

29 November 2018 Member's meeting

A quorum of members was present.

Steve Hobbs, Chair of Sims Hill, introduced the agenda.

Grower's update.

Brutal year because of drought. Most things have done really well with a couple of failures, but very good under the circumstances. We are going to build up fertility, etc. James has tracked the actual values of the veg that we supply each week usually averaging about £7 and £13 most of the time, but it might fluctuate down to £12 and £6 during the hungry gap.

Steve asked the members to please give us feedback to the Board and also help us out if they have good ideas. In the big polytunnel which has no-dig compost in it, we now have rocket and winter salads which will run out in January and start off again in February. In one of the polytunnels at the field we have lots of spring onions which will come in mid-March. In the big field we have some beetroot which will come in the winter still, and lots of green manure to help build nutrition in the soil. The other tunnel has chard and spinach which will mainly come through in the hungry gap. The middle field is the main cropping space, which has leeks, broccoli, and some cabbages. James has plans to expand the growing space and to keep building the fertility by rotation and adding more nutrients to the field. The onions were lost mainly because of the heat.

Food Centre update

We try to help alleviate food poverty and social isolation, and the barriers that keep people from eating and cooking nutritious food. The people who come help with the farming and cooking and have a good social time together and learn to reconnect with how food is grown and cooked. It is all done very informally, and people get a veg share and they can order dry goods from Real Economy. They can bring home the fruits of their labour. Are people growing, cooking and eating more healthily? Is it helping them to develop their confidence and to reconnect with the natural environment? It turns out to be 80% to 100% on all the questions from the survey that was done with the participants. Sian read out some inspirational quotes from participants. It has helped some people with some of their physical and emotional issues. We are now fundraising for a wood burner for the project. Please buy some chutney! We are in the process of applying for more funding and will keep everyone informed.

Education project

We worked with 770 young people in 2017-2018. The funding has stopped for the project, but we have materials and hope we can keep offering opportunities for community groups and schools on a more self-funding basis. We have an ongoing relationship with Begbrooke Primary School. It was hard for schools to come to the site because of budget cuts and curriculum pressure.

Budget

2019 budget we are stronger than coming into the same period last year. We shouldn't have to buy in so much veg.

We have two budget scenarios, one with Tudor and/or external funding. The raise for the growers will somewhat be eaten up with pension contribution increases.

Our budget was very tight this year.

The income was distorted somewhat by the grant funding for the Food Centre and for the polytunnel. We hope to just use grants for special projects and infrastructure.

Our wholesale sales have gone down as it has been more difficult to do that. We are now approaching member capacity, but we are going to put more land into production. We are now up to about 75 full shares! Mainly through word of mouth.

We spend most of our income on wages and bought-in veg. We are hoping that this is going to go down significantly. We pay rent to Feed Bristol and also for the use of the facilities.

We are expecting to be in the black for the veg project.

Ideal budget (If we get Tudor and/or external funding)

Scenario 1: If we don't raise the share price and if we slowly increase up to 80 full shares, we could expect maybe to be around £1000 in the black at the end of the year.

Scenario 2: If we raise the share price, and the other conditions remain the same, then we might be about £2000 in the black at the end of the year.

Fall back budget (no Tudor or external funding)

We would fund the Food Centre directly for the first three months from CFC project savings and with interim support from a private donor, while we look for other funding. This budget would come into play only if we don't get any funding for the CFC and are just then running the veg project. Under this emergency budget we would probably just break even.

Has our approach changed about changing the share price? This is still a live discussion and we don't know what to do about this. What do the members think? Could we have a tiered system? This should be proposed in advance of the AGM so we could try to model this scenario so members could discuss it.

We need to think about how would implement an inflationary price rise sometime next year. We have received permission to implement this later next year, but we haven't made a final decision on this yet. We can come back to this at the AGM with a formal proposal.

Could we increase the membership in targeted places to help get more income in?

Are members happy in principle to accept the two budget scenarios. Yes.

AOB

Corra is opening up the volunteer position of Volunteer Day assistant for helping with photos and social media tasks. Corra will send out an email about this a bit later on. We also need help with financial admin help.

Plastic bags for shares? What can we do about it? We are trying to minimise this as much as possible. We need canvas bags to reuse. We can't reuse the salad bags at the project.

We can put the number of shares that pick up from each pick up point so capacity can be determined on the website.