

The Marlow Allotments Association

The thirty-eighth Annual General Meeting, in the form of a Year End Report

Message from the Chair Juliette Chanoir – Greetings to all Plot Holders, unfortunately, for the second year we have not been able to run an AGM, but are hopeful that we will be back to normal next year. It has been an unusual year with the relaxing of COVID rules, however, we have all remained cautious and stayed safe. Some crops have been very productive, whilst others that should do well have suffered from the extreme heat in June & July. We all struggle on regardless and are hopeful that the next year will be productive.

With best wishes to you all for a fruitful year ahead with bountiful harvests. **Juliette Chanoir – MAA Chair**

Minutes of 2021 AGM – In view of the circumstances last year this was replaced with a Year End Report which was circulated to all tenants and is available on the MAA Website. Alternatively, a hard copy can be supplied upon request.

Message from our Mayor: *The Council hopes that allotment holders are pleased that we have been able to keep the allotments open throughout the pandemic and not close either of the sites, as many Councils have done.*

Thank you to the tenants that respected the rules on numbers of people working on the plots and for respecting social distancing. I understand that your Association continues to be strong and, from a number of visits I have made to the allotments over the past year, and can see that your allotments are productively maintained. Indeed, the range of fruit, vegetables and plants is very impressive. The Council continues to be pleased with your stewardship and we have tried to support this by maintaining our two sites in good order.

During the year extensive bramble clearance has taken place at Foxes Piece and an assessment of trees will take place in the next few weeks. A formal assessment of the trees bordering Hanging Hill will take place in 2022. The water leak at Hanging Hill has now been repaired and Community Payback will be working to clear and tidy the site of the old playground adjacent to Foxes Piece. The Council has responded to tenants concerns over bonfire banning and are offering a trial period for bonfires to be permitted in the last 2 weeks of January 2022. Furthermore, the Council has always been pleased to hold regular meetings with representatives of your Association, which gives us the opportunity to exchange views and give updates on current matters. Let's hope that these can soon restart following Covid.

I am pleased to announce that the winners of the Allotment Competition were Sarah Beddall at Hanging Hill and Richard Bailey at Foxes Piece.

My best wishes for the Festive season and we all look forward to a successful 2022.

Kind Regards, Cllr Richard Scott, Marlow Town Mayor

Secretary's Report – This last year has been a little challenging and unique, while we all try to adjust to the current situation & new circumstances created by Covid. The weather has proved changeable, both sites have suffered blight on the tomato crop, along with the latest problem at HH, damage by badgers, caught on camera – makes a change from deer and pheasants!

New Tenants: Over the past year there have been 14x new tenants at FP & 11x at HH, plus plots that have been re-let since 1st November 2021 being 10x at FP & 6x at HH, this is the result of tenancies that have not been renewed.

Waiting lists & vacant plots: At present we have 2x vacant plots at HH and none at FP with 11 people on the waiting list of which 3x for FP, 5x for HH and 3x have no preference.

Water shut off: This has now been turned off on both sites and will be switched back on in Spring as usual.

Vandalism at Foxes Piece: There have been numerous and repeated instances of vandalism by persons unknown resulting in damage to greenhouse windows. It appears that missiles are launched from the public footpath, however, there has been unexplainable damage incurred that does not follow the previous assumption. The Council & local Police are investigating this. MTC have placed notices along the footpath advising that there may be cameras in use on site as a deterrent, furthermore, some tenants are considering the use of cameras or similar devices on their plots. In addition to this the Council are planning to set up a type of privacy netting along the inside of the fencing by the public footpath, to deter the vision of any would-be perpetrators.

Review of trees: The trees on both sites will be reviewed regularly by Denise Bagge, Committee Member, with MTC, so that they take action on any dangerous or overhanging trees and bushes. This will need to be a multi-year programme for MTC to get on top of neglected trees and bushes, so any member who have concerns regarding trees near their plot, please contact Denise – meet up on plot 66 FP or phone 483192.

Events: There has been another excellent Dahlia Talk carried out by Richard Bailey at FP in August, MAA thanks him for his expert and well organised meeting. There are plans for further events and talks in the New Year.

