

The Othona Community – Bradwell centre Committee.

Minutes of meeting on Sunday 6th May 2018.

Place – Othona Bradwell. **Time** – 2pm to 5.20pm.

1. **Welcome** to Angela Mutum, Angie Smith, Susanne Kelly, Nicholas Mannoukas (Skype) Debbie and Richard Sanders (standing in for Tim,) Ruth Bull (Chair/minutes.) Apologies for absence from Katie (maternity break,) Tim Fox and Simon Thompson. Nicholas opened the meeting with prayer.

2. **Minutes of BCC meeting 10th March** as approved, signed and put on Bradwell web page. Matters arising:

- Data protection: we are pleased that OWD have offered to take a lead, Debbie and Richard will pick up actions for Bradwell, Tim to advise if there are any particular issues for Bradwell. We understand we will be required to ensure positive permission to use data; and deletion of old records. Deadline of 25-5-2018 for Action Plans (not compliance.)

- Wind Farm grant for Disability Parking: estimates coming in, plan for a start this spring.

“Bradwell Festival” (formerly Bradwell Pilgrimage) is now Bradwell Gathering, Saturday 7th July only. No clarity on the schedule and events for the day. Nicholas voiced his feelings, shared by all, that we had been let down by the Diocese, who had encouraged promotion of the Festival as set out on our Programme; it looks bad on Othona. Nicholas needs to know details of any “Festival” /Diocesan event for the 2019 programme.

3. **Warden’s Report** including staffing and volunteers update –from Richard.

- Staffing update: Tosca is back in July. Richard is not aware of any mid-term VAPS for the summer, but there are three two-week VAPs working-parties of eight people. They are on specific projects, International week; Grounds Works; and Permaculture and Gardens. This links with a Volunteer Scheme Conference Nicholas attended in Paris, on bio-construction, soil care and sustainable food production. We have a volunteer gardener once a week, and Debbie and Richard are doing some garden maintenance.

- Generator problems, generator being repaired under warranty, we are using an expensive hired generator.

- Sustainability: there are minor but effective changes in hand; we discussed using local suppliers as much as possible. Susanne proposed putting some updates on our sustainability, garden improvements etc. on Facebook – Debbie agreed to do this.

- We considered the affordability of Othona, and that there needs to be an item on Facebook about contacting Tim to discuss a need for a bursary.

4. Othona Bradwell Website – BCC members said it looks good, easy to navigate around, lots of useful links. Roo to forward the BCC photos and mini-biographies to Bradwell office to put up. Others being done this weekend.

5. Safeguarding and H&S reports/any incidents – nothing to report. Nicholas and Susanne are working on a form of words/advice for a Speakers Leaflet, re appropriate and sensitive content of lectures. Accident book in use for reporting incidents and learning from them.

6. Finance and budget update - Angie is welcome – she took over a month ago, with hand-over from Colin Butcher. Angie is arranging connection to the Xero accounting system. Book balances appear healthy but include ring-fenced money transferred from central account. Angie plans to provide us with regular monthly reports. We discussed the identified problem that some people book, pay no deposit and fail to appear – causing Othona a financial loss as they are catered for, and as the beds they reserve are empty, potential bookings turned away. Many people do not pay until they arrive. We agreed that the current policy as set out in the programme is correct, but could be softened as follows: people should pay the one-night adult deposit on booking (£42, except working weekends which is £21) and pay in full one month before their stay, but if this presents financial problems people may ask for a Personal Payment Plan which Debbie can set up on the system. If there are genuine reasons for a late cancellation the system allows credit – and at all times people should be treated as individuals with the staff having discretion over payment arrangements.

We considered the need for a format for the minimum size of a private group booking, to ensure it is financially viable for Othona. We need to know the break-even cost for the site: the variables are mainly food, catering, extra heating and water costs. The staff have to balance the needs of small groups who may or may not be prepared to share with other groups; and the needs of larger groups who require the whole site.

Angie will be talking to Charlie Wong (Community Treasurer) about Central/Local funding issues so our accounts give the true picture.

7. Programme update – Nicholas is talking to the 2018 Leaders to ensure appropriate support is offered. The 2019 Programme is well in hand. Suggestions needed for themes/speakers for the Spring and Autumn retreats.

