

Chair's Report AGM 7.11.23

“Managing Expectations”

A year of transition.

We had the Annual Meeting with the TC on Nov 7th. Brian had circulated a report which had not been read by any member of the TC prior to the meeting. An underwhelming meeting with no real outcome, these meetings are no longer required to be held. The TC were focussed on the Allotment Society forming a full committee which Brian reassured them was in hand and on track.

The next noteworthy event was the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting held at the Somer Centre on February 15th 2023. Inishkea Bishop was elected as Chair, Emma Abdullah as Site Officer, and Simon Green as Treasurer. Brian Snellgrove continued to act as Secretary to the committee.

For a few weeks we had a full management committee. Following some turbulence and an attempted removal of the Chair, Brian resigned his position on the 18th April 2023. Two months later, on the 18th June 2023 Inishkea Bishop resigned her position of Chair on the basis that she no longer was in a position to manage her allotment.

Since June, Emma & Simon have taken care of the administration and day to day running of the Allotment Society, we are extremely grateful for all the support and encouragement we have received from so many allotment holders. Between us we have worked hard to keep the Association in good shape. We have co-opted Sharon Melling, Jacqui Cobban and Sarah Smith onto the Management Committee. Sharon will lead on our social activity, Jacqui will support us with our IT – Facebook, website etc and Sarah is supporting us with site management.

Since our appointment Emma and I have very regular dialogue and have held three formal meetings. One of our biggest challenges was keeping the current bank account and changing the mandate to us, it took months and plenty of effort but we got there.

We are pleased to be able to present a fully audited set of accounts, many thanks to Mike Carne for producing this professional report which will be circulated at the AGM. For the purpose of this report our carry forward 2022/23 is almost identical to the previous year so our accounts are very well balanced.

We have two willing volunteers to join the MC, Hayley Bird will stand for the vacant position of Secretary and Sarah Smith as site officer to be voted on at the AGM. We are looking forward to welcoming Sharon & Sarah to the MC, they will be a real asset to us all. Emma will resign her current position in favour of the Chair vacancy, subject to election.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of the Town Council who have been most helpful in all of our interactions with them, we do consider that we are in a robust position with our landlord. Our dealings have been positive and most encouraging. We are delighted that our recently appointed link Councillor, Deborah Thatcher, has shown so much interest in our group. Deb is a keen gardener and has set up the community allotment site “Somer Valley Gardening Community” at Withies Lane. We have a great deal in common and share the ethos about the benefits of gardening in terms of sustainability, physical & mental health. I had the pleasure of showing Deb around our site and we both agreed that ours is a fabulous site, great location, good parking and ... fresh, running water! On a slightly negative we do have a number of plots currently well below the required minimum standards which we will need to address in the coming weeks.

So a busy year. Going forward we will be exploring the benefits (or not) of joining the National Allotment Society and we will also be investing the feasibility of installing a compost toilet on site. Other site improvements will include the replacement of the two noticeboards and we will be pursuing the hard standing area for our compost deliveries at the centre car park. One of our early priorities will be to bring the website up to date and to host some social activities, we are fully aware of the shortcomings.

We will do our very best to manage expectations and we do hope that your interactions with us have been positive, professional & polite.

Emma & Simon

MSN Allotment Association Management Committee.