

2020 Chair report for EOFCM Annual Members' Meeting

May 2021



2020 was obviously dominated by Covid. As social distancing guidelines were introduced, it was clear that the market needed to adapt.

During those first few weeks the committee met (via the newish medium of Zoom!) several times a week - learning from each market and adapting our plans following feedback from market managers, volunteers and costumers. We later went back to our usual rate of meeting about every two months.

A big thank you to the committee members at the time, some of which stepped down at the previous AMM, including the then-chair Frederik Ferner.

The first socially distanced market was on 21 March, two days before full lockdown was announced. We were the only market in Oxford that didn't miss a single market day because of Covid! The markets were a success since the very beginning, demonstrating the importance of – and power in – communities. More specifically, it highlighted what a wonderful community we have in East Oxford: from an influx of new volunteers to TOAD Gin donating copious amounts of hand gel, and our lovely lovely customers, patiently waiting in those long queues (which thankfully have since got shorter!).

The school was also helpful and generously reduced our rent over the months when we had fewer stalls, and therefore a smaller income than usual.

The committee continued to debate how to run the market in light of the ebb and flow of Covid restrictions throughout the year. For example, examining the option of returning into the hall, during the months when cases were down and restrictions were relaxed. As members would have noticed – that idea was rejected.

Since we moved to a fully outdoors market (for now), the market has invested in several new gazebos. These supplemented, and in some cases replaced, old ones as well as gazebos who were generously loaned to us by stall holders.

Moving on from Covid...

Until this summer, the market was insured via the CAG (Community Action Groups) Network, of which the market is a member. Due to unexpected changes on their end, we had to get our own insurance. We now have an annual insurance with Ansvar.

In July we welcomed a new member to the committee – Kate Jury (who is now our interim treasurer), and in February 2021 Caitlin Coombs joined as well. Both were co-opted by the committee in a unanimous vote. As is the case with the other committee members who wish to continue their role, their membership in the committee will be put to the vote at this AMM.

In August two of our volunteers received the (simple!) training needed to become a market manager. This was a welcome addition to a dwindling pool of freelance day managers.

Also in 2020, we renewed our connection with Aspire, an Oxford-based employment charity and social enterprise. Their clients need volunteering opportunities, and we need volunteers – so it is a perfect match! For us this is also about being a part of the larger (East) Oxford community, something we are keen to develop further where possible.

And finally, a big big THANK YOU to the two committee members standing down – Rune Lyngsoe, our treasurer for the past four years, and Martha Crockatt, who has been on the committee, this time around, for three years.

Plans for the future:

- 1) Find a new market secretary! Kat, our brilliant secretary, has been doing this role for a long time, but would now like to focus on other things, like membership engagement. Any suggestions for a replacement will be most welcome.
- 2) Increase engagement with you, the market members.
- 3) Increase the market's connection to the wider community – our connection with Aspire is an example.
- 4) Develop sections of our website – nothing big, just some more information about how the market is run, who the committee members are and how market members and customers can engage with us. General website feedback is welcome!

I'd like to encourage any member who feels they can help with any of the above, or help in any other way to improve the market – do step forward! Either at the AMM, or email me, at – chair@eastoxfordmarket.org.uk. Ultimately – this market belongs to the community, and the more people engaged the better it will be!

Here's to another vibrant, resilient and tasty year,

Ruthi Brandt, Chair,

East Oxford Farmers & Community Market