Bonfires: MAA hoped that there would be another AWP meeting with MTC before the AGM to discuss this matter and put forward possible options, unfortunately, due to many other pressing matters at the Council they were not able to arrange this for us, with Officers and Councillors.

However, at the request of MAA, they did put forward the matter of bonfires on site and the suggestions laid out in our last Newsletter, along with additional points brought up by other MAA members, after a meeting held one evening. As a direct result of this, they have now agreed to allow bonfires for a couple of weeks in January as you should all know by now.

Whilst the Committee understand the frustration that some tenants feel with the Bonfire ban, we must also consider the impact that smoky fires have on other tenants who have breathing problem such as asthma and worse, they have no option but to leave the site when a smoky bonfire is started, local residents cannot do this. Therefore, we are pleased that MTC have allowed Tenants to burn dry branches and cuttings for a short period in January and hope that tenants respect others when doing so.

Facebook: This is proving popular, please contact Juliette with news and information that tenants would like to share.

Communal Tables: There is now a Communal Table and pot swap area on each Site, thanks to the volunteers who have organised, provided and installed these. They are located at FP near the entrance by the flats and at HH by the main entrance in Prospect Road, if others would like a further one organised at another location on either site, please let me know.

Wood chippings: These are available free of charge to all tenants, and are proving very popular. There are now four wood chip bays at Hanging Hill, and one at Foxes Piece, if FP tenants would like a second one this can be organised should there be sufficient interest. Please note that only the one local Tree Surgeon is authorised to delivery these onto the sites.

Allotment Working Party Meeting. The Committee members attended two meetings over the past year via Zoom, with Marlow Town Council Officers & Councillors to cover allotment issues, below is a brief summary of some of these matters:

- a) FP playground area: At present no planning permission will be put forward for this area, the Council still have no confirmed plans for this area at this time.
- b) Bonfires: MTC have agreed to allow bonfires on both sites for the last two weeks in January 2022
- c) Vandalism at FP: MTC are considering various options to deter the perpetrators.
- d) Fencing damaged at FP – plans are in place to review the fencing.

The Triangle Project: As a result of the recent problems encountered due to COVID, along with other issues, three of the groups now no longer attend the site, which means that only two people are benefiting from this facility.

Therefore, we have researched other possibilities and have found that due to the new Eco-friendly Initiatives in all areas, the local schools are very interested in using the facility to enable the children to benefit from the whole experience, along with their families. At present this new avenue is under discussion, we will update tenants once this has been arranged.

Committee meetings: The Committee this year held meetings via electronic means, except for the last meeting in August which was hosted by Richard Harker, with grateful thanks from the other Committee Members. Should any Association member like to be part of the Committee, please contact me.

Thank you: This is my opportunity to thank those that have helped and supported the Association throughout the past year. Thank You to the Committee Members for their support and advice, especially Maren, our Treasurer, who spends many hours on the accounts, supporting seed orders and balancing the books for us. Most recently a lot of time was spent researching the best banking procedures, with hours of mind-numbing time completing online applications, along with numerous visits to the bank to enable MAA to use the new procedures moving forward, and thereby save MAA the cost of additional bank charges.

Thank you to Juliette for all her work on the Webpage and Facebook, and Denise for her work on the new Project reviewing unsafe or hazardous trees & bushes on both sites.

Thank you to the rest of the Committee for their help and support along with all the volunteers, on both sites, who contribute for the good of the Allotments with work and clearance in communal areas, maintaining the Orchard throughout the year and the organisation and upkeep of the Communal Tables on both sites, which are proving very popular.

Of course, a BIG Thank You to the volunteers who deliver the newsletters to tenants that do not have email.

Last, but by no means least, Thank You to Marlow Town Council for their support for all matters related to the Allotments. Especially to Debbie who has gone out of her way, even at the weekend, to resolve issues on both of the sites.

All help, no matter how small, means that together we make the Allotment Community such a pleasure to be part of.