Nicholas would welcome suggestions from Othona Members; he would also appreciate any contact from anyone in the community who has ideas for programme topics or speakers. Debbie suggested the Spring Watch and Autumn Watch programmes be revamped for variety, to sustain interest. New ideas promote new interests and bring new faces. Nicholas and Richard to liaise over the Open Community Times needed for 2019, and what spaces are left for private group bookings. We had a discussion on the pros and cons of bring in Groups to Open Community times.

8. Preparing for summer Season – we discussed roles and responsibilities of Tim & Staff Team, and Summer Helper's Team.

It was suggested we re-introduce the morning Work Period, as voluntary, with a few jobs always available; many people like to contribute to Othona in this way, and it gives people the opportunity to enjoy the "Work" pillar of Othona and learn new skills. This needs to be co-ordinated, (we used to have a summer Maintenance Leader each week.)

We understand that Tim is working with Martin Riemer and it is likely that Tim will draw up a list of summer Cooks, Martin will find the Team Supports, Chaplains and any other roles needed.

Richard highlighted the importance of mealtimes shared in community together – with clearing and washing up afterwards. We are shaping up new routines for different jobs, and need Duty Lists to encourage everyone to share the tasks and avoid staff overload. We shared experiences in community living and emphasised the need for staff and volunteers to take sufficient breaks during the day, and the week. We considered the role of Chaplain – to organise and support Chapel services – and some have the skills and experience to offer spiritual support, as do some other Community members.

9. Strategic topics – moving forward.

- **Reconciliation** – this is a vital part of Othona's work, whether on a small local scale or contributing to world conflict resolution. Anouk developed some ideas but has left so we need a new Leader to pull together a plan to support Tim in this area – ideally with a small group of - interested members.

- **Education** – we continue to encourage residential school bookings and also propose to promote Othona for school Day Visits. This would be ideal for spring and autumn mid-week times where there are currently few bookings. Dave Bull to contact Debbie and Richard to see how this fits with the education strategy – and Susanne to explore options with local schools. This needs to fit with the school curriculum, linking in to the many historic, natural and

sustainable resources at Othona. We have considered whether the Riemer Hut should be upgraded/replaced with an Education Hut.

- **Resources and Sustainability** – A company has provided the estimated cost of connecting to the Grid. This can now be compared with the cost of any other energy systems, stand-alone or grid-connected. Discussion points included the grid not being incompatible with Othona – we would have the potential to sell back to the grid and demonstrate our commitment to optimising green electricity. On the other hand there is the attraction, for some people, of being off-grid; and if we were on the grid there is the possibility people would be less cautious about electricity consumption – a topic for the Open BCC. We now need to seek the cost of alternative systems in a complete appraisal of our energy needs and options. Angie suggested the Centre for Alternative Technology as a source of information, and is happy to phone around and find out about technical suppliers. Dave Bull has also fed in some suggestions to Tim, to be followed up.

We agreed the need to analyse the requirement for more accommodation, notably requests for single rooms and our very inadequate accommodation for people with disabilities and the need for en-suites. Roo has obtained from John James, Architect, an electronic copy of the plans drawn up for single rooms, disability en-suites, and a small communal area – to replace the Bank. Although Susanne has identified that the Solar Building was erected instead (because of grant funding) this is so long ago that any application for Planning Permission may be considered afresh.

Christian spirituality – Richard agreed to be team link for this strategic area.

A Local Resource – networking and promoting our activities will promote this.

10. Communication – Martin Riemer is developing ideas and queries about electronic communication. Communication is a theme that runs through everything. Debbie agreed to help develop a strategic approach that includes all media, networks and opportunities. Simon had also agreed to look at this – all ideas need to be shared, for action.

11. Anything to report to trustees on 16th May: Angela, Angie and Roo will be there and can report on matters from this BCC meeting.

12. Any other business – Al Fitzjohn had raised the old agreement to provide a hearing loop for deaf people. Susanne agreed to obtain the price of purchasing a portable loop for use in the Chapel, dining area or in lectures.

Next meetings

- **Sat 28th July 2-4.30 at Bradwell: Open meeting** – needs publicity, support.

- **The Othona AGM is on Sat 22nd Sept in London.** The staff team may look for BCC support in preparing a Bradwell presentation.
- **There will not be a meeting on Tuesday 18th September.**
- **Saturday 6th October, 2-4.30pm (at Working weekend – note new date.)**
- **Sat 10th November 9.30-5pm** Strategy Day Bradwell, probably St Thomas' Church meeting room, Bradwell Village.