will now be held quarterly. The next date will be decided at a later date with the input of all the committee members.

Meeting ended: 8.58pm.