Wishing you all the best for a happy and productive 2022 – **Sylvia Miller, MAA Secretary**

Treasurer's (and Seed Secretary's) Report –

Dear Members, Last year has been a peak year for membership with 153 tenants signing up as members of the Marlow Allotments Association. This is the best result ever and we hope it reflects that the tenants are fully aware of the benefits offered by membership, which includes membership of the National Allotments Society (NSALG), whose aims are to protect the Integrity of the Allotments Sites, access to Seed Orders from Kings at favourable rates & discount from Hunts in Marlow. Strong membership shows our landlords, Marlow Town Council that we are a thriving community and deserving of their support.

Our finances are in good shape, we pay our bills on time (insurance, web charges etc) and are able to put away some money for a rainy day. Most of your contribution goes to the NSALG (currently £3.00 per person). They are not planning to increase their membership fees and neither are we for at least another year.

Our income has been boosted by a new initiative called 'Give Away', where members donate used equipment to be passed on to newcomers or other members for a modest donation.

However, we are no longer able to provide chicken manure pellets as there is a national shortage of these.

A major challenge is the decision by our bank to start charging for Charitable Bank Accounts like ours, at £5 per month and 40p for each cheque paid in or out. We looked for other bank accounts, but none were available. Therefore, we have moved quickly to enable free online payments by the Treasurer. To further reduce the cost of banking, we have also applied for a debit card for use by the Treasurer for MAA business. This means changing the Rules of the Association, and we are asking the AGM to support that change. The aim is to eliminate cheques from our dealings, so please pay anything you owe to the MAA by bank transfer (Sort Code: 403219, Account No: 41460919, Acc. Name: Marlow Allotments Association) or in cash, either to any Committee Member or suitably disguised in an envelope to M Talbot, 4 Hazel Close, Marlow SL7 3PW. Regarding the Seed Scheme, we are encouraging members to place orders online via the NSALG/Kings website. To do this, contact Maren who will register you on their website. MAA receives a discount at the end of the year, which came to £95 last year, a welcome result! Wishing you all a Happy New Gardening Year.

Maren Talbot, Treasurer & Seed Secretary (mtalbot@talktalk.net)

MAA Rules Amendments: Attached are the MAA Rules which are followed and adhered to by the Committee, there have been some recent changes to these, most importantly regarding banking procedures that MAA needs to change in our battle to reduce bank charges that have now been introduced, as explained previously by our Treasurer, Maren. In the absence of a physical AGM, we have again had to use the Committee as proxy for voting.

Therefore, should any MAA member wish to object, comment, question or disagree with the rule changes, please do not hesitate to contact a Member of the Committee to lodge this.

Elections for the incoming Committee Members with Proposers & Seconders

		PROPOSER	SECONDER
Committee Officer (HH) - Chair:	Juliette Chanoir	Loredana Cornea	Maren Talbot
Committee Officer (HH) - Treasurer:	Maren Talbot	Bill Masser	Bill Kilner-Smith
Committee Officer (HH) - Secretary:	Sylvia Miller	Peter England	Daphne Roberts
Committee Member (FP):	Denise Bagge	Robert Frost	Bernard Carter
Committee Member (HH):	Pete Cooper	Geraldine Rowe	Nick Ricketts
Committee Member (HH):	John Stilliard	John Holland	Sylvia Miller
Committee Member (FP):	Fred Tillier	Neil Garside	Gordon Young
Committee Member (FP):	Richard Harker	Claire Rowan	Susan Gale
New Committee Member (HH):	Richard Maidment	Sylvia Miller	Liz Bunt
New Committee Member (FP):	Huw Stevenson	Maren Talbot	Kate Marshall

New Committee Members have been unanimously voted in by the existing Committee members. Committee Officers and Members for re-election have been voted in by proxy – if any MAA members wish to comment, question or disagree with any nominations, please do not hesitate to contact a Member of the Committee to lodge this.

Messages from tenants:

*We would like to propose a vote of thanks - **MANY THANKS** - to our Committee, and especially to Sylvia Miller, for the great work they do throughout the year on our behalf. - Bill and Elizabeth HH*

My only point is the inflammatory topic of bonfires!

A 2 week window makes no sense, albeit better than nothing!.....and it makes little sense to have same rules for both sites! Hanging Hill is on a hill with open country side behind. – Shaun HH

I was hoping to put forward my views regarding bonfire window 17th-30th Jan 2022 at the AGM, but due to insufficient numbers to host a meaningful representation. So would like to offer the following word of caution in regard to the "Bonfire window".

*Firstly, The UK has just hosted COP26 and asked all of us to consider; **How to do our bit for the environment.** Consequently, I support the Council's message that Allotment Tenants should consider alternative methods to get rid of unwanted plants/growth on the allotment e.g. weeds, pruned bushes, pruned branches, cut back stalks/briars etc.*

Whilst I thank the Council for allowing a two week period in January, for those tenants that consider that the only way to dispose of their (non-compostable) material is via the use of a bonfire ...However, I strongly believe that allotment tenants are being set up to fail.....due mainly to a bonfire window being granted for January (February would have been just as unwelcome from my perspective) history shows us that Farmers traditionally did their burning at end of harvest in

Sept/October, when the stalks have had all summer to dry out....We have also seen recently, albeit from a minority of allotment tenants, a clear ability to burn allotment "Wet-Rubbish" with massive smoke emissions, which has caused major issues for nearby residents: e.g. tenants in flats at Foxes piece or the residents in the Care Home in Prospect Road, near Hanging Hill (to mention just a couple of close proximity areas that have been affected by smoky bonfires) . The affect has been made more noticeable as the country has battled COVID and prolonged bouts of lockdown.

So, I conclude by encouraging my fellow allotment tenants to consider just how they will prepare their Organic Waste (earmarked for bonfires) over the winter period, so that at the time of bonfire the waste is dry and should not be a cause for concern when ignited. Common sense should imply, the planning should start now not a day or two before the bonfire window. Thank you - John HH

Being down the allotment in fresh air, meeting people has been very beneficial in a COVID world, and it does wonders for your mental health.

Suggestions:-

Have an AGM indoors or ZOOM. The best way of attracting people is via prize winners, reinstall Allotment Competition with proper judges, suggest 3 visits not 2. New plot holders might take on the challenge, without prize winners the turn out would be low unfortunately.

I help out cutting the grass for several plot holders that have no lawn mowers, and also cut the grass by gate at Foxes Piece entrance, other people also help out in this task around the site.

Please tell new plot holders the rules of having a plot, they should be told, that having an allotment is hard work, but the rewards are huge.

Could you use the pay back men to strim poor plots, making them more attractive to rent out? – Richard FP

Questions to MTC from tenants:

Thank you to the Committee Members involved for negotiating a window to light bonfires. My only comment to the Council (not the Committee who I have no doubt are well aware of this) would be that the timing of this window being in January is far from optimal for reducing smoke and burning time. Weather at the end of this month and in the lead up to it is probably the coldest and wettest of the entire year and keeping materials dry for an extended time will not be easy. Autumn is the season for garden and other bonfires for a reason this is when the annual clearance takes place and is when material is likely to be at its driest and deadest. Please would the council consider introducing this in the Autumn time for 2022. –

Sally FP

It is clear that the decision makers have no experience as gardeners. Most of the material collected for burning has to be stacked and dried. I start pruning soft fruit in September, cut back blackberries and raspberries in November and commence pruning of fruit trees in January. This collection will not be ready for burning until March at the earliest. This winter I will have to make a serious reduction in an apple tree thus producing wood that will need a year to dry out. We need a long term policy, not an on off policy that varies as the wind changes direction.

My winter stack, which I have sorted each year for burning in March, provides a winter home for innumerable creatures. I have found ground nesting bees and hedgehogs in there. From an ecological standpoint it would be totally wrong to disturb the stack in January. This whole business has not been thought through properly. - Martin FP

Messages from Marlow Town Council

Playground Area near Foxes Piece Site – There are no plans in progress at present, therefore, the Council will be clearing and tidying the area of debris that has collected recently.

Tenancy Renewals - These must be completed, submitted and paid before the end of November. If any tenants have not yet received a renewal, please contact: Marlow Town Council Office tel: 484024 or email: debbie@marlow-tc.gov.uk

The Marlow Allotments Association Committee sends best wishes to all for a healthy & productive 2